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"TO BE USEFUL FOR THE NATION" STANISŁAW WAWRZYNIEC STASZIC

"BYĆ NARODOWI UŻYTECZNYM" STANISŁAW WAWRZYNIEC STASZIC

Summary: Stanisław Staszic was born on December 6, 1755 in Piła. He died on January 20, 1826 in Warsaw. He was an activist and political writer, naturalist, philosopher and ideologist of the Polish Enlightenment. Staszic was one of the most outstanding representatives of the thoughts of Polish enlightenment, he exerted a multilateral influence on the intellectual life of the country, especially after 1800. As a political journalist, he made his debut with *Notes on the Life of Jan Zamoyski (1787)* and *Cautions for Poland (1790)*, criticizing the flaws of the Polish political system he saw the main reason for her weakness, and postulating extension of burgher rights; the brochure *On Polish Statistics (published in 1807)* contained guidelines regarding the organization of the state in the spirit of Enlightenment rationalism and was an expression of support for French orientation. His study in geology of the Carpathians and other mountains and plains of Poland (1815), which together with the geological map of Poland and neighboring countries (one of the first maps of this kind in the world) constituted the first attempt at a synthetic approach to Polish geology, as well as description of the Tatra Mountains, which he visited in 1805. He presented his views on the evolution of social and political relations in an intricate historiosophical poem *Human Family (1819–20, confiscated by censorship)*. As a philosopher, he preached a monistic concept of the world, based on the principle of development arising from the law of nature. After the fall of Emperor Napoleon I, he was a supporter of a close relationship between the Polish lands and Russia, convinced of the coming of the era of the Slavs united under her aegis (Pan-Slavism).

Keywords: thought of Polish enlightenment, Polish state, political journalist, philosopher, monistic concept of the world, law of nature,

Streszczenie: Stanisław Staszic urodził się 6 grudnia 1755 r. w Piłce. Zmarł 20 stycznia 1826 r. w Warszawie. Był działaczem i pisarzem politycznym, przyrodnikiem, filozofem i ideologiem polskiego oświecenia. Staszic był jednym z najwybitniejszych reprezentantów myśli polskiego oświecenia, wywarł wielostronny wpływ na życie umysłowe kraju, szczególnie po 1800 r. Jako publicysta polityczny zadebiutował *Uwagami nad życiem Jana Zamoyskiego (1787)* i *Przestrogamiami dla Polski (1790)*, krytykując wady ustroju Rzeczypospolitej, w których widział główną przyczynę jej słabości, i postulując m.in. rozszerzenie praw mieszczaństwa; broszura *O statystyce Polski (wydana 1807)* zawierała wskazówki odnoszące się do organizacji państwa w duchu oświeceniowego racjonalizmu i była wyrazem poparcia dla profrancuskiej orientacji. Duże znaczenie miało jego studium z zakresu geologii O ziemiopłodzie Karpatów i innych gór i równin Polski (1815), które wraz z mapą geologiczną Polski i krajów ościennych (jedną z pierwszych map tego rodzaju na świecie) stanowiły pierwszą próbę syntetycznego ujęcia geologii Polski, a także opisu Tatr, które odwiedził 1805. Swe poglądy na ewolucję stosunków społecznych i politycznych przedstawił w zawiłym poemacie historiozoficznym *Ród ludzki (1819–20, skonfiskowany przez cenzurę)*. Jako filozof głosił monistyczną koncepcję świata, opartą na zasadzie rozwoju wynikającego z prawa natury. Po upadku cesarza Napoleona I był zwolennikiem ścisłego związku ziem polskich z Rosją, w przekonaniu o nadejściu ery Słowian zjednoczonych pod jej egidą (panslawizm).

Słowa kluczowe: myśl polskiego oświecenia, państwo polskie, publicysta polityczny, filozof, monistyczna koncepcja świata, prawo natury, panslawizm

Introduction

The Honourable Readers are entitled to receive information on the genesis of the motto of the First (I) General Congress of Polish Surveyors that was held on January 1 (Saturday) – 6 (Monday) (nota bene, it was the Epiphany) of 1919.....

At the beginning, let me mention some facts which are universally known; inter alia, the main stages of Poland's partition:

- Partition I – 1772 (Russia, Prussia, Austria)
- Partition II – 1793 (Russia, Prussia)
- Partition III – 1795 (Russia, Prussia, Austria).

After Poland's partition III, the area of Prussian partition occupied more than a half of the territory of the Kingdom of Prussia whereas

the Poles constituted almost a half of its population. In 1807, Poland obtained a substitute of independence in a form of the created Duchy of Warsaw; in 1815 it became transformed into dependent Kingdom of Poland, formally connected by the personal treaty with Russia. By this, Russia occupied 82% of the territory of Poland within the boundaries of 1772, Austria – 11% and Prussia 7%. In 1916, Austria-Hungary and Germany generated the subordinate Regency Kingdom of Poland. After overthrow of tsarism, the Provisional Russian Government of Prince Lvov recognized – in the Manifest of 17 March/30 March 1917 – a full right of Polish nation to decide on its future according to the own will, and the fact that being faithful to the agreements with its allies, being faithful to the common plans of the struggle against the German world, eager to the fight, would help in establishing the independent Polish state, consisting of all territories where the Poles are in majority, as a guarantee of

Fot. 1. Stanisław Staszic
Source: www.ampoleagle.com



lasting peace in the emerging future Europe. On 29, August 1918, the Council of the Peoples' Commissars, when implementing the provisions of the Brest Peace, annulated the partition treaties by a special decree (however, the return of the seized territories or other properties as a result of the partitions, did not occur). On October 7, 1918, the Regency Council announced the independence of Poland and on November 11, 1918, it conveyed the chief military command to Józef Piłsudski. On November 14, 1918, the Regency Council was dissolved. After 1918, the new states were formed at the territory of the most of Polish pre-partition land: the revived Republic of Poland II, Lithuania and Free City Gdańsk; the scraps of the territory of the land were found within the borders of Latvia and Estonia and a part of the territories remained within the borders of Germany and the Soviet Russia.

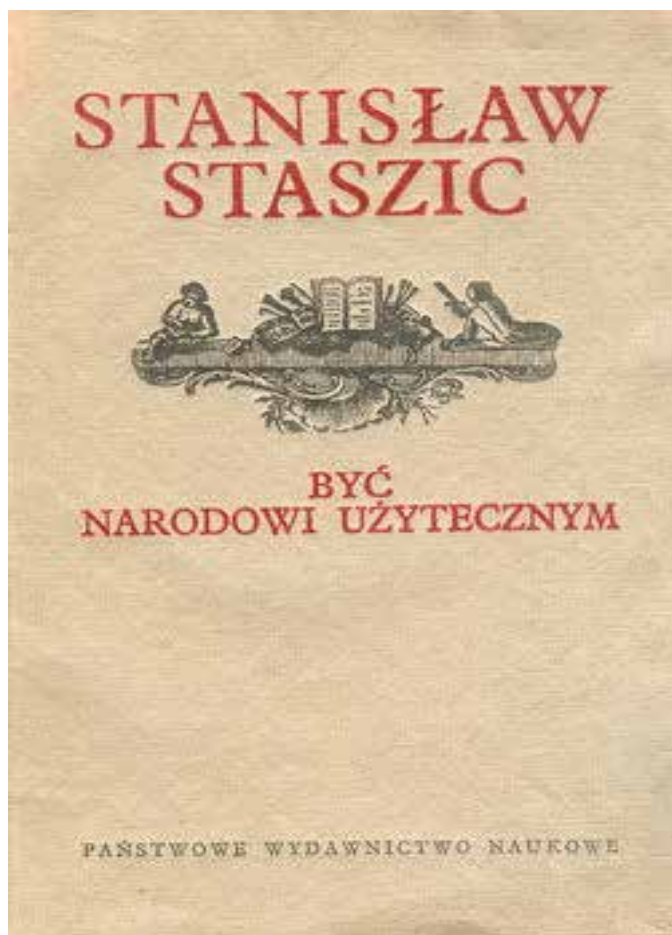
- Historical calendar
- The Wielkopolskie Uprising 1806
 - Free City of (Danzig) Gdańsk (1807-1813)
 - The Duchy of Warsaw (1807-1815)

- The Kingdom of Poland (Congress) (1815-1831)
- Great Duchy of Poznań (1815-1849)
- Free City of Cracow (1815-1846)
- The Cracow Uprising (1846)
- Galicia (1772-1918)
- The November Uprising (1830-1831)
- The Springtime of Nations, the Revolutions of 1848 in Poland (1848)
- The Wielkopolskie Uprising of 1848
- The January Uprising (1863-1864)
- The Baikal Insurrection (1866)
- Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland
- The Kingdom of Poland 1916-1918

In the partition conditions, the Society of Friends of Sciences (TPN) was formed. It has also other names such as the Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences (1800-1832), since 1808 – the Royal Society of Friends of Sciences or the Royal Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences – the Society, associating the researchers of

Fot. 3. Stanisław Staszic "To be useful to the nation" cover page, PWN Publishing House, 1976

Source: www.antykwariat.waw.pl



care of the preservation of Polish language, literature and national traditions. It also brought together the representatives of artistic world and the reviving Polish Masonic lodges (being later closed by tsarism authorities). Apart from the scientific activity, the Society was involved in gathering of museum collections, organization of anniversaries and popularization of knowledge. The Presidents of the Society of Friends of Sciences were, successively: Jan Chrzciciel Albertrandi (1800 -1808), Stanisław Staszic (1808 -1825) and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1826 -1831). The function of secretaries was played by the following persons: Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski (1800 -1802), Józef Kalasanty Szaniawski (1802 -1804), Ludwik Osiński (1804-1814), Edward Czarnecki 91814-1824) and Łukasz Gołębiowski (1824 -1831). The more known members of the Society were: Jan Paweł Woronicz, Samuel Linde, Onufry Kopczyński, Jerzy Samuel Bandtkie and Stanisław Kostka Potocki. Gotfryd Ernest Groddeck – professor of the Greek and Roman literature at the Vilnius University, the teacher of Adam Mickiewicz (nominated to the member of the Society in 1831), Zan, Czeczot and Lelewel. The honourable circle included also, inter alia: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Nikolai Karamzin, François-René de Chateaubriand, Alexander von Humboldt, Georges Cuvier, W. Anastasiewicz, G.R. Dzierżawin and J. Dobrovski. The Society was dissolved by the Russian authorities in July 1832, as the repression after the November Uprising.

Stanisław Wawrzyniec Staszic [born on November, 6, 1755 in Piła, died on January 20, 1826 in Warsaw]. He was born in bourgeois family (his father Wawrzyniec and grandfather were mayors of Piła; mother, Katarzyna from the Mędlicki family, was the daughter of the

different specialities and meeting since November 1800 until April 1832 in Warsaw. The Society brought together scholars, writers, official individualities and the so-called friends of sciences. It was the third (after the Society of Writers in Poleszcza, 1765-1770 and Society for Elementary Books, 1775-1792) permanently meeting Polish scientific academy which contributed to the establishment of the Royal Warsaw University, the precursor the University of Warsaw. This latter was the fourth university founded at the territory of Poland.

The mentioned above Society was founded in 1800, on the initiative of Stanisław Sołtyk. Initially it counted 30 members, including the initiator, who were considered as intellectual elite. They included, inter alia: Tadeusz Czacki, Prince Adam Czartoryski, astronomer Marcin Poczobutt-Odlanicki, Ignacy Potocki, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Jan Śniadecki, Professor of Cracow Academy Walenty Sobolewski and priest Stanisław Staszic. on November 16, 1800, in the house of Jan Albertrandi situated in Warsaw, Kanonie 85, the solemn inauguration of the Society of Friends of Sciences had place. The first public meeting was held on 23 November 1800 in the Piarists' Order building. Albertrandi delivered the inauguration speech. The discussed association was established legally (confirmed by the rescript of the Prussian King, dated 1 July 1802), it had, however, to formulate its tasks carefully. The Society took

Fot. 3. Stanisław Staszic, *Cautions for Poland* - title page

Source: Illustration Archive of WN PWN SA © PWN Scientific Publishing House



mayor). After graduation of school (priest seminar) in Poznan, he took the holy orders (1778/1779) and in 1779, he became a priest. He was the Polish enlightenment activist, pioneer of cooperative movement, political writer and publicist, philosopher and translator, member of a mason lodge, geographer and geologist and catholic priest [nota bene, for almost 20 recent years of his life, Staszic did not perform the pastoral service and did not wear a cassock]. He was the member of the Chamber of Public Education of the Duchy of Warsaw since 1807), the minister of the state of the Duchy of Warsaw since 1809 and the counsellor of the state of the Duchy of Warsaw since 1810.

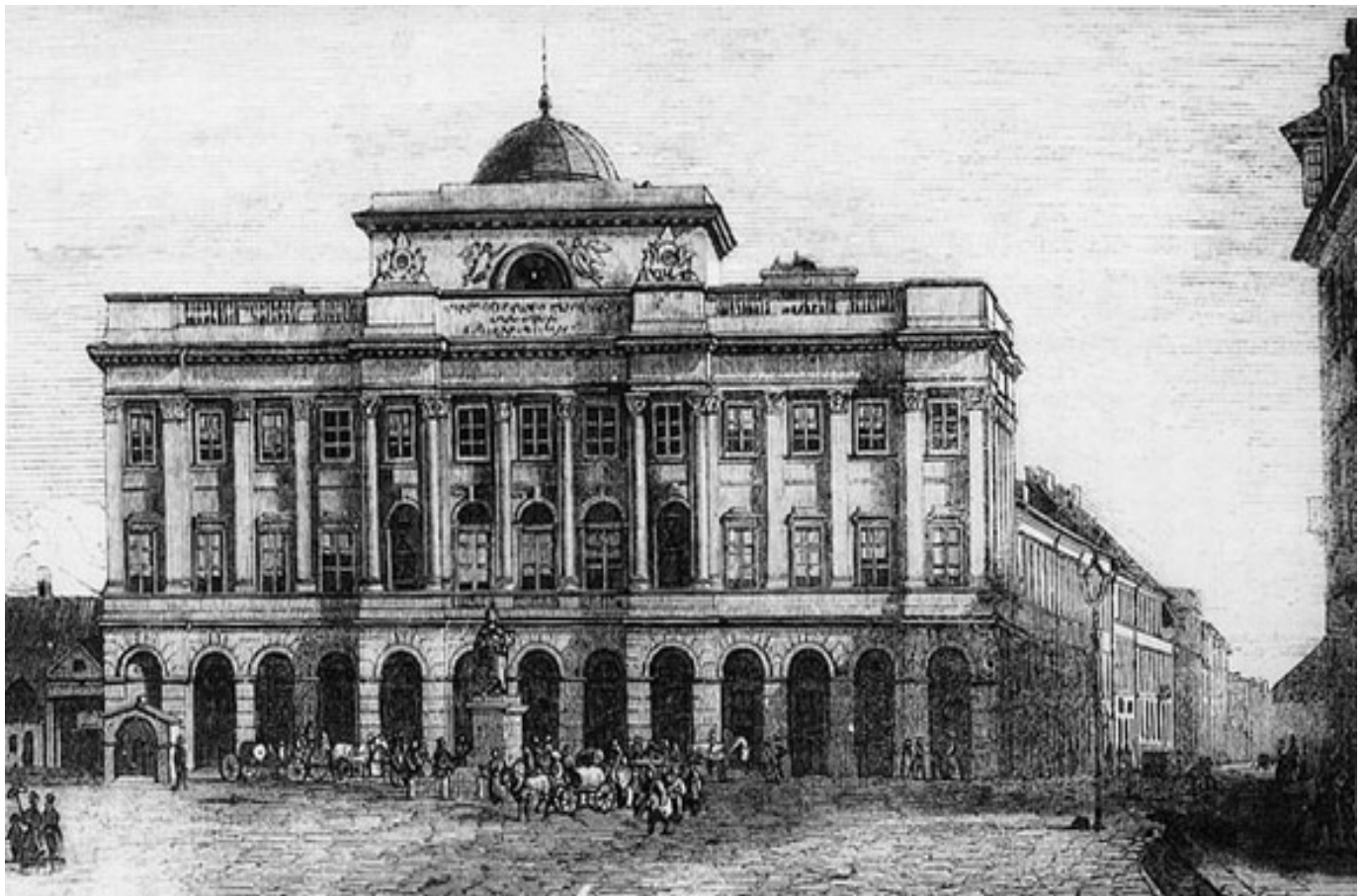
Staszic was one of the main reformers and scholars of the Polish enlightenment epoch. He acted in favour of the improvement of the situation of peasants. In 1812, in Jarosławiec manor (Uchanie, province of Hrubieszów) he founded the Hrubieszów Agricultural Society and by this, he became the precursor of the cooperative movement in Poland. He was a follower of profound systemic reforms in the Commonwealth of Poland I; during the period of the Polish Great Sejm meetings, he supported the changes, conducted by the Parliament. Since 1808 he had been the President of the Society of Friends of Sciences. In the years 1807-1812, Staszic was the member of the Educational Chamber, since 1815 – of the Commission for Religion and Public Enlightenment; he was the member of the Council of the State of the Kingdom of Poland.

He was the co-organizer of the university school in Warsaw and Academic-Mining School in Kielce. He played a function of the deputy minister of education of the Kingdom of Poland in the years 1818-1824 and the minister of the state of the Kingdom of Poland since 1824.

Diligence, capabilities and unselfish readiness to public service caused that he became one of the most influential Poles in the discussed period of time. The motto "TO BE USEFUL FOR THE NATION" was his life motto. In the epoch of decline of the Commonwealth of Poland he supported the movement of the state's reform by writing the anonymous letters. After revival of the Polish state, he developed the comprehensive organizational activity in the field of education, science and economy. He had the merits worthy to be mentioned. He always tried to help people. After his death, it was revealed that he was "not only the helm for his generation but also the torch for the generations to come".

Staszic played the important role in development of the industry, acting as geologist and researcher of the nature. In 1825, he published information on the Izerskie Mountains and the Karkonosze. In the years 1816-1824, he was a director general of the Department of Industry and Craftsmanship of the Congress Poland. He elaborated a plan for development of the Staropolski Industrial District. He restarted output of hard coal from the bed in Reden

*Fot. 4. Medical and Surgical Academy, operating 1859–62 in the Staszic Palace in Warsaw
Source: Illustration Archive of WN PWN SA © PWN Scientific Publishing House*



at the territory of the present Dąbrowa Górnicza. on his initiative, many industrial objects were erected, e.g. the first (in the Kingdom of Poland) metallurgical plants of zinc (4 metallurgical plants with a common name "Konstanty" – 1816-1822) and ferrous metallurgical works. He was the protector and promoter of the inventor Abraham Stern... (Yes, it is the man who constructed arithmometer, a sort of mechanical calculator). He was buried at the cemetery of the Niepokalane Poczęcie NMP Church in Bielany, the District of Warsaw. His funeral was attended by 14 thousand persons. According to the last will of Staszic, a part of his property – 800 000 zlotys was divided as the founding capitals for the earning house for the poor people and the baby Jesus hospital (200 000 for each of them). The remaining money was destined for Mikołaj Kopernik monument, Institute of the Deaf and for the Marcinkanki hospital. His grave had been the place of meetings of the Warsaw youth and the members of patriotic movements for 4 years.

The selected memorized events concerning life of Stanisław Staszic

- During his funeral, the music of Józef Elsner (teacher of Chopin) was played; his achievement contains a piece dedicated to Staszic: Cantata with Polish verse, ascribed to Minister Staszic, for 5 voices, with 5-voice canon for the use of Musical School – without accompaniment
- A story about Staszic "Judge Not!" by English writer, Charles Dickens (1851)
- Marian Brandys dedicated him a chapter of his book "General Arbuż" (Warsaw, 1988)
- Staszic became a patron of ca. 200 schools and few universities, including AGH University of Science and Technology since 1969.

Several dozens of them are associated in the all-national Society of the Staszic Schools, founded in 1987.

- Monuments of Staszic are found in Ciechocinek (1961), Częstochowa (1974), Dąbrowa Górnicza (1962), Hrubieszów (1922), Jarosławiec (1926), Kielce (1906), Cracow (1901), Łódź (1984), Obłęgorek (1901), Piła (two – 1960, 1991), Poznań (1967) and Warsaw (1976).
- The salt mine in Wieliczka memorized Staszic, giving his name to the Chamber, being found on the route destined for visiting.
- The pond in the Tatry mountains, the mountain in Spitsbergen (Svalbard, Norway), the chamber of cave in Ukraine were called by the name of Staszic; the name of several fossils and minerals and the name of one single-celled organism from Dinoflagellata family were also generated from his name
- The image of Staszic was found on the note of 50 000 PLN, being in the turnover in the period of 1989-1993
- ...and the titular motto of the First (I) Congress of Polish Surveyors

P. S. No. 1

Staszic in anecdote: in 1816, on the initiative of Staszic, the Society of Friends of Sciences in Warsaw began to develop a new metric system of measurement and weight for the Kingdom of Poland. The developed project was then the subject of debate at the Council of the State where Staszic took a care of it – he was in the deputation, nominated to evaluate it; then, he submitted the provisions of the Council during the plenary sessions and opted for approval of the project (May 1818). Not all the participants liked the new law. It was criticised by, inter alia, Dominik Krysiński (1785-1853), economist, professor of the University of Warsaw. After many

Fot. 5. The tomb of Stanisław Staszic, located within the Vysehs Seminary (former Camaldolese church), located at the north wall of the church, Warsaw, Bielany, ul. Dewajtis 3
Source: www.uci.agh.edu.pl/



years, he talked with one of the state chancellors, asking how such "unreasonable and harmful" project could be resolved univocally. The answer was as follows: "Why are you surprised? Staszic, being carried away by a passionate inspiration, like Joas in "Atalia" told us so much about these metres, decimetres, miriametres, grams, litres and kilolitres during the sessions and he said that many my colleagues and me did not have any idea about all this; as we had to hear, all the time, the repeated words: metres, millimetres etc, and we were near to dreaming, we thought that Staszic – who was at the same time the member of the ministry of public education – introduced a new organization of schools in which he constantly repeated metres and teachers... we all were silent and he talked and talked. Nobody wanted to enter the dangerous discussion (as it was supported by a strong voice and breast) and the project passed univocally".

P. S. No. 2

Establishment of the Polish Academy of Sciences was connected with the decisions which were undertaken during the First Congress of Polish Science in 1951 and was linked with the liquidation of the Polish Academy of Abilities and of the Scientific Society of Warsaw (it was founded in 1907 and was the continuation of the activity of Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences).

P. S. No. 3

The Royal University of Warsaw – Polish public university, founded on November 19, 1916 in Warsaw by the Commission for Religion Matters and Public Enlightenment, the first University of Warsaw. It was dissolved in 1831 within the frames of Russian repressions after the November Uprising. Establishment of the Warsaw University has its genesis in activity of educational institutions of the Duchy of Warsaw, inspired by the reform of Polish education, conducted by the Commission of the National Education, and being interrupted by the partitions of Poland. On January, 26, 1807, the authority of the Duchy – the Governing Commission created the Chamber of Public Education – the supreme organ of public administration specific of the matters of science, education and upbringing. It functioned in the years 1807-1812; until the decline of the Duchy of Warsaw; it was managed by Stanisław Kostka Potocki, in cooperation with Stanisław Staszic, Samuel

Bogumił Linde, Onufry Kopczyński and other representatives of Polish intellectualists associated in different educational and scientific organizations such as e.g. Warsaw Society of Friends of Sciences.

P. S. No. 4

The Surveyor Review no 2 of 1926, page 8, Feliks Kucharzewski – lecture on the occasion of 100th anniversary of the death of Staszic: "He was also familiarized with the surveying matters what was well demonstrated in many of his treatises. We allow ourselves to cite a fragment of one of papers where Staszic treats the problem of geodetic education in the following way:

"Those ones possessing higher mathematics will enter the rooms where the architecture, geodesy and civil engineering with the practical application will be submitted. In winter semester, they will learn the above science..., and in summer semester ... they will be employed in measurement in the fields".

When understanding the question of education in such a way, Staszic organizes the surveying department at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Warsaw..".

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