



# De viris mulieribusque illustribus



Warsaw 2019

Our Mythical History  
Children's and Young Adults' Culture  
in Response to the Heritage of Ancient Greece and Rome

ERC Consolidator Grant (681202)

Our Mythical Childhood...

The Reception of Classical Antiquity  
in Children's and Young Adults' Culture  
in Response to Regional and Global Challenges





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***De viris mulieribusque illustribus: Schools Endeavour Educational Materials***

**Texts:** Teachers and Students from the Schools involved in the Project: Barbara Bibik & the students from Nicolaus Copernicus University Academic Junior and Senior High School in Toruń, Janusz Ryba and the students from Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Cracow, Barbara Strycharczyk and the students from "Strumienie" High School in Józefów, Anna Wojciechowska and the students from Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw, and Katarzyna Marciniak

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***Our Mythical History: Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to the Heritage of Ancient Greece and Rome***

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# De magistris discipulisque claris

As we can learn from the old dictionaries, the Latin adjective *illustris* supposes a merit that causes a person to be esteemed. Thus, it is food for thought that this adjective has fallen by the wayside in our times, contrary to the adjective *celeber* residing in the term “celebrity” and meaning “very much frequented”, “popular”, no matter the many reasons, including quite momentary fashion.<sup>1</sup>

There is also no doubt that the protagonists chosen by the students of the four schools, who, with their engaged teachers, entered into the role of a Publius Cornelius Nepos for the twenty-first century, fulfil the demanding criterion for being dubbed *illustris*. Thus the title of this year’s endeavour: ***De viris mulieribusque illustribus***. For besides Jan Zamoyski, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, and Zdzisław Lubomirski, there is a woman, *mulier*, as well: Krystyna Skarbek, a secret agent, who may have inspired Ian Fleming, the creator of the James Bond series. Yet the protagonists in question are not *celebres*, popular – on the contrary, they are forgotten, simply for the lack of a place for them in the tests-oriented school curriculum, or for their often quiet (or not quite so simple to describe in the whole spectrum of colours) work for the country. Thus, all the bigger is the merit of the students who decided to restore the memory of these protagonists to us today, in the ancient belief that *scripta manent*. This is the origin of our book.

A close collaboration with schools has been a crucial element and a source of joy to all the people involved in our activities from the very beginning of the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme. We started in the school year 2012/2013, within the project *Our Mythical Childhood... The Classics and Children's Literature Between East and West* (Loeb Classical Library Foundation Grant), we continued in 2015/2016 within the project *Chasing Mythical Beasts... The Reception of Creatures from Graeco-Roman Mythology*

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baptiste Gardin Dumesnil, *Latin Synonyms, with Their Different Significations*, London: Richard Taylor and Co., 1809, p. 142.

*in Children's & Young Adults' Culture as a Transformation Marker* (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Alumni Award), and it was only natural to us to consolidate our efforts with support from the ERC Consolidator Grant. The first of our ERC conferences – *Our Mythical Hope in Children's and Young Adults' Culture... The (In)efficacy of Ancient Myths in Overcoming the Hardships of Life* of 2017 – brought to light the students' wonderful artworks and presentations on mythological themes. In 2018, in the European Year of Cultural Heritage, we met for the workshops *The Present Meets the Past*, during which we began our studies into the reception of the Classics in the context of history. The schools project developed then, *Scraps of Memory*, showed clearly how young people, guided by their wise and open-minded teachers and tutors, learn from the past to respect the present and to strive for a future shaped by universal values, as preserved in the works of the ancient authors.<sup>2</sup>

From the very beginning Barbara Strycharczyk, a teacher of Latin and Ancient Culture, was a link between our Faculty and the two schools: the "Strumienie" High School in Józefów, where she develops experimental curricula, and Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw, where she had taught for ages and where now the Polish-Classical Profile, under the patronage of the Faculty of "Artes Liberales", is taken care of by Anna Wojciechowska. This year we are pleased to broaden our collaboration owing to the exemplary engagement on the part of Barbara Bibik's (a Rej High School graduate) students from the Nicolaus Copernicus University Academic Junior and Senior High School in Toruń and Janusz Ryba's students from Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Cracow. All four schools accepted the challenge of presenting four important figures from Polish history who were well versed in the classical tradition and whose lives may serve as biographies of, indeed, the *illustres*.

<sup>2</sup> For the reportages on our collaboration on various stages of the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme see the OMC YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6zvu9ExsI0gK5rSvgnQseQ>) and the materials – always in Open Access – with my descriptions of our idea (some crucial parts repeated also here) and the introductions to the single tasks, on the project's website (<http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/>).

The motto of Rej High School, which is also my own school, if I am allowed this personal statement, originates from the *Thebaid* of Statius: ***Macte animo*** – “Cheer up! / Have courage!”. We are trying to apply this in our activities, by inviting young people, who at this very moment are building their identities for their adult life, to engage with Classical Antiquity. They have the courage to study it, to question it, and to trust it, and thus to make it still valid to build on its universal heritage the foundations for dialogue and mutual understanding beyond the borders of times, nations, generations, and historical experiences, in the spirit of Our Mythical Community. This is also possible owing to the extraordinary involvement on the part of the school headmasters, the teachers, the students and their parents and tutors. We all learn from their illustrious commitment to the process of education that is always two-sided and requires effort and trust both from the students and their educators.

The Latin adjective *clarus* means “bright”, also one that is remarkable. Hence the title of my introduction. For this narration *de viris mulieribusque illustribus* is at the same time a testimony to the brightness of the minds and hearts of the teachers and students: *De magistris discipulisque claris*, whose engagement resulted in this remarkable piece of reading.

Besides the educational value of the texts gathered in the present book, there is something of a similar, if not major, importance – namely, the brightness and the light of optimism that this task brings to the worldwide discussions on the crisis in education. As long as such tasks and challenges are undertaken by the new generations, there is hope.

It is my pleasure now to express my utmost gratitude to all involved in the project! I also hope that the readers of this book will feel the spirit of a true, child-like and serious at the same time joy of (re)discovering the ancient heritage and the history for our times. ***Macte animo!***

Katarzyna Marciniak

Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw  
Principal Investigator of the *Our Mythical Childhood* Project

# De viris mulieribusque illustribus

Collaboration with the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” is a valuable experience for students and teachers participating in the project. First of all, it allows us to understand what is interdisciplinarity in education. The second significant element of the collaboration is the acquisition of abilities which let us use Latin and ancient culture as tools making it possible and easier to read texts of culture. We would also like to stress that *Our Mythical Childhood* does not mean that we simply reach for mythical motifs, or treat Antiquity as an encyclopaedia. It is most of all an inspiration to understand reality through the experience of our ancestors. It is a constant encouragement to seek answers to the question – why? – in the treasury of our culture.

Work accomplished this year within the project relates to the *topos* of the lives of famous men – *De viris illustribus*. Recorded by Greek and Roman writers, during centuries, these biographies played in the European education the role of textbooks showing models to imitate but also providing warning and caution. Lives of those who selflessly fulfilled their duty towards the state, their families, or friends, played a special role. *Exempla* we selected – Jan Zamoyski, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Zdzisław Lubomirski, and a *mulier illustris*: Krystyna Skarbek – describe outstanding statesmen, politicians, political writers, and even an amazingly courageous and daring Polish female secret agent who accomplished great things for the British intelligence. School curricula do not provide information about the lives and merits of our heroes. This is the reason why we would like to bring back their memory. Convinced that *exempla trahunt*, we hope that their accomplishments will serve as inspiration for the young generation.

Barbara Strycharczyk  
Teacher at the “Strumienie” High School  
Schools Endeavour Coordinator



# STRUMIENIE

LICEUM OGÓLNOKSZTAŁCĄCE  
STOWARZYSZENIA STERNIK

“Strumienie” High School of the “Sternik”  
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**Supervisor of the project at school:** Barbara Strycharczyk –  
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**Collaborating teachers:**

Hazel Pearson – English  
Maria Skibińska – French  
Agnieszka Żukowska – Spanish

# Jan Zamoyski – *vir incomparabilis*<sup>3</sup>

A school trip to Zamość, more than 300 kilometres from Warsaw, turned into an expedition in which the city was our classroom. Examining its buildings and urban order, we searched for traces of the Renaissance's ideal city – the dream that Hetman Jan Zamoyski (1542–1605) managed to realize. More than four hundred years after Zamość was built, we were trying to find out who this man was who had transposed the conception of the ideal city drawn from ancient texts into reality – what he was like. School textbooks do not provide answers to these questions. Apart from a few facts about Zamość, at best they additionally cite a saying attributed to Zamoyski, that “The future of the Commonwealth will be determined by the education of its young”. But that is definitely not enough for understanding what kind of person he was – what his interests and his dreams were. It seems that to young people today, Hetman Zamoyski is someone remote and not very real. That is why together with second-year students of the “Strumienie” High School we are making an effort to bring him to life, considering how important he is for Polish history and culture. We treat the studies presented by the students as supplementary material for school textbooks teaching history, cultural studies, or Polish language and literature. The information compiled by the students will also be posted on the school's blog, *Okruchy pamięci* [Scraps of Memory], as material for pupils of the “Strumienie” Primary School.

Anyway, since the founder of Zamość was fluent in Latin and read texts in the language with no trouble at all, he must have been familiar with many biographies of famous men who were held up to him in his youth as examples or warnings. Following the model of texts *de viris illustribus* [*on illustrious men*] by ancient authors, students Łucja, Urszula, Zofia, and Oliwia set out to show in their essays who Zamoyski was as a student of the University of Padua, a Renaissance polymath, the founder of an ideal city, a courtier, and a diplomat.

<sup>3</sup> Incomparable man.

It is worth noting that the man or, more accurately, the youth portrayed in these short texts is above all the writers' peer. When he was 13, the same age as today's senior primary school pupils, his father sent him off to Paris to the royal court so that he could prepare for a court career. However, he was not really attracted to life at the king's court. He preferred to read books and attend lectures at the Sorbonne. Today a 13-year-old reading Aristotle is likely an unattainable dream.

At the age of 17, he started studying Greek literature and rhetoric in Strasbourg. He was the same age as second-year students of our current high school. He knew Latin, Classical Greek, French, Italian, he read works by the greatest writers of Antiquity, was interested in philosophy and mathematics, and was trained in the art of speech. He was familiar with the life of a royal court and travelled across Europe, listened to lectures by famous professors and was fascinated with what Europe lived and breathed at the time: the rebirth of Antiquity.

At the age of 19, the age at which our high school students graduate, he commenced studies at the very core of Renaissance thought: the University of Padua, at the Faculty of the Humanities (*studia humaniora*). As a 20-year-old student, he showed himself to be a brilliant orator, giving a *laudatio funebris* (funeral speech) at the funeral of one of Padua's professors. Soon after, he published his first work, *De senatu Romano libri II [Treatise on the Roman Senate in Two Books]*. He also received an honour that testifies to his excellent relations with students and professors: he was elected rector of the University of Law (rector of law students).<sup>4</sup> When he left Padua in 1565, he was 23 years old, the same age as a University graduate today. However, he certainly seems to have had much greater achievements: a doctoral diploma, a letter of recommendation to King Sigismund II Augustus, and significant academic successes. He would go on to prove his skills and talent as a royal secretary and adviser, chancellor, hetman, founder and patron of learning and the arts. One might say: *vir incomparabilis*. Researchers and biographers of Zamoyski underline that he was "always active, always on the go. In the 63 years of his life he accomplished so much that it could have filled several human lives".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Among the rector's duties there were such tasks as taking care of the students and of the quality of the studies and winning new professors for the University.

<sup>5</sup> Adam Andrzej Witusik, *O Zamoyskim, Zamościu i Akademii Zamojskiej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1978, p. 19, quoted here after: Jan Saryusz Zamoyski, *Korzenie rodu*, online at: [http://pspzoi.ids.l.pl/doc/PSPzOI-Jan\\_Zamoyski.pdf](http://pspzoi.ids.l.pl/doc/PSPzOI-Jan_Zamoyski.pdf) (accessed April 8, 2019).

# *Laudatio litterarum –* Zamoyski as a Renaissance Man

You often hear the term “Renaissance man” applied to Leonardo da Vinci, the architect, philosopher, engineer, and famous painter. If we consider the qualities of Renaissance polymaths, the most important would appear to be comprehensive interests, creativity, a desire to learn about the world and people, looking to the future through tradition and experiences of the past – which, of course, is linked to being fluent in Latin and Classical Greek as well as in-depth studies on the heritage of Antiquity. Therefore, does Jan Zamoyski deserve to be called a Renaissance man and a polymath?

Jan Zamoyski’s life and work fell on a watershed, a time when people started looking at the world by interpreting ancient ideas. This was the period when the future hetman stepped on the path of acquiring knowledge and experience. As a 13-year-old boy, he was sent to the French court by his father to gain some court refinement and learn languages. However, he preferred to listen to lectures at the Royal College and the Sorbonne. Of course he was interested in the humanities so popular at the time, but he also directed his attention towards mathematics, which proves his interests were broad. This was also when he became interested in Aristotle, and Zamoyski remained influenced by his philosophy all his life. As a 17-year-old, he set off to continue his studies, first to Strasbourg where he learned rhetoric, then to Italy to the University of Padua. The school in Padua enabled him to develop skills in many different areas.

Today, when we look at Jan Zamoyski from the perspective of past centuries, we notice more than just how comprehensive his education was: his knowledge of law, foreign languages, philosophy, literature, history, but also his great industriousness and persistence in working for his goals. Upon completing his studies, he was ready for a career. In this context, the words he used to describe the experience he had gained in Padua, *Patavium virum me fecit*,<sup>6</sup> mean that the future chancellor, statesman, and adviser at the royal court received true “academic baptism” at the University. We can say

<sup>6</sup> Stanisław Łempicki, “Patavium virum me fecit”, in: Stanisław Grzybowski (ed.), *Mecenat Wielkiego Kanclerza. Studia o Janie Zamoyskim*, Warszawa: PIW, 1980, p. 363.



Jan Styka (1858–1925), *Jan Zamoyski Hetman*, Wikimedia Commons.

that thanks to his education in Padua, he truly became a man of his times – a Renaissance polymath and humanist, expert in ancient law, literature, and philosophy, excellent orator and polyglot. From the very start of his education, Zamoyski was fascinated by Antiquity and obtained extensive knowledge about it – above all thanks to his fluency in Latin and Classical Greek.

When he returned to Poland after completing his studies in Padua, he was 23 and launched his career – first at the court of Sigismund II Augustus, as a royal secretary. He worked on organizing the Crown Treasury Archive. During this time he reviewed many important documents. Knowing what they contained but also his own exactitude, orderliness, and diligence enabled Zamoyski to become an authority on Polish law. The next quality Zamoyski had as a Renaissance humanist – his knowledge of the art of oratory and his great skills in this area – revealed itself after the death of King Sigismund II Augustus. That was when Zamoyski gained the byname of “tribune of the gentry”. Using his enthusiasm and rhetorical talent, he devoted himself to working to maintain order and stability in the country. This was also when he started growing into a statesman, a leading figure of political activity and leader of the gentry. When Stephen Báthory became king of Poland in 1576, he appreciated the royal secretary’s talent, enthusiasm, and erudition. Zamoyski was appointed the king’s personal adviser and, with time, Great Crown Hetman and Great Crown Chancellor, becoming second only to the king. He was responsible for Poland’s foreign policy and for its defences; you could say that, like Themistocles in his time, *totus se dedidit rei publicae*.<sup>7</sup>

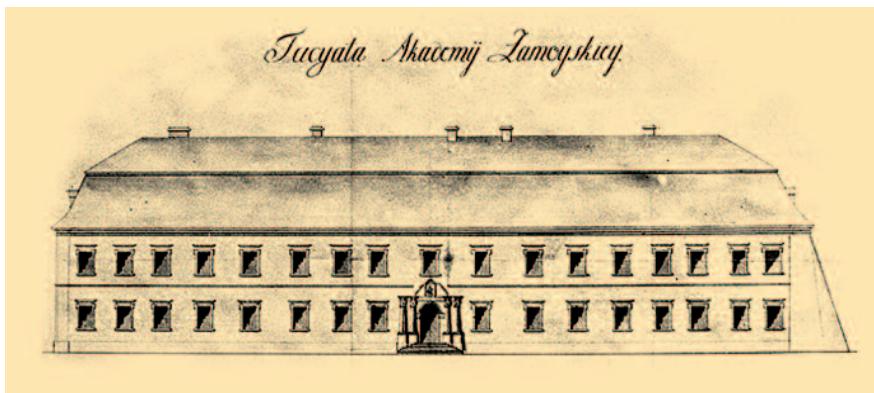
The time came for the hetman and chancellor to pass on his acquired knowledge and experience to the younger generation. That is the reason he founded the Zamoyski Academy in 1594. “The future of the Commonwealth will be determined by the education of its young” – this was the idea guiding the founder: to educate enlightened minds who in the future would offer their fervour and talent to serve their country. That is why the Academy’s main task was to prepare people to undertake a civic *cursus honorum*<sup>8</sup> – get them ready for public life and for performing their duty as senators. In the

<sup>7</sup> “Themistocles Atheniensis totus se dedit rei publicae, amicis serviens”, *Splash Latino*, at: [http://www.latin.it/frase/Themistocles\\_Atheniensis\\_totus\\_se\\_dedidit\\_rei\\_publicae,\\_amicis\\_serviens](http://www.latin.it/frase/Themistocles_Atheniensis_totus_se_dedidit_rei_publicae,_amicis_serviens) (accessed April 5, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> “Cursus honorum”, *Imperium Romanum*, at: <https://www.imperiumromanum.edu.pl/ustroj/republika-rzymska/cursus-honorum/amp/> (accessed April 5, 2019).



University of Padua, phot. by Didier Descouens (2016), Wikimedia Commons.



Academy of Zamość in 1810 – Façade (the image's author unknown),  
Wikimedia Commons.

Academy's programme, Zamoyski referred to his own experience, chiefly from Padua – to the study of many disciplines: learning the classical languages and reading ancient writers in the original – Cicero and Aristotle first and foremost, also to law, moral philosophy, politics, history. Other areas that ensured the comprehensiveness of education were also included: mathematics, geography, astronomy, music, medicine.

The Academy's teachers, supported by the founder, were qualified academics, the best in their fields, including law professor Tomasz Drezner, lawyer Jan Herbut, and philologist Adam Burski. You could say the Academy's founder exercised patronage over the Academy's academic and literary community. He also supported the development of young and gifted writers and artists who, after completing their studies, could pass on their knowledge and skills to the younger generation as the Academy's teachers. The greatest of them included Szymon Szymonowic, Sebastian Klonowic, Piotr Ciekiński – writers and poets, Mikołaj Gomółka – the greatest Polish musician of the Renaissance, and court painter Krzysztof Bystrzycki. Thanks to Zamoyski's private funds and efforts, a print workshop was also set up for the Academy's needs, enabling philological studies to be developed.

A reply to the question whether Zamoyski was a Renaissance man is provided by his own words spoken at the Academy's opening:

"I, chancellor and highest commander of the Polish forces, have been granted the noblest honours in the country not only thanks to God, the king of the Commonwealth, but also for the learning I once undertook to acquire. Without learning there can be neither virtue nor fame. Mindful of this truth, in my youth I wholly devoted myself to studies".<sup>9</sup>

You could say these are words with echoes of *laudatio litterarum* – the praise of learning expressed by the great Marcus Tullius Cicero, Chancellor Zamoyski's master and spiritual teacher:

<sup>9</sup> Jan Zamoyski's speech for the opening of the Zamoyski Academy, in Michał Szukała's interview with Prof. Stefan Ciara, "Zamoyski był człowiekiem renesansu", *WP Książki*, March 21, 2017, at: <https://ksiazki.wp.pl/prof-s-ciara-zamoyski-był-człowiekiem-renesansu-6145961138886273a> (accessed April 5, 2019), transl. Joanna Dutkiewicz (here and after, if not indicated otherwise).

“[...] haec studia adulescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, [...] delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur. Quod si ipsi haec neque attingere neque sensu nostro gustare possemus, tamen ea mirari deberemus, etiam cum in aliis videremus.”<sup>10</sup>

“[...] these studies [of literature] are the food of youth, the delight of old age, [...] a delight at home, and no hindrance abroad; they are companions by night, and in travel, and in the country. And if we ourselves were not able to arrive at these advantages, nor even taste them with our senses, still we ought to admire them, even when we saw them in others”.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cic. *Arch.* 16–17.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Speech for Aulus Licinius Archias, the Poet*, transl. C.D. Yonge, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856, online at: <https://www.forumromanum.org/literature/cicero/arche.html> (accessed April 5, 2019).

## *Patavium virum me fecit*

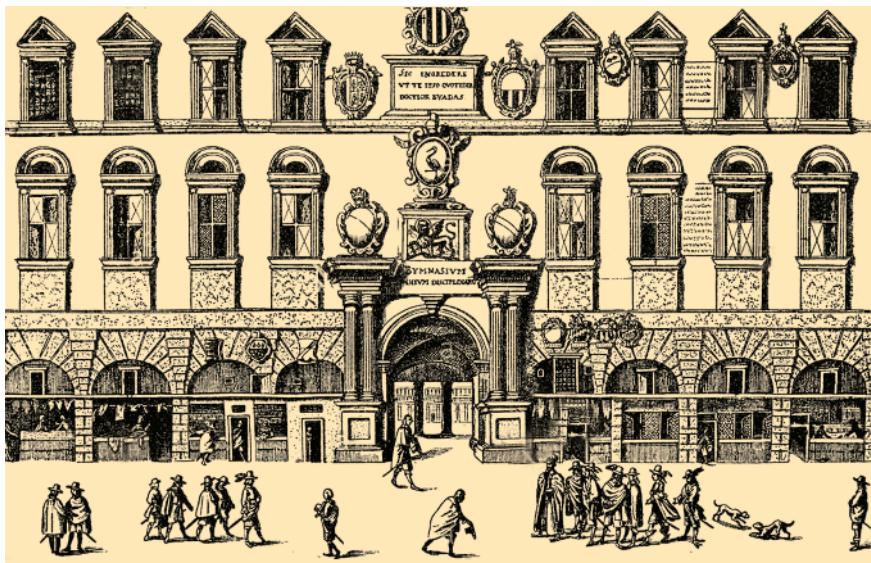
The time Jan Zamoyski spent studying in Padua would influence his entire life. He would go on to use the skills and knowledge he acquired there during his time of service at the courts of Polish kings: Sigismund II Augustus and Stephen Báthory. Renaissance ideas would also inspire Zamoyski to build the ideal city. Before he travelled to Italy to study, he spent some time at the French court, sent there by his father so he could acquire the refinement needed for serving at court, but he very soon discovered this was not his place in life. That is why, a few months later, he went to Padua to become a student of one of the most famous and oldest universities in Europe. Graduating meant good chances of a grand career. When he began his studies, Zamoyski was just 19 years old, but despite his young age he already had a vision for his future.

At this time the University of Padua was one of the most highly regarded universities. Many Poles had studied there before Zamoyski, including Klemens Janicki, Łukasz Górnicki, Jan Kochanowski, and Nicolaus Copernicus. Classes at the Paduan *Alma Mater* were taught by the best professors of the time, to mention Francesco Robortello, an Aristotle expert and researcher, commentator of his *Poetics*, eminent teacher of philosophy and rhetoric, and Carlo Sigonio (Sigonius), a leading expert on Roman law, commentator of Cicero, participant in a famous literary and academic dispute with Robortello. Padua was an extraordinary place, steeped in an atmosphere of curiosity and passion about Antiquity. It was the birthplace of many leading Renaissance ideas, it was where Cicero's letters discovered for posterity were avidly studied and his works were keenly discussed. Writing like Cicero, speaking like Cicero, and even suffering like Cicero – these were topics of many a University discussion and debate.

The young Zamoyski wanted to take the best possible advantage of what the University had to offer. That is why, even though he joined the Faculty of Law and Liberal Arts – a course that combined philology, theology, natural science, philosophy, and medicine, he enjoyed attending lectures by other

teachers. During his time there, he studied under the guidance of the greatest professors of his century. He attended the lectures of Carlo Sigonio, who became one of his closest friends and a mentor during his stay in Padua. The professor supported him with his knowledge and experience. He also helped his student with the editing of the work *De senatu Romano libri II*. In it, Zamoyski described the office of senator, its functions, structure, tasks and duties.

The choice of topic was not random. On the one hand, it could seem the young man was simply inspired by Sigonius' work *De antiquo iure civium Romanorum libri II*. However, the motivation for his own writing could have come from another source. The thing is, Zamoyski knew that while working on his volumes he could acquire knowledge which would be useful in future, for the development of his political career in Poland. His next objective in writing the book was to produce a textbook for those who would govern Poland in future. The guidelines it contained were addressed to all those wanting to work for the Commonwealth and turn it into a strong and efficient state. In part one of his work Zamoyski gives in-depth consideration to the



F.L. Goltz, *Façade of the University building at Padua at the beginning of the seventeenth century*, Wikimedia Commons.

tasks and duties of a senator; in part two he discusses the senate – its work, importance and authority. Working on the volume, Zamoyski made liberal use of ancient sources as well as referring to the work and legal experience of his master, Siganus. Zamoyski's work was considered one of the first treatises on the Roman senate produced with proper care and knowledge of sources.<sup>12</sup> To us reading such opinions many centuries later, this means the author was an expert on Antiquity and a true Renaissance humanist.

Zamoyski's talents also manifested themselves in the posts he filled at the University and for which he was remembered and appreciated. Soon after arriving in Padua, he was elected “councillor of the Polish nationality”<sup>13</sup>. This meant he represented all Poles before the University authorities. Some time later he was also appointed rector of law students. Assuming this extremely responsible office, he was just 21 years old. Giving this position to such a young man, and a foreigner, meant he not only had extensive legal knowledge but in particular had good interpersonal skills, an ability to build relationships and, above all, showed responsibility for his tasks. Commemorative plaques at the University of Padua contain words of praise for Zamoyski: *rectori meritissimo [to the most deserving rector]*.

In Padua, Zamoyski became fascinated with the works and achievements of ancient authors, especially Aristotle and Cicero. He took part in many academic debates, gaining experience as an orator and writer. When he founded the Academy in Zamość, he wanted it to be as similar to Padua's University as possible. That is why the curriculum of this school featured subjects, works, and authors that Zamoyski had enthusiastically learned, read, and studied in his youth.

When he returned to Poland with a doctorate *utriusque iuris* [of both laws], with a letter and a recommendation to King Sigismund II Augustus, he was 23 years old – the same age as today's University graduates facing further decisions regarding their future. As a mature man, Zamoyski used to say: *Patavium virum me fecit* [Padua made me a man].

<sup>12</sup> Stanisław Łempicki, op. cit., p. 363.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 354.



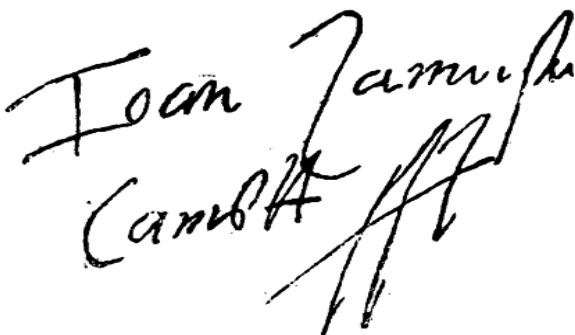
Portrait of Hetman Jan Zamoyski (author unknown, probably mid-sixteenth century), Wikimedia Commons.

# Jan Zamoyski – the Polish *Il Cortegiano*

Culture as it developed in Europe in Jan Zamoyski's times had its origins in Italy which was considered the mainstay of Antiquity. This was a time of returning to the source – a time when Europe noticed the world around it and "opened its eyes wide to the beauty of nature".<sup>14</sup> New ideas from Italy reached Poland as well, arousing the interest of many young Poles. A desire to learn about new phenomena, see the world, and get ready to serve their country led young enthusiasts like Jan Zamoyski to foreign Universities, especially to Italy. Looking almost five hundred years later from our own viewpoint – that of a high school student – at the young student of the Paduan *Alma Mater* who was the same age, it is worth asking ourselves what message Jan Zamoyski's attitude and aspirations bring us today.

In 1559, as a 19-year-old young aristocrat full of enthusiasm for learning, Zamoyski arrived in Padua to start studying law. In a way, his meteoric career at the University signalled and reflected his subsequent path. The young Pole's erudition and his talent for winning people over enabled him to climb the ladder of a University career very quickly and to strike up important acquaintances and friendships. Well-liked by all, he was appointed rector of law students – at the age of 21. He filled this post until the end of his education, fulfilling his duties with dedication. Throughout his stay in Padua, he studied different fields, from strict humanities all the way to medical science. From among the *studia humaniora* – Humanities – popular at the time, Zamoyski focused on Latin and Greek philology, philosophy, and especially law. Under the guidance of Siginus, the greatest humanist of the Renaissance, he wrote and published his first publication, *De senatu Romano libri II*, in Latin. In it, he considered issues that in times to come would be very useful to the future statesman. The publication's discussion of the Roman senate,

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 581.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Zamoyski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jan" at the top and "Zamoyski" below it, separated by a diagonal stroke.

Hetman Jan Zamoyski's Autograph, Wikimedia Commons.

the political system of the Roman republic and its institutions, was not just a manifestation of the writer's extraordinary erudition and how well-read he was. It also indicated the civic attitude of this young Pole and future statesman.

Having completed his education in 1565, Jan Zamoyski left for Poland with a letter of recommendation to Polish King Sigismund II Augustus from the Venetian Senate, confirming his achievements and talents.<sup>15</sup> After spending several years there, he was leaving friendly Padua and returning to his native country with the clear intention of using his acquired knowledge and skills in work for the public good.

At the royal court he was given the important task of organizing the Crown Treasury Archive. He spent two years arranging and copying documents, and thus improving his knowledge of Poland's history. An education obtained in Padua and experience in the work of a secretary, staying at the royal court – this is the image of the ideal courtier that was popular during the Renaissance mainly thanks to a work widely read at the time, i.e. Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*. Almost the same age as Zamoyski, and also educated at the University of Padua, writer Łukasz Górnicki responded to Castiglione's work with his own volume, *Dworzanin polski* [*The Polish Courtier*], written in 1566.

And Zamoyski fits in perfectly with the portrait painted by Górnicki. Educated at a superb University, he spoke several languages and was fluent

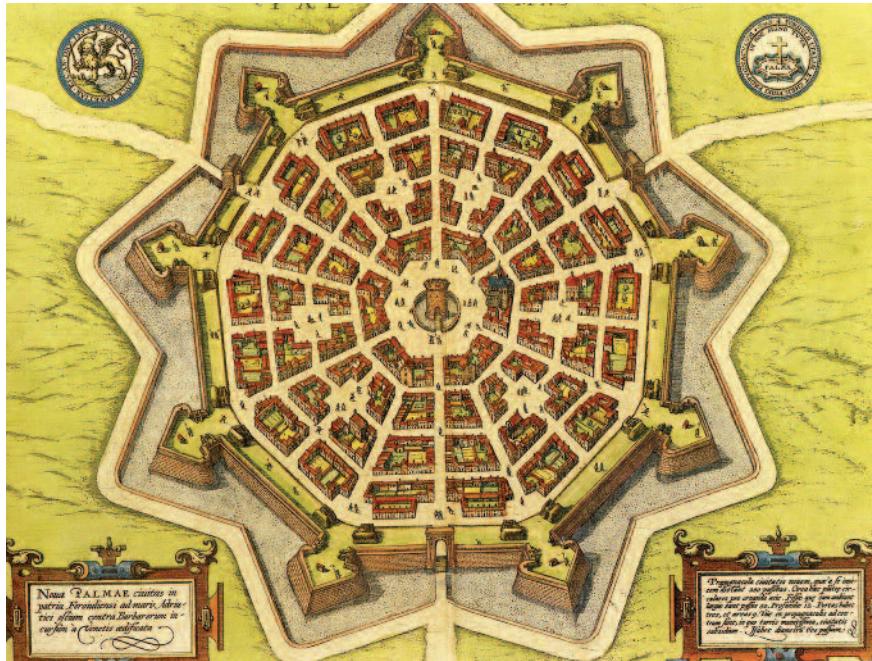
<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 367.

in Latin and Classical Greek. He displayed oratory skills, an ability to conduct conversations, and the capacity to adjust their topic and style to his interlocutor. The ideal of a courtier presented in Górnicki's work is made complete by his noble background and his personality traits. A courtier should come from a noble family, and consequently his manners should be impeccable. He is polite, tactful, versatile, and also eloquent enough to know how to behave in any situation. One of the most important things to be considered when portraying a courtier is his attitude towards his service and his duties. A courtier is faithful and devoted to the king, serves him honestly, but is also a friend who does not flatter but leads him to virtue.<sup>16</sup>

This is the model with which we compare Jan Zamoyski, who in the course of his life travelled an extraordinary path of service at court and in diplomacy for three kings of Poland: Sigismund II Augustus, Stephen Báthory, and Sigismund III Vasa. This path was crowned with his appointment to the important and honorary office of Great Crown Hetman and Grand Chancellor. His fluency in foreign languages enabled Zamoyski to fulfil his diplomatic duties on many royal missions with admirable professionalism and refinement. The ability to build good relations with others, open-mindedness but also industriousness and the tact with which he behaved in every situation must have been contributing factors for King Báthory to make him his personal trusted adviser. Broad horizons, open-mindedness, a constant drive for acquiring knowledge undoubtedly made him one of the most versatile courtiers not only in Poland but also in Europe. After returning from Padua, Zamoyski maintained an animated correspondence with Paduan professors and mentors as well as many eminent figures in Europe at the time.

One could say the education he obtained in Padua and civic virtue helped Zamoyski not only to achieve fame, honours, wealth, and to be a model courtier. When we look today at Zamoyski's aspirations, efforts, and work, we can see that all the skills and experience he gained at the University and the royal court were, above all, directed towards service for the public good.

<sup>16</sup> Łukasz Górnicki, *Dworzanin polski*, vol. I, edition based on the text published in 1888 and 1954, the latter elaborated by Roman Pollak, at: <https://literat.ug.edu.pl/dworan/index.htm> (accessed April 5, 2019).



Palmanova on a drawing from the atlas (1572–1617) by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, Wikimedia Commons.



Zamość on a drawing from the atlas (1572–1617) by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg, Wikimedia Commons.

# Zamość – *Civitas sancta – La città ideale*

The discovery of Vitruvius' treatise *De architectura libri X* in the early fifteenth century became a stimulus for a new approach to architecture and the planning of space. This extraordinary discovery also caused many discussions and disputes over planning the development of cities. Many ideas for building ideal cities emerged. Architectural guidelines referred to proportions and symmetry.

The ideal city was meant to be an image of an orderly reality and an expression of dreams of the ideal shape. A description could be found in Book III of Vitruvius' treatise, in his thoughts on the perfect proportions of the human body: "Namque non potest aedis ulla sine symmetria atque proportione rationem habere compositionis, nisi uti ad hominis bene figurati membrorum habuerit exactam rationem" (III 1.1) / "[...] without symmetry and proportion there can be no principles in the design of any temple; that is, if there is no precise relation between its members, as in the case of those of a well shaped man".<sup>17</sup>

Leonardo da Vinci illustrated this idea in his drawing of the Vitruvian Man which aimed to show that the ideal proportions of the human body were the source of architectural order. The study of Vitruvius' treatise inspired many architects, artists, and builders to produce plans of cities with ideal proportions. The example to follow was Sforzinda, a city designed by famous Renaissance architect Filarete for Francesco Sforza. Although it was never built, it remained in existence as a dream – a city-idea awaiting fulfilment. Palmanova, a city in north-eastern Italy designed by Vincenzo Scamozzi, bears clear references to the idea and vision of Sforzinda. Built in the shape of a nine-pointed star, it has existed almost unchanged to this day. Brielle is a Dutch ideal city that likewise references those dreams of Sforzinda. Leonardo da Vinci also worked on a design for an unusual two-level city.

<sup>17</sup> Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, transl. Morris Hickey Morgan, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960, online at:  
<https://www.math.dartmouth.edu/~matc/math5.geometry/unit7/unit7.html>



Palmanova, phot. Katarzyna Marciniak (2019).



Great Marketplace in Zamość, phot. Centymetr (2011), Wikimedia Commons.

Among many fields and disciplines he found interesting, the young Jan Zamoyski, who started University when he was our age, turned especially to *studia humaniora*.<sup>18</sup> Today we can see that Zamoyski's greatest achievement as a builder and founder was the realization of an extraordinary dream: the ideal city, a dream from the time of his Paduan studies, taken from ancient writings – from Plato and Vitruvius. You could say that thanks to Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, the idea of the city of the future materialized for the first time in Poland in the extraordinary design of Zamość.

To carry out the project, Zamoyski commissioned Italian architect Bernardo Morando who, you could say, devoted his whole life to completing this extraordinary undertaking. In his design he made a noticeable reference to Sforzinda – a city shaped like a star with a centrally positioned marketplace and symmetrically arranged streets. In accordance with the Vitruvian idea, the layout of Zamość was meant to reflect the proportions of the human body: the head was the palace of the founder and head of the Zamoyski family, the spine – Grodzka Street, and the heart was the Town Hall located in the Great Marketplace – a square-shaped space in the centre of the city, invoking the tradition of the ancient public square: the forum. Near the Town Hall was the Cathedral, symbol of *civitas Dei*.

True to the principle of ideal proportions, the Cathedral mirrors the city's urban plan, only fifteen times smaller. Together with the Academy – a centre of learning, they form the city's lungs and heart. To the sides of the Great Marketplace, which was the city's belly, there were two smaller markets – the arms and shoulders of the urban body: the Salt Market and the Water Market, which were intended for merchants and artisans. The defensive bastions are the legs of the whole urban body. The city buildings comprised very beautiful Renaissance tenements situated around the large marketplace and lining the streets. All the houses were to be built according to a template, because Zamoyski wanted the city to look aesthetically pleasing – he did not want to see any squalid and neglected houses in it.

<sup>18</sup> *Studia humaniora* – studies on ancient culture, chiefly Greek and Roman, especially popular in the fifteenth century.

The city could be entered by three gates: the Lvov Gate from the South, the Szczebrzeszyn Gate from the West, and the Lublin Gate from the North. The Commonwealth's most important transport and trade routes ran through them. This was extremely important for the city, which very quickly became a major craft and trade centre. The Lublin Gate is the oldest and most famous of the gates. It symbolized a number of ideas, the most valuable was that of "Mother Poland-Polonia". It was designed in the form of a triumphal arch leading into the city. Over the arch's colonnade was a sculpture – a personification of Poland with an inscription devised by Zamoyski: *Salve mater Polonia! Tu non solum moenibus sed etiam profusione vitae nobis defendenda es. O sidus nobilitatis et libertatis Polonia salve!*<sup>19</sup>

Initially the foundation charter allowed only Catholics to settle in the city, but more and more often, due to the proximity of major trading routes, people of other religions and nationalities arrived in the area. Zamoyski issued permission for people from different denominations and of various descent to settle in the city. Residents included Greeks, Jews, Italians, Scots, and Armenians who left behind the Great Marketplace's most beautiful tenements.

Today the city of Zamość is mentioned the most often as an example of the greatest achievements of European heritage and the world's most valuable historical complex. In 1992 Zamoyski's great legacy was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List. To us, who most often visit this city during school trips, Zamość is not just a complex of unique monuments of architecture and art, it is also proof of the responsible civic attitude of a man who dedicated effort and financial resources to the public good. The small Padua of the North – as Zamość is very often called – remains a testimony to education, a Renaissance outlook on the world and an example of civic virtue.

<sup>19</sup> Inscription on the Lublin Gate: *Hail mother Poland! Thou shouldst be defended not by ramparts alone, but also by the sacrifice of life. O star of nobility and freedom, hail!* (translated into English from O.J.'s Polish translation).

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# An Old Remedy for New Ills, or about the Renewal of the Republic according to Jan Zamoyski's *De senatu Romano libri II*

The central figure of our project is Jan Zamoyski, royal secretary and later Crown Chancellor during the reigns of kings Sigismund II Augustus, Stephen Báthory, and Sigismund III Vasa. What aroused our interest in this particular person was his life as a courtier and his political and social activity. Courtly intrigues, coalitions and alliances with other noblemen – these are the things that show clearly what a colourful character Zamoyski was. He took part in three royal elections, and his candidates always won the throne. This proves just how important a personage this sovereign magnate was in Polish politics.

Zamoyski was also an able speaker and an excellent writer. It was this activity that ultimately helped us refine the composition of a project which we tried to base not only on works by contemporary historians, but also on sources from the era in question. A special place among these goes to *De senatu Romano libri II* [Treatise on the Roman Senate in Two Books], in which Zamoyski used the figure of the political system of ancient Rome to express his ideas on the renewal of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Contrary to Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski's *De Republica emendanda* [On Amending the Commonwealth], the Crown Chancellor's work is not widely known.

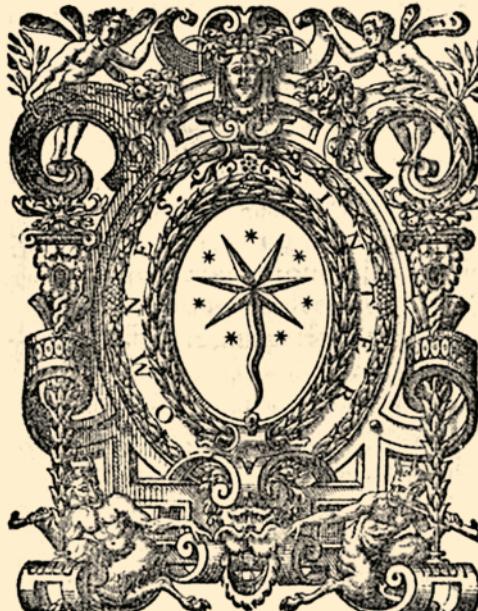
That is precisely why we took up the challenge of looking at the person of Zamoyski from a different angle, not necessarily the viewpoint we read about in textbooks. We want to present him as a thinker who combined ancient models typical of his times with an innovative approach to Polish culture and politics. We also want to bring this colourful personality to life, and to identify his legacy in the modern world.



Jan Szwankowski, *Portrait of Hetman Jan Zamoyski* (before 1602),  
Wikimedia Commons.

IOANNIS SARII  
ZAMOSCII  
DE SENATV ROMANO  
LIBRI DVO.

Index auctorum, & rerum memorabilium.



CVM PRIVILEGIO.

Venetiis, apud Iordanum Zileatum. M. D. LXIII.

Jan Zamoyski, *De senatu Romano libri II* (1563), cover, Books Google.



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**Supervisor of the project at school:** Anna Wojciechowska –  
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# Stanisław Kostka Potocki: The Taste of Beautiful Things

Wilanów is a special place. It was once the residence of King John III Sobieski – a splendid monarch, a European fascinated with literature, learning, the arts, a patron of artists, admirer of Virgil's *Georgics*. A hundred years later it became the home of a Polish nobleman, citizen, patriot, reformer who shared Sobieski's passion for the arts and culture. They were both great friends of artists. Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1755–1821) lived in extremely tough times, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When people in Poland were doing their best to preserve national memory, he decided to revive Wilanów by opening a public art collection in the royal palace. His dream came true in 1805.

After Potocki's death, politician and writer Stanisław Staszic said that "He wanted to instil in the nation a desire to develop the arts of their age, he wanted to spread a taste for beautiful things, and in young Polish people – to enrich developing minds with feeling for all that is beautiful, genuine, and great, in sciences and arts as well as nature and morals".<sup>20</sup> Kostka Potocki was one of the most enlightened citizens of his time. There are many reasons he deserves to be remembered.

With this year's project, second-year students of the Polish-Classical Profile Class at Mikołaj Rej XI High School worked to restore remembrance of Potocki, to some extent inspired by ancient biographical literature. Upon closer acquaintance he turned out to have been an extremely inspirational person, with an affinity to ourselves also because of his fondness for Antiquity. We have other connections to the Museum of King John III in Wilanów as well. For several years, thanks to the hospitality of the Museum management, we were able to organize the finals of our oratory contest there. Today we have the opportunity to be involved in the Museum's seminars and discussions aimed at developing the Museum's educational programme in the spirit of Classical culture.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the biographical note on Stanisław Kostka Potocki by Barbara Grochulska in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, here quoted after: Krzysztof Chmielewski, Jarosław Krawczyk, *Wilanowski widnokrąg. Szkice o pałacu i sztuce europejskiej*, Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2010, p. 144.



Jacques-Louis David, *Equestrian Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* (1781),  
Wilanów Palace Museum, Wikimedia Commons.

# Stanisław Kostka Potocki

Stanisław Kostka Potocki, son of Eustachy Potocki and Marianna née Kątska, Polish. Politician, orator, member of parliament, senator, minister, reformer, educationalist, soldier, general. Collector, Antiquity enthusiast, historian of culture, translator. Before we say more about him as a person and his achievements, we feel it is necessary to mention that he was not a typical man for his time. We want to show Potocki's versatility, his extraordinary level of public activity, and the diversity of his interests. The values he was guided by, his many travels, political activity, and his devotion to his family as well as his country deserve remembrance. We will portray someone who was a great man of his times.



Anton Graff (1736–1813), *Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* (1785),  
phot. by BurgererSF, Wikimedia Commons.



Alexander Varnek (1782–1843), *Jan Potocki with the Pyramids* (after 1810), Wilanów Palace Museum, Wikimedia Commons.

# Potocki Family of the Pilawa Coat of Arms

Stanisław Kostka Potocki came from a noble family that bore the Pilawa coat of arms. He was the son of Eustachy Potocki and Marianna née Kątska, who both died in 1768 when Stanisław was 13 years old. He had two sisters and four brothers.

From the fifteenth century, the Potocki family was one of the largest and most distinguished magnate families in Poland. They held high offices and bore honourable titles as voivodes, marshals, and hetmans. However, the family played an especially important role in the eighteenth century. Ignacy Potocki, Stanisław's brother, distinguished himself as a writer and reformer, a member of the Commission of National Education that developed an organizational model for primary and secondary schools. Ignacy was the leader of a patriotic party and co-authored the Constitution of 3 May 1791. Within the Potocki family we also find an extremely colourful figure: traveller, polyglot, and literary writer Jan, who travelled the world from Egypt to the Caucasus; he stayed in China as a diplomat, but is best-known as the author of the *mise en abyme* novel *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa*.

In 1775 Stanisław Potocki married Aleksandra, who was from the distinguished Lubomirski family. The marriage turned out to be a well-matched and happy one. They often received support from mother-in-law Izabela Lubomirska who, like Potocki, was a great art enthusiast and collector. There were many occasions when he won Izabela Lubomirska over to his foreign travels, counting on her financial support. During a trip together, he discovered that she often gave in to a weakness greater than his own for making artistic purchases. From her mother, Aleksandra Potocka inherited a love of art. In Morysin near the Wilanów palace she established a romantic park and funded a few buildings in the style of the period, e.g. a little palace with a rotunda. After her husband died she also made sure to secure the Wilanów collection.

After marrying, the young couple lived in Olesin, a locality near Puławy which got its name in celebration of their son Aleksander, who was known as Oleś at home. The father wanted this to be a way of compensating the son for his own frequent absence from home: he was very active politically, travelled a lot, and took part in archaeological digs. The Potockis had only one child. His father's constant absence had a significant impact on Aleksander's life. The young Potocki, like his father, albeit to a lesser extent, became involved in the country's public life.



Wincenty Kasprzycki (1802–1849), *View of Morysinek near Wilanów* (1834),  
Wikimedia Commons.

## Times of Youth

Stanisław Kostka Potocki and his siblings received a proper education and support for all their talents. Stanisław was sent to the Collegium Nobilium, an excellent Warsaw school run by the Piarist order. It was opened in 1740 to educate young people to be the future elite of Polish society: good citizens with a sense of responsibility for the country's fate. The curriculum included natural sciences, history, law, exact sciences and economics, foreign languages and rhetoric. The school theatre played a major educational role. Latin was taught as well. In year five, Stanisław was sure to have learned about the history of Rome, and read and analysed Cicero's orations, texts by Caesar and Seneca, Horace's odes, and Cicero's letters.

In the following years, Stanisław Kostka Potocki began his travels across Europe. He was 17 years old. His first journey took him via Berlin to Paris, which, however, he left after a few months of studies to continue his education at the Royal Academy of Turin, where he studied military science. But he went on his Grand Tour of Europe two years later. Its route led from Lausanne through Rome, Naples, Herculaneum, Pompeii where archaeological excavations had been conducted for a few dozen years, all the way to Sicily and Malta, then back via Florence, Siena, Pisa, and Milan. Besides giving him extensive knowledge on foreign countries, this tour helped Stanisław develop considerable sensitivity to art and culture. He met many artists who were active at the time, e.g. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, an expert on Roman antiquities, and Angelika Kauffmann, a popular painter. He also became a member of the Arcadia literary academy in Rome. He studied works by ancient authors, improving his language skills at the same time. He returned to Italy many more times as an adult.

Stanisław Kostka Potocki's travels and education bore marvellous fruit in subsequent years. He was a citizen extremely committed to Polish affairs, especially education which he constantly and patiently reformed; he supported the development of science and was an active member of the Society of Friends of Science. It is also very important that he wanted to instil in the Poles the fundamental idea of belonging to Western culture, the idea of their old Mediterranean roots.



STANISŁAW POCOCKI

pożyciej 'Rejestrator, - Minister i Proces Komisarz.'

W. W. G. 1875

Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki (1875), based on a lost painting  
by Angelika Kauffmann (1741–1807), Polona, Sign. F.3820/III.

## *Pro publico bono*

Stanisław Kostka Potocki was well-known in Poland for his activities in the spirit of the Enlightenment. As a patriot and a citizen unconditionally devoted to the Commonwealth, he took part actively in the country's political life, made his homeland famous beyond its borders, and was its worthy representative. In the difficult times after the partitions, he filled various high-ranking posts under different governments, he was even Prime Minister and Minister of Education. Endowed with great charisma which helped him win over others, he was also willing to achieve compromise and showed restraint.

His service to Poland began in the Sejm. He debuted there in 1778 when, under the guidance of his elder brother Ignacy, as a deputy he delivered the first speech in his political career. He did not have military talent, despite having studied military science in Turin. On the other hand, he was probably the greatest orator of his times, people even called him the Prince of Orators.

He encouraged the people he met abroad to visit his homeland. Painter Vincenzo Brenna, a dear friend of Kostka Potocki's, let himself be persuaded to create architectural designs for some gems of the Polish Enlightenment, e.g. he decorated the ground-floor rooms of the Palace of the Commonwealth (Krasinski Palace) in Warsaw. Potocki together with Brenna made drawings for the reconstruction of the "Villa of Pliny the Younger" on the basis of a description in one of the Roman writer's letters. These sketches were used a dozen or so years ago to create a fascinating virtual reconstruction of the Villa Laurentina.

Potocki's doings, to mention active participation in underground activity and work on the Constitution of 3 May 1791, were considered treason in those days, but he was guided by fear and concern for the Commonwealth's future. His political commitment served the good of the Polish people, as evidenced by the events that accompanied the sessions of the

Four-Year Sejm. He did not shirk his duty to the state, even if he was given tasks that left him unconvinced or for which he did not have a penchant. He accepted the post of artillery general, which resulted in the patriots' vigorous activity, before the Constitution was enacted in Warsaw on May 3, 1791. Allegedly on the day it was proclaimed, he was giving out firearms to the Warsaw townspeople. In his world – and he was a nobleman through and through – this was almost revolutionary action. Despite his lack of military experience, he also took part in the war against Russia to defend the Polish Constitution.



Vicenzo Brenna (1747–1820), *Reconstruction of Villa Laurentiana* (a villa of Pliny the Younger, plafond: *Triumph of Amor*, 1777–1778), Polona, Sign. R.5030.

# Potocki – Enlightenment Man

The idea by which Stanisław Kostka Potocki was always motivated was to make changes around him and improve the reality. He has found a place on the pages of history mainly thanks to his contribution to culture, the arts, and education. He drew inspiration from his foreign travels, where he carefully observed other societies and the organization of public life. It was exactly such experience that enabled Kostka Potocki as a representative of the Enlightenment movement to become a pioneer of many disciplines of learning hitherto unknown in Poland, including archaeology and art history.

Potocki was especially happy to hold offices that allowed him to join in activities serving education. In 1807, after the Duchy of Warsaw was established, he began to organize education anew with substantial enthusiasm. First he was President of the Chamber of Education, then Director of National Education in 1810 and, finally, after the Congress of Vienna and the formation of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, he became involved in developing elementary education and setting up the University of Warsaw. Despite constant political turmoil, he took part actively in public life the whole time as a deputy to the Sejm and co-author of the Constitution of 3 May 1791.

He showed great commitment and a desire to develop Polish culture when he established the John III Sobieski Museum in Wilanów Palace, which today is one of the better organized museum centres in Poland, boasting a rich art collection. However, it was not always so. When Izabela Lubomirska transferred the residence to her daughter and son-in-law – Potocki, the Palace was neglected. Thus, the art collector decided not only to thoroughly restore the property, but also to found an art museum there, one that would be open to people of all estates. The actions and initiatives he undertook testify to Potocki's great dedication to this project. He was restoring Wilanów to its former glory both out of enormous respect for the legacy of that place and because he was driven by a desire to see it develop and flourish. Potocki also wanted Polish society to have direct access to mementos of

John III Sobieski, which – as the future was to show – was very important in the long years separating the Poles from independence, which they finally regained in 1918.

The remodelling encompassed the Palace's residential part, its utility spaces, and the park. Potocki wanted to preserve the historical fabric, he did not convert the Palace according to his own ideas. He expanded the art collection started by King John Sobieski, adding many treasures of European painting, collections of ancient vases, and oriental handicraft items. It is worth noting that works by the greatest artists were brought to Wilanów, to mention Lucas Cranach the Elder, Peter Paul Rubens, and Jacques-Louis David whose *Equestrian Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* (1781, see above) is his only work in Polish collections, which unquestionably made and continues to make the Wilanów Museum a unique place. When the Museum was finally opened in 1805, Potocki wrote the first entry in a specially prepared register.

In the work he undertook for the benefit of the residence and adjacent land, he did not limit himself only to activity related to art and museology. It needs mentioning that, sensing a need to improve the living conditions of peasants living in the village, he designed new homesteads that were meant to ensure basic hygiene and respond to the residents' living and aesthetic needs.

Looking at Stanisław Kostka Potocki's biography, we can see that a passive stance was definitely alien to him. Drawing on models from the world of his times, this learned man was able not only to develop his views and acquire enormous knowledge but also, more importantly, to use the experience he gained on the way for the benefit of his own country.

# Art, Collecting, and Literature

Stanisław Kostka Potocki (like his brothers) was characterized by a great sensitivity to art. This fondness was born when he was young, and it was all thanks to his travels to Italy, France, the German states, and Switzerland, where he could enjoy it at every step. He greatly admired Antiquity, and especially loved Ancient Greece. During this period he met many artists of the time, among them Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Angelika Kauffmann, and Vincenzo Brenna, and became a member of the Arcadia literary academy in Rome. He avidly read ancient works, improving his language skills. Thanks to close acquaintances with Italian artists, he persuaded Brenna to come to Poland, and supported him during his stay in Warsaw.

Potocki had not only theoretical knowledge but also practice in collecting, and the skill to evaluate works of art. He placed great value on the designs of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, who had long played a major role in the dissemination of classical designs in Europe. Potocki had his own achievements in this area as well, such as his well-known drawn reconstruction of Pliny the Younger's villa (see above) – its likely appearance in garden surroundings, views of its façades and interiors as well as wall decorations.

His love affair with art began typically for his times – on a journey, first in France, at the Louvre, but it was not the French he admired the most, but ancient and Italian works. And it was to Italy that he had ties his whole life. He considered it a kind of refuge where he could always go and devote himself completely to art. His enthusiasm for collecting was born there, the first items he collected being ancient vases. Any marble objects, ceramics, and paintings Potocki bought, he dispatched from Italy to Wilanów where, together with his wife, he opened Poland's first public museum in 1805 (see above).

He began his archaeological activity on his own initiative in Italy, in Noli, and the digs conducted there were a source of great joy and excitement for him. In one letter to his wife he wrote:



Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto, 1721–1780), *Wilanów Palace as Seen from North-East* (1777), phot. by www.kobidz.pl, Wilanów Palace Museum, Wikimedia Commons.



The Gallery Study with paintings from the Stanisław Kostka Potocki collection, Wilanów Palace Museum, phot. by Dennis Jarvis, Wikimedia Commons.

“I am returning from Noli, where the excavation of Etruscan vases continues, I worked on my own account, fate was kind to me, I excavated the most interesting things in the world, I found the greatest joy in removing them with my own hands from the tomb where they had been resting for at least two thousand years”.<sup>21</sup>

With time, Potocki gained the reputation of an expert on Etruscan vases and even considered establishing a business manufacturing vases modelled on them.

Kostka Potocki assigned important educational and social tasks to culture, therefore, like his brother Ignacy, he tried his hand at literature. He was knowledgeable about it, so he was aware of the inadequacy of his poetic talent. Nevertheless, he wrote short and long poems in which he outlined his political views, but it was to art that he dedicated his major and significant works, and especially one which was published in 1815, fifty years after the publication in Europe of the ground-breaking *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* [*History of the Art of Antiquity*] by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, considered the father of contemporary archaeology and art history. Kostka Potocki published a critical adaptation written with Polish readers in mind. He left out some fragments of the original and added some passages he thought were lacking. Potocki’s *O sztuce u dawnych, czyli Winckelman Polski* [*On the Art of the Ancients, or Polish Winckelmann*] was the first systematic lecture on art history in Polish, written according to the new concept of research on ancient art.

<sup>21</sup> Fragment of a letter from Stanisław Kostka Potocki to his wife (no date, between July 1785 and May 1786), quoted after: Bożena Grochala (ed.), *Grand Tour. Narodziny kolekcji Stanisława Kostki Potockiego*, Warszawa: Muzeum Pałac w Wilanowie, 2006, p. 152.

# Curiosity about the World

Stanisław Kostka Potocki felt great curiosity about the world, and perhaps the tours he went on failed to fully satisfy it. Already from his first trip, he returned to Poland with a great love of ancient and Italian art, but we can also find works from the Far East in Potocki's collection. The family must have talked a lot about the travels of his relative Jan Potocki, almost his peer, who led the colourful life of an adventurer, e.g. fighting with pirates in the Mediterranean, going all the way to the Caucasus and China, and describing it all in successive accounts.

Stanisław led what was a serene life in those times, interspersed with frequent trips around Europe. His first journey was to the military academy in Turin. The time he spent in Italy, which included trips to France, Switzerland, and seeing the German states, had a major impact on the young Potocki's development, mainly as regards the arts, taste, and style. He had barely discovered his love of art, chiefly ancient, when he returned to Poland and married Aleksandra Lubomirska. Soon after, together with his wife and her sister, he went to Italy where he continued to make the acquaintance of Italian artists. As we can see, the first trip served the purpose of supplementing his education, subsequent ones were official in character, to do with research and collecting, finally they were made for health reasons.

Potocki and his family belonged to the anti-royal opposition fighting against King Stanisław August Poniatowski. One of his trips took him to Vienna to present the opposition's stand. Upon returning, he devoted himself to family life as well as art and collecting. His next journey to Italy was a period when his collecting truly flourished.

He returned to the Commonwealth to take part in parliamentary elections and then set off abroad again, this time to France and England. This journey – like all the others – lasted many months and was an opportunity to get to know people linked to culture and the arts. Yet again, Potocki was not enraptured with French art, so he went to Britain where, among other things, he visited libraries and universities, familiarizing himself with the country's culture and politics.

We have ample materials enabling us to judge how those travels proceeded. It was the custom of the time when travelling to write many letters to relatives and friends, take detailed notes, and young people on their Grand Tour were often obliged to keep a travel diary. It is hard to imagine today, but the itinerary Potocki drew up for his son Aleksander encompassed absolutely all the monuments of every city included in the programme as well as its environs, and the more important sites were visited multiple times.

These travels taught Stanisław Kostka Potocki a great deal. They enabled him to meet many eminent people, he was able to communicate in many languages, he found his life's passion: a love of art as well as art collecting.



Sundial of Wilanów Palace, phot. Andrzej Barabasz (Chepry, 2004),  
Wikimedia Commons.



Jan Matejko (1838–1893), *Constitution of 3 May 1791* (1891), fragment,  
Wikimedia Commons.

## Potocki – *homo politicus*

Stanisław Kostka Potocki lived during the reigns of the last two kings of Poland: Augustus III the Saxon and Stanisław August Poniatowski. He witnessed the end of the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as an event unprecedented in the modern history of Europe took place before his eyes: the gradual partitioning of Poland, carried out in 1772, 1793, and 1795. Russia, Prussia, and Austria, which split the territory among them, decided that chaos and anarchy were disastrous and harmful for the country. True enough, the Commonwealth reconciled the interests of Poland and Lithuania with difficulty, unable to carry out necessary reforms; it remained an elective monarchy; the Sejm's work was paralysed by the *liberum veto*, as any deputy calling upon it could end the Sejm session and nullify any legislation passed; there was no central treasury; the army was too small for the country's needs.

In the years after the partitions, there were many Poles who supported political and social reforms, to mention Tadeusz Kościuszko who fought for America's freedom as an officer and a general. In Poland he is remembered mainly as the leader of an uprising during which, among other things, he adopted a law abolishing serfdom. Other reformers included Stanisław Małachowski and Hugo Kołłątaj, active participants in the Four-Year Sejm whose deliberations ended with the passage of Constitution of 3 May 1791 – the first in Europe and the second in the world. Poland was to be transformed into a constitutional monarchy, royal power was to be hereditary, the life of peasants easier, the liberties of burghers made equal with the gentry – greater. The Assembly of Friends of the Government Constitution was established to develop the detailed provisions. One of the founders was Stanisław Kostka Potocki.

Unfortunately the next Sejm, which was held in Grodno – in the presence of Cossacks and at the point of Russian guns, one of the most tragic assemblies in Poland's history – pronounced the decisions of the Four-Year Sejm invalid. Neither Kościuszko's Manifesto nor the Constitution of 3 May 1791 came into effect. Four years later – during which time the third partition of Poland took place – King Stanisław August Poniatowski abdicated.

Hope that the Polish people would regain their freedom emerged in Napoleonic times. Poles joined the ranks of the French army, counting on Bonaparte to restore Poland. In fact, in 1807 he established the Duchy of Warsaw, but it was completely subordinated to him. Stanisław Kostka Potocki was appointed President of the Council of Ministers.

The fate of the Duchy and the Polish people was determined for long years by the Congress of Vienna which began just after Napoleon's defeat. That was when the Kingdom of Poland, called the "Congress Kingdom", was established. Stanisław Kostka Potocki became head of the Commission on Religion and Public Enlightenment and, as minister, handled education. It was he, together with writer and activist Stanisław Staszic, who presented Russian Tsar Alexander with plans for the Royal University of Warsaw, which was established in 1816. Other educational institutions were set up as well, and thousands of primary schools were opened. As we can see, enlightenment and education were the Polish reformers' focus of attention. In 1820, however, a conflict with the Church broke out, for the Church was opposed to the development of secular education under the patronage of the state. Kostka Potocki managed to finish an anticlerical satire entitled *Podróż do Ciernogrodu* [Journey to Dunceville] when he was forced to resign from office. He died a year later.



*Eagle above the Main Gate of University of Warsaw*, phot. by Clicgauche, Wikimedia Commons.

## *Vir bonus et honestus*

Stanisław Kostka Potocki displayed great simplicity in his relations with other people. As a husband he was faithful, as a father he was caring, he was sometimes moody, but much more often his conduct was calm and he stifled his innate hot-headedness. In public matters he showed magnanimity, and handling his estate and charity work he was a thrifty and meticulous manager.

As a committed activist he had specific, well-defined views on political, social, and geopolitical issues. However, he was not characterized by the craftiness or duplicity frequently present in politicians, but by moderation and reason as well as the ability to achieve compromise. Moreover, he knew very well how to address people to win them over to his arguments. These were the fruits of his training in rhetoric – he was regarded as an excellent speaker.

His family had a negative attitude towards the activity of Poland's last king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, but Potocki did not share their opinion. He did not blindly follow the king, he did not support only him. In his choices he was guided solely by the good of the country. Debuting as a deputy in the Sejm, when he was included in a committee tasked with evaluating the work of the Permanent Council (the government appointed by Tsarina Catherine after the third partition of Poland), he judged the Council's activity objectively and fairly, not allowing the opinions of his family or even the king to affect his own. However, being a man devoted to his family as strongly as he was to his country, he did not abandon his kin and supported their activities. He always remained true to his views.

Stanisław Kostka Potocki contributed greatly to the success of efforts at reform and won a permanent place in the patriotic legend. For the good of his homeland, he persevered in worse times as well, patiently bearing deserved criticism. He was one of the most honest and straightforward political activists of the time.



Józef Maria Grassi (1757–1838), *Portrait of Stanisław Kostka Potocki* (1792),  
phot. by [www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl), Wikimedia Commons.

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# *De libertate Rei Publicae meriti...*

## Krystyna Skarbek and Zdzisław Lubomirski in the Service of a Sovereign Republic

Thousands of Poles fought and perished for the independence of the Republic. The idea of a free country for many people constituted the sense and the goal of their lives, and the sacrifice they made in the name of independence was often their own life. The dreams of Poles about a free and independent Republic met with success in 1918, and the end of war coincided with the beginning of the difficult process of rebuilding the structure of Polish statehood. It was a hard time but also joyful and filled with the hope of a better future and life in the liberated country.

The project of the reconstruction of the Polish state could not have flourished without the outstanding individuals, designers and architects of the new order, certainly, including Zdzisław Lubomirski, today not as clearly remembered. An equally important role in the service of the country played Krystyna Skarbek, called “the evening star of Europe”, who lived in the most difficult time for Europe, the World War II. She was an intelligence agent, a very effective one; she inspired Ian Fleming – the creator of the famous Agent 007 and was the prototype of woman-spy in this highly popular series about the adventures of James Bond.

The project *De libertate Rei Publicae meriti... Krystyna Skarbek and Zdzisław Lubomirski in the Service of a Sovereign Republic*, implemented by students of Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Cracow, constitutes a homage to heroes of the fight for Polish freedom and independence. It is an attempt to bring to the attention of the young generation, the dreams and ideas that led our ancestors to fight and often sacrifice their whole lives to

## Janusz Ryba

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their country. Today, we remember only the most outstanding figures and certain symbols, but the thousands of other heroes become for the successive generations, gradually, more anonymous. Hence, the idea, inspired by the ancient tradition of describing the lives of famous people, to reach for the biographies of Zdzisław Lubomirski and Krystyna Skarbek whose lives and service to the state fully corresponded to the Latin maxim *SALUS REI PUBLICAE SUPREMA LEX*.



Zdzisław Lubomirski (before 1919),  
Wikimedia Commons.



Krystyna Skarbek,  
Wikimedia Commons.

# The Theory of the Great Regency, or a Piece on Zdzisław Lubomirski

Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski – also referred to as the Prince Regent – was a figure of key importance for Polish independence politics. Although traditionally the name of Father of Polish Independence usually goes to Józef Piłsudski, Zdzisław Lubomirski could aspire to this glorious name as well. Therefore it is worth introducing the person of Prince Lubomirski, which we are doing in the present text.

## Family and Social Life

Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski was born on April 4, 1865 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, in the well-known and respected Lubomirski landowner family of the Szreniawa coat of arms without a Cross, as the child of Jan Tadeusz Lubomirski and Maria Lubomirska née Zamoyska. His father was well-known for his active participation in community and political life (among other things, he was a member of the Agricultural Society in the Kingdom of Poland) and was director of the National Government Department of Internal Affairs during the January Uprising. It was most probably for his activity during the insurrection of 1863 that Jan Tadeusz was sent into exile deep into Russia. The future regent's mother, Maria, was an unusually beautiful woman, brave and religious. She is recalled as a warm-hearted person, hospitable and taking good care of hearth and home on the Lubomirski estate in Mała Wieś.<sup>22</sup>

The future regent's parents were married on June 24, 1863 in Warsaw. Jan Tadeusz was arrested soon afterwards and disciplinarily exiled deep into the partitioning power. Although she knew no Russian language or customs, Maria decided to follow her husband. Not sure where her beloved was being taken, she did not get to him until several months later. The hardships

<sup>22</sup> Maria z Łubieńskich Górska, *Gdybym mniej kochała. Dziennik z lat 1889–1895*, Warszawa: Twój Styl, 1996, p. 138, cited after: Magdalena Jastrzębska, *Książę Regent. Opowieść o Zdzisławie Lubomirskim*, Dziekanów Leśny: LTW, 2018, p. 22.

of the journey were not good for a pregnant woman. She lost her unborn baby. The couple settled in Nizhny Novgorod for a time, and Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski was born there two years later. The choice of his name was not random. According to a pledge Maria and her two sisters had made, after giving birth to a son each of them was to give him the name Zdzisław in memory of their prematurely deceased father. All of them kept their promise. In 1865 Jan Tadeusz and Maria together with their infant son returned to their homeland. They settled in Mała Wieś in Mazovia, but often also stayed in a small Warsaw palace in Warecka Street. The Lubomirskis had two more sons as well as four daughters.

But let's move on to Zdzisław himself. His father wanted his son to be brought up in a patriotic, anti-Russian spirit at all costs. He forbade him to learn Russian and deliberately sent him to schools outside the Russian Empire, which was an expression not only of his anti-Russian outlook but also of his concern for his son's education. Good education was only to be had in Galicia. That is why for his son's second school after the Jesuit College in Kalksburg, Jan Tadeusz chose Cracow's famous St. Anne's Gymnasium. After graduating, the young Zdzisław started studying law at Jagiellonian University. During his time in Cracow he proved himself to be an extremely sociable fellow. At the same time, he was not at all a diligent student, which had become apparent already when he was very young – during his time at the Jesuit College, from which he was expelled.<sup>23</sup> As a student he preferred socializing to studying, which led to multiple conflicts with his father, whose personality and attitude to life were completely different. Zdzisław was a man who lived life to the full. He also proved to be extremely impulsive, loved lavish parties, and was bad at managing money.<sup>24</sup>

Young Lubomirski continued studying law at the University of Graz. In letters to his aunt he described his stay in Austria as extremely boring.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Zdzisław Morawski, *Gdzie ten dom, gdzie ten świat*, Warszawa: Twój Styl, 1997, p. 132: "He was expelled for waywardness after he threw a sugar beet at one of the cassocked professors".

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Archiwum Dzikowskie Tarnowskich*, letter from Zdzisław Lubomirski to Zofia Tarnowska née Zamoyska, May 13, 1886, Graz, cited in: Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 31.

As a young man Lubomirski became interested in hunting, and after a time it became his passion. It was also thanks to hunting that he met his future wife. In 1886–1893 he went hunting a few times at Stawiszcze, the eastern borderland estate of the Branicki family. That was when he met Maria Branicka, seven years his junior, and fell in love with her a few years later once she had grown up. Their wedding took place on September 6, 1893 at 11 o'clock in the morning at St. Alexander's Church in Warsaw.

At first Zdzisław's father was very sceptical towards his daughter-in-law. He could not come to terms with the idea that his son would be with the daughter of a great-grandson of a prominent member of the Targowica Confederation, Franciszek Ksawery Branicki, but he came to accept his son's choice quite quickly. The young couple received the little palace in Mała Wieś from Zdzisław's parents, while the Branickis gave them the Little White Palace in Frascati Street, where they lived whenever they stayed in Warsaw. The couple had three children: Julia (1894–1982), Jerzy (1896–1943), and Dorota (1904–1930).



Palace in Mała Wieś, phot. by Tombarpmw (2016), Wikimedia Commons.

After getting married, Zdzisław gave up his riotous lifestyle but did not stop socializing. He organized numerous meetings, parties as well as hunts, to which he invited the most famous landowners. Joint expeditions provided opportunities, among other things, to show off new and expensive hunting equipment. The prince was even portrayed by Wojciech Kossak, in the painting *Departure for the Hunt in Antoniny*. Before the war Lubomirski was a member – from 1891 – of the prestigious Warsaw Hunting Club. There, he met an officer of the Imperial Russian Army, Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, who was two years younger. The future Finnish national hero became friends with Maria Lubomirska. They exchanged letters in the following years. Prince Lubomirski also loved all kinds of technical innovations, including automotive ones. He became the second president of the Society of Automobile Drivers of the Kingdom of Poland (later of the Polish Automobile Club).

### Socio-political Activity

Quite some time passed before Zdzisław Lubomirski stepped onto the path of public activity. This was most probably due to the fact that his father was extremely actively involved in this area whereas, as we know, the son more often argued than agreed with him.<sup>26</sup> A major role was ultimately played by Prince Zdzisław's wife, who directed his interest towards charitable, social, and political activity.

In 1904 he became vice-president of the Warsaw Charitable Society founded at the initiative of his great-grandmother Zofia Zamoyska née Czartoryska, only to follow in his father's footsteps and become its president just four years later. He was also a sponsor of the National Education Society – an organization that promoted education in rural areas, ran a national awareness campaign, educational courses, farmers' associations, libraries as well as savings and loan associations. In his activity he also distinguished himself as curator of the Prince Edward Lubomirski Ophthalmic Institute in Warsaw which conducted quality ophthalmological research and treated poor people for free.

<sup>26</sup> *Kurier Warszawski*, No. 206, 1908, cited in: Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 85.

In 1908 he also showed himself to be an excellent organizer: he initiated the famous trip of Polish landowners to Prague to a trade and industry exhibition during which his beautiful, powerful speeches won recognition among both Poles and Czechs.<sup>27</sup> Warsaw's *Słowo* periodical wrote about him as follows:

"A lively young patriot-citizen, a winning personality, amiable with a great simplicity and frankness, with excellent, even rhetorical Polish and foreign language skills, spreading his innate tactfulness and moderation in political matters with substantial acuity, it was as if he was intended to be a guide"<sup>28</sup>.

A year later he also organized the stay of the Czechs paying a return visit to Warsaw.

With the outbreak of World War I, Zdzisław Lubomirski launched an active political life. This was also when, with the consent of the Russian governor-general, the Citizens' Committee of the City of Warsaw was formed with the aim of aiding the city's residents. It was Lubomirski who stood at its helm. It was also then, yet again, that he showed his talent for working in managerial and organizational posts. Prince Lubomirski knew how to use his high position to advantage. His intercession secured the Russians' release from prison of Zdzisław Tarnowski (arrested for being a member of the pro-Austrian Supreme National Committee in Cracow) and Franciszek Xawery Pusłowski whom a Russian court martial had sentenced to death.<sup>29</sup> In November 1914 the Polish National Committee (KNP) was formed in Warsaw, with Roman Dmowski heading the KNP Executive Committee. It leaned towards pro-Russian ideas. At that time Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski, who was a member of the Committee, believed that a united Poland would only be reborn under Russia's rule,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> "Echa i wrażenia praskie", *Słowo*, No. 210, Warszawa 1908, p. 1, cited after: Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>29</sup> Jastrzębska, op. cit., pp. 89–90.

<sup>30</sup> *Kurier Warszawski*, No. 327, 1914, cited in: Jastrzębska, op. cit., pp. 92–93.

and this idea led to the KNP proclamation of November 25, 1914 being drawn up. In it you could read: "Poles in all the districts of their great homeland have one thought, one goal – the unification of Poland and building the foundation for the nation's free development".<sup>31</sup>

In August 1915 the Russian authorities withdrawing from Warsaw turned over management of the capital city to Lubomirski. After entering the city the Germans confirmed his appointment as mayor. At this time he was still chairman of the Warsaw Citizens' Committee while also serving as president of the Central Citizens' Committee. He organized help for the injured, oversaw clean-up activities, and was involved in promoting education; among other things, in August 1915 he brought about the adoption of a resolution on obligatory elementary education. The Committee was dissolved by the Germans in September of the same year. When the Provisional Council of State was being appointed, Lubomirski refused to head it, but nevertheless did work with it, being a member of the Parliamentary and Constitutional Committee.

In October 1917, with Archbishop Aleksander Kakowski and Józef Ostrowski, Zdzisław Lubomirski was appointed a member of the Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland. This came as quite a surprise to many of his supporters, because until then he had been more of a symbol of resistance to the Germans. The Prince Regent, however, was aware that turning down this proposition would lead to further exacerbation of the conditions under occupation. Lubomirski's premise was that Poland should be built by any available means, even if it meant working with the Germans. It was on his initiative that an address was published on October 7, 1918 speaking of the necessity to form a Polish state having access to the sea. On November 10, on behalf of the Regency Council, he welcomed Józef Piłsudski, who had been released from the Magdeburg fortress, and handed over command of the army to him the next day, and the entirety of state power three days later.

<sup>31</sup> *Odezwa Komitetu Narodowego Polskiego w Warszawie*, <https://zbruc.eu/node/30046> (accessed April 5, 2019).<sup>2</sup>

## In the Face of Change

Poland regaining its independence started a time of change in Polish politics over which (whether he wanted to or not) Zdzisław Lubomirski no longer had any influence. The first cabinet of the reborn state was appointed on November 18, 1918, and three days later Józef Piłsudski took over as leader of the whole country, as the Provisional Chief of State. This was justified, if only because of the activity the Marshal Piłsudski had undertaken in the fight for independence, which had won him widespread affection. Naturally Zdzisław Lubomirski had to step down. And although he knew his time on the political scene was drawing to an end, he found inactivity and the lack of any influence on politics very painful indeed. The Regency Council, the legislation it enacted, the developed state administration that was the result of the Regent's rule, was a great beginning for the rule of his successor. One could ask why, then, is every Pole familiar with the story of Piłsudski while very few know that the mayor of Warsaw, Prince Zdzisław Lubomirski, was an important and distinguished figure? The reason could be that he received the title of regent from the occupying forces, and consequently this "honour" was something Lubomirski had accepted unwillingly.

Now "on holiday" from politics, the former regent again had time for the things he liked best: hunting, travelling, and frequent parties which were organized at his little palace in Frascati Street. Those parties at the Lubomirskis' were very popular and respected, just like the guests who attended them. In July 1920, even though the prince was no longer active in politics, he was not indifferent to Poland's fate in the face of the Bolshevik threat. He and Prince Janusz Radziwiłł decided to volunteer for the army. Preserved documents show that Second Lieutenant Lubomirski (and his car, a Lorraine-Dietrich) became part of the 1st Light Cavalry Regiment on July 25, 1920.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately the prince, by then a major, ended his military career in the Cavalry Officers' Corps.

As befitted an aristocrat, in the two inter-war decades Lubomirski got involved in a number of social projects, serving as a patron or sponsor

<sup>32</sup> Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 175.

of various organizations. During this time he was also made president of the Society of Friends of the Infantry Officer Cadet School, helping the elite school by funding its banner which is currently housed in the Sikorski Museum in London.

The year 1922 was a year of many changes in the life of the Lubomirski family, starting with the marriage of the eldest daughter, Julia, to Tadeusz Morawski, who turned out to be an excellent administrator, a hard-working and resourceful man. Two months after this joyful event, Zdzisław had to say goodbye for the last time to his mother – Princess Maria Lubomirska née Zamoyska. Before long, in 1930, Zdzisław and Maria's youngest daughter – Dorota – died. The death of these two women so important to Zdzisław was a very painful experience for him.

At the same time, throughout this period Zdzisław Lubomirski kept in touch with his co-regents, Aleksander Kakowski (Primate of Poland) and Józef Ostrowski, and in 1926 served as a mediator when he chaired a reconciliation committee for resolving disputes within the Polish government at the time.

Also during this time Piłsudski, in view of Stanisław Wojciechowski's resignation as President of Poland, started looking for prospective candidates for this office; Prince Lubomirski was one of them but, being affiliated with conservative circles, firmly refused. In 1928 Lubomirski became a senator and for seven years belonged to the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (BBWR) as well as being president of the Foreign Affairs Committee; however, he did not take the podium too often, allegedly because he got emotional during his speeches, which was embarrassing for him.<sup>33</sup>

In 1931–1935 Zdzisław Lubomirski was head of the Supreme Council of Landowners' Organizations, and was greatly respected by citizens and politicians. In August 1934, just after Aleksander Lednicki died, Lubomirski chaired the Civic Court that ultimately exonerated this community activist. In January 1931 Zdzisław's only son, Jerzy, married Julietta Rembielińska. At this time Lubomirski's wife Maria tried to get him to have his portrait painted by Kossak, but he was not eager to agree and ultimately this portrait never materialized.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, pp. 184–185.

The Theory of the Great Regency,  
or a Piece on Zdzisław Lubomirski

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Bolesław Czedekowski (1885–1969), *Portrait of Zdzisław Lubomirski* (1936),  
Educational Resources of the Polish Senate  
(<https://senat.edu.pl/assets/Senat/Senatorowie/Lubomirski.jpg>).

Shortly afterwards, on July 12, 1934, Maria Lubomirska's death left her husband and family in mourning. After her passing, Cracow newspaper *Czas* published an article about the great service of the princess as an extraordinary personality.<sup>34</sup> She was described as a model Polish lady. In the aftermath of her passing, Zdzisław rented out the little palace in Frascati Street and moved to a villa in Francesco Nullo Street. Some time later, the idea for him to have his portrait painted returned, and this time it was realized by portraitist Bolesław Czedekowski. Lubomirski posed in a white *żupan* (traditional dress of Polish noblemen) with a golden sash, which was meant to underline his aristocratic descent, invoke tradition, and show similarity with portraits of his eminent ancestors.

### In His Declining Years

Even at an advanced age, Zdzisław Lubomirski did not lose his passion for life. He continued his activity despite the passage of time, never losing his energy and willingness to work. Even though his beloved Maria had passed away, he still had someone for whom and at whom he could smile. It is worth adding that when he came to Mała Wieś for weekends, to the estate his son-in-law Tadeusz Morawski had long been running, he was always accompanied by his trusted drivers. First, the prince's faithful friend Jan Konarski, excellent at his job, never left his side. But after his premature and sudden death, his duties were assumed by Mister Czesław. He was enormously fond of reckless driving, often causing great indignation and irritation in Lubomirski's daughter.

Upon arriving at the house, Lubomirski himself relished every minute spent with his grandchildren. Klementyna, Stanisław, Zdzisław, Kazimierz, and Maria were the apple of their grandfather's eye, and the prince spared no effort to make them feel special. Often, against his daughter's ironclad rule, he handed them small sums of money during town parish fairs. Nothing gave him more pleasure than to see a smile on their faces.

<sup>34</sup> "Śp. Maria z Branickich Xiężna Zdzisławowa Lubomirska", *Czas*, No. 193, 1934, cited in: Jastrzębska, op. cit., p. 196.

Normally, though, Lubomirski still lived in Warsaw, far from his family. His love for the city did not allow him to part from it. It might seem he was very lonely there. Nothing could be further from the truth! He never made the name of his lady public, but she – who exactly? – is mentioned in many sources. Witold Kamieniecki, for instance, wrote in a literary sketch that after his wife's death the prince became close with a lady friend of Stanisław Lubomirski.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately Zdzisław Lubomirski was not destined to grow old in peace and happiness. When he was 74, World War II broke out. The prince observed approaching events with pessimism. Straight after the siege of Warsaw he started working at the civilian station of the Warsaw Defence Command led by Stefan Starzyński, the then Mayor of Warsaw. Thanks to numerous notes left by Lubomirski's grandson, we know that despite the tragic situation he never gave up "normal" functioning. He continued to drive around the city in his Oldsmobile with Mister Czesław, who was so scared he got paler with every day. It might seem this was something ordinary, perhaps a little unwise, but it was a sign of Lubomirski's inner opposition to the war and – above all – it showed the enormous love he felt for his treasured city. In spite of many adversities, he still saw and loved the old, beautiful Warsaw.

It needs mentioning that just after September 1, Lubomirski's family left Mała Wieś and moved in with the prince. Unfortunately the villa where he had been living was damaged in an air raid, so they all had to move into the Tyszkiewicz's Palace. These had been terrifying moments for all of them, so during subsequent air strikes the whole family went down into the basement; the whole family except Zdzisław Lubomirski. He sat with bowed head in the drawing room, deeply affected by the fall of the city. To the surprise of his grandson, who overheard the adults speaking one time, Lubomirski believed that Warsaw should abandon further defence. He did not want everything that had been amassed over many centuries, by many generations, to be destroyed by one generation's laborious desire to defend itself.

<sup>35</sup> Witold Kamieniecki, *Historycy i politycy warszawscy 1900–1950*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1992, p. 11, cited in: Jastrzębska, op. cit., pp. 202–203.

The prince's whole life collapsed during the night of November 10–11, 1942. Fearing demonstrations and retaliation for their actions, the Nazis decided to increase the number of arrests. Among those detained was Zdzisław Lubomirski. He was sent to Pawiak prison where, like all the other prisoners, he was kept in extremely harsh conditions and suffered greatly. Having no regard for his position or his age, the Nazis treated him the same as everyone else. Among other things, he had to walk around naked in hard frost and spend many hours in interrogation. The idea of escaping from prison was impossible to realize, a miracle mission. In Lubomirski's case, however, thanks to many connections, it was successfully achieved. The prince was released from Pawiak prison on December 3, 1942. The old man's body, however, could not cope with the torture it had suffered in prison. He returned to Mała Wieś where, exhausted and ill with tuberculosis, he passed away on July 31, 1943 without seeing his beloved Warsaw again. He was buried in Belsk Duży, and his funeral was attended by crowds from the occupied Polish capital and its environs.

Thus passed away one of the most important activists and supporters of the Second Republic of Poland: a man who had dedicated most of his life to his beloved homeland, sparing no effort – first – to work for its independence, and then for its greatest possible honour; a lawyer, community activist, philanthropist, lover of automobiles, devoted to his family and to Poland, and faithful to the very end to his city – Warsaw.

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# One against All... Krystyna Skarbek – Europe’s “Evening Star”

“Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.”

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 2, Scene 2

“Have you decided?”  
‘I would love a glass of vodka,’ she said simply, and went back to her study of the menu.  
‘A small carafe of vodka, very cold,’ ordered Bond. He said to her abruptly: ‘I can’t drink the health of your new frock without knowing your Christian name.’  
‘Vesper,’ she said. ‘Vesper Lynd.’  
Bond gave her a look of inquiry.  
‘It’s rather a bore always having to explain, but I was born in the evening, on a very stormy evening according to my parents. Apparently they wanted to remember it.’ She smiled. ‘Some people like it, others don’t. I’m just used to it.’”<sup>36</sup>

Who could this woman have been who inspired Ian Fleming to create the character of Vesper, captivating companion of the world’s most famous spy? Is it possible the writer knew her personally? And therefore what was the real name of the woman who will forever be remembered in pop culture as “the Bond girl”?

On a stormy May night, a baby girl was born. Maybe that very storm was a harbinger of who the innocent infant would become in future.

<sup>36</sup> Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale*, London: Random House, 2012, pp. 65–66.

## Childhood and Youth

Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek was born on May 1, 1908 in Warsaw.<sup>37</sup> She was the daughter of count Jerzy Skarbek, descendant of the famous Skarbek family's Kuyavian line, of the Abdank coat of arms, and Stefania Goldfeder, a Jewish woman from a wealthy family of bankers. The family settled down on the Trzepnica estate near Piotrków Trybunalski, which was also where Krystyna spent her childhood.

From the beginning she passed a great deal of time with her father, who instilled in her a love for activities that were unusual for women in those days. She loved horseback riding, enjoyed sports and outdoor physical activity, seldom passing up a chance for rivalry. You can definitely say young Krysia (Polish diminutive for Krystyna) was the apple of her father's eye. In reference to the time she was born, his pet name for her was "Vesperale" – "Little Evening Star".

At first Krystyna was schooled at home, but later was enrolled in a school run by the Sisters of Sacre Coeur in (what was then) Lwów (in Poland, now Lviv in Ukraine), and then in a school run by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Jazłowiec (now Yazlovets in Ukraine). She was rather an unruly pupil, one of those who persist in following their own path despite their teachers' pleading.

She was a gifted but disobedient child. She did not like to submit to discipline or carry out orders. She did like to learn, however, and her favourite subjects included mathematics and Latin. Nevertheless, a school could not give her everything she needed. Used to getting a lot of physical exercise and having substantial freedom from a young age, she found school simply boring. Her strong personality and fiery temperament often made life a misery for the young aristocrat's guardians.

<sup>37</sup> Based on: Lesław Sajdak, *110 lat temu urodziła się Krystyna Skarbek – „ulubiony wywiadowca” W. Churchill*, May 1, 2018, at: <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/110-lat-temu-urodzila-sie-krystyna-skarbek-ulubiony-wywiadowca-churchilla> (accessed April 5, 2019). See also Madeleine Masson, *Wojna moja miłość. Krystyna Skarbek – ulubiona agentka Churchill* (Polish edition of *Christine: SOE Agent and Churchill's Favourite Spy*), transl. Wojciech M. Próchniewicz, Poznań: Vesper, 2012, pp. 39–42.

At the school Krystyna went to, Mass was a mandatory part of the day. For a restless soul like her, daily celebration of the liturgy was an extremely difficult and tiresome task. It is not surprising that the inventive and inquisitive girl finally came up with a madcap idea. One day she decided to set the priest's cassock on fire in order, as she later explained, to test his faith. She was curious whether he would go on praying or discontinue the service and save himself. To her disappointment, the man stopped praying and frantically put out the fire.<sup>38</sup> This time the pupil's waywardness was not ignored and Krystyna was expelled.

The Skarbeks started having financial difficulties in the late 1920s. These were largely caused by the count's extravagant lifestyle, although the economic crisis played a part as well. The estate in Trzepnica was sold and the family moved to Warsaw.

The capital city awakened all kinds of desires in the young woman. Krystyna lost no time. She had fun, went to clubs, pursued a truly partying lifestyle. She even cut her hair short, out of some kind of youthful rebellion. Her enjoyment of this “new” life was overshadowed by her father’s death. Having driven himself into alcoholism, the count died prematurely, leaving his family in not the best financial condition. Therefore Krystyna had to get a job. She was soon hired by the Fiat factory representative office in Warsaw.

It is worth adding that Krystyna was considered a beautiful woman. She even took part in the Miss Poland contest and in 1930 was announced Miss Poland Runner-up with the title of Beauty Star. There must have been a lot of extraordinary charm about her; she exuded power and confidence. Apparently she was not tall, but was distinguished by a dark complexion and almond-shaped eyes. She had dark, usually long hair. No wonder all this, combined with her good looks, won her many admirers and made it easy for her to get men to fall in love with her. She changed partners frequently and often did not even try to keep them with her for longer.

<sup>38</sup> See Łukasz Włodarski, *Krystyna Skarbek – ulubiony szpieg Churchilla*, January 22, 2014, at: <http://wmrokuhistorii.blogspot.com/2014/01/krystyna-skarbek-ulubiony-szpieg.html> (accessed April 5, 2019).

She got married for the first time in 1933, the man she chose being industrialist Gustaw Gettlich, whom she had met at work.<sup>39</sup> Their union did not last long – the marriage fell apart after six months.

As a fan of physical exercise, in winter Krystyna would go to Zakopane to ski. There, she won the Miss of Skiing title as well as established contacts with smugglers, whom she decided to join after a time. She treated this like a sport: a new, interesting experience. Thanks to this activity, though, she gained know-how, learned different routes and hideaways, and met all kinds of people, which would come in handy in future.

Also in Zakopane, she met her second husband – traveller and writer of teenage novels Jerzy Giżycki, whom she married in November 1938.<sup>40</sup> With him she set off on an exotic journey. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 caught the couple by surprise when they were staying in Kenya.

### The War and Intelligence Work

Upon hearing war had broken out, they returned to Europe. Next Krystyna, now without her husband from who she had separated, made her way to England. That was where her adventure with British intelligence began.

She came to the British Special Operations Executive (SOE)<sup>41</sup> on her own initiative. She offered to smuggle information from Hungary to Poland. She must have made a great impression because she was allowed to start mandatory training. It was an extremely tough course, but the talented Polish woman did so well that she received a distinction. It is worth adding that she was the first woman in British intelligence. She also assumed a new name: Christine Granville. A knife became her favourite weapon.

<sup>39</sup> Jan Larecki, *Krystyna Skarbek. Agentka o wielu twarzach*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 2008, pp. 23–25.

<sup>40</sup> Masson, op. cit., pp. 56–57.

<sup>41</sup> The SOE was a secret organization established by Winston Churchill in 1940, its purpose being to conduct sabotage and espionage operations in countries occupied by Germany, see Iwona Górnicka, *Krystyna – zapomniana bohaterka*, July 1, 2016, at: [https://historia.org.pl/2016/07/01/krystyna-skarbek-zapomniana-bohaterka/#footnote\\_8\\_57151](https://historia.org.pl/2016/07/01/krystyna-skarbek-zapomniana-bohaterka/#footnote_8_57151) (accessed April 5, 2019).

One against All...  
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Krystyna Skarbek, Wikimedia Commons.

Shortly afterwards, she was sent on her first mission, to Budapest. There she established contact with Andrzej Kowerski, also an agent and a recipient of a Virtuti Military Cross for valour and courage. They started working together, smuggling Polish and Allied prisoners from camps within Hungary. Quite quickly, they also started having a love affair.

One time when Krystyna was smuggling some Czech officers from Hungary to Yugoslavia, the car in which she was travelling with them broke down. Because of the breakdown, the car was inspected by a Nazi patrol. Krystyna managed to keep a cool head. She showed the Nazis false papers and even persuaded them to push the car across the border.

Some time later, Skarbek and Kowerski had to go back to Poland. Their guide across the Tatra Mountains was Jan Marusarz – a well-known ski jumper. Allegedly it was during this first expedition across the Tatras that Krystyna witnessed the cruelty of war, when she came upon the bodies of people who had frozen to death during an escape attempt.

In Warsaw the female agent established contact with an organization called the Musketeers<sup>42</sup> – the largest and most effective intelligence organization in occupied Poland and a very active group of spies. Due to their connections, and also some often dubious activities, the Musketeers were regarded as traitors. Their conflict with the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ) intensified the negative perception of these underground activists even further. The leaders of the Polish Underground State decided that since Krystyna Skarbek was working with the Musketeers, she too was a traitor. The Polish underground movement and the Home Army (AK) did not trust her words or deeds.

Despite their bad reputation, the Musketeers did obtain many important documents, for example passing on some U-boot construction details as well as the positions of German troops and accounts of Nazi crimes against the civilian population. Probably the most important information, however, was the date of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union. It was Krystyna Skarbek who passed this information on to London.

<sup>42</sup> See Larecki, op. cit., pp. 104–106; EJ, *Super Historia: Muszkieterzy – największa polska organizacja wywiadowcza Witkowskiego*, March 3, 2014, at: <https://www.se.pl/wiadomosci/polska/super-historia-muszkieterzy-wszyscy-ludzie-bandycy-witkowskiego-aa-uedi-XHAS-h8ZX.html> (accessed April 5, 2019).

On November 20, 1940 Hungary entered an alliance with Hitler. Consequently, Gestapo units soon arrived in the country and the mission of which Skarbek was a part started getting more and more dangerous.

In 1941 Krystyna was arrested by the Nazis together with Andrzej Kowerski. During her interrogation she started saying she felt ill. She bit her tongue very hard, and when blood filled her mouth she coughed in the interrogator's face<sup>43</sup>. She told the Gestapo officers she had tuberculosis, and the terrified Nazis promptly sent her off to be tested. Interestingly, she was saved by a real lung disease she had contracted before the war, when she was working in a factory. On her X-ray the doctor noticed darker spots on her lungs and said it really could be tuberculosis. The Nazis quickly came to the conclusion that detaining a sick person could endanger them and released Krystyna together with Kowerski, having decided he could be infected as well. The couple would ultimately return to England. In the meantime, Kowerski cheated on Krystyna with another woman, a wrong she never got over.

In London, Krystyna had to get papers under a new name, since she had been booked under the old one. That was when they took a few years off her age, entering 1915 as her date of birth. This would cause many problems in future, since it was not clear for a long time when Krystyna was really born. She travelled most of the road to Yugoslavia in the boot of a car driven by her acquaintance. From there they made their way to Turkey. Their destination was Egypt, but as it turned out, they lacked the required documents to cross the border. Krystyna obtained them by seducing the consul, who gave her two visas after spending two hours with her.

In Egypt she remained “unemployed” for a time. It was even suggested she should join the Red Cross. Polish leaders still did not trust her, as they still remembered she had worked with the Musketeers. They also informed the British that she was, allegedly, a double agent. However, after a time the British, without consulting the Polish underground movement, gave her new orders: to design an operation to blow up a bridge.

<sup>43</sup> See William Stevenson, *Vera Atkins. Kobieta szpieg. Historia najlepszej agentki II wojny Światowej* (Polish edition of *Spymistress: The Life of Vera Atkins, the Greatest Female Secret Agent of World War II*), transl. Bartłomiej Łopatka, Zakrzewo: Replika, 2015, pp. 228–229.

Thanks to further love affairs, Krystyna was sent on new training during which she learned to operate a radio station, jump with a parachute, and use explosives.<sup>44</sup> She was made an officer of the Royal Air Force (RAF). From then on she could wear a uniform, which she did often and willingly.

### Krystyna in France

In July 1944 she was parachuted into France.<sup>45</sup> She served as the British SOE's courier and was a liaison of the spy network in France. She supported the French Resistance forces on Vercors Plateau. When her superior, Francis Cammaerts, was arrested, she tried to persuade the French to rescue him and the agents arrested with him. The Resistance fighters refused, fearing for the lives of their own people. Having been turned down, Krystyna went to the prison herself and demanded to see the local Gestapo commander. She allegedly declared she was a niece of General Montgomery. She told the commander the Allies were prevailing and assured him that in exchange for the release of the French prisoners she would guarantee him protection after the British entered the area.<sup>46</sup>

She was so self-confident and direct that the commander believed her and, terrified at the near prospect of an encounter with the Allied forces, he released the prisoners. In addition, he offered them his car and a gun so they could travel safely. The Polish woman's crazy plan was completely successful. BBC Radio even broadcast "congratulations to Pauline" – Pauline Armand was one of Krystyna Skarbek's false identities.

When the Warsaw Uprising broke out on August 1, 1944, Krystyna was in London. She even asked to be allowed to return to Poland to help in the fight against the occupying forces, but she was turned down.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> This was made possible by a change in the SOE Cairo unit's command. Contrary to his associates, Major Patrick Howarth, who took over as leader in summer 1942, did not believe the recurring accusations, at the same time appreciating Krystyna's talent as well as her experience. See Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 180–181.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, pp. 378–380.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Górnicka, *Krystyna – zapomniana bohaterka*, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

## Demobilization

Krystyna Skarbek was demobilized in April 1945. Churchill reportedly thanked her in person, calling her “his favourite spy”. In a sense, though, her demobilization was humiliating – she was a brilliant agent who had carried out many spectacular operations as well as some that demanded discretion. She was extremely effective and dutifully carried out commands and orders. The gratuity she received was a mere 100 pounds.<sup>48</sup> For comparison: the annual salary at the time was about 3,000 pounds. She was never able to reconcile herself to this decision.

Madeleine Masson, author of a biography of Krystyna Skarbek, wrote that Krystyna had more ribbons than a general. She had a magnetic personality and stood out from the crowd.<sup>49</sup> Even if Masson was exaggerating, Christine – as the British called her – truly must have been an extraordinary woman. Heads of services reportedly stood up when she entered the room.

She was awarded a British George Medal and a French Croix de Guerre with silver star.

## Post-war Life

Krystyna Skarbek was not officially divorced from her second husband, Jerzy Giżycki, until 1946. She was able to obtain British citizenship in the same year.<sup>50</sup> She later had an affair with a reporter she asked to help her find a job. He pointed her towards Ian Fleming, who had been demobilized from the Navy Intelligence Division and was working on his first novel about the adventures of James Bond: *Casino Royale*.

It is likely she also became his lover.<sup>51</sup> It was on Krystyna Skarbek's life story that Fleming most probably based the character of agent Vesper Lynd.

<sup>48</sup> 110 lat temu urodziła się Krystyna Skarbek – „ulubiony wywiadowca” W. Churchilla, op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Masson, op. cit.; cf. also Clare Mulley, *Kobieta szpieg. Polka w służbie Jego Królewskiej Mości* (Polish edition of *The Spy Who Loved: The Secrets and Lives of Christine Granville*), transl. Maciej Antosiewicz, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2013, pp. 400–402.

<sup>50</sup> She never actually obtained full citizenship. In 1946 the British government granted her a British passport, but with the status of a naturalized British citizen, see Larecki, op. cit., pp. 220–221.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Mulley, op. cit., pp. 412–413.

This supposition comes from the fact that Vesper is remarkably similar in character to the Polish spy. Her favourite weapon was also a knife. Also, Vesper tells the story of where her name came from – the time she was born, namely a stormy night, and the Evening Star. As we remember, Krystyna Skarbek was born on a stormy night and her father called her “Vesperale”.

Furthermore, Krystyna worked in many different jobs, never able to stay in one place for long. She worked as a maid, a telephone operator, a salesperson, and also a stewardess. She sailed on the Ruahine and the Winchester Castle between Britain and South Africa.<sup>52</sup> Aboard one of these ships she met Dennis Muldowney, an Irishman who fell obsessively in love with her after a brief affair. Krystyna complained about him and hated the way he was behaving.

Tragedy struck on April 15, 1952. Krystyna Skarbek was living in a hotel at the time. Muldowney was stalking her and would not let her go out. She cried out that she did not want to see him again and that she was fed up. This was just too much and the man, blinded by his obsession, stabbed Krystyna with a knife. She died from the wounds. Dennis was arrested almost immediately and executed just as quickly.

Soon afterwards there appeared rumours that Krystyna’s death had been brought about by someone else. Among others, it was blamed on Soviet agents, who supposedly took their revenge for her work for the enemy; some suggested it was the British themselves, for whom someone with so much knowledge could have been inconvenient. However, no proof was ever found that pointed to any other perpetrators than the condemned Dennis Muldowney.<sup>53</sup> She was buried at Kensal Green St. Mary’s – a cemetery in northern London.

Krystyna’s mother did not live to learn of her daughter’s sad end, as she had died during the war, murdered by the Nazis at Pawiak prison in January 1942. It was a death she had chosen for herself. Visiting her in 1940, Krystyna tried to persuade her to leave Poland, but Stefania refused.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 407–408.

<sup>53</sup> For more about different hypotheses on the circumstances of Krystyna’s tragic death, see e.g. Górnicka, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Mulley, op. cit., pp. 126–127.

## Remembering Krystyna Skarbek

The name of this Polish agent is still not widely known. Her story is full of unexpected twists, and Krystyna showed courage and extraordinary bravado on many occasions. She was the first woman working for British intelligence and a very good agent. She had many successfully completed operations to her credit, about which one could say and write a great deal more, to mention the time she smuggled some film containing proof of Operation Barbarossa and passed it on to Churchill. She loved risk, adrenaline. She enjoyed life and lived it to the full, even in wartime. At the same time, she was a beautiful woman who knew how to take full advantage of her looks to achieve her goals.

Krystyna Skarbek was unquestionably an interesting and colourful character whose life story is worth knowing. In times when actresses and singers serve as role models, it is good to remember a brave and talented woman who can be an inspiration to many a young girl.



Ian Fleming,  
*Casino Royale* (cover  
of the first edition, 1953),  
Wikimedia Commons.

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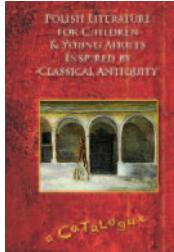
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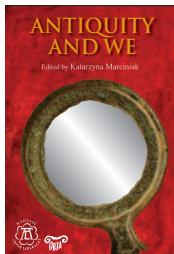


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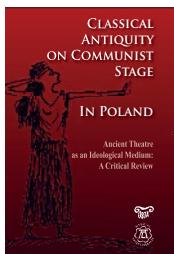
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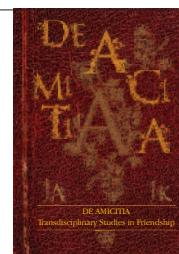
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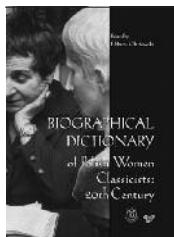
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Collaboration with the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” is a valuable experience for students and teachers participating in the project. First of all, it allows us to understand what is interdisciplinarity in education. The second significant element of the collaboration is the acquisition of abilities which let us use Latin and ancient culture as tools making it possible and easier to read texts of culture.

We would also like to stress that *Our Mythical Childhood* does not mean that we simply reach for mythical motifs, or treat Antiquity as an encyclopaedia. It is most of all an inspiration to understand reality through the experience of our ancestors. It is a constant encouragement to seek answers to the question – why? – in the treasury of our culture.

From the introduction by Barbara Strycharczyk  
Teacher at the “Strumienie” High School  
Schools Endeavour Coordinator

A close collaboration with schools has been a crucial element and a source of joy to all the people involved in our activities from the very beginning of the *Our Mythical Childhood* programme. [...] it was only natural to us to consolidate our efforts with support from the ERC Consolidator Grant. [...] All four schools [“Strumienie” High School in Józefów, Mikołaj Rej XI High School in Warsaw, Nicolaus Copernicus University Academic Junior and Senior High School in Toruń, and Bartłomiej Nowodworski I High School in Cracow] accepted the challenge of presenting four important figures from Polish history who were well versed in the classical tradition and whose lives may serve as biographies of, indeed, the *illustres*. [...] Besides the educational value of the texts gathered in the present book, there is something of a similar, if not major, importance – namely, the brightness and the light of optimism that this task brings to the worldwide discussions on the crisis in education. As long as such tasks and challenges are undertaken by the new generations, there is hope.

From the introduction by Katarzyna Marcińska  
Faculty of “Artes Liberales”, University of Warsaw  
Principal Investigator of the *Our Mythical Childhood* Project

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