

NOTES ON THE SENATE



SENATE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND

The Marshal's Guard

CHANCELLERY OF THE SENATE
6, WIEJSKA STR. | 00-902 WARSAW
TEL. 48 22 694 93 34 | 48 22 694 95 20
senat@senat.gov.pl
www.senat.gov.pl
www.facebook.com/SenatRP

KEEPING ORDER IN PARLIAMENT AND ENSURING A CALM ENVIRONMENT FOR DEPUTIES AND SENATORS HAS BEEN THE TASK OF THE MARSHAL'S GUARD for centuries. Up to the end of the aristocratic Republic, the Guard was under the authority of the Grand Marshal of the Crown and when the Sejm met in Lithuania, of the marshals of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It should be remembered that theirs was a separate office from that of the Marshal of the Sejm, who was elected only for the duration of the proceedings.

THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE SAFETY OF THE SEJMS AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MARSHAL'S GUARD were contained in constitutions i.e. in the laws called the "Marshal's Articles". They defined different types of offences and established penal sanctions. The Marshal had his own summary court – the Marshal's Court – to try offences against the King and the Sejm. A nobleman could be sentenced by the Marshal's Court, an offence committed by a nobleman's servants, however, could be punished by the Guard immediately. For example, an offender could be made to "sit in the tower for six Sundays". The Marshal's Tower was in the corner of the city walls at the intersection of Mostowa and Brzozowa Streets in Warsaw.



A photograph from a publication entitled "Parliament of the Republic of Poland 1919-1927", edited by Professor H. Mościcki and Professor W. Dzwonkowski

The Marshal's Guard



(photo by Marta Marchlewska)

Our information about members of the Guard only dates back to the 17th century, when the soldiers of the Marshal's Guard were popularly called the "Marshal's Hungarians". It is estimated that the Guard consisted of between 120 and 150 soldiers who previously served in the Hungarian company. They were recruited on an individual basis. The "Marshal's men" wore the uniforms of the Hungarian infantry: a blue overcoat with red facings, a waistcoat and white trousers.

When Poland regained independence after the First World War, the Marshal's Guard again took over the protection of the Parliament. The Guard was administered by the Office of the Sejm and the Senate of the Polish Republic and was under orders from a Commander of the Guard appointed by the Marshal of the Sejm. Whereas in the First Republic the Guard had authority within a radius of one Old Polish mile (7,146 metres) of the place of debates, from 1919 its authority was confined to the Parliament buildings alone.

The most important task of the Guard was to ensure the safety of deputies and senators, to keep law and order, and to secure the building from fire. The guards had the right to bear arms outside the Sejm and Senate building as well. Neither the police nor the army had the right to enter the Parliament without the Marshal's consent. The atmosphere of the debates and the temperament of those taking part in them meant that the Guard was authorized to intervene even in the debating chamber itself. During debate, Deputies used arguments unheard-of today, sounding horns, drumming on their desks, singing or just shouting. The Marshal could also order the public to leave the gallery if they disrupted order by applauding or interrupting the debate, which happened frequently. The Marshal's Guard consisted of about 16 officers. Soldiers honoured with high military decorations, e.g. the Virtuti Militari Cross, were often selected to serve as the Guard's commanders.

As an internal protection institution of the Sejm, the Marshal's Guard started its post-war activity in the first months of the work of the Sejm elected in February 1947. Currently, it is a uniformed and armed independent formation, reporting to the Marshal of the Sejm. Its tasks include, first of all, ensuring order and safety – including fire protection – on the premises of the Parliament and in the buildings that are under the management or disposal of the Chancellery of the Sejm. The Marshal's Guard performs representative functions as well, including as part of honorary escorts. Its officers wear uniforms designed based on military uniforms. Depending on the situation, the versions include ceremonial, formal, official or special purpose uniforms. The base is a navy blue single-row jacket, in the ceremonial version decorated with a gold cord coming out of the right arm. Trousers in this version are adorned with red stripes. Used in special circumstances, e.g. in colour guards, the formal jacket features a popped collar, fitted with white-red shields with crossed marshal's staves, while metal buttons bear the image of an eagle. The officers wear high boots with their breeches. A part of this uniform is also a ceremonial weapon; for the commander and his deputies – an honorary dirk, and for other officers – a sabre. A peaked cap with red band adorned with gold oak leaves is a reference to the tradition of the Second Republic of Poland.