



WHITE EAGLE

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JOSEPH PILSUDSKI FACTS

Picture by Prince Jan Polubinski, Historical Pictures Archivist

The Polish general and statesman Joseph Pilsudski (1867-1935) played a large role in the reestablishment of an independent Polish state and became its first president in 1918.

Joseph Pilsudski was born on Dec. 5, 1867, at Zulow in the Vilna district of Russian Poland, the second son of a family of the lower gentry. The harsh treatment of the Poles under Russian rule, and the anti-Russian feeling pervading his environment, inspired him with a hatred of Russia and a desire to liberate his country from foreign domination.

Suspended from medical school at Kharkov in 1886, Pilsudski returned to Vilna and was exiled for 5 years to Siberia in 1887 for allegedly conspiring to assassinate Czar Alexander III. Pilsudski returned home in 1892, joined the Polish Socialist party, and became its leader in 1894. He soon became editor of its clandestine newspaper, Robotnik (The Worker), but his press was discovered in Łódź, and he and his wife were arrested in 1900. Pilsudski escaped, however, in May 1901, and he settled in Cracow in Austrian Galicia.

Needing foreign aid for Poland's liberation, Pilsudski went to Japan in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War, but was met with resistance there from Roman Dmowski, who had convinced the Japanese that Pilsudski's projects were not feasible. To assist the spread



In this issue we recognize those individuals who fought to bring Poland back into existence as a Nation State after WW I. We have Marshal Joseph Pilsudski who, among many things, was the man who was able to stand up to Hitler and Stalin; also to those valiant men and women who gave their lives during WW II to save Poland's independence. Please see pg. 12 Tribute in Baltimore "National Katyn Memorial Annual Remembrance" –Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski, PNAF

(Continued on Page 5)

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HOW TO REGISTER A COAT OF ARMS

Continued from the Winter 2013 White Eagle Journal

SOUTH AFRICA

The State Herald
Bureau of Heraldry
Private Bag X236
Pretoria 0001
South Africa
Tel : +27-12-323-5300
Fax: +27-12-323-5287

Background

- The South African Bureau of Heraldry is currently the least expensive official heraldic authority with which you may register a coat of arms...It is also the most egalitarian: anyone may apply to the State Herald for the registration of Arms, regardless of nationality, race, gender, religion, etc...He will not, however, allow posthumous registrations, and the Arms must, of course, be heraldically correct and not infringe on any other registered Arms.

Who may apply?

- Anyone

How much will it cost? (Current as of 1 November 1997) Currency Exchange US\$1 = R8 (as of July 2001)

1. In these tariffs, unless the context indicates otherwise:

(Continued on Page 3)

HOW TO REGISTER A COAT OF ARMS

Continued from Page 2

- (i) “the Act” means the Heraldry Act 1962 (Act No. 18 of 1962), as amended, and
 - (ii) “crest” includes a coronet, helmet and mantling.
2. An application for the registration (or amendment) of a heraldic representation shall be accompanied by an initial amount of ... R250
 3. After the State Herald has notified an applicant that there have been no objections to the proposed registration, the balance of the fee indicated below shall be payable to the Bureau before the notice of registration is published, the particulars are entered in the register and a certificate of registration is issued, viz:
 - (a) Registration (or amendment) of a badge, flag, pennant, gonfalon, decoration, medal, seal, insignia of rank, any office or order or other kindred representation, excluding a coat of arms ... R660
 - (b) Registration (or amendment) of -
 - (i) arms consisting of a shield only ... R550
 - (ii) arms with a crest ... R1400
 - (iii) arms with a crest and supporters ... R1850
 - (iv) arms complete with crest, supporters and special compartment ... R2120
 4. Registration of the arms, badge or other emblem of a heraldic heir in conformity with the principles and rules of heraldry and the policy of the Council, or where the name of the registered owner has been legally changed (payable by means of a single amount) -
 - (a) by means of a notification in the Government Gazette and an entry in the register only ... R120
 - (b) where a new certificate of registration is required and for the issue of (with the approval of the Heraldry Council), a duplicate certificate in respect of -
 - (i) a badge, etc. as in 3(a) above ... R425
 - (ii) arms consisting of a shield only ... R390
 - (iii) arms with a crest ... R800
 - (iv) arms with a crest and supporters ... R1000
 - (v) arms complete with crest, supporters and special compartment ... R1065
 5. The registration (or amendment) of a name, a special name and a uniform ... R210
 6. For an appeal to the Council against a decision by the State Herald, or the Heraldry Committee (provided that if the appeal is upheld, such amount shall be refunded) ... R50
 7. Correction of an error in any document submitted in terms of the Act, or of an entry in the register in the Bureau, where the error originated with the applicant ... R100
 8. Additional drawings of a registered -
 - (a) badge, etc. as in 3(a) above ... R280
 - (b) arms consisting of a shield only ... R240
 - (c) arms with a crest ... R565
 - (d) arms with a crest and supporters ... R750
 - (e) arms complete with a crest, supporters and special compartment ... R780
 9. Fees due to the Bureau shall be payable in cash, postal order or by cheque made out to the State Herald. Payments from outside the Republic of South Africa should be by means of a bank draft drawn in Rands on a South African Commercial Bank.

Application Form: <http://www.araltas.com/services/southafrica.gif>

(Continued on Page 4)

HOW TO REGISTER A COAT OF ARMS

Continued from Page 3

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Academy of Heraldic Sciences of Czech Republic (AHN)
Akademie heraldických nauk České republiky, o.s.
Foltynova 15, CZ 635 00 Brno

The objective of Academy is to support scientific research in the field of auxiliary historical sciences, especially in heraldry, genealogy, vexillology, sphragistics etc. In order to perform its tasks, The Academy organizes changes of information between its members, especially by organizing public lectures, talks, publishing specialized publications and papers, by running web sites etc. The Academy publishes professional opinions in field of heraldry and is allowed to register coats of arms, seals, flags and insignia.

Cost: Unknown

INTERNATIONAL REGISTER OF ARMORIAL BEARINGS

Burke's Peerage & Gentry International Register of Arms is a register of armorial bearings in current use throughout the world which includes the names, addresses and family biographies of the bearers along with the rationale and history behind their use and design. This fully illustrated record of contemporary Coats of Arms used internationally is the precursor to the publication of a prestigious work in book form.

The armorial bearings of persons resident in countries with an existing law of arms and/or granting authority [or former Granting Authority] will only be accepted where they have been granted, recorded or matriculated by the recognised granting authority and that they are the rightful arms of the applicant. Where armorial bearings are being claimed or used by way of "ancient usage" the editor may ask to see a recent matriculation or exemplification of the arms before they can be recorded against the name of the present bearer.

In cases where, for example, a citizen of the United States of America is using armorial bearings by descent from an armigerous ancestor who emigrated to the USA from, say, England or Scotland where the arms were granted to said ancestor, the editor will expect to see a recent matriculation or exemplification of the arms or genealogical proof of descent from an armiger. In the event that the armiger is not inclined to matriculate his/her arms with a heraldic authority or provide genealogical proof of descent from an armiger, the arms will be registered as 'assumed arms' (see below).

The "status" of arms in the Register will be recorded as Granted, Recorded or Matriculated; alongside a record of the relevant granting authority where there is one. In cases where there is no lawful granting authority the arms will be shown as "assumed" and the date of assumption recorded. The College of Arms (England) has adopted the practice of granting honorary arms to "foreigners"; such arms will be recorded as honorary. Subject to the discretion of the editor, all 'assumed' arms will be required to have first been accepted and registered with some form of registration, organization or heraldry society within the relevant host nation. Burke's intended the publication to be a register of already existing arms that conform to the laws, customs, and traditions of the country where the arms originate. Where laws and customs governing external additaments are undefined, the register will record only a basic achievement.

Where the applicant uses a title or titles, or if their armorial bearings feature additaments such as awards and medals, ecclesiastical hats or supporters and coronets of rank, the applicant will be expected to assure the editor

(Continued on Page 5)

HOW TO REGISTER A COAT OF ARMS

Continued from Page 4

that they are genuinely entitled to them and that the awards and titles themselves stem from genuine authorities. The Editors' decision will be final.

It will be the aim of the editor to ensure that all armorial bearings within the International Armorial are genuine and the persons whose names are included therein will be expected to give an undertaking that the information they have furnished is true in every respect. Where an armiger uses assumed arms he will be expected to satisfy the register that prior to their assumption every effort was made to ensure that the blazon could not be mistaken for any other coat of arms already in use by another person, body or corporation. If, however the editor should discover that any record may not conform to the information supplied, the relevant entry may then be deleted from the register until the point at issue has been resolved.

Applicants are advised that if they are in any doubt about the acceptability of their armorial bearings, they should make prior inquiries. The Armorial Register reserves the right to reject any application. Where a substantial amount of work or research has been undertaken on any application which proves to be unsuitable for the register (i.e. self-styled (bogus) titles or no legitimate right to use of arms or additaments), we reserve the right to recoup any costs incurred. Cost: £50

JOSEPH PILSUDSKI FACTS

Continued from Page 1

of the revolutionary movement in Russia, Pilsudski entered Russian Poland at the end of 1904, but after the failure of the revolution in 1905, his Polish Socialist party split; Pilsudski's faction insisted on the party's primary goal of creating an independent Poland, whereas the left faction wished this goal to be deemphasized. In Austrian Poland, Pilsudski began to form a secret force in 1908 that would become a Polish national army. By 1910, Pilsudski was receiving assistance from Austrian military forces.

In World War I, Pilsudski commanded the 1st Brigade of the Polish Legion against the Russians under Austro-Hungarian command. In order to free their soldiers for duty on the Western front, the Central Powers proclaimed the independence of Poland on Nov. 5, 1916, and Pilsudski was appointed chief of the military section of the Polish State Council; however when the Central Powers refused to accept the Polish army as an organ of a Polish state, Pilsudski was defiant and was arrested by the Germans in July 1917, and jailed in Magdeburg.

Released in the fall of 1918, Pilsudski returned to Warsaw in November 1918, where he was proclaimed head of state and commander-in-chief of the Polish armed forces. Agreeing with the Polish National Committee, which was supported by the Western powers, he named Dmowski, right-wing leader, as the first Polish deputy to the Paris Peace Conference. Poland's first Parliament in 1919 confirmed Pilsudski as chief of state, with Ignace Jan Paderewski as prime minister. Almost immediately, Pilsudski needed to defend Polish territory against any attack by the Red Army, and initially he was successful in occupying much territory that had belonged to historical Poland but that had long been under Russian rule. He favored a federal organization of the new state to include these territories, whereas Dmowski favored their outright annexation to the Polish state. A Soviet counteroffensive reached the environs of Warsaw, but Pilsudski, created marshal of Poland on March 19, 1920, repelled it with the assistance of French General Maxime Weygand, thus ending the Soviet threat by August 1920.

(Continued on Page 6)

DUES PAID IN 2013

Thank you one and all – members and friends – who have sent in 2013 Dues and Contributions. For those on the membership mailing list, if you missed the Winter 2013 Dues Letter and Return Envelope folded into the Journal, a second direct mailing will be sent to those we have not heard from as yet. Thank you for your continued support.

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JOSEPH PILSUDSKI FACTS

Continued from Page 1

The new constitution of March 1921, which limited executive powers considerably, caused Pilsudski's retirement from the presidency, although he continued as army chief of staff; he resigned this post also on May 29, 1923, when a conservative government took power. Disillusioned with the workings of the parliamentary system, Pilsudski marched with troops on Warsaw on May 12, 1926, and though elected president by the National Assembly on May 31, 1926, he refused the position and served as minister of defense until his death.

From late 1926 to 1928, and again in 1930, Pilsudski served as Polish prime minister, ruling dictatorially and arresting members of the Sejm who opposed his rule. He was the real ruler of Poland, choosing the holders of important offices. His associates, August Zaleski and Józef Beck held the foreign office during the period, concluding a nonaggression treaty with the Soviet Union in July 1932 and another with Germany in January 1934, although Pilsudski himself had wanted to oppose Adolf Hitler's entry to power with force. On May 12, 1935, Pilsudski died and was buried in Wawel Cathedral in Cracow. His collected works were published in Warsaw from 1930 to 1936 with selections appearing in English in 1931.

FONS HONORUM

By Dr. Felix w.L. Holewinski

The Polish Nobility Association Foundation has never become involved in controversies surrounding the legitimacy of Orders of Knighthood and continues this policy. However, it is to the benefit of the Foundation's members that there be a clear understanding of the most important and universally accepted standard by which the legitimacy of orders of knighthood are judged. This concept, termed fons honorum, stipulate who has the right to bestow various titles and honors, including knighthood. During the earliest period of Feudalism, it was common practice for knight commanders to confer knighthood upon their finest soldiers. In turn, these knights could legitimately function as fons honorum, bestowing knighthood on others. This situation evolved during the Crusades with the proliferation of Crusading Orders. Knights within these orders took vows of obedience to their Grand Masters, who assumed the sole right of fons honorum to the awarding of knighthood. During the 13th century powerful monarchs arose, such as HHH Emperor Frederick II (as King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor), who reserved the right of fons honorum to themselves exclusively. Finally, with the end of feudalism and the rise of nation states, fons honorum became the sole prerogative of monarchs or heads of states.

In modern practice, the right of fons honorum (as it applies to the legitimacy of orders of knighthood) is discussed in the writings of Lord Shelton, Duke of Warren. He divides fons honorum into several classes but the most relevant to modern orders of knighthood is contained in the first three classes.

The first class of fons honorum applies to reigning monarchs (regnant or de facto monarchs) of sovereign or heads of state (including republics whose constitutions permit the awarding of knighthood).

The second class of fons honorum applies to deposed monarchs of sovereign states or principalities. Such deposed monarchs, however, cannot create new orders of knighthood. They can only award orders of knighthood as existed when the said monarchs were deposed.

The third class of fons honorum applies to heads of royal houses that previously ruled states or principalities and existed prior to the Congress of Vienna. Such royal houses must not have freely and voluntarily abdicated their royal prerogatives, but had been removed through revolution or been forced out. In this category there might be several royal families or branches of families whose heads hold the prerogative of pretenders to vacant thrones. In such cases all recognized pretenders may hold the right of fons honorum.

In this third class, the same rules apply as to deposed monarchs; namely that royal dynasties can only award Orders of Knighthood or serve as Royal Protectors for those orders that had been dynastic orders when the respective royal families ruled their nations or principalities or whose former principalities, kingdoms and/ or empires were historically associated with a particular order.

These three classes or categories of fons honorum define the best accepted standards in evaluating and judging the legitimacy of modern Orders of Knighthood. Despite this apparent clear criteria, controversy continues to swirl around the legitimacy of various orders. Many "experts" (including some self-proclaimed experts) still disagree as to the appropriateness of justifying the claims of legitimacy of some orders. These disagreements are usually based on either challenges to some aspect of the previously mentioned fons honorum criteria or to questioning the validity of claims of some orders as falling within the parameters of the definition of fons honorum.

(Continued on Page 8)

FONS HONORUM

Continued from Page 7

There is also a gray area that includes organizations many authorities classify as quasi-chivalric that do not perfectly fit into one of the three classes of fons honorum but have characteristics that make them more legitimate than privately organized, self-proclaimed orders.

Ultimately, an individual who might be offered the honor of being awarded membership in an order of knighthood must judiciously consider and ponder the merits and advisability of accepting such an honor. One should base one's decision on information available, weigh the divergent opinions of various authorities in the field and consider any bias that such authorities may hold.

There are a variety of reference works that one can consult listing and discussing the nature and legitimacy of various Orders of Knighthood. These works, unfortunately, do not universally agree on all orders. One must sift through the material available, compare authors and arrive at one's own opinion. One of the most respected authors on this subject is Peter Bander van Duren. While he has passed away his, *Orders of Knighthood and Orders of Merit: The Pontifical, Religious and Secularised Catholic Orders and their relationship to the Apostolic See*, published in 1985 and revised and greatly enlarged in 1995, is considered classics. While these works do not include all current orders, they do provide one of the most well-documented and researched works available in the field. In particular, the 1995 issue has a very comprehensive historic review of various orders and discusses numerous extinct orders. In addition, its numerous coloured plates superbly illustrate the decorations of certain orders and photos including illustrations of royals and prominent individuals properly wearing the decorations of orders.

POLISH NOBILITY ASSOCIATION (F) ORDERS OF MERIT: A BRIEF HISTORY

By: Leonard J. Suligowski (deceased)

Another change, in the structure of society, affected the development of Orders in France. After the French Revolution, the Commune decided to reward citizens in the military for their role in fighting for freedom, as well as civilians who benefitted their new society. In 1802, the French Legion of Honor issued commendations for service. By 1805, there were five classes of honor, and they became the prototype for Orders of Merit.

In the Legion of Honor, democracy became a part of the new chivalry. No longer was this limited to men of noble birth, as in the past, who received favors from a Sovereign. The Order of Merit was the new society's way of recognizing citizens of merit. The head of state, be he King or President, could now bestow honors upon his citizenry.

The new Democratic society spread through many countries as the old monarchy lost its control. This resulted in existing Orders of Chivalry and Secular Orders being changed and divided. In 1808, the Danish Order of Dannenberg (1671) was divided, by the founding of new Orders of different classes. This was originated before the French Revolution by the French Military Order of St. Louis in 1693, whose three classes were:

- Grand Cross
- Commander's Cross
- Knight's Cross

(Continued on Page 9)

POLISH NOBILITY ASSOCIATION (F) ORDERS OF MERIT: A BRIEF HISTORY

Continued from Page 8

This then became the pattern for later Democratic Orders. Today the Polish Nobility Association administers two Orders (Awards) of Merit each consisting of one class:

The Royal Order of Piast

The Royal Order of Piast (one class), was established on January 27, 1927. The Royal Order of Piast is a progressive Order of Chivalry and Merit, given by the PNAF to recognize individuals who contribute to the well-being and knowledge of the Polish-Lithuanian Nations.

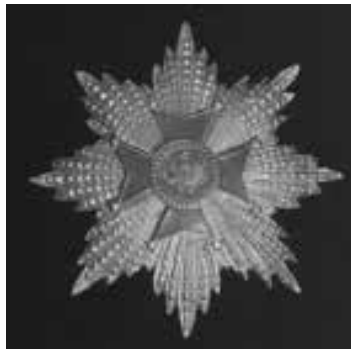
Its purpose is to protect the absolute independence of the Polish Lithuanian States, and the ultimate recovery of the achievements of the Piast Dynasty; through the realization of a project/movement via "The Slavic Commonwealth of Nations." The main organizer was Rev. Count Chodkiewicz and other Polish-Lithuanian nobles.

Today, the Royal Order of Piast is granted as a Merit Award to a qualified individual regardless of religion, race, sex, or national origin for cultural or humanitarian contributions made on behalf of Poland/Polonia and Lithuania. They must be recognized and have achieved recognition in the criteria for nomination.

HOW DOES ONE QUALIFY FOR AN R.O.P. OR AND R.O.J.

The Order of Piast (R.O.P.) and the **Royal Order of Jagiello** (R.O.J.) are awards of merit given to individuals who have contributed significantly to the Cultural, Humanitarian, and Historical promulgation of the people of the Polish/Lithuanian Commonwealth. The nomination process requires:

- A. a **recommendation** from at least two Polish Nobility Association/Foundation members who are in good standing.
- B. a **curriculum vitae** (Resume) showing the qualifications of the individual in the above-stated areas of achievement: Cultural, Humanitarian, and Historical endeavors.
- C. a **vote of the directors of the College of Heraldry**. A majority vote is required. In the event of a tie, the President of the Foundation will cast the tie-breaking vote.



A cross pate, indented, each cross arm is red with gold trim and each point ending with a silver ball. In the center is a circle of white dots surrounding a blue field upon which is displayed a crowned white eagle. The cross is surmounted on a silver multi-rayed star, and can be suspended on a red moiré sash, or the star can be used as a breast decoration on formal wear. The above star is no longer issued, the present day Orders are of one class. A similar cross suspended by a ribbon may be worn as a breast decoration.

(Continued on Page 10)

POLISH NOBILITY ASSOCIATION (F) ORDERS OF MERIT: A BRIEF HISTORY

Continued from Page 9

The Royal Order of Piast was named after Piast, the legendary 9th century founder of the Piast dynasty, of Poland (c. 840 A.D.)

II. The Royal Order of the Jagiellon

The Royal Order of Jagiellon was established in 1969 at the recommendation of the late Sigmund H. Uminski, former Grand Chancellor of the Polish Nobility Association Foundation, to recognize the significant role played by Lithuania and the Lithuanian people in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of Nations.

RECIPIENTS

Sigmund H. Uminski, R.O.P. and R.O.J. had the unique pleasure of being knighted twice in the same day. This event took place in the chapel of the Felician Sisters Convent, Mother Angela Hall, on February 25, 1975. The ritual ceremony of investiture into the Royal Order of Piast, was conducted by Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski, President of the PNAF. The prince was assisted by Countess Aleciya Orłowski-Andrews who represented the PNAF Board of Trustees.

- Sigmund H. Uminski was also accepted into the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Knights of Malta by Bishop, Prince von Lobkowitz.
- The late Sigmund H. Uminski wrote "Poland Discovers America," the first volume in a series printed by the Polish Publication Society of America in New York. Uminski was directly involved with the 22-volume history as its General Editor. One of his other works, *River's Edge*, has also received recognition.

DAVID P.J. SAS-TYSOWSKI, R.O.P. AND R.O.J. For his years of work in Library research and development, political activities on behalf of Poland and Polonia, Philanthropic contributions David P.J. SAS-TYSOWSKI was presented with both the R.O.P. and R.O. J. awards of merit.

ALECIJA ANDREWS (nee Countess Orłowska), R.O.P. , For her promotion of Polish Culture, having survived a Warsaw labor force roundup by occupying Nazi invading forces, her removal to forced labor in Germany and loss of her family and immigration with Col. Rbt. Andrews (later General) U.S.A., pursuing a career in the Arts and promoting Polish Culture.

Bishop Paul, Prince von Lobkowitz, R.O.P. and R.O.J. for his enthusiastic support and service as a long time member of the Board of Trustees of the PNAF. The loss of his siblings to the Nazi occupation of his homeland and eventually immigrating to the U.S.A. and founding the Hospice of St. John in Lakeland, Colorado.
Countess Judith Arz und Arzio, R.O.J. for her heroic flight during the Hungarian Revolution with her infant son and the loss of her family estates in Hungary and donation of their estate ARZIO in Italy to a Catholic Religious Order of nuns for the perpetual care of her ill husband during his life.

Princess Tatiana Galitzin, R.O.J. as a descendant of Gedymin Grand Duke (maternal from Rurik) of Lithuania and founder of numerous Princely Houses some extinct while other prosper with descendants residing around the world.

Count Leonard Leszczynski for his dedication and service as a Board member of the PNAF and hosting the PNAF delegation at the 1983 celebration of the Polish-Lithuanian and allied armies in the defeat of the Turks

(Continued on Page 11)

POLISH NOBILITY ASSOCIATION (F) ORDERS OF MERIT: A BRIEF HISTORY

Continued from Page 10

at the “Battle of Vienna”. All members of the PNAF delegation attended the special mass celebrated by His Holiness, John Paul II.

This unique monarchy, Jagiellon Dynasty, was created by the descendants of Guedymine/Gedimin as hereditary Grand Dukes of Lithuania/elected Kings of Poland beginning with Jogaila (Wladyslaw Jagiello, Polish King from 1386-1434). This union made the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth the largest land empire in Europe during its Golden Age. The Royal Order of Jagiello is awarded to individuals for their significant humanitarian/cultural contributions to Lithuania, on behalf of Lithuanians around the world. Individuals must be recognized by their charitable activities, which have a major impact on people of Lithuanian ancestry.



A Maltese cross, of eight points, each point ending with a silver ball. The cross is blue and edged in gold, and surmounted of a gold patriarchal (double armed) cross. Between the arms of the cross are radiating rays. The decoration is suspended from a blue moiré sash or mounted on a silver multi-pointed star and worn as a breast decoration, and suspended from a grand cordon sash of blue moiré for the Knight's Grand Cross. The Knight's Commander degree is suspended from a neck ribbon. This decoration is also surmounted of a gold crown, when suspended from a sash.

The patriarchal cross, in this decoration, commemorates the conversion of King Jagiello, of Lithuania, to Christianity upon his marriage to Queen Jadwiga of Poland. The above star is no longer issued. The present day Orders are of one class with a similar cross suspended from a ribbon may be worn over the left breast.

Registration of the Orders

The PNA Foundation has officially registered the Orders with the Institute of Orders Researches in West Berlin (in 1974) under Dr. Klietman, Director of the Institute.

Historical Information

In the past, nominees (Chevaliers and Dames) into the Royal Order of Piast and Royal Order of Jagiellon were of noble origin. Applicants for this honor were chosen from the membership of the Polish Nobility Association Foundation. Today anyone regardless of nationality, religion, race, who meets the criteria may be nominated.

The Royal Order of Piast and the Royal Order of Jagiellon are the only PNAF Orders of Merit. The Orders are administered jointly by the Chairman and President of the PNAF Board of Trustees.

THE NATIONAL KATYN MEMORIAL



*For the full story from the establishment of the Katyn Memorial Monument committee please look up on the WEB “National Katyn Memorial Foundation” or “Richard Porcmski, President” to see how it all came about and the many wonderful, patriotic individuals who made this world class monument possible.
–Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski, PNAF*

The Katyn massacre, also known as the Katyn Forest massacre (Polish: zbrodnia katyńska, mord katyński, ‘Katyń crime’; Russian: КАТЫНСКИЙ расстрел Katynskij ra’sstrel ‘Katyn shooting’), was a mass execution of Polish nationals carried out by the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), the Soviet secret police, in April and May 1940. The massacre was prompted by Lavrentiy Beria’s proposal to execute all members of the Polish Officer Corps, dated 5 March 1940. This official document was approved and signed by the Soviet Politburo, including its leader, Joseph Stalin. The number of victims is estimated at about 22,000, with 21,768 being a lower bound. [1] The victims were murdered in the Katyn Forest in Russia, the Kalinin and Kharkiv prisons and elsewhere. Of the total killed, about 8,000 were officers taken prisoner during the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland, another 6,000 were police officers, with the rest being Polish intelligentsia arrested for allegedly being “intelligence agents, gendarmes, landowners, saboteurs, factory owners, lawyers, officials and priests.”[1]

The term “Katyn massacre” originally referred specifically to the massacre at Katyn Forest, near the villages of Katyn and Gnezdovo (approximately 19 kilometers (12 miles) west of Smolensk, Russia), of Polish military officers in the Kozelsk prisoner-of-war camp. This was the largest of several simultaneous executions of prisoners of war. Other executions occurred at the geographically distant Starobelsk and Ostashkov camps, at the NKVD headquarters in Smolensk, and at prisons in Kalinin (Tver), Kharkiv, Moscow, and other Soviet cities. Still more executions took place at various locations in Belarus and Western Ukraine, based on special lists of Polish prisoners, prepared by

the NKVD specifically for those regions. The modern Polish investigation of the killings covered not only the massacre at Katyn forest, but also the other mass murders mentioned above. Polish organisations, such as the Katyn Committee and the Federation of Katyn Families, consider the victims murdered at the locations other than Katyn as part of the overall massacre.[1]

The government of Nazi Germany announced the discovery of mass graves in the Katyn Forest in 1943. When the London-based Polish government-in-exile asked for an investigation by the International Red Cross, Stalin immediately severed diplomatic relations with it. The Soviet Union claimed the victims had been murdered by the Nazis, and continued to deny responsibility for the massacres until 1990, when it officially acknowledged and condemned the perpetration of the killings by the NKVD, as well as the subsequent cover-up.[1][2][3][a]

An investigation conducted by the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Soviet Union (1990–1991) and the Russian Federation (1991–2004), has confirmed Soviet responsibility for the massacres. It was able to confirm the deaths of 1,803 Polish citizens but refused to classify this action as a war crime or an act of genocide. The investigation was closed on grounds that the perpetrators of the massacre were already dead, and since the Russian government would not classify the dead as victims of Stalinist repression, formal posthumous rehabilitation was ruled out.[4] The human rights society Memorial issued a statement which declared “this termination of investigation is inadmissible” and that their confirmation of only 1,803 people killed “requires explanation because it is common knowledge that more than 14,500 prisoners were killed.”[5]

(Story will continue in the next issue of the White Eagle)