



## Jasonia!

*A "Zawotanic" or clan war cry, also a designation of arms in Polish/  
Lithuanian heraldry*

By Stanislas M.A. Yassukovich

Genealogy is a subject which interests few in general, but a far larger number in particular where it pertains to their own pedigrees. In no country is the interest in personal genealogy greater than in that haven of egalitarianism, the United States of America. Americans outbuy the British for such works as Burke's Landed Gentry, in bogus Lordships of the Manner, and all other paraphernalia designed to demonstrate the importance of breeding. Their own "blue book", the Social Register, is a model of anti-egalitarianism, despite a growing incursion into its pages by new money, and, in American terms, that real social horror: politicians. Originally, divorce meant exclusion but if this policy had been maintained, the publication would have starved to death years ago. In an age of pre-marital co-habitation, the book cross-references females with their married names under a section entitled "Married Maidens". Holiday residences are listed under "Dilatory Domiciles". Those of us who remain listed (and many are delisting as the publication's exclusivity inevitably declines) see it as a handy telephone directory and a reminder of who married whom. The ladies' previous husbands are all listed in brackets. The gentlemen are spared their marital history in print. In no

country in the world is social rank as important as in America, founded on the principle that all men are created equal. The Founding Fathers made no mention of women, but then, neither did Jean Jacques Rousseau. Despite American pre-occupation with sexism, the most prestigious American societies, all focussed on heredity, are segregated. "The Daughters of the American Revolution", "Colonial Dames of America", and "Daughters of the Cincinnati", on the one hand, with "Colonial Lords of Manors", "Sons of the Revolution", on the other. "Mayflower Descendants" are presumably co-ed. Ladies' societies predominate.

I make no apology for my interest in my own pedigree. I am anti-egalitarian. I consider egalitarianism to be at the heart of political tyranny. The concept that all men are equal defies the evidence of one's own eyes and was invented by those wishing to secure ascendancy over others. It is also inconceivable that breeding should have obvious consequences for animals but



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none for humans and to so claim is an example of human arrogance. Political and philosophical egalitarianism has also undermined the real truth: that all men are equally important, which is a very different thing from being equal. Nature is full of elements which are of equal value, but are obviously not equal. All this being said, there is no doubt that preoccupation with a personal pedigree is generally regarded as elitist and even snobbish; although this last criticism, I would contest since I believe snobbism is about a desire to hobnob only with those of a higher social standing.

My family is of Polish-Lithuanian origin

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All members and readers are encouraged and welcome to submit Feedback regarding The "White Eagle Journal" articles and content. If you would like to share your thoughts, submit material or have an idea for an article please contact George W. Helon, White Eagle Journal Editorial Board at: [ghelon@yahoo.com.au](mailto:ghelon@yahoo.com.au).

## News & Notes

- Princess Brigitta of Prussia and Sweden 2<sup>nd</sup> wife of Prince Michael of Prussia committed suicide. Prince Michael was an acquaintance and became aware of the PNAF at a cocktail party hosted in Frankfurt in honor of PNAF officers who drove up from Vienna after John Paul's II celebration of Mass for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Victory at the Battle of Vienna at the Polish Church in Kahlenberg, Austria.

- Prince Dimitri Romanovich (Romanov) has passed away at age 90. He was one of the claimants to the defunct Russian throne.

- Piotr Wilczek, Ph.D, the new Polish Ambassador to the U.S. has a message for us from the Washington Embassy at: [Washington.press@msz.gov.pl](mailto:Washington.press@msz.gov.pl)

- King Michael of Romania celebrates his 95th birthday.

### Suggested organizations and publications of possible interest:

- Polish American Journal [www.polamjournal.com](http://www.polamjournal.com) "Great Cultural publication (monthly)" - Current events, history, entertainment, genealogy, heraldry
- "The International Monarchist League", P O Box 5307 Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3DZ, UK. [www.monarchyinternational.net](http://www.monarchyinternational.net), email [enquiries@monarchy.net](mailto:enquiries@monarchy.net)
- "History Today" subscription on internet at: [historytoday.com](http://historytoday.com)
- "Royal Forums Blog", [www.theroyalforums.com](http://www.theroyalforums.com)
- "History of Royal Women Newsletter" at: [info@historyofroyalwomen.com](mailto:info@historyofroyalwomen.com)
- "Nobility Analogous Traditional Elites", newsletter at: [www.nobility.org/](http://www.nobility.org/)



## Count Jan Ladzinski - a Man with a Remarkable and Strange History

By Thomas L. Hollowak

**Thomas L. Hollowak, Author/Historian**

**Associate Director Emeritus, Special Collections, Longsdale Library, University of Baltimore**

In the 19th century western journalists were not necessarily weighed down in reporting truthfully, but had a tendency to freely mix fact with fiction. The best known example is Mark Twain's article, "Petrified Man" in the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. Literary historian, Ben Tarnoff wrote that Twain "...despite his gift for observation...discovered that dry facts bored him. He preferred to embroider and enlarge the truth, or ignore it altogether." Twain later would not only admit the article was a hoax but wrote it was, "an unmitigated lie, made from the whole cloth." A desire to rise above the "sagebrush obscurity" of frontier journalism may be among his motivations for three fake articles he was known to author while a newspaperman in Nevada.<sup>1</sup>

Mark Twain's subsequent writing did catapult him to become one of America's foremost writers, but the immediate result of his prank articles was to force him to flee Nevada for San Francisco in disgrace. This may have tempered subsequent western journalist to sprinkle some facts with their fiction. Especially, since Twain's news reports were reprinted by other unsuspecting newspapers and their editors were quick to cut the journalist loose when the deception was revealed.

Ryan Cordell, a professor in the English department at Northeastern University, found that reprinting was rampant in 19th century newspapers. As he and a colleague discovered it was not only news,

but poems, articles, serialized fiction, and anecdotes that were republished.<sup>2</sup> In the spring of 1887 a biographical sketch of a supposed Polish nobleman appeared in the *Denver News*. The strange and adventurous career of Count John Ladzinski, as chronicled in the unsigned article, caught the imagination of newspaper editors across the country and was eagerly reprinted. Although the headline varied from paper to paper the story appeared verbatim. Among the earliest to reprint the article was the *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser* who published the story in its May 5, 1887.<sup>3</sup> Between April and July of 1887 the article would appear in sixteen newspapers across the country.<sup>4</sup> Like a shooting star across the night sky the story shone brightly then disappeared. For the historian the question remains was the story fact, fiction or a combination of both?

The Denver journalist is introduced to Count Ladzinski<sup>5</sup> by a friend of the Polish nobleman at the local beer hall. Ladzinski is sitting at a table with three Russians enjoying caviar sandwiches with their mugs of beer. The men are speaking in French, but when he is introduced to the journalist he is able to converse in English "without a trace of an accent." The Count agrees to an interview and submits to the reporter's "interrogations" with a fusion of good humor and modesty as he "recants his adventures."

Born in Warsaw in 1830 his earliest re-

membrance is his mother being "knouted" for refusing to tell where her husband is hiding. Ladzinski was six at the time. Six months later his father was captured and shot on orders of the Czar. His mother then disappeared and "to this day he does not know what became of her." The following year, homeless and near starvation he was rescued "by a kind-hearted Jew merchant, who adopted and took him to St. Petersburg where he remained for seven years." The merchant hired a tutor for Ladinski and his two sons to provide them with an education. One evening while walking along a quiet street in St. Petersburg he happened upon two Russian soldiers beating a Polish Jewish peddler who was refusing to give them money. Outraged by their actions Ladinski demanded they stop their brutal attack. The soldiers let the peddler alone but grabbed the enraged youth and were about to haul him to prison when he pulled a knife killing one of the soldiers and seriously wounding the other. "Realizing what he had done, young Ladinski stowed away on an English vessel" and escaped. While at sea he was discovered by the captain of the ship, but fortunately he took a liking to the boy and when the ship docked at London, he provide him with 5 pounds and a suit of clothes.

He remained in London for a year and the Jewish merchant who had become his foster-father provided funds for Ladzinski through a friend who lived in the city. The Count would probably have continued to

reside there, but after his discovery by Russian secret service agents he “was obliged to flee England, and went to Rio de Janeiro.” Upon his arrival he secured a “position as a tutor in the family of a rich Brazilian and remained there three years.” After asking his benefactor to secure him an army commission, Ladzinski was shortly thereafter assigned to a man-of-war and sent on a cruise of Europe. At Naples he and several of his fellow officers were invited to a masked ball. At the end of the evening’s festivities they were returning to their ship when Ladzinski somehow became separated from the group. Without warning he was knocked down gagged and bound and put aboard a Russian vessel anchored in the bay. On board “he was placed in irons and kept in prison” until their arrival at St. Petersburg. For six-months after his return he was held in a dungeon without seeing anyone until one day he was taken before a tribunal and tried for the murder of the soldier. Ladzinski received a life sentence to be served working in a Siberian mine. “He made the journey to the mines on foot, with a number of political prisoners.” At this point in the narrative the reported noted that the Count “seemed averse to speaking about the hardships he underwent there, but said that at the end of ... five years, he was the only one left out of the twenty-three men who went with him.”

At the end of his fifth year in exile his good behavior and affability won the respect of his jailers and he was “removed from the mines and given a clerkship in a government warehouse.” While working as a clerk “he conceived the idea of forging himself a pardon from the Czar.” It took a year and with the assistance of the daughter of the post commander, Colonel Tourteioff (sic), he succeeded. Once again his Jewish foster-father managed to supply funds for a return to St. Petersburg from where he planned to flee the country.

He wasn’t long in the city when Russian spies pounced and had him thrown in prison while an investigation was mounted into his pardon. The Czar took a personal interest and interviewed Ladzinski who admitted to the forgery. “His Royal Highness pardoned Ladinski for the murder, but allowed the law to take its course in regard to the forgery, the result being that he was again given a life sentence in the Siberian mines, “and he started back to the hell he had schemed so long to escape from.”

It was on the trek back to Siberia that Ladzinski and a Russian political prisoner, Captain Komiskoff, “managed to free themselves of their shackles and escape.” The two crossed the Austrian border on foot. They believed they had walked over a 1,000 miles to secure their freedom and eventually made their way to England. In London the Count supported himself “by giving music and painting lessons.” During his sojourn in England he married had two children before his wife died around the time the American Civil War began. Anxious to get in the fight he placed his children in an asylum and emigrated to America joining the New York 49th Regiment as a private. By the war’s end “his valor and covered with “honorable scars” along with a four-month stint in the notorious confederate prison Andersonville, he had risen to the rank of a Major.<sup>6</sup>

He provided other incidents of “his eventful life,” but the reporter chose not to write of them. Rather he did have one final question - given the hardships he had endured at their hands; how could he a Pole, be friends with Russians? Ladzinski responded, “This is my friend, Captain Komiskoff” and these other gentlemen are all educated “and have no love for the Czar.” “We were nihilist, but are now American citizens.” He added they all had money and planned to buy ranches in Colorado. Ladzinski then “laughed heartily as he drained his beer, saying something

in Russian to his companions, which caused them to smile also.” The reporter ended his article with an admiring observation, “he is a well preserved man for his age, and one looking at him would not think he had undergone the hardships he has.”

Maybe it was this frontier journalist admission that the story was a mix of fact and myth. Many of those who participated in the 1830 November Uprising were executed or exiled to hard labor in Siberian mines, Russian secret agents were known to operate in Europe, the New York 49th Regiment did participate in a number of battles throughout the American Civil War and one of the most notorious prisons was Andersonville. Count John Ladzinski and his exploits appear to be the invention of an unknown Denver reporter who probably also hoped to also rise above his own “sagebrush obscurity.”

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Ben Tarnoff, *The Bohemians: Mark Twain and the San Francisco Writers Who Reinvented American Literature*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>Aleszu Bajak, “How Newspaper Stories Went Viral in the 19th Century,” <http://www.storybench.org/how-newspaper-stories-went-viral-in-the-19th-century/>.

<sup>3</sup>“An Adventurous Career,” *Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser*, May 3, 1887, 3. The earliest reprint I was able to find was in the issue of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (April 30), “A Count’s Career: Remarkable Adventures of a Pole Who Escaped From Siberia by Forging the Czar’s Signature,” p. 10. The Count’s surname is given as Ladinski a Jewish spelling of Ladzinski. I have used the Polish spelling throughout except when quoting from the Denver News article.

<sup>4</sup>“A Count’s Career: Adventures of a Pole Who Escaped From Siberia by Forging the Czar’s Signature,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (May 2) p. 4; “A Polish Count: The Story of Major Ladinski’s Remarkable and Romantic Career,” *The Humboldt Union* (Kansas, May 7) p. 4; “John, Count Ladinski: His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States,” *The Sun* (New York, May 9) p. 3; “A Count’s Career: Adventures of a Pole Who Escaped From Siberia,” *Juneau County Argus* (New Libson, Wisconsin, May 13) p. 3; “John, Count Ladinski: His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States,” *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky, May 15) p. 12; “A Polish Count: The Story of Major Ladinski’s Remarkable and Romantic Career,” *The Galveston Daily News* (May 15) p. 9;



# The Freedom of the City of London.

## “Baaaaaa ... ! There be Sheep on London Bridge!”

© Wieslaw George, Marquis de Helon FCL, JP (Qual.), KCSG, GCEG, PNA: Australia, 2016

I was very privileged to have been in London this September past where I was admitted as a Freeman of the City of London by Redemption; after which I was very fortunate to have been given the once in a lifetime opportunity to exercise my right to drive sheep across London Bridge.

Since the mid-1800s the Freedom of the City of London has been granted as a ‘honour’ by a general resolution of Common Council, by ‘patrimony’ (inheritance), ‘apprenticeship’ (time served as an trade intern), or by ‘redemption’ (purchase, that is a donation to the Freeman’s School), with the latter still requiring a resolution by the Common Council.

Steeped in long-held tradition, and believed to have been first presented in 1237, the Freedom of the City of London sports one of the oldest surviving traditional ceremonies still in existence.

Today, the City of London rarely grants Honorary Freedoms, and these by their prestige, are only awarded to Royalty, Heads of State, or public figures of global standing like the first President of South Africa Nelson Mandela, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Honorary Freedoms are presented at the Guildhall by the Chamberlain of the City of London in the presence of the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, the Court of Common Council, the Sheriffs and invited guests.

The Freedom of the City of London by Redemption on the other hand is open to a much wider section of society, and includes many notable dignitaries and celebrities who have achieved success, recognition, acknowledgement, or distinction in their chosen field.

Notable personages who have received The Freedom of the City of London by Redemption include the Irish singer Bob ‘Boomtown Rats’ Geldof, English novelist J.K. ‘Harry Potter’ Rowling, American actor Henry ‘the Fonz’ Winkler, English actor Ian ‘Gandalf’ McKellen, English actress Dame Judi Dench, English comedian Stephen Fry - and American actor



**With Murray Craig, Clerk of the Chamberlain's Court (right): Guildhall, London; 12 September 2016.**



**Pictured with Murray Craig, Clerk of the Chamberlain's Court (right) and Ernest Brocklehurst, the Court Beadle (left).**



**Pictured with one of my nominators Frederick Trowman, Ward Beadle of Bassishaw (right) and my cousins Yvonne Holloway (nee Helon – far right) and Wendy Helon (left).**

and like many of similar ilk would love to claim descent from a brother or kin of Rurik the Dane – sometimes known as Rurik the Red, or the Rus, hence Russia. This is the Viking Chieftain who colonised greater Russia. But there is no evidence to support such a claim. More likely there is a descent from one of his soldiers. The family name is actually Jasiukowicz. When my father transliterated the name from Cyrillic to Roman letters on arrival in America, he used the spelling he thought would ensure more accurate pronunciation. In fact the choice had been made for him, since when my grandfather arrived in Washington at the head of the Russian military mission; a standard transliteration was applied by the Embassy. Of course, my non-Russified cousins still spell the name correctly as they always rendered it in Roman letters. A great number of immigrants in America, often of Jewish origin, whose names end in “owicz” or “ewicz” – which means descendant from, or clan of – suffer their names being mispronounced with a soft “w” rather than the hard “v” sound, and an end sound to rhyme with “blitz” rather “bitch”. I am sure we would have survived. But I would not have had the pleasure of hearing George Plimpton, rendering once at the Porcellian Club in Cambridge, Massachusetts, open with the phrase: “I often have an itch to kick Stanislaw Yassukovich”. Speaking of the “Porc” (as the oldest gentleman’s club in America is nicknamed) the great family of Bohemian magnates Lobkowicz had two or three of the family settled in America who were members, and they coped with persistent mispronunciation of their famous name with no ill effects.

My forebears would have been knights, in the service of various magnates. An ancestor Jan, or Ivan, obtained the Dyrwaniszi estate in Vilno Province in 1604 from Zygmunt III, the first of three Vasa dynasty of Sweden members to be elected Kings of Poland, after the last of the Jagiellon kings. Zygmunt’s mother was Catherine Jagiellon and his father John II, King of Sweden. After being elected King

of Poland in 1587, Zygmunt also became King of Sweden in 1592. Jan Jasiukowicz and his ancestors bore arms (“herb”) of the Jasiencyk, also known as Jasiona, and, sometimes, Klucz: Azure, a Key or pale wise, upwards and turned to the Dexter, and for crest five ostrich feathers Argent issuing from a Coronet Or. This requires some explanation. The Polish system of heraldry is entirely different from the rest of Western Europe. The same coat of arms can be shared by several families, usually unrelated. Such groups of families are called “herby” and their arms have names of their own thought to date back to ancient war cries used by clans or other family groups. Their arms are designated “proclamation-arms” by heraldic specialists. A vaguely similar structure might be Scottish clans and their tartans. My own “herb” Jasiencyk includes the Michafowski family – Austrian counts and French Imperial barons, who obviously blew with the prevailing wind, and the Polish branch of the Tartar princely family Shirinski. The clan war cry “Jasiona” strikes me as unlikely to provoke fear in the hearts of the enemy, even if shouted very loudly. The Polish nobility, known as the Szlachta, were in theory all equal and untitled, the exception being the few great magnate families such as the Potocki or Zamoyski, who bore the title Prince. Foreign titles such as Count or Baron were granted by foreign rulers and were rare until Russian monarchs of German origin, such as Catherine II, started sprinkling them about. The same is true of Russia itself where only one genuine Russian title existed: Prince or Kniaz and the rest of the nobility were untitled, until foreign influences, mostly Germanic, infiltrated. Crests on all Polish/Lithuanian arms carry the same coronet, placed on a helm. This posed a problem for an Austrian friend of mine, Max Turnauer, until recently Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of the Knights of St. John and Jerusalem to Prague. Max’s sense of hierarchical distinctions within the nobility is so *recherché* that he separates those with covered crowns – kings, princes and some dukes – from those with mere coronets

which are, of course, open on top and used by the aristocratic masses. We were once at one of his very grand shooting parties down in Dorset where we sat down twentyfive or so for dinner. Copperplate written place cards named my wife and me as Prince and Princess Yassukovich. I gently informed our host that we were not of the covered crown variety. Undaunted, Max had us down the next evening as Count and Countess – wrong again, of course, but by then I was reluctant to lower the tone of the guest list any further and spent the balance of the weekend as an imposter.

Most are aware of the recent history of Poland, a sad story of frequent territorial rape made easy by the country’s lack of natural boundary defences. Less well-known is the fact that the thousand-year history of Poland includes a period of more than two hundred years as a Commonwealth, the largest state in Europe at the time, incorporating Lithuania, Byelorussia, the Ukraine, large parts of modern Germany, and for that matter, large parts of modern Russia – a total of almost one million square kilometres. The Commonwealth in 1600 had a population of 10 million, twice that of England and two thirds that of France. Only 40 per cent were true Poles, the rest belonging to two main ethnic groups, Lithuanian and Ruthene. But scattered about the empire, as it truly was, could be found an astonishing variety of nationalities:

Germans, of course, in the port of Gdansk, English and Scots in Elbing, Hungarians and Italians in Krakow and Wilno, Armenians, Tartars in the Ukraine and, in every city, Jews. No city was without a ghetto and together, the Jews made up close to ten per cent of the population. They were tolerated but entirely separate, speaking Hebrew, Yiddish and even Tartar in some areas.

But a distinctive social structure separated Poland from the rest of Western Europe, had led, in a way to the creation of the Commonwealth and, some could say was

the source of the nation's political vulnerability. This was the Szlachta, or nobility. Like the Jews, it also comprised some ten per cent of the population, but its members were all powerful and entirely enfranchised. In theory, their nobility and their exclusive right to the vote as members in permanence of the Sejm, or parliament, were drawn from their obligation to bear arms in defence of the realm. This obligation became unenforceable, but the Szlachta continued to defend their rights to the point of mania against attempts by the magnates to devise a more oligarchic form of government and against attempts by successive elected monarchs to gain greater freedom of action. Poland – and so the Commonwealth – was an elective monarchy, a system which could be described as the worst of both worlds. Missing was the stability which stems from the continuity and legitimacy of hereditary monarchy. Missing also was the accountability associated with an elective office subject to confirmation or change at regular intervals. Poland was a Royal Republic, a political concept as effective as a lame thoroughbred or a cold mince pie. The rediscovery of Rome and things Roman by the European intelligentsia during the Renaissance convinced educated Poles that theirs was a system blessed by the great traditions of antiquity. As Adam Zamoyski points out in his definitive work *The Polish Way*, to be a member of the Szlachta was like being a Roman citizen; they were the “*pupulus Romanus*” while the rest of the population were the “*plebs*”, who counted for nothing and had no rights at all.

By the mid-sixteenth century, the Szlachta were extraordinarily cosmopolitan and dynamic to some extent in that successful merchants and even Jews and peasants were able to gain admission through services to the King or sponsorship by magnates. Within this top ten per cent of the population were to be found Lithuanian and Ruthene boyars – such as my family – Prussian and Baltic nobles, Tartars, Moldavians, Bohemians, Magyars,

Armenians and Italians. Their economic status varied enormously. At the top were the fabulously rich magnates, maintaining courts and life styles that made some western monarchies look shabby. At the bottom were impoverished nobles in menial service to fellow nobles or living like peasants. The rich were certainly not portfolio investors, or even given to aggressive land accumulation – which took place only through inter-marriage – but they spent their fortunes on jewels and other physical manifestations of wealth: horses galore with jewel encrusted and embroidered saddle clothes and fancy tack and equipages. We, their modern descendants, would consider it of unspeakable vulgarity – whilst hankering after the horse side, I must admit. The poor Szlachta spent their lives hanging on to their noble prerogatives for dear life. One of these was the right to attend the election Sejm, the occasional convocation at which a new king was elected. In-between, a more complex bicameral system existed involving deputies elected by the Szlachta divided into constituencies. Tens of thousands of nobles would gather for the election of the Sejm which was held in a large field lined with tents and other stands where factions organised support for their candidates. The horse was a key symbol of nobility, even more than in the West. Polish military strength has always been cavalry. Impoverished nobles would turn up with spurs strapped to bare feet, boots being beyond their means.

My family's first benefactor Zygmunt III, first of the Vasa dynasty, was not a great success. He sought to overturn the policy of religious tolerance seeking to establish a Catholic ascendancy, tried to undermine the Sejm, and had to apologise. He took a leave of absence to claim his Swedish inheritance when his father John III died, was unpopular in Sweden, left his uncle as Regent, and was ultimately deposed by the Swedish Parliament, who determined that his son Wladislas could only succeed to the Swedish throne if he turned Protestant. Back in Poland, Zygmunt (who

started a war which almost led to the loss of Livonia) constantly breached the Polish constitution by carrying out secret diplomatic initiatives and marrying a Hapsburg, generally making himself unpopular with the Szlachta. After trying to totally undermine the Sejm, he faced open rebellion and was only just saved by the fact that the two Grand Hetmen (commanders of the Polish and Lithuanian armies) Chodkiewicz and Zolkiewski, stood by him. The rebels were not punished, so widely supported was their cause. Zygmunt died in 1632 and a Sejm took half an hour to elect his eldest son Wladislas IV whose reign saw the Commonwealth's prestige reach its pinnacle. The fact that every other European nation of importance was engaged in the Thirty Years War, the newly enthroned Romanov dynasty was busy consolidating power in Russia, and the Sublime Porte was not threatening Europe, gave the Commonwealth unique political leverage. Wladislas IV, who was urged to become Holy Roman Emperor, on the death of Ferdinand II, received representations from sixteen foreign courts seeking to place eligible princesses when his wife died and, in 1641, William of Brandenburg, the Great Elector, knelt in homage to Wladislas to receive the tenure of the Duchy of Prussia. Fifteen years later, the Commonwealth was dead as a political force in Europe. Fortunately my family appears to have enjoyed the favour of this great King who, in 1643, confirmed land grants to Pyotr Jasiukowicz, son of Jan, and appointed him to a court position – Cupbearer.

With all its grandeur and glory, the Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or the Two Nations, as it was called for short, incorporated fatal flaws. One of the most obvious was that, leaving aside myriad minorities, there were three principal tribes, not two. The Ruthenes, mostly Orthodox, had mingled with the Lithuanians in the sense that their noble classes had merged, yet they were jealous of their separate identity and this served

to drive a wedge between Lithuania and Catholic Poland. Added to the main ingredients in this cocktail were Tatars, Moldavians, Muscovites, Germans, Jews and sundry other European migrants. The Commonwealth had a frontier (like the American West) in the Ukraine, and the scramble for its rich farmland amongst all these competing interests served to blow off steam but caused tensions with the indigenous Ukrainian magnates. These were truly impressive. The Ostrogski family owned a hundred towns and 1,300 villages. The Wisziowiecki owned 38,000 homesteads with 230,000 tenants. Commonwealth hegemony in the Ukraine was further complicated by Catholic and Orthodox rivalry. The Orthodox interest, led by Prince Ostrogski, allied itself with the Protestants. The Catholic effort was Jesuit led. Adding colour to the chaotic panorama were the Cossacks, a breakaway Tatar group – “Cossack” means “free soldier” in Turkish – whose nomadic and military life style was to make them a permanent source of instability, especially when the whole region became part of the Russian Empire. Wladyslaw IV tried to enlist them in an ill-fated Crusade project. After strong opposition from the Sejm, the initiative got nowhere but triggered an uprising in the Ukraine by a joint Tatar/Cossack force which ultimately led to an alliance between the Commonwealth and Muscovy.

In all the turmoil of the 17th century, my family clearly kept their nose clean and increased their land holdings in Lithuania. Jan Jasiukowicz’s great grandson Andrei acquired an estate in Oszmiany Province called Zeliadz, near the town of Swiecziany (Swiecziany today) one of the oldest Lithuanian towns. His great granddaughter, who married a gentleman called Czechowicz, possessed another estate near Swiecziany called Kapadlo, but by then Lithuania existed no more except as one of what my father always called the “Baltic Provinces” of the Russian Empire. Andrei was prolific and sired seven sons. The sons had varied careers indicating integration into civil society,

even a tendency to adopt bourgeois professions – evolving from the pure soldier/landowner tradition of the Szlachta. One, Anton, had a purely military career. But Mikhail became a surveyor and an arbiter of land boundary disputes. My direct ancestor Ignatii became a lawyer and served as chairman of the investigatory council of the civil court at Kovno. Kovno was an important commercial town in the Middle Ages but had suffered slow decline as a result of the increasing russification of Lithuania – which was formally annexed by Russia in 1795, during Ignatii’s lifetime. Its main activity was as an entrepôt for trade between the Commonwealth and Prussia. Ignatii married a Russian, one Bona Bielopetrovna. Perhaps this influenced their son’s decision to serve in the Imperial Russian Army. Ignatii’s brother Mikhail, the land surveyor, died young and Ignatii served as guardian and trustee of his nephews’ estate – Byalozorovo, also in the Kovno area. These nephews, Ignatii and Wilhelm, appear to have been twins.

Ignatii had four sons and two daughters. The eldest, my great grandfather Stanislas became a general in the Guard’s Sapper regiment of the Imperial Russian Army. The Guards were army strength in the Imperial Russian military, as opposed to a brigade, as in the British army, and contained several cavalry and foot regiments as well as artillery and sappers. But it was his younger brother Ignatii who was to become by far the most successful of my branch of the family. If it hadn’t been for the unfortunate intervention of the Russian Revolution and two world wars, my sister and I would have been disgustingly rich. This Ignatii Jasiukowicz might be described as the Carnegie of Eastern Europe. He founded the Southern Russian Dneprovsky Metallurgical Society – SRDMS – which was to become the leading blue chip on the St Petersburg Stock Exchange. He built a huge company town in Kamenskoy – now Dneprodzerzhinsk – on the Dnieper River. Housing for employees, two churches – Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox,

municipal buildings, concert halls – even a yacht club, all rose from the original riverside village through his entrepreneurial energy.... Initial capital for the enterprise had been supplied by the Cockrill steel interests of Belgium, originally founded by the Scottish ironmaster John Cockrill. SRDMS became the largest manufacturer of steel and metallurgical products in Eastern Europe and the core of a huge monopoly, created by Ignatii Jasiukowicz, called Prodamet. In 1910, with a combined capital of 300 million roubles and 100,000 employees, Prodamet, with Jasiukowicz as chairman, had united 90% of the metallurgical plants of the Russian Empire and concentrated 85% of Russian sales of ferrous metals, exporting worldwide. A biography of Ignatii Jasiukowicz, by a Professor Slonevski has recently appeared. I cannot resist the temptation to quote from it, undermining any vestige of family modesty. The translation is by Marina Bradbeer, wife of Professor Paul Bradbeer: “To Jasiukowicz’s list of virtues one should add his extraordinary honesty and fidelity to his word. For him verbum Nobile was not an empty sound. He shunned the temptation of speculative profit. On one occasion, a certain society wished to initiate a play on the stock exchange to increase the value of its shares. To this end they wanted to use Jasiukowicz’s reputation as an excellent administrator. But Jasiukowicz was furious at this manoeuvre. He wrote a letter publically declining the position he had been offered, though many people would have considered it an attractive post whereby they could make money without any effort.”

Jasiukowicz’s prosperity and prestige as one of the leading industrialist in the Russian Empire provided an opportunity to redress a deficiency in his side of the family. As younger sons of younger sons a few generations back, we were the landless, cadet branch of the family. Jasiukowicz decided to purchase a country estate. He first looked to Lithuania where most of his relations were. The estates



which had come down through the senior branches were all in Lithuania – except one, which was in modern day Latvia. But, as a Pole, Jasiukowicz was not allowed to hold property in Lithuania. This requires some explanation. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide it. How can a Russian subject, from an old Lithuanian family, chairman of one of Russia's largest industrial complexes, with an elder brother a general in the Tsar's Sapper Guard Regiment, not be allowed to acquire an estate in Lithuania? All one can say is that the Russian Empire was riddled with anachronisms; to be a subject of the Tsar did not mean one was a citizen of Russia. One can site the case of the British Empire where a subject of the King Emperor in India was not necessarily a citizen of England. In the northwest corner of the Russian Empire, history played the critical role in determining the relationship between the residents or citizens of the nations and the government in St. Petersburg. The three most important components were the Kingdom of Poland, the Tsar as King, and the Grand Duchies of Finland and Lithuania, where, naturally, the Tsar was Grand Duke. Finland was by far the most autonomous of these, with its own parliament, university, Lutheran religion and distinctive language. The Finnish gentry might serve in the Russian Army. The national hero of eventual Finnish independence, Marshal Mannerheim, had attended the Corps of Pages in St. Petersburg. But Finland was a different case in almost every respect. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, on the other hand, was quite fully integrated – with the same local government institutions as metropolitan Russia. My great aunt Evgenia Krassovskaya was married to the Marshal of Nobility in Vilnius – the rough equivalent of a Lord Lieutenant. Primarily Orthodox Lithuania had never rebelled after its incorporation into Russia in the late 18th century. Poland was another story altogether. Fiercely nationalistic, constantly restive under the Russian yoke, Poland had rebelled at least three times since its partition, the last and most

violent in 1848. Poland's integration into the Russian Empire had been in fits and starts; periods of relatively benign rule alternating with periods of brutal occupation and attempts to obliterate Polish language and custom. The Polish nobility, the *szlachta*, were only incorporated into the Table of Ranks in the nineteenth century, and after some thinning out of nobles deemed potentially troublesome and rebellious. The Table of Ranks, instituted by Peter the Great, was the key to the hierarchical structure of pre-revolutionary Russia. The military and civil service – the only occupations open to nobles – were ranked equivalently, i.e. a colonel had as civilian counterparty a state counsellor. Once one reached the rank of colonel, or its civil service equivalent, one was entitled to a patent of nobility. This was Peter's idea of introducing a meritocracy, unusual in 17th century Europe. Certainly a few achieved this social mobility, but by and large, birth still determined position in the Table.

Barred from acquiring an estate in Lithuania, Ignatii settled on the estate and village of Chodow, in the Kutno District, in the vicinity of Poznan. Some 535 hectares, the estate had belonged to the Jastrzembovsky family in the 18th century and had been acquired by a German family von Treskow who expanded the manor house in 1857 in an Italianate style and then sold it to Jasiukowicz in 1897. It was to become a refuge for my grandmother after the Bolshevik Revolution. Ignatii's son Stanislas lived there until WWII when the Germans captured it. It was subsequently seized by the Communists – my cousin Hanna Schlenkier, Stanislas's daughter, may well regain it after a lengthy legal process.

But Stanislas Jasiukowicz, my name sake, deserves some attention, as he became a celebrated martyr of the Soviet rape of Poland after the Allies had ceded Eastern Europe to Stalin at Yalta. Educated at the University of Munich, a leading political figure in the interwar years, he moved to Warsaw after Chodow was confiscated by

the Germans. Active in the conspiratorial activities of the Polish National Party, which he had chaired before the war, he was arrested and jailed in 1942. Released in 1943, Stanislas Jasiukowicz was named deputy to the Vice Premier and delegate to the Polish Government in Exile in London – but unable to leave Poland. During the Warsaw Rising, he worked closely with General Bor-Komorowski on relief for the civilian population. When the Rising was crushed by the Germans (the Soviet Army sitting quietly on the sidelines to allow this) Jasiukowicz moved to Krakow with leaders of the Delegate's Council to the London Government. The "liberating" Soviets disbanded the Home Army, which had been the resistance to German occupation. Thousands of its members were disarmed and shipped to Russia where most were never heard of again. Nevertheless, Polish Resistance heroes tried to co-operate with the Soviets and, in March 1945, General Okulicki, who had succeeded Bor-Komorowski in command of the Home Army, together with Delegate Jankowski, were invited to a conference with Soviet General Ivanov, under written guarantees of safety. Jasiukowicz and several other members of the Delegate's Council were also invited.

Okulicki and Jankowski, together with Puzak, Chairman of the National Unity Council, were the first to travel. Everyone was under the impression that they were going to discuss measures to assure final victory and the formation of a postwar civilian government. On arrival in Pruszkow, the three were immediately deported to Moscow and thrown in the Lubianka. Initial discussions with Ivanov had established that, after a meeting with Marshall Zukov at Pruszkow, the delegates would all travel to London for discussions with the Government in Exile. When the twelve strong delegation, headed by Stanislas Jasiukowicz, arrived in Pruszkow, presumably unaware of the fate of Okulicki, Jankowski and Puzak, they were told Zukow would now meet them at his own HQ near Poznan, and an aeroplane

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On behalf of the Foundation thank you all for your continued support.

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### **Jasonial continued from page 9**

was waiting to take them there. With a lack of suspicion which boggles the mind, on 29th March, they boarded the plane, were flown straight to Moscow and incarcerated in the Lubianka. A major show trial was prepared and Western objections, voiced even by Churchill, were ignored. Stalin told the Moscow correspondent of The Times: "... These Poles have never been invited by the Soviet authorities for discussions. They have been arrested as saboteurs with the well-known saboteur Okulicki at their head. The arrest was carried out in consultation with the Polish Government in Lublin." All of this was a lie. The captives were tortured and told to confess to avoid death sentences. Okulicki was sentenced to ten years, Jankowski to eight and Jasiukowicz to five. The rest received shorter sentences or were released. Jasiukowicz's fate was unknown until 1990, during Perestroika, when an attaché at the Russian Embassy in Paris called Jasiukowicz's daughter, who was living in France, to say documents had now been released indicating that Jasiukowicz had died in prison shortly after sentencing. The Kutno branch of Solidarity placed a marble plaque to his memory in the family chapel on the Chodow estate.

### **Footnotes continued from page 4**

"John, Count Ladinski: His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines and in the United States," Richmond Dispatch (May 15) p. 3; "John, Count Ladinski:

His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines and in the United States," St. Louis Post-Dispatch (May 17) p. 7; "An Adventurous Career: Count Ladinski's Strange History," The York Daily (Pennsylvania, May 25) p. 1; "An Adventurous Career: Count Ladinski's Strange History – A Polish Nobleman's escape From Siberia," Bangor Daily Whig and Courier (May 30) p. 4; "Count Ladinski: Remarkable Career of a Man With a History – His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States – A Stirring Life," The Abbeville Press and Banner (South Carolina, June 1); "Count Ladinski: Remarkable Career of a Man With a History – His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States – A Stirring Life," Washington Press (North Carolina, June 7) p. 6; "Count Ladinski: Remarkable Career of a Man With a History – His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States – A Stirring Life," The People's Press (Winston-Salem, North Carolina, June 23) p. 4; "Count Ladinski: Remarkable Career of a Man With a History – His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States – A Stirring Life," The Pine Knot (Southern Pines, North Carolina, June 25) p. 6; "Count Ladinski: Remarkable Career of a Man With a History – His Adventures in South America, in the Siberian Mines, and in the United States – A Stirring Life," The San Saba News and Star (Texas, July 15) p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Email: Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski to author, October 31, 2016, Ladzinski a noble family (coat of arms SAWUR from 1600) but I am certain it is a different family. Searched Polskie Rody Szlacheckie I Ich Herby, compilation by T. Gajl, 2003 and Herbarz Polski, 2007.

<sup>6</sup>As search of the National Park Services "Search for Soldiers" database failed to find him.

<https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/search-soldiers.htm?submitted=1&battleUnitCode=UMD0009RI>. There is no record of him either in the Andersonville Prisoners database - <http://www.civilwarprisoners.com/search.php?>

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## From the Desk of the Chairman

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*Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski*



Dear Members and Friends:

Many thanks for your support and financial contributions which are necessary to fund the annual budget of the Polish Nobility Association Foundation, Inc. (PNAF). It reaffirms to the PNAF volunteers who continue to strive for insight into a number of aspects of Polish/Lithuanian culture and history by sharing with you information on our web site, through our semi-annual Journal, the "White Eagle", and by maintaining communication with most known international Polish-Lithuanian Heraldic and Nobility Organizations, as well as State Libraries in the U.S. and National Libraries in Western and Eastern Europe. The PNAF also mails the "White Eagle" to de jure and de facto Royal Heads of ruling and former ruling families (Western/Eastern Europe). More than just keeping you informed and involved, membership in the Polish Nobility Association Foundation gives you the satisfaction of knowing that you are personally engaged through your financial support of the Foundation's works.

Your individual Membership is what sustains and advances the projects which permits us to continue to share historical, heraldic and cultural information regarding the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lands and present day Eastern Europe.

The look and content of the PNAF Journal have been undergoing a number of changes. In the future we will continue to send members the 12 page print copy of the "White Eagle Journal", published semi-annually. As a cost containment articles viewed as noteworthy that would exceed the printed version will have the original printed version with the additional supplemental information published in the PNAF.US web site filed under the heading Journal. The email version can be shared with interested friends and family members and may exceed the number of pages you will continue to receive in the printed copy.

### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT**

Roger

Dr. Roger Chylinski-Polubinski

Chairman, Board of Trustees

P.S. DUES and DONATION envelopes are enclosed with this mailing. Dues and Contributions may be paid in U.S. and Foreign currencies. The PNAF established a PayPal account which can be accessed on the web site under PNAF.US "MEMBERSHIP", Donate.

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## Your Feedback

All Members and readers are encouraged and welcome to submit feedback on our articles. If there is something that you would like to see an article on, or an opinion you would like to contribute, please let us know.

From our last issue of the WHITE EAGLE (Summer 2016) we received the following in response to George Helon's article

### **The Freedom of the City of London: Peculiar Privileges to Die For! "Would You Prefer a Silk or Hemp Noose?"**

"Your article is excellent, very well expressed and very clear. At the same time you make it clear that this is an honor steeped in history, and that even in our bleak 21st century it still remains an honor worth having. Your article made me very homesick" (IU: United States).

***The Freedom of the City of London***  
***continued from page 5***

Morgan Freeman too!

Freedoms of the City of London by Redemption are presented at the Guildhall by the Clerk of the Chamberlain's Court, or his Assistant, in the presence of the Court Beadle, the prospective Freeman, his nominators, and guests.

The prospective Freeman is invited to read aloud the 'Declaration of a Freeman', summoned to sign the Freeman's Declaration Book, and then welcomed as a 'Citizen of London'.

Each newly admitted Freeman of the City of London is then presented with a beautifully inscribed parchment copy of their Freedom, together with a copy of a little archaic book entitled the 'Rules for the Conduct of Life'.

From the Middle Ages to the Victorian era, Freemen of the City of London enjoyed a number of unique and inherent privileges denied to other city residents.

Free men had the right to trade and carry-on a profession, to own land and earn money in their own right; they could play some part in determining how the city would be governed; they could take sheep to market across London Bridge without having to pay the mandatory bridge toll, and sell their livestock, produce, goods wholesale.

A Freeman could also carry an unsheathed sword in public, and if found drunk and disorderly in the City of London he would be bundled into a taxi by London Police and sent home rather than arrested and thrown into the lockup.

Children of Freemen of the City of London – just as they were during the nineteenth century - are still afforded preferential consideration for admission to the City of London's prestigious Freeman's co-educational day and boarding school (the CLFS) located in Surrey.

And fortunately – or otherwise - for Freemen of the City of London, along with hereditary peers guilty of capital crimes, or poachers who killed the King's royal deer, condemned Freeman were extended the luxury of being launched into eternity by a silken rope which meant a quick and painless departure from this earth, rather than a slow death by strangulation and asphyxiation hanging in a rough hempen noose.



**W. George, Marquis de Helon inspecting the flock: London Bridge.**