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NOTES ON THE SENATE

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Marshals of the Senate of the Second Polish Republic

During 17 years of its existence (1922–1939), the Senate of the Second Polish Republic was headed by five marshals. They were united by the family tradition of struggle for independence characteristic of the generation born after the insurrection of 1863. They were all educated in the countries that had invaded and occupied Poland – Austro-Hungary, Germany and Russia. They all entered the adult age at the turn of the 20th century (1880–1914). In 1918, the year Poland regained independence, all five future marshals of the Polish Senate held public offices either at home or abroad, also in patriotic organizations. Before becoming Senate leaders and moving into offices on Wiejska Street – which the Senate has traditionally shared with the lower house of Polish parliament – they all held various state positions in the Second Polish Republic. Throughout their lives they were involved in politics and Polish issues.



WOJCIECH TRĄPCZYŃSKI
(1860–1953)

First Term Senate
(1922–1927)

Was born in 1860 in Dębowa, Wielkopolska Region, to a landed gentry family. Received legal education at institutions of higher learning in Wrocław and Berlin.

In 1886, opened a legal practice in Poznań. Represented the Polish caucus in Poznań City Council. After election to the Reich parliament in 1912, held the position of Chairman of the Polish Parliamentary Caucus. In late 1918 early 1919, represented the Supreme People's Council at negotiations of a peaceful separation of Wielkopolska Region from Germany. Soon after that, on February 14th, 1919, was elected Sejm (Lower House) Marshal by a majority of votes. Trąpczyński organized the Sejm chancellery from the ground up. Presided over the Civic State-Defence Committee during the war with Soviet Russia in 1920. By virtue of constitutional entitlements bestowed upon him by the Constitution of March 1921, played the role of mediator between the Head of State and the Sejm during the formation of successive governments. **On December 1st, 1922, was elected Marshal of the First Term Senate (1922–1927).** Although critical of the May 1926 coup d'état, the Marshal of the Senate agreed to mediate between Wielkopolska – which was prepared to reinstate by force the abolished legal government – and K. Bartł's cabinet supported by Marshal Piłsudski. Trąpczyński brought to Poznań a letter from the new prime minister guaranteeing the rule of law. The threat of a civil war was thus averted. After the new constitution was adopted in 1935, he joined the opposition convinced that the winners of the latest election were not true representatives of the nation.

Wojciech Trąpczyński died in Poznań in 1953 at the age of 93. Was buried at the Poznań Pantheon of Meritorious Citizens.



JULIAN JULIUSZ SZYMAŃSKI
(1870–1958)

Second Term Senate
(1928–1930)

Was born in 1870 in Kielce. In 1896, graduated *summa cum laude* from Kiev University Ophthalmologic Faculty. Participated in anti-tsarist demonstrations at the time of the revolution of 1905. Averted repression by fleeing to the United States, where he combined an ophthalmologic practice with journalism and cultural involvement within the Polish community of Chicago. After lengthy emigration, returned to independent Poland in 1922. Became the Head of the Ophthalmologic Clinic in Vilnius. In 1928, with support of Marshal Piłsudski, opened the state-of-the-art Eye Clinic and Military Ophthalmologic Department. **Was elected to the Second Term Senate on March 27th, 1928, as representative of the Non-Partisan Block of Cooperation with the Government (BBWR), and became its Marshal.** Counted on support of fellow-politicians in initiating efforts to legislate tuberculosis countermeasures and physical education, compulsory hygiene education in schools, and establishment of a Ministry of Social Care and Public Health. A conflict between the opposition and the government gained force during the Senate's second term. Although Szymański sympathized with Marshal Piłsudski, he advocated a compromise between the government and the opposition for the sake of the common good. When K. Bartł's cabinet resigned, Szymański was tasked with establishing a new government. On August 30, 1930, the President dissolved the government on the pretext of its inefficiency. Szymański returned to Vilnius, where he retired in 1935. It is not clear what he did during World War II. In 1950, he emigrated to Brazil with his family. In 1956, after his spouse's death and liberalization of the political system in Poland, Szymański returned to his homeland at the age of 87.

Died in 1958 in Białystok and was buried there.



WŁADYSŁAW RACZKIEWICZ
(1885–1947)

Third Term Senate
(1930–1935)

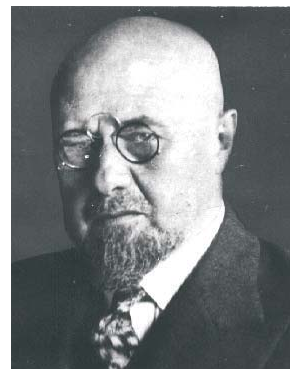
Was born in 1885 in the Caucasus. Finished law studies in 1911 at universities in Saint Petersburg and Dorpat (later Tartu).

During World War I, received permission from the Russian government to establish the First Polish Corps. Served as Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Polish Military Force in Russia. In December 1918, reported to President Piłsudski on the situation in the Eastern Borderland. Between 1921 and 1930, served three terms as Minister of Internal Affairs and Novgorod Province Administrator, and, after the creation of Vilnius Province, also as its Administrator. As Minister of Internal Affairs, was responsible for public administration, territorial self-governments, public safety and healthcare. Also oversaw the Main Statistical Bureau, Silesian Affairs

Bureau and Border Protection Corps. Served as Chairman of the Ministerial Committee for the Eastern Borderland and National Minorities. Advocated the policy of negotiated solutions to social conflicts. Was instrumental in the establishment of the Eastern European Research Institute in Vilnius. Replaced Prime Minister Władysław Grabski during his absence from Poland. **In 1930, was elected to the Senate from the BBWR list. Served as Marshal of the Third Term Senate from December 9th, 1930.** Introduced the custom of seeking presidential approval of the candidate elected to the position of Marshal of the Senate, which became law in 1938. The adoption of a new constitution on July 10th, 1935, ended the work of the Third Term Senate. Raczkiewicz served successively as Krakow Province Administrator, Minister of Internal Affairs and Pomerania Province Administrator. As Minister of Internal Affairs, presented a plan for the development of the territorial self-government structure. Supported the aspirations of national minorities. After the outbreak of the war, President Piłsudski sent him to Paris to serve as Chairman of the World Polish Union. He was tasked with organizing assistance for Poland. During World War II, served as President of the Polish Republic in exile. For the sake of the country's good, collaborated with prime ministers opposed to Marshal Piłsudski, among them General Władysław Sikorski. However, was opposed to policies that violated Poland's territorial integrity. In a letter to Pope Pius XII intervened in the matter of the annihilation of Polish Jews. Demanded a clarification of the circumstances of the death of Polish officers in Katyń. Died childless in Wales in 1947 after a lengthy illness. Was buried at the Polish pilots' cemetery in Newark.

ALEKSANDER PRYSTOR
(1874–1941)

Fourth Term Senate
(1935–1938)



Was born in 1874 in Vilnius. Between 1894 and 1901, studied mathematics and medicine in Moscow and Dorpat (later Tartu).

As a student, was involved in covert political activities on behalf of Polish independence within the Polish Socialist Party. During the revolution of 1904/1905, established armed anti-tsarist organizations jointly with Józef Piłsudski. In 1908–1912, participated in officer courses at the legally operating Shooting Association in Krakow. In 1912, was arrested and deported to Orel in Russia. Was freed during the revolution of February 1917. In May 1918, by virtue of his medical training, received the post of Councillor in the Ministry of Public Health and Labour Protection in the Regent Council government. At the same time, served as member of the Supreme Headquarters of the Polish Military Organization. In 1918–1922, served as Undersecretary of State in the Labour Ministry. Was Special Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief. After the May 1926 coup d'état, served as department head at the General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces. In 1934, represented Marshal Piłsudski at negotiations of the normalization of Polish/Lithuanian relations in Kovno. Prystor served as Labour Minister (1929–1930) and Prime Minister (1931–1933). His cabinet developed policies based on the economic experience of western democracies, U.S.A. and authoritarian states (USSR, Italy). Participated in the development of a new electoral law, in consequence of which only 2% of the population had the right of vote in elections to the Fourth Term Senate. That voting system was based on affluence and age. Prystor became a senator from Vilnius. **Was elected Marshal of the Senate at its first sitting on October 4th, 1935.** In the Fifth Term Senate (1938–1939), presided over the budget, economic and agricultural committees. After the Nazi invasion in 1939, Prystor found shelter in Lithuania. In 1940, upon Lithuania's occupation by Russia, was arrested, taken to Moscow and imprisoned at Lubianka.

Died in the summer of 1941 in Moscow. There is a symbolic grave of Aleksander Prystor at Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw.



BOGUSŁAW MIEDZIŃSKI
(1891–1972)

Fifth Term Senate
(1938–1939)

Was born in 1891 in Miastków near Warsaw. Studied agronomy and chemistry in Lviv and Krakow between 1910 and 1914.

Was an activist in the Krakow branch of the Shooting Association, where he became acquainted with J. Piłsudski. Co-founder of the Polish Military Organization during World War I. While acting in political underground, acquired the reputation of an excellent organizer. When Piłsudski became the Head of State, Miedziński was tasked with political responsibilities (for example, he headed the Second Information Department of the Staff of the Ministry of Military Affairs). Joined the First Term Sejm (1922–1927) as a deputy from PSL-Piast. Belonged to the Piłsudski-led pressure group inside and outside the parliament. In 1926, the Head of State appointed him to the position of Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. Miedziński, who was known for his ability to act behind the scenes, participated in developing an election and propaganda strategy for the Piłsudski camp. These activities led to the establishment of the Non-Partisan Block of Cooperation with the Government (BBWR). In the Second Term Sejm (1928–1930), Miedziński was a member of the Military and Foreign Affairs Committee. Was Deputy Marshal of the Fourth Term Sejm (1935–1938). Participated in drawing up the Constitution of April 1935. As president of the Prasa Polska S.A. conglomerate, promoted the concepts of an uninational state and primacy of the executive branch of government. **Miedziński was elected to the Fifth Term Senate (1938–1939) and, on the President's nomination, becomes its Marshal on November 28th, 1938.** After 1939, was sent to South Africa by the anti-Piłsudski government of General Sikorski for the duration of the war. Returned to London in 1947, where he occasionally published historical articles. Contributed many editing notes to the *Modern History of Poland* written by Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski. Was member of the Council of the Piłsudski Institute. Remained loyal to Marshal Piłsudski until his death.

Died in London in 1972 and was buried at South Ealing Cemetery.

Prepared by Piotr Pulikowski, September 1995