



SENAT RP

NOTES ON THE SENATE

**SENATE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND**

CHANCELLERY OF THE SENATE
OFFICE FOR CITIZEN RELATIONS

ul. Wiejska 6, 00-902 Warszawa
tel. (48-22) 694-92-84
fax (48-22) 694-95-70
www.senat.gov.pl

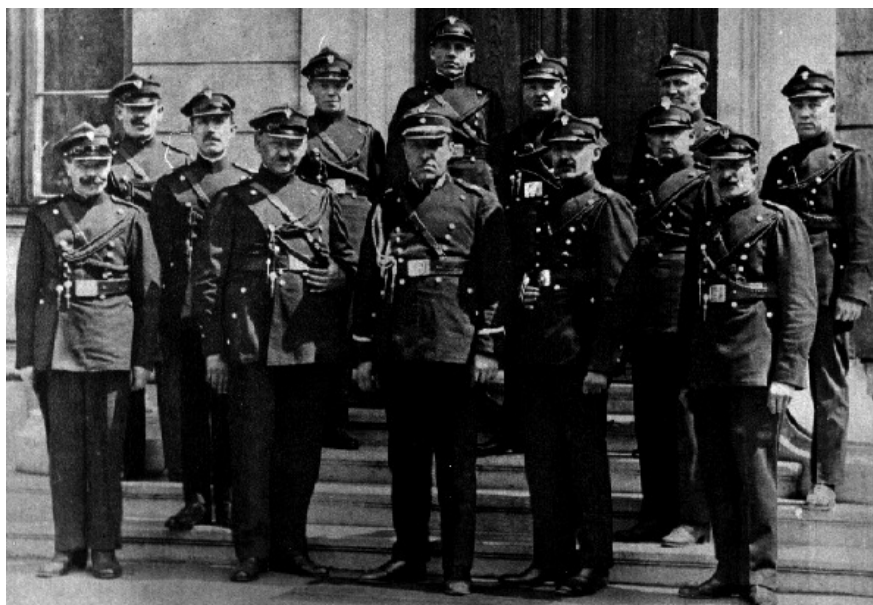
The Marshal's Guard

Keeping order in parliament and ensuring a calm environment for deputies and senators has for centuries now been the task of the Marshal's Guard. Up to the end of the aristocratic Republic, the Guard was under orders from the Royal Grand Chamberlain and when the Sejm met in Lithuania, from the chamberlain of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This was a separate office from that of the Sejm Marshal, who was elected only for the duration of the debate.

The regulations governing the safety of the Sejms and the responsibilities of the Marshal's Guard were contained in constitutions i.e. in laws called the "Marshal's Articles". They defined the kinds of offences and their penalties. The Marshal had his own summary court – the Marshal's Court – to try offences against the King and the Sejm. A nobleman was sentenced by the Marshal's Court, but punishment was immediately meted out to his servants by the Guard. The punishment could be "sitting in prison for six Sundays". The Marshal's Tower in Warsaw was in the corner of the city walls at the intersection of Mostowa and Brzozowa Streets.

Our information about members of the Guard only dates back to the 17th century, when the soldiers of the Marshal's Guard were popularly called the "Marshal's Hungarians". There were between 120–150 of them, and they were taken from among the soldiers of the Hungarian company, which consisted of individual recruits. The "Marshal's men" wore the uniforms of the Hungarian infantry: a blue overcoat with red facings, a waistcoat and white trousers.

When Poland regained her independence after the First World War, the Marshal's Guard again took over the protection of parliament. The Guard was administered by the Office of the Sejm and the Senate of the Polish Republic and was under orders from a Commander of the



(Fot. Senate Archives)



(Fot. S. Kaczorek)

Guard appointed by the Sejm Marshal. Whereas in the First Republic the Guard had authority within a radius of one Old Polish mile (7,146 metres) of the place of deliberations, from 1919 its authority was confined to the parliament buildings alone.

The Guard's most important task was to ensure the safety of deputies and senators, to keep law and order, and to secure the building from fire. Guards had the right to bear arms outside the Sejm and Senate building as well. Neither the police nor the army had the right to enter parliament or its precincts without the Marshal's consent.

The atmosphere of the debates and the temperament of those taking part in them meant that the Guard was authorized to intervene even in the debating chamber itself. During debate, Deputies used arguments unheard-of today, sounding horns, drumming on their desks, singing or just shouting. The Marshal could also order the public gallery to be cleared if it disrupted order by applauding or interrupting the debate – which was not an infrequent occurrence.

The Marshal's Guard numbered around 16 officers, and its Commanders were also soldiers who had previously been awarded high military decorations e.g. the *Virtuti Militari* Cross.

The Guard began its post-war duty as the internal Sejm protection body in the initial months of the Legislative Sejm elected in February, 1947.

At present, the Marshal's Guard is a statutory organizational unit of the Sejm Chancellery. It has 125 guards, whose duty it is to ensure order and security in and around parliament, and in the buildings belonging to the Sejm Chancellery, particularly during Sejm and Senate sittings. The Guards all have the same uniform in two versions: ceremonial and service. The design is similar to military uniforms. The ceremonial uniform is worn by the Guards on duty at Sejm and Senate sittings, on state holidays and at ceremonies attended by the supreme authorities. It consists of a double-breasted, three-buttoned jacket and trousers with black stripes, which are worn with a white shirt, navy-blue tie and black shoes and a ceremonial yellow cord like that of an army officer. Both uniforms are navy-blue.

The letters SM (for Marshal's Guard) framed in oak leaves are embroidered in gold thread on the lapels. The cap is decorated with the same oak-leaf motif.

The service uniform differs from the ceremonial one in having a single-breasted jacket with top pockets and no stripe on the trousers. The Commander's uniform has a ceremonial cord like that of an army general. He has eagles embroidered on his lapels and the stripes on his trousers are twice as broad.

*Artur Bartosiński, September 1993
with later amendments, January 2006*