



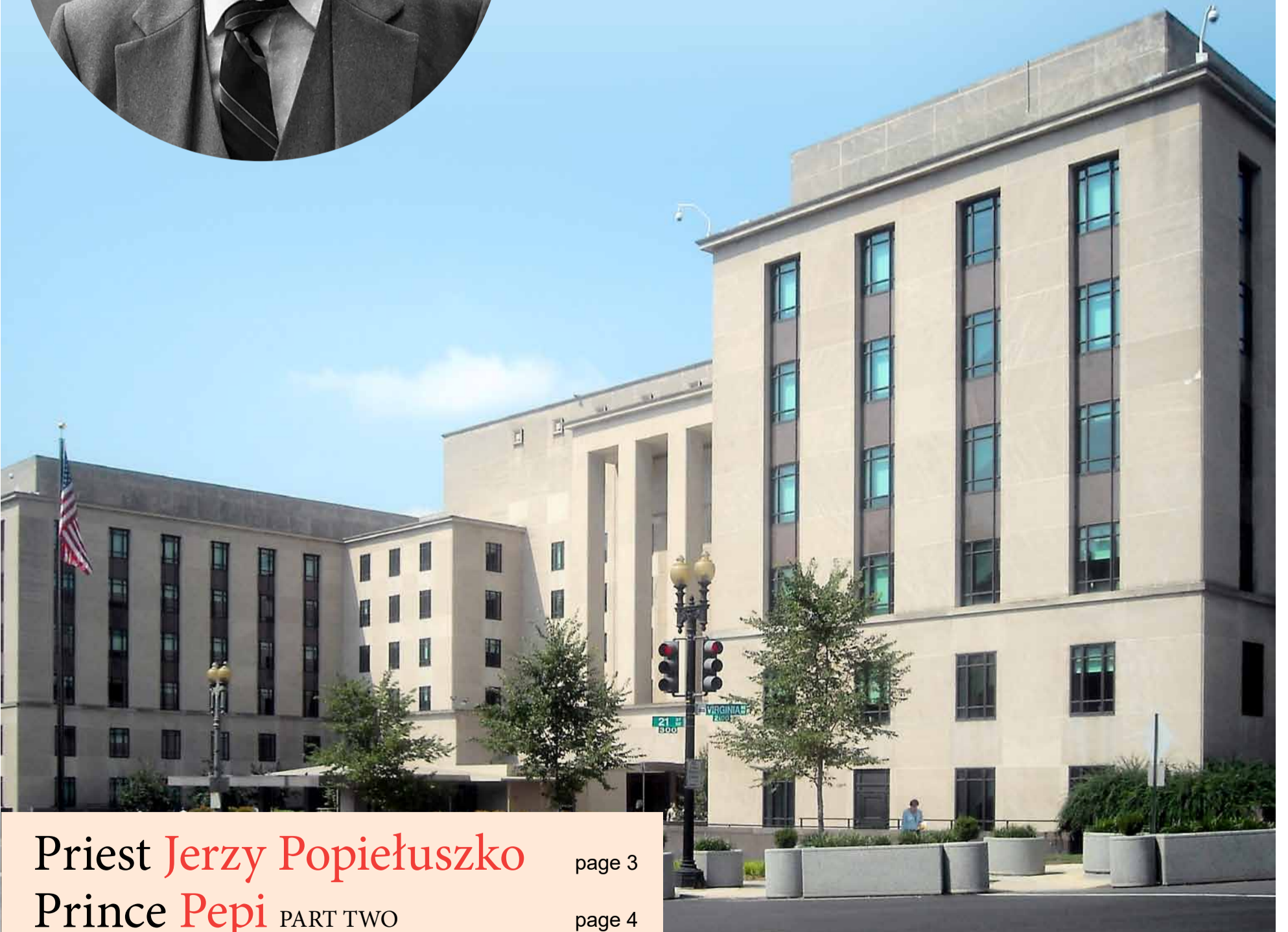
# True Voice from Poland

No. 005 • October 21 – November 3, 2022

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# Mission: USA

## An interview with Dr. Łukasz Kamiński, Director of the Ossolinski National Institute



KRZYSZTOF  
BRZEHCZYN

**Q: What is the exhibit “Mission: USA – Kornel Morawiecki in the United States in 1988” about?**

A.: The exhibit is primarily devoted to Kornel Morawiecki’s stay abroad, after his deportation from Polish People’s Republic, but we also show his earlier activity in Poland, the reactions after his arrest and the conditions of his exile.

**Q: In what circumstances Kornel Morawiecki was arrested?**

A.: It happened after the rules of conspiracy were broken. Kornel Morawiecki wanted to show his appreciation to two women, who were dealing with underground printing part – the “accessions”. He wanted to take their oath (of the membership of the underground organization Fighting Solidarity), so he showed up in their apartment, which was compromised. The apartment was known to the Security Service (SB in Polish) and they soon showed up. Despite the fact that the visit was not planned earlier, the security “commando group” soon showed up and captured the leader of Fighting Solidarity, together with accompanying him Hanna Lukowska-Karniej. Such a quick reaction of the Security Service only showed how broad was the search for Kornel Morawiecki – they wiretapped, constantly listened and observed tens of places, where he potentially could have showed up.

**Q: Did the West noticed his arrest? What was the reaction of Western public opinion and how did Polonia react?**

A.: For the purpose of the exhibit, I did research of the American press. Despite the fact that it was not a complete one, I found tens of records about imprisonment of the Fighting Solidarity leader. Media in other countries also mentioned his arrest. Morawiecki’s arrest was described as the capture of one of the last Solidarity leader in the underground.

The responses were not lim-



Dr. Łukasz Kamiński

ited to the press. As a result of Polonia’s activity, one interpellation was submitted in the British House of Commons, and another one in the Canadian parliament. But the most active were the American representatives – over one hundred senators and congressmen sent letters both individually and collectively, to the authorities of the Polish People’s Republic. It is worth mentioning, that Nancy Pelosi was also among them.

Such a great engagement of the American politicians was the result of the action of the Committee for the Release of Kornel Morawiecki, formed already in November of 1987. It was initiated by Marek Ruszczynski, representative of KPN, (acronym of Confederation of Independent Poland), who together with Ted Kontek was its co-chairman. The honorary chairman position was given to Alojzy Mazewski, the chairman of the American Polish Congress.

Among other members, the committee was comprised of well-known people – a famous Russian dissident Wladimir Bukowski, Polish legendary couriers from WWII Jan Karski, Jer-

zy Lerski and Jan Nowak-Jezioranski. Also, an Afghan exile authority Habibullah Mayar and an opposition poet from Wroclaw, Lothar Herbst. Other members were Jaroslaw Swiatek (member of Fighting Solidarity), as well as activists Dariusz Olszewski, Donna Kersey and Ewa Slusarek.

The committee was trying to gain support of the public figures, distributed information about whereabouts of Kornel Morawiecki and organized demonstrations and pickets.



**Q.: What was the story with Amnesty International – they did not include him in their list of political prisoners? Were the allegations of terrorist activity the real reason?**

A.: I do not know all the aspects of this case – Amnesty International documentation is not available. However, it is clear that the Fighting Solidarity leader was not on the list of the prisoners of conscience. The AI’s answer to Anna Morawiecka was presented in general terms about monitoring of the case. The alleged terrorism allegations were publicized by the communist propaganda, and also quoted by one of the Polonia’s newspapers. Sometimes that was effective, we have a letter from one of the members of the Congress to Ewa Slusarek, in which the congresswoman claimed that this was the reason she refused to join the defenders of the Morawiecki.

The Amnesty International’s position was disputed in letters sent by professor Andrzej Wisniewski and Zbigniew Romaszewski. Terrorism accusations were confirmed by witnesses of the opposition; however, they spoke from their memory, hence it is almost impossible to verify.

**Q.: What were the circumstances of his departure?**

A.: While we cworking on the exhibit, it came out that not only the Polish Episcopate was trying to free Morawiecki, but also the American diplomats.

During various meetings, (both in the US and in PPR), the Americans (including deputy Chief of State Department, John C. Whitehead), were conditioning good relations between both countries on resolving this issue – the Warsaw communists were very keen on normalizing those relations. This allows us to look differently on the real reason of getting rid of Morawiecki (as well as Andrzej Kolodziej), despite the fact that the indictment was ready and submitted to the court.

The Fighting Solidarity leaders were offered a possibility of leaving the country for medical reasons with the guarantee of return any time. Lawyers of the Episcopate were brokers of the deal. Hence, they agreed, looking at this as a chance to continue their activities. But when on April 30<sup>th</sup> they were taken to the airport, they learned about the outbreak of strikes. In that situation, they demanded return to the prison. And they returned – Morawiecki was blackmailed, professor Andrzej Stelmachowski told him about cancer of Andrzej Kolodziej, diagnosed and confirmed by independent doctors. In such circumstances Morawiecki agreed to depart, at planning at the same time quick return home. Both travelled to Rome, with a transfer in Vienna.

Kornel Morawiecki was supposed to meet with pope John Paul II and was planning to return home as quick as possible. However, when he landed on May 4<sup>th</sup> at the Warsaw Okęcie airport, he was stopped by the Security Service and deported to Vienna. As the first wave of strikes subsided, the Fighting Solidarity leader decided to stay in the West, to gain support for his organization and warn against any relief towards the reforming communists.

**Q.: In which countries did he stay?**

A.: First days after deportation he spent in Austria, where he met with Polish people, including famous writer Stanislaw Lem. He also conducted many phone talks with representatives of the Polish immigration, including Jerzy Giedroyc. His next stay was in Great Britain.

► There, among meetings with the Polish President and Government in exile, his most important meeting was in the House of Commons. Kornel Morawiecki, together with another dissident Andrzej Gwiazda, were trying to convince conservative members of the parliament to be careful with 'perestroika' and not giving any support to the bankrupting communism. But the most important was his visit in the USA.

**Q.: How was his stay in the US? Who did he talk to?**

A.: Kornel Morawiecki, together with accompanying him Ewa Kubasiewicz, landed in New York on June 17<sup>th</sup> of 1988 and spent over two months in the US. Most of his time he was meeting with the Polish Americans all over the US. In some places he met with the local authorities, like in Chicago and Cleveland. From the political point of view, the most important were meetings with Jan Nowak-Jezioranski and Zbigniew Brzezinski. From the American perspective, the

most important was his visit in the State Department, where he met with experts on Poland (including Polish opposition), and the press conference he had on Capitol Hill. The conference was attended by senator Bill Bradley and members of Congress – Jim Courter, Henry Hyde and William Lipinski. Congressmen Dan Rostenkowski, who actively was helping to free the leader of Fighting Solidarity, was not present, but invited Morawiecki and Kubasiewicz to a separate meeting. A famous think tank Freedom House visit was also very important, attended also by Andrzej Gwiazda, a famous Hungarian writer Gyorgy Konrad and the future Czech foreign affairs minister, Jan Kavan. All those meetings were centered around one important matter – warning against perestroika and giving any economic support to the falling communist system. A planned meeting in the White House with president Bush did not happen, due to Morawiecki's decision to return home after the start of a new wave of strikes.

**Q.: In what circumstances Morawiecki returned to Poland?**

A.: Morawiecki knew, that his next open attempt will end up with his arrest. With help of Zbigniew Belza, a representative of the Fighting Solidarity in Canada, he prepared a disinformation campaign. They announced many meetings in Canada, but after a few of them, the leader of the FS flew to Vienna. There, he met with professor Jerzy Przystawa, who was just returning to Poland by car from a conference. Together, through Czechoslovakia, they came to Wrocław. That was only possible, because Morawiecki was using somebody else's passport – Kazimierz Gromacki's, who looked similar to him.

**Q.: Where the exhibit was shown? Do you have its English version?**

A.: The opening of the exhibit was in June, 2022 in the Wrocław Zajezdnia Historic Center, and during the XIV International Film Festival NNW in Gdynia.

Right now, we are scheduling to show the exhibit in other countries, also in the USA. The English version was just published.

**Q.: On behalf of myself, the publishers and readers of the Gazeta Obywatelska, I would like to congratulate you on your nomination on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August this year for the position of the Director of the National Ossolineum Institute. How do you look at the Ossolineum mission in XXI century – an institution established in the beginning of the XIX?**

A.: Thank you! Ossolineum is the treasury of the Polish culture. However, our mission is not only to take care of the priceless artifacts for the next generations. We would like to inspire present day Polish people and help them discover our identity. After the pandemic break, Ossolineum will be the place to participate in meetings, discussions and reflections over the Polish culture. An important part of our mission is also education, which is done now through the

Museum of Pan Tadeusz. Right now, we are developing an educational mission of the library and in few years, we will complete the Museum of the Princes Lubomirski. Our mission was defined over 200 years ago by Joseph Maksymilian Lubomirski, but we constantly discover it again in the changing reality. We will be actively participating in an extremely important discussion today, over the shape and the identity of the Central Europe.

*Interview by Krzysztof Brzechczyn, October 2022*

Łukasz Kamiński – a historian, specializing in the history of communism and the resistance movement. A lecturer of the Wrocław University. Worked at IPN (Institute of National Remembrance) 2000 – 2016; from 2011 to 2016 he was the President of the Institute of National Remembrance; 2017-2021 – chair of the European Platform of Remembrance and Consciousness. Director of the Ossolinski National Institute; an editor (with Grzegorz Waligóra) of the six volumes history of NSZZ "Solidarność" 1980-1989 (2010).

# Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko

■ He was the chaplain of the Solidarity, defender of human rights in the times of Polish People Republic, the working people's priest, a very brave man, who became the symbol of the fight for freedom and solidarity.

The communists considered priest Popiełuszko as a very dangerous enemy. They absolutely wanted to silence him, as he condemned their brutality in his homilies.

However, he preached the principle of overcoming evil with good. His words were keeping the spirit of the society depressed by the Jaruzelski re-

gime. The priest was harassed, slandered and persecuted by the Secret Service.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1984, the Secret Service captured him, tortured and killed him. His body was thrown into Vistula River. The body was recovered on October 30<sup>th</sup>. His funeral was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1984 in Warsaw. It became

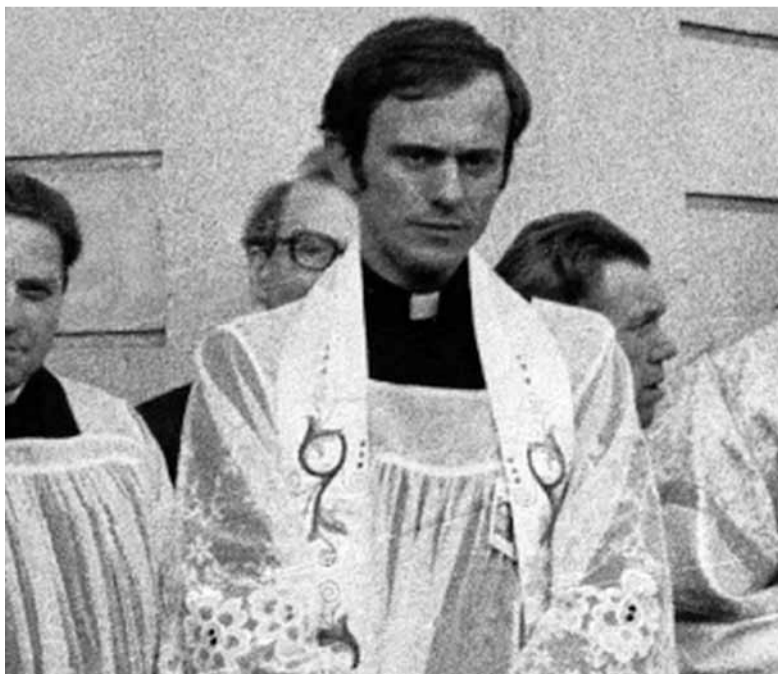
a huge manifestation of the underground Solidarity.

His murderers were convicted and sent to prison, but their sentences were shortened several times. They are free now for a number of years, but those who ordered the murder were never tried.

Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko was posthumously awarded the Order of the White Eagle.

*Below are stamps printed by the underground workshops after his death.*

IPN Wrocław



## PART TWO

# Prince Pepi

## Duchy of Warsaw

Prussia, confident of the strength of its army, demanded that Napoleon withdraw from the Prussian land. Faced with this form of coercion, Napoleon invaded the former Polish lands. The Prussian army, while withdrawing from Warsaw, entrusted Prince Józef Poniatowski with maintaining peace. The local Polish people greeted the French arriving in the capital (on the 26th November 1806) with enthusiasm. The Prince greeted General Murat, who was wearing a uniform of a Polish general, yet with Prussian decorations. The Prince, chivalrous, bold, and loving horses and the cavalry, gained favour of the general, with whom he began negotiations on restoring the Polish state. Napoleon, influenced by the Polish circles unfavorable to the Prince, was critical of the talks. Tadeusz Kościuszko was to become Commander in Chief of the Polish army. However, Kościuszko refused to take up this role, and the Polish aristocratic circles, having some influence on Napoleon, put forward Prince Józef Poniatowski as the best candidate. Soon afterwards, Napoleon himself arrived in Warsaw. Out of twenty-nine candidates for the commander in chief put forward, the Prince's candidacy was the worst. Yet, his political activism and friendship with General Murat, as well as Napoleon being enmeshed by Ms. Walewska, led to the Prince being appointed head of the Military Department of the Ruling Commission. He was to triple the size of the Polish army in the upcoming weeks and months, making the total of up to 50 thousand soldiers. He was to feed and equip all of the French army deployed on the Polish lands. Fierce rivalry, among Polish generals close to Napoleon, had a negative impact on Poniatowski, who could have been dismissed any time. Although he had little experience in managing the war economy, thanks to his military talent, physical strength and ingenuity, he handled this difficult task very well. Poniatowski, urged by Napoleon, commenced building



large fortifications in the Warsaw district of Praga, in Serock and in Modlin, where they are till the present day. The outcome of the war (1806 – 1807) led to the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw, which was met with great disappointment, considering the hopes and expectations placed in Napoleon. In 1809 the Austrian army, approaching with strong corps, advanced towards Warsaw, which was being defended by Poniatowski with his weak army forces at the Battle of Raszyn. When Poniatowski realized that it was impossible to hold Warsaw, in spite of the great disappointment of its residents, he gave up the capital to the enemy. Leaving the capital, he moved with his army to Vienna.

## National Hero

Since the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw, Prince Józef Poniatowski had been loyal in his service to Napoleon, realizing that only with him was there an opportunity to rebuild the Polish state. He participated in

the 1812 campaign. His troops under the command of General Murat invaded Moscow. The troops showed exemplary discipline and did not get involved in looting the city. The Polish army, under the command of the prince, saved the French from heavy oppression many times. Unlike Napoleon, Prince Józef was perfectly aware of the realities of the army that was not prepared for this military expedition and of the unfeasibility of winning this war, which he continuously wrote about in his letters to Warsaw. In the Battle of Vinkovo, the battle of his lifetime, he saved General Murat and his army from heavy defeat. Crushed by his own horse in one of the smaller battles, he suffered internal injuries which prevented him from engaging in further combat. He continued his retreat from Moscow in a carriage, passing by Napoleon wearing a fur coat and using a walking stick. He then reached Berezyna river. Amidst heavy fight and in spite of injuries and ill-being, he successfully made it through the "saving bridge".

Warsaw greeted Poniatowski with the following poem:

Honor to you, Commander in Chief who by constant example

Deeply instilled in the Polish infantry fellowship and modesty,

Chivalrous virtues, which shall be revered by the entire world.

Guarding the French army not far from Leipzig, having again broken up the Austrian divisions, on the request of General Murat, the Prince was appointed Field Marshal of France by Napoleon on the 17th of October 1813. He accepted the nomination with no enthusiasm, realizing the total defeat of the Grand Army as well as the following failure of restoring the Polish state. Upon numerous proposals put forward by Tsar Alexander I, he responded to one of his aides: *Do you see these guns? I was holding them in my hand last night and intended to shoot myself in the head in order to*

(...) You shared intense afflictions with us  
Great sacrifices, duties with no reward,  
And in place of sweet hopes of fulfilment  
Bitter disillusionments.

(Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz "The Funeral of Prince Poniatowski")



ADAM  
MAKSYMOWICZ

put an end to such a difficult predicament, yet, eventually, I resolved – I would never leave Napoleon ... as a soldier I defend my honor. Two days later he died in the currents of Elster river near Leipzig, when guarding the withdrawal of Napoleon's army during the famous Battle of Nations. Loyal soldiers erected a stone pillar in that place to honor the Prince, with the following inscription:

*In this place in the currents of the Elster river, Prince Józef Poniatowski, Commander in Chief of the Polish Army and Field Marshal of the French Empire, afflicted by three fatal blows while guarding the withdrawal of the Grand French Army, and leaving the battlefield as the last, perished in glory in the service to the Fatherland on the nineteenth of October 1813 having lived 52 years.*

*This small monument, drenched with tears, was placed by Polish soldiers to honor their compatriot and Commander in Chief, Prince Józef Poniatowski.*

6.V.1761 – 19.X.1813

**Nowadays, the Elster river no longer flows where it used to, when Prince Józef Poniatowski died. The area is now covered with compact residential buildings next to the city center of Leipzig at 44 Gottsched Strasse. The place is marked in city maps and guidebooks, showing a heavy 91 m high monumental pillar of the Battle of Nations in the city of Leipzig.**

## True Voice from Poland

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Fundacja Kronika Naszego Życia

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