

## On Several Court Memorabilia at the Princes Czartoryski Museum in Krakow

### Summary

If one asked Poles who was the last king of Poland, the majority would doubtless say: Stanisław August Poniatowski. Odd as it is, this *damnatio memoriae* of the subsequent monarchs is nourished even by professional historians such as Adam Zamoyski, author of a book on Stanisław August, *The Last King of Poland* (first edition: London 1992; Polish edition: 1994 under the unchanged title *Ostatni król Polski*), or the organisers of the 2011 exhibition at the Warsaw Royal Castle *Stanisław August: The Last King Of Poland, Politician, Patron And Reformer, 1764–1795*.

However, pursuant to the decisions made at the 1815 Vienna Congress, the Russian emperor Alexander I (d. 1825) was King of Poland. As the resurrector of the name of Poland, which had been erased from the map of Europe following the partitions, he enjoyed wide and heartfelt popularity with the Polish subjects. There is no denying his successor, Nicholas I, who crowned himself King of Poland on 24 May 1829 in Warsaw, held the title quite lawfully too, at least until dethroned by Parliament on 25 Jan. 1831.

Modest in the times of Alexander I, the Warsaw royal court grew much larger under Nicholas I. On his coronation day, the court title of Grand Chamberlain was conferred upon Duke Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire in 1804–1806. In the opinion of the Polish people of the day, who lacked a good understanding of the Russian hierarchy, that move was a token of falling from the tsar's grace and of demotion. According to the Russian Table of Ranks, Czartoryski was, in fact, promoted from the third to the second grade (among the imperial court service there were no first-rank grades).

This brief episode of service at the Warsaw court of Nicholas I, which for Duke Adam Jerzy ended with the position of Prime Minister of the insurrectionary government, a death sentence handed down *in absentia* and emigration, is remembered at the Princes Czartoryski Museum in a parade long-jacket, an undress long-jacket and a Grand Chamberlain's key. Both long-jackets followed the Russian pattern since the Russian autocrat wished to blur the identity of the Kingdom of Poland even in this respect. The Grand Chamberlain's key, which differed from chambellans' keys for its rich encrustation, was made at Henryk Hildebrandt's workshop in Warsaw.

Both long-jackets were used by Jan Matejko in the painting *Rejtan. Upadek Polski* [Rejtan. The Fall of Poland; completed 1866], where the venal Adam Poniński, a self-appointed speaker of the 1733 partitioning parliament, is wearing a red jacket embroidered with designs copied from Czartoryski's gala uniform. Being a member of the Targowica Confederation, Ksawery Branicki is dressed in Matejko's painting in Prince Adam Jerzy's undress with epaulettes added for a more military effect.

This is arguably the oldest example of Jan Matejko making use of objects from the Czartoryskis' collection. The painter drew lavishly on the collection as a repository of props after the Princes Czartoryski Museum had been installed in Krakow in 1876.