

= Sejm of Congress Poland =

The Sejm of Congress Poland ( Polish : Sejm Królestwa Polskiego ) was the parliament in the 19th century Kingdom of Poland , colloquially known as Congress Poland . It existed from 1815 to 1831 . In the history of the Polish parliament , it succeeded the Sejm of the Duchy of Warsaw .

= = History = =

After the Congress of Vienna , a small Kingdom of Poland , known as Congress Poland , was recreated , with its king being the Tsar of Russia , Alexander I. Alexander I , an enlightened autocrat , decided to use Congress Poland as an experiment to see if Russian autocratic rule could be mixed with an elective legislative system , and rule Poland as a constitutional monarchy . At that time many hoped that this experiment would be a success and pave way to a liberalization in Russia ; in the end it proved to be a failure .

Tsar Alexander left the administration to his younger brother , Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich of Russia , to serve as viceroy . Constantine , with the help of Nikolay Nikolayevich Novosiltsev , " Russified " Congress Poland and oversaw secret police investigations of student groups in contravention of the Constitution . Alexander visited the Sejm in 1820 and received such condemnation from the deputies ( members of the Sejm 's lower house ) that he reversed his stance of the Sejm as a liberalization experiment although he was still bound by the Congress of Vienna not to liquidate Russia 's partition of Poland entirely . By 1825 , Alexander I was sufficiently dissatisfied with the Sejm that he decided to bar some of the most vocal opposition deputies from it .

Although the Sejm was supposed to meet every 2 years , only four sessions were called by the Tsar as it became the scene of increased clashes between liberal deputies and conservative government officials . With regards to the years the Sejm met , Bardach gives the dates of 1818 , 1820 , 1823 and 1830 ; J?druch offers a similar list , however lists 1825 instead of 1823 .

Nicholas , an opponent of Alexander 's liberalization efforts , acceded the throne as Tsar Nicholas I upon Alexander 's death in December of 1825 . Idealistic Russian military officers resisted Nicholas 's takeover in the Decembrist revolt . Some Polish liberals were accused of being connected to the Decembrist plot and were brought before the Sejm for trial in 1828 . Despite heavy political pressure from Moscow , the Sejm Tribunal only found them guilty of belonging to the National Patriotic Society formed by Walerian ?ukasi?ski ( a misdemeanor ) rather than treason . The decision was met with cheers in Poland but infuriated Tsar Nicholas .

In the 1830 session , the Sejm refused to allocate funding for a statue in Warsaw to honor Tsar Alexander , further incensing Moscow . The Tsar 's tightening grip on Poland ran counter to the growing romantic nationalism sweeping Poland 's youth , especially in the universities . These factors led to increasing discontent within Poland culminating in the failed November Uprising in 1830 . An extraordinary Sejm was convened on 18 December 1830 . Despite the danger this failed attempt to assassinate the Grand Duke represented , the Sejm was swept by nationalist fervor and supported the insurgents , thereby appointing a new revolutionary government led by General Józef Ch?opicki . On 25 January 1831 , it passed an act introduced by Roman So?tyk dethroning Tsar Nicholas I and declaring full independence from Russia . Senator Wincenty Krasi?ski , one of the few votes against the National Patriotic Society members , refused to join the revolt . The overthrow of Russian rule was planned badly and as the fortunes of war turned against the insurgents , the last session of the Sejm @-@ in @-@ exile was held in P?ock in September that year . After the uprising was crushed , in an act of vengeance the Tsar not only eliminated the parliamentary institution of the Sejm from the new government of Congress Poland , but ordered the demolition of the Chamber of Deputies in the Castle of Warsaw . Member of the Sejm and noted historian Joachim Lelewel , as well as fellow deputy Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and countless others , fled the Russian crackdown in what would be termed the " Great Emigration . "

= = Composition and duration = =

The Sejm was composed of the king , the upper house ( Senate ) and the lower house ( Chamber of Deputies or Sejm proper ) . There were 128 members ( called deputies ) , including 77 deputies elected by the nobility ( szlachta ) at local sejmiks , and 51 elected by the non @-@ noble classes . They were chosen for 6 years , with one third of them chosen every 2 years . Sejms were called every 2 years for a period of 30 days , with provisions for extraordinary sessions in time of special need . The king could also dissolve the Sejm before the 30 days elapsed . During the Uprising , on 19 February , 1831 , a new law declared the Sejm in constant session . The Marshal of the Sejm was appointed by the king . Candidates for all offices had to meet specific wealth requirements .

Suffrage was offered to property owners , lease holders , and teachers . Jews were forbidden from voting . Military personnel had no right to vote . Overall , about 100 @, @ 000 people in the Congress Poland population of 2 @. @ 7 million had the right to vote , which made them one of the most enfranchised populations in early 19th @-@ century Europe .

Candidates for Deputy had to be literate males over the age of 30 . The deputies had legal immunity , although that did not prevent two liberal deputies , brothers Bonawentura and Wincenty Niemojowski , from being placed under temporary house arrest to prevent them from joining the Sejm in 1825 .

The Senate had 64 members , including 9 bishops , 18 voivodes and 37 castellans . Candidates for the Senate members ( senators ) were appointed by the king for a lifetime from a list prepared by a Senate , and had to be at least 35 years old .

= = Competences = =

While the Constitution of Congress Poland was relatively liberal in theory , and gave the Sejm significant powers ( wider than those of the Sejm of the Duchy of Warsaw ) , in practice those competences were limited , as they were often not respected by the tsar . Jews and peasants lost rights they had previously enjoyed under the Duchy of Warsaw .

The Sejm had the right to vote on civil , administrative and legal issues ; a simple majority was required to pass laws . With permission from the king , it could vote on matters related to the fiscal system and the military . It had the right to control government officials , and could prepare reviews and reports on them to present to the king . It had legislative competences in court and administrative law . It could issue laws on currency , taxation and budget , deal with issues related to military conscription ( such as its size ) , and amend the constitution . It had no legislative initiative , as that belong only to the king ; however , the Sejm could issue petitions to the monarch with proposed legislation .

The Senate , rather than the judiciary , acted as the tribunal , and could sit in judgement over government officials impeached by the Sejm . The Sejm Tribunal also had competences in cases of crimes against the state . After the Sejm Tribunal 's 1828 acquittal of the National Patriotic Society members , Tsar Nicholas reversed the tribunal 's verdict and permanently removed the Sejm 's competency to hear other such cases .