

= Stanisław August Poniatowski =

Stanisław II August (also Stanisław August Poniatowski ; born Stanisław Antoni Poniatowski ; 17 January 1732 ? 12 February 1798) was the last King and Grand Duke of the Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth (1764 ? 95) . He remains a controversial figure in Polish history . Recognized as a great patron of the arts and sciences . Initiator and firm supporter of progressive reforms , he is also remembered as the last king of the Commonwealth whose election was marred by Russian involvement . Main criticism resonates around being the one who failed to stand against the partitions , and in the end to prevent the destruction of Poland .

Arriving at the Russian imperial court in Saint Petersburg in 1755 , he became romantically involved with the twenty @-@ six @-@ year @-@ old Catherine Alexeievna (the future Empress Catherine the Great , reigned 1762 ? 1796) , three years his senior . With her support , in 1764 he was elected king of Poland . Against expectations , he attempted to reform and strengthen the ailing Commonwealth . His efforts met with external opposition from Prussia , Russia and Austria , all interested in keeping the Commonwealth weak ; and from internal conservative interests , which saw reforms as threatening their traditional liberties and prerogatives .

The defining crisis of his early reign , the War of the Bar Confederation (1768 ? 1772) , led to the First Partition of Poland (1772) . The latter part of his reign saw reforms wrought by the Great Sejm (1788 ? 1792) and the Constitution of 3 May 1791 . These reforms were overthrown by the 1792 Targowica Confederation and by the War in Defense of the Constitution , leading directly to the Second Partition of Poland (1793) , the Kościuszko Uprising (1794) and the final Third Partition of Poland (1795) , marking the end of the Commonwealth . Stripped of all meaningful power , Poniatowski abdicated in November 1795 and spent the last years of his life in semi @-@ captivity in Saint Petersburg .

A Polish noble of the Ciołek coat of arms and a member of the Poniatowski family , he was the son of Count Stanisław Poniatowski , Castellan of Kraków , and Princess Konstancja Czartoryska ; brother of Michał Jerzy Poniatowski (1736 ? 94) , Primate of Poland ; and uncle to Prince Józef Poniatowski , (1763 ? 1813) .

= = Royal titles = =

The English translation of the Polish text of the 1791 Constitution gives his title as : Stanisław August , by the grace of God and the will of the people , King of Poland , Grand Duke of Lithuania and Duke of Ruthenia , Prussia , Masovia , Samogitia , Kiev , Volhynia , Podolia , Podlasie , Livonia , Smolensk , Severia and Chernihiv .

= = Life = =

= = = Youth = = =

Stanisław August Poniatowski was born on 17 January 1732 in Wołczyn , then located in the Polish ? Lithuanian Commonwealth and now part of Belarus , to Stanisław Poniatowski and Konstancja née Czartoryska . The Poniatowski family of the Ciołek coat of arms was among the highest of the Polish nobility (szlachta) . He spent the first few years of his childhood in Gdańsk ; afterward , his family moved to Warsaw . He was educated by his mother , then by private tutors , including Russian ambassador Herman Karl von Keyserling . He did not have many friends in his teenage years ; instead , he developed a fondness for books , which continued throughout his life . He made his first foreign voyage in 1748 , when he accompanied the Russian army as it advanced to Germany . During that trip he visited Aachen and the Netherlands . Later that year he returned to the Commonwealth , stopping in Dresden .

= = = Political career = = =

Poniatowski spent the following year as an apprentice in the chancellery of Michał Fryderyk Czartoryski, then the Deputy Chancellor of Lithuania. In 1750, he traveled to Berlin. There he met the British diplomat Charles Hanbury Williams, who became his mentor and friend. In 1751, Poniatowski was elected to the Treasury Tribunal in Radom, where he served as a commissioner the following year. He spent most of January 1752 at the Austrian court in Vienna. Later that year, after serving at a Radom Tribunal and meeting with King Augustus III of Poland, he was a sejm (Polish parliament) deputy. During that Sejm his father acquired for him the title of starosta of Przemyśl. In March 1753 he left on another foreign trip, this time through Hungary to Vienna, where he met Williams again.

He spent more time in the Netherlands, where he met many key members of that country's political and economical sphere. By late August he arrived in Paris, where he again entered the high social circles. In February 1754 he left Paris and traveled to England, where he spent the next few months. There he befriended Charles Yorke, future Lord Chancellor of Great Britain. He returned to the Commonwealth later that year, this time not participating in the Sejm, as his parents wanted to keep him out of the political drama surrounding the Ostrogski family's fee tail (Ordynacja Ostrogska). Next year he received a title of stolnik of Lithuania.

Ultimately, Poniatowski owed his career to his family connections with the powerful Czartoryski family and their political faction, known as Familia, to whom he grew closer. It was the Familia who sent him in 1755 to Saint Petersburg in the service of Williams, who had been named British ambassador to Russia.

In Saint Petersburg, Poniatowski met the 26-year-old Catherine Alexeievna (the future empress Catherine the Great). The two became lovers. Whatever his feelings for Catherine, it is likely Poniatowski also saw an opportunity to use the relationship for his own benefit, using her influence to bolster his career.

Poniatowski had to leave St. Petersburg in July 1756 due to court intrigue. Through the combined influence of Catherine, Russian empress Elizabeth and chancellor Bestuzhev-Ryumin, Poniatowski rejoined the Russian court as ambassador of Saxony the following January. In St. Petersburg, he became the source of more intrigue between various European governments, some supporting his appointment, others demanding his withdrawal. Eventually, he left the Russian capital on 14 August 1758.

Poniatowski attended the Sejms of 1758, 1760 and 1762. He continued his involvement with the Familia, and supported a pro-Russian and anti-Prussian stance in Polish politics. His father died in 1762, leaving him a moderate inheritance. In 1762, when Catherine ascended to the Russian throne, she sent him several letters professing her support for his ascension to the Polish throne, but asking him to stay away from St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, Poniatowski hoped that Catherine would consider marriage, an idea that was seen as plausible by some international observers. He was involved with the unrealized plans of the Familia for a coup d'état against Augustus III. In August 1763, however, Catherine advised him and the Familia that she would not support a coup as long as Augustus III were alive.

=== King ===

=== Years of hope ===

Upon the death of Poland's King Augustus III in October 1763, negotiations began concerning the election of the new king. Catherine threw her support behind Poniatowski. The Russians spent about 2.5m rubles supporting his election, Poniatowski's supporters and opponents engaged in some military posturing and even minor clashes, and in the end, the Russian army was deployed only a few miles from the election sejm, which met at Wola near Warsaw. In the end, there were no other serious contenders, and during the convocation sejm on 7 September 1764, the 32-year-old Poniatowski was elected king, with 5,584 votes. He swore the pacta conventa

on 13 November , and the formal coronation took place in Warsaw on 25 November . The new King 's uncles in the Familia would have preferred another nephew on the throne , Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski , characterized by one of his contemporaries as *débauché* , *sinon dévoyé* (debauched if not depraved) , but Czartoryski had declined to seek the office .

Stanisław August , as he now styled himself , combining the names of his two immediate royal predecessors , began his rule with rough support within the nation ; particularly , the lower nobility was favorable towards him . In his first years , he attempted to introduce a number of reforms . He founded the Knights School , and began to form a diplomatic service , with semi - permanent diplomatic representatives throughout Europe , Russia and the Ottoman Empire . On 7 May 1765 , Poniatowski established the Order of the Knights of Saint Stanislaus , Bishop and Martyr , in honor of Poland 's and his own patron saint , as Poland 's second order of chivalry , to reward Poles for noteworthy service to the king . Together with the Familia he tried to reform the ineffective government , reducing the powers of the hetmans (Commonwealth 's top military commanders) and treasurers , moving them to commissions elected by the Sejm and responsible to the king . In his memoirs , Poniatowski called this period the " years of hope . " The Familia , which was interested in strengthening the power of their own faction , was dissatisfied with his conciliatory policy as he reached out to many former opponents of their policies . This uneasy alliance between Poniatowski and the Familia continued for most of the first decade of his rule . One of the points of contention between Poniatowski and the Familia concerned the rights of the religious minorities in Poland ; whereas Poniatowski reluctantly supported a policy of religious tolerance , the Familia was opposed to it . The growing rift between Poniatowski and the Familia was exploited by the Russians , who used this issue as a pretext to intervene in the Commonwealth 's internal politics and destabilize the country . Catherine had no desire to see Poniatowski 's reform succeed ; she had supported his ascent to the throne to ensure that the Commonwealth would remain a weak state under Russian control , and his attempts to reform the state 's ailing machinery were a threat to the status quo .

= = = = Bar Confederation and First Partition of Poland = = = =

Matters came to a head in 1766 . During the Sejm in October of that year , Poniatowski attempted to push a radical reform , restricting the disastrous *liberum veto* policy . He was opposed by conservatives such as Michał Wielhorski , who were supported by the Prussian and Russian ambassadors , who threatened war if the reform was passed . The dissidents , supported by the Russians , formed a confederation , the Radom Confederation . Abandoned by the Familia , Poniatowski 's reforms failed to pass at the Replin Sejm , named after Russian ambassador Nicholas Replin , who promised to guarantee the Golden Liberties of the Polish nobility , enshrined in the Cardinal Laws , with all the might of the Russian Empire .

Although it had abandoned the cause of Poniatowski 's reforms , the Familia did not receive the support it expected from the Russians , who continued to press for the dissidents ' rights . Meanwhile , some factions now rallied under the banner of the Bar Confederation , aimed against the dissidents , Poniatowski and the Russians . After an unsuccessful attempt to find allies in Western Europe (France , England and Austria) , Poniatowski and the Familia had no choice but to rely more heavily on the Russian Empire , which treated Poland as a protectorate . In the War of the Bar Confederation (1768 ? 1772) , Poniatowski supported the Russian army 's repression of the Bar Confederation . In 1770 , the Council of the Bar Confederation proclaimed him dethroned . The following year , he was kidnapped by Bar Confederate sympathizers and briefly held prisoner outside of Warsaw , but managed to escape . Faced with the weakness of Poland and continuing chaos , Austria , Russia and Prussia decided to intervene militarily , in exchange for significant territorial concessions from the Commonwealth ? a decision they made without consulting Poniatowski or other Polish parties .

Although Poniatowski protested the First Partition of the Commonwealth (1772) , he was powerless to do anything about it . He considered abdication , but decided against it . During the Partition Sejm of 1773 ? 1775 , in which Russia was represented by ambassador Otto von

Stackelberg , with no help forthcoming from abroad and the armies of the partitioning powers occupying Warsaw to compel the Sejm by force of arms , no alternative was available save submission to their will . Eventually Poniatowski and the Sejm acceded to the partition treaty ; at the same time , several other reforms were passed . The Cardinal Laws were confirmed and guaranteed by the partitioning powers . Royal power was restricted , as the king lost the power to give out titles , and positions of military officers , ministers and senators , the starostwo territories , and Crown lands would be awarded through an auction . The Sejm also created two notable institutions : the Permanent Council , a main governmental body in continuous operation , and the Commission of National Education . The partitioners intended the Council to be easier to control than the unruly Sejms , and indeed it remained under the influence of the Russian Empire . Nevertheless , it was a significant improvement in the Commonwealth governance . The new legislation was guaranteed by the Russian Empire , giving it another excuse to interfere in Commonwealth politics if the legislation it favored was changed .

The political scene in the aftermath of the Partition Sejm saw the rise of a conservative faction which was opposed to the Permanent Council , seeing it as a threat to their Golden Freedoms . This faction was supported by the Czartoryski family , but not by Poniatowski , who proved to be quite adept at making the Council follow his wishes ; this marked the formation of new anti @-@ royal and pro @-@ royal factions in Polish politics . The royal faction was made up primarily of people indebted to the king , who planned to build their careers on service to him ; few were privy to his plans for reforms , which were kept hidden from the conservative opposition and Russia . Poniatowski scored a political victory during the Sejm of 1776 , which further strengthened the Council . Chancellor Andrzej Zamoyski was tasked with the codification of the Polish law , a project that became known as the Zamoyski Code . Russia supported some , but not all , of the 1776 reforms , and to prevent Poniatowski from growing too powerful , it supported the opposition during the Sejm of 1778 . This marked the end of Poniatowski 's reforms , as he found himself without sufficient support to carry them through .

= = = = Great Sejm and Constitution of 3 May 1791 = = = =

In the 1780s , Catherine slightly favored Poniatowski over the opposition , but did not support any of his plans for significant reforms . Despite repeated attempts , Poniatowski failed to confederate the sejms , which would have made them immune to liberum veto . Thus , although he had a majority in the Sejms , Poniatowski was unable to pass even the smallest reform . The Zamoyski Code was rejected by the Sejm of 1780 , and opposition attacks on the king dominated the Sejms of 1782 and 1786 .

Reforms became possible again in the late 1780s . In the context of the wars being waged against the Ottoman Empire by both the Austrian Empire and the Russian Empire , Poniatowski tried to draw Poland into the Austro @-@ Russian alliance , seeing a war with the Ottomans as an opportunity to strengthen the Commonwealth . Catherine gave permission for the next Sejm to be confederated , as she considered some form of limited military alliance with Poland against the Ottomans might be useful .

The Polish @-@ Russian alliance was not implemented , as in the end the only acceptable compromise proved unattractive to both sides . However , in the ensuing Four @-@ Year Sejm of 1788 ? 92 (known as the Great Sejm) , Poniatowski threw his lot with the reformers associated with the Patriotic Party of Stanis?aw Ma?achowski , Ignacy Potocki and Hugo Ko???taj , and co @-@ authored the Constitution of 3 May 1791 . The Constitution introduced sweeping reforms . According to Jacek J?druch , the constitution , in the liberality of its provisions , " fell somewhere below the French , above the Canadian , and left the Prussian far behind " , but was " no match for the American Constitution " . George Sanford notes that the Constitution gave Poland " a constitutional monarchy close to the English model of the time . " Poniatowski himself described it , according to a contemporary account , as " founded principally on those of England and the United States of America , but avoiding the faults and errors of both , and adapted as much as possible to the local and particular circumstances of the country . " The Constitution of 3 May remained to the end a work

in progress . A new civil and criminal code (tentatively called the Stanisław August Code) was in the works . Poniatowski also planned a reform improving the situation of the Polish Jews .

In foreign policy , spurned by Russia , Poland turned to another potential ally , the Triple Alliance , represented on the Polish diplomatic scene primarily by the Kingdom of Prussia , which led to the formation of the ultimately futile Polish - Prussian alliance . The pro - Prussian shift was not supported by Poniatowski , who nevertheless acceded to the decision of the majority of Sejm deputies . The passing of the Constitution of 3 May , although officially applauded by Frederick William II of Prussia , who sent a congratulatory note to Warsaw , caused further worry in Prussia . The contacts of Polish reformers with the revolutionary French National Assembly were seen by Poland 's neighbors as evidence of a conspiracy and a threat to their absolute monarchies . Prussian statesman Ewald von Hertzberg expressed the fears of European conservatives : " The Poles have given the coup de grâce to the Prussian monarchy by voting a constitution " , elaborating that a strong Commonwealth would likely demand the return of the lands Prussia acquired in the First Partition ; a similar sentiment was later expressed by Prussian Foreign Minister Friedrich Wilhelm von Schulenburg - Kehnert . Russia 's wars with the Ottomans and Sweden having ended , Catherine was furious over the adoption of the Constitution , which threatened Russian influence in Poland . One of Russia 's chief foreign policy authors , Alexander Bezborodko , upon learning of the Constitution , commented that " the worst possible news have arrived from Warsaw : the Polish king has become almost sovereign . "

= = = War in Defense of the Constitution and end of the Commonwealth = = =

Shortly thereafter , conservative Polish nobility formed the Targowica Confederation to overthrow the Constitution , which they saw as a threat to the traditional freedoms and privileges they enjoyed . The confederates aligned themselves with Russia 's Catherine the Great , and the Russian army entered Poland , marking the start of the Polish - Russian War of 1792 , also known as the War in Defense of the Constitution . The Sejm voted to increase the Polish Army to 100 ,000 men , but due to insufficient time and funds this number was never achieved . Poniatowski and the reformers could field only a 37 ,000 - man army , many of them untested recruits . This army , under the command of the King 's nephew Józef Poniatowski and Tadeusz Kościuszko , managed to defeat the Russians or fight them to a draw on several occasions . Following the victorious Battle of Zieleńce , in which Polish forces were commanded by his nephew , the king founded a new order , the Order of Virtuti Militari , to reward Poles for exceptional military leadership and courage in combat .

Despite Polish requests , Prussia refused to honor its alliance obligations . In the end , the numerical superiority of the Russians was too great , and defeat looked inevitable . Poniatowski 's attempts at negotiations with Russia proved futile . In July 1792 , when Warsaw was threatened with siege by the Russians , the king came to believe that surrender was the only alternative to total defeat . Having received assurances from Russian ambassador Yakov Bulgakov that no territorial changes would occur , a cabinet of ministers called the Guard of Laws (or Guardians of Law , Polish : Straż Praw) voted eight to four in favor of surrender . On 24 July 1792 , Poniatowski joined the Targowica Confederation . The Polish Army disintegrated . Many reform leaders , believing their cause lost , went into self - exile , although they hoped that Poniatowski would be able to negotiate an acceptable compromise with the Russians , as he had done in the past . Poniatowski had not saved the Commonwealth , however . He and the reformers had lost much of their influence , both within the country and with Catherine . Neither were the Targowica Confederates victorious . To their surprise , there ensued the Second Partition of Poland . With the new deputies bribed or intimidated by the Russian troops , the Grodno Sejm took place . On 23 November 1793 , it annulled all acts of the Great Sejm , including the Constitution . Faced with his powerlessness , Poniatowski once again considered abdication ; in the meantime he tried to salvage whatever reforms he could .

= = = Final years = = =

Poniatowski's plans were ruined by the Kościuszko Uprising. The king did not encourage it, but once it began he supported it, seeing no other honorable option. Its defeat marked the end of the Commonwealth. Poniatowski tried to govern the country in the brief period after the defeat of the Uprising, but on 2 December 1794, Catherine demanded that he leave Warsaw, a request to which he acceded on 7 January 1795, leaving the capital under Russian military escort and settling briefly in Grodno. On 24 October 1795, the act of the final, Third Partition of Poland was signed; one month and one day later, on 25 November, Poniatowski signed his abdication. Catherine died on 17 November 1796, succeeded by Paul I of Russia. On 15 February 1797, Poniatowski left for Saint Petersburg, Russia. He hoped to be allowed to travel abroad, but was not able to secure permission to do so. A virtual prisoner in St. Petersburg's Marble Palace, he subsisted on a pension granted to him by Catherine. Despite financial troubles, he still supported some of his former allies, and he tried to represent the Polish case at the Russian court. He also worked on his memoirs.

Poniatowski died after a stroke on 12 February 1798. Paul I sponsored a royal state funeral, and on 3 March he was buried at the Catholic Church of St. Catherine in St. Petersburg. In 1938, when the Soviet Union planned to demolish the Church, his remains were transferred to the Second Polish Republic, and put in a church at Wołczyn, his birthplace. This was done in secret, and it caused a controversy in Poland when the issue became known. In the 1990, due to poor state of the Wołczyn Church (then in Belarus), his body was transferred to Poland once more, to St. John's Cathedral in Warsaw, where, on 3 May 1791, he had celebrated the adoption of the Constitution he had co-authored and endorsed. A final funeral ceremony was held on 14 February 1995.

= = Legacy = =

= = = Patron of culture = = =

Poniatowski may have been the most important patron of the arts of the Polish Enlightenment. His political goals included the overthrow of the myth of the Golden Freedoms and the reform of the backwards culture of sarmatism, and many of his artistic projects aimed to eradicate the negative qualities he associated with them. The "Thursday Dinners" he hosted were considered the most brilliant social functions in the Polish capital.

He founded the Warsaw National Theatre, the first Polish public theatre, and sponsored many of its expenses, actors and an associated ballet school. He remodeled the Ujazdów Castle and the Royal Castle in Warsaw, and erected the elegant Royal Baths in Warsaw's most romantic park. He was deeply involved with the details of the architectural projects, and his eclectic style became known as the Stanisław August style, a term coined by Polish art historian Władysław Tatarkiewicz. His chief architects included Domenico Merlini and Jan Kamsetzer. He was also a patron of numerous painters, many of them on personal retainer. They included Poles Anna Rajecka, Franciszek Smuglewicz, Jan Bogumił Płersch, Józef Wall and Zygmunt Vogel, as well as foreign painters, namely Marcelli Bacciarelli, Bernardo Canalotto, Jean Pillement, Louis Marteau and Per Krafft the Elder. His retinue of sculptors was led by Andrzej Le Brun, and included Giacomo Monaldi, Franciszek Pinck and Tommaso Righi. Jan Filip Holzhaeusser was his court engraver and designer of many commemorative medals. According to a 1795 inventory, his art collection, spread throughout numerous buildings, contained 2,889 pieces, including ones by Rembrandt, Rubens, van Dyck and others. His plan to create a large painting gallery in Warsaw was interrupted by the dismembering of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; nonetheless, most of the paintings he ordered can now be seen at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London. Poniatowski also planned to fund an Academy of Fine Arts, but this dream was also never realized.

Poniatowski accomplished much in the realm of education and literature. He established the School of Chivalry (also called the "Corps of Cadets"), which functioned from 1765 to 1794 and whose alumni included Tadeusz Kościuszko; he supported the creation of the Commission of

National Education , considered to be the world 's first Ministry of Education . In 1765 he helped found the Monitor , one of the first Polish newspapers and the leading periodical of the Polish Enlightenment . He sponsored many articles that appeared in the Monitor (and perhaps even wrote some himself) . Writers and poets who received his patronage included Stanisław Trembecki , Franciszek Salezy Jezierski , Franciszek Bohomolec and Franciszek Zabłocki . He also supported publishers , including Piotr Witkowski , and library owners such as Józef Lex .

He supported the development of the sciences , particularly cartography ; he hired a personal cartographer (Karol de Perthes) even before his election as king . A plan he initiated to map the entire territory of the Commonwealth , however , was never finished . At the Royal Castle in Warsaw , he organized an astronomical observatory and supported astronomers Jan Niadecki and Marcin Odlanicki Poczobutt . He also sponsored historical studies , including the collection , cataloging and copying of historical manuscripts . He encouraged publications of biographies of famous Polish historical figures , and sponsored their paintings and sculptures .

For his contributions to the arts and sciences , Poniatowski was awarded membership in 1766 to the Royal Society , where he was the first royal member outside the British royalty . In 1778 , he was awarded membership to the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences , and in 1791 to the Berlin Academy of Sciences .

He also supported the development of industry and manufacturing , fields in which the Commonwealth lagged behind most of Western Europe . Among the endeavors in which he invested were the manufacture of cannons and firearms and the mining industry .

Poniatowski himself left several literary works : his memoirs , some political brochures and recorded speeches from the Sejm . He was considered a great orator and a skilled conversationalist .

= = = Conflicting assessments = = =

King Stanisław August remains a controversial figure . In Polish historiography and popular works , he has been criticized or marginalized by Szymon Askenazy , Joachim Lelewel , Jerzy Jędrzejko (whom Andrzej Zahorski describes as Poniatowski 's most vocal critic among modern historians) , Tadeusz Korzon , Karol Zyszewski and Krystyna Zienkowska , whereas more neutral or positive views have been expressed by Paweł Jasienica , Walerian Kalinka , Władysław Konopczyński , Stanisław Mackiewicz , Emanuel Rostworowski and Stanisław Wasylewski .

When elected to the throne , he was seen by many as a simple " instrument for displacing the somnolent Saxons from the throne of Poland " , yet as Norman Davies notes , " he turned out to be an ardent patriot , and a convinced reformer . " Still , according to many , his reforms did not go far enough , leading to accusations that he was being overly cautious , even indecisive , a fault to which he himself admitted . His decision to rely on Russia has been often criticized . Poniatowski saw Russia as a " lesser evil " ? willing to support the independence of a weak Poland within the Russian sphere of influence ; however in the end Russia chose to support the partitions of Poland rather than reform . He was accused by others of weakness and subservience , even of treason , especially in the years following the Second Partition ; during the Kościuszko Uprising , some rumors claimed that Polish Jacobins were planning a coup d'état and his assassination . Another line of criticism alleged poor financial planning on his part . Poniatowski had little personal wealth ; most of his income came from royal lands and monopolies . His patronage of the arts and sciences was a major drain on his treasury ; he also supported numerous public initiatives , and attempted to use the royal treasury to cover the country 's expenses when tax revenue was insufficient . The Sejm promised to compensate him several times , with little practical effect . Nonetheless the accusation of being a spendthrift was frequently levied at him by his contemporary critics .

Andrzej Zahorski dedicated a book to the discussion of Poniatowski , *The Dispute over Stanisław August* (*Spór o Stanisława Augusta* , Warsaw , 1988) . He notes that the discourse concerning Poniatowski is significantly colored by the fact that he was the last king of Poland ? the king who failed to save the country . This failure , and his prominent position , made him a convenient scapegoat for many . Zahorski argues that Poniatowski made an error by joining the Targowica Confederation ; he wanted to preserve the Polish state , but it was too late for that ? he only

succeeded in damaging his reputation for centuries to come .

= = = Remembrance = = =

Poniatowski has been the subject of numerous biographies and many works of art . Voltaire , who saw Poniatowski as a model reformist , modeled King Teucer in his drama *Les Lois de Minos* (1772) after him . At least 58 contemporary poems were dedicated to him or praised him . Since then , he has been a major character in many works of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski , in the *Rok 1794* trilogy by Władysław Stanisław Reymont , in the novels of Tadeusz Dołęcki , and in the dramas of Ignacy Grabowski , Tadeusz Miciński , Roman Bradstreet and Bogdan Michałowski . He is discussed in Luise Mühlbach 's novel *Joseph II and His Court* , and appears in Jane Porter 's *Thaddeus of Warsaw* .

On screen he has been played by Włodzisław Głusiński in the 1976 *3 Maja* directed by Grzegorz Królikiewicz . He will appear in an upcoming Russian TV series .

He has been a subject of numerous portraits , medals and coins . Poniatowski is prominent figure in Jan Matejko 's 1891 painting , *Constitution of 3 May 1791* . Matejko also portrayed him on another large painting , *Rejtan* , and in his series of portraits of Polish monarchs . His bust was unveiled in Łazienki in 1992 . Numerous cities in Poland have streets named after him , including Warsaw and Kraków .

= = Family = =

Poniatowski was the son of Stanisław Poniatowski (1676 ? 1762) and Princess Konstancja Czarotowska (1700 ? 1759) ; brother of Michał Jerzy Poniatowski (1736 ? 94) , Kazimierz Poniatowski (1721 ? 1800) , Andrzej Poniatowski , (1734 ? 1773) ; and uncle to Józef Poniatowski (1763 ? 1813) .

He never married . In his youth , he had loved his cousin Elżbieta Czarotowska , but her father August Aleksander Czarotowski disapproved because he did not think him influential or rich enough . When this was no longer an issue , she was already married . His *pacta conventa* specified that he should marry a Polish noblewoman , although he himself always hoped to marry into some royal family . Upon his accession to the throne , he had hopes of marrying Catherine II , writing to her on 2 November 1763 in a moment of doubt , " If I desired the throne , it was because I saw you on it . " When she made it clear through his envoy Rzewuski that she would not marry him , there were hopes of an Austrian archduchess .

A few historians believe that he later undertook a secret marriage to Elżbieta Szydłowska . However , according to Wirydianna Fiszerowa , a contemporary who knew them both , this rumour only spread after the death of Poniatowski , was generally disbelieved , and moreover , was circulated by Elżbieta herself , so the marriage is considered by most to be unlikely .

He had several notable lovers , two of whom bore him children . Magdalena Agnieszka Sapieżyńska (Lubomirska) (1739 ? 1780) bore Konstancja Łwanowa (1768 ? 1810) and Michał Cichocki (1770 ? 1828) . Elżbieta Szydłowska (1748 ? 1810) bore him Stanisław Konopnica @-@ Grabowski (1780 ? 1845) , Michał Grabowski (1773 ? 1812) , Kazimierz Grabowski (1770- ?) , Konstancja Grabowska and Izabela Grabowska (1776 ? 1858) . It is also very likely that Anna Petrovna (1757 ? 1758) , Catherine the Great 's second child , was his daughter .

= = = Ancestors = = =

= = = Issue = = =