

= Jan Dekert =

Jan Dekert or Jan Dekiert (1738 ? 4 October 1790) was a Polish merchant of German descent and political activist . Starting in the 1760s , he rose to become one of the most prominent merchants in the Polish capital of Warsaw . He was an activist arguing for more rights for the burghers in the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth while opposing Jewish merchants . As the representative of Warsaw , he was elected a deputy to the Sejms of 1784 and 1786 , as well as to the Great Sejm (1788 ? 1892) . He was the mayor of Warsaw (1789 ? 1790) , during which period he organized the Black Procession on 2 December 1789 (a march of burghers who delivered a petition to the king) . This was a major step towards the passing of the Free Royal Cities Act enfranchising burghers , as one of the reforms of the Great Sejm and part of the Constitution of the 3rd May , 1791 .

= = Biography = =

He was born in 1738 in the city of Blesen . The exact date , and information about his family are unknown , as any relevant documents have been lost . He likely had beyond basic education , and some sum of money when he left Bledzew and traveled to Warsaw .

In December 1756 , Dekert was admitted to the Warsaw " youth " Confraternity of Merchants (warszawska konfraternia kupiecka " m?odziaska ") . He started out as a clerk in a cloth store of Kazimierz Martynkowski (or Marcinkowski) , in whose house he also stayed . In April 1761 he married his patron 's daughter , Ró?a Martynkowska . By 1762 he had taken over the cloth store , moved from the " youth " Confraternity of Merchants to the " senior " (" starsza ") one , and become a full citizen of Warsaw . Some time before 1786 , Ró?a died , and Dekert married Antonina Dembska (D?bska) . He had several children from his two marriages , among them Jan Dekert , future bishop of Warsaw .

Dekert 's rise to mayor began with his first official positions in the Warsaw merchant organizations in the 1760s . In the early 1760s he was among the steering group of the " youth " Confraternity , which he resigned in 1762 upon joining the " senior " one . There is some confusion regarding his exact positions and the dates he held them . According to Zienkowska , in 1767 he received a position (gminny) in the magistrate of Warsaw . According to J?druch , he became Alderman (a position usually known in Polish as " radny ") of Warsaw in 1769 , but this is contradicted by Zienkowska ; according to her , it was only in 1776 that he reached the rank of " ?awnik " in the magistrate . He also served an elder (" starszy " ; J?druch translates this as an alderman) for the Confraternity of Merchants from 1771 to 1785 .

Along with his political career , Dekert 's business enterprise was growing . He gathered enough savings to become a cofounder of the Company of Woolen Manufacture in 1766 (Kompania Manufaktur We?nianych) . In 1775 the Sejm granted him a request to buy landed estates (a privilege usually restricted only to the nobility) . In 1776 he leased the Tobacco Monopoly (or Company ; Kompania Tabaczna) from the Polish Treasury ; ten years later , in 1786 , he leased a theatre in Warsaw .

As the representative of Warsaw , he was elected a deputy to the Sejms of 1784 and 1786 , as well as to the Great Sejm (1788 ? 1892) . In the meantime , in February 1789 , he was elected mayor of Warsaw ; he would be reelected in 1790 (as a mayor of Warsaw , he succeeded Wojciech Lobert , and would in turn be succeeded by Józef Micha? ?ukasiewicz) . During the Great Sejm , together with Hugo Ko???taj , Dekert organized the confederation of 141 cities and towns and was at the forefront of demanding the representations and enfranchisement of the burghers in the Sejm ; notably , he helped organize the Black Procession on 2 December 1789 (a march of burghers who delivered a petition to the king) . The burghers demanded similar privileges to those held by the nobles (szlachta) . Their demands included the right to buy and own land estates , the right to be represented in the Polish parliament (Sejm) and reforms to the urban law . The procession influenced the Great Sejm to create a Commission for the Cities (Deputacja w sprawie miast) tasked with addressing those concerns during the works on the new constitution .

He was a vocal critic of Jews , accusing them of unfair competition .

He spend much of his fortune on political activism , and was nearly bankrupt by the time of his death . In February 1790 , despite his objections , he was pressured , through general public demand , into reelection for a second (yearly) term of office as the mayor of Warsaw . It is likely that major reasons he preferred not to have been elected were his ailing business operations and his worsening health . He led his last public debate on 31 April 1790 , and withdrew from politics afterward . He died on 4 October 1790 in Warsaw . He was buried in St. John 's Archcathedral , and his large funeral was paid for by the City of Warsaw .

He died before the Free Royal Cities Act , enfranchising burghers , was passed in 1791 as one of the reforms of the Great Sejm , next to the Constitution of the 3rd May , 1791 .

= = Legacy = =

His contemporary , poet Franciszek Dionizy Knia?nin , called him the " leader of Polish burghers " . In 1896 a plaque dedicated to him in St. John 's Archcathedral proclaimed him " the first defender and representative of the burgher class in the Commonwealth " .

Jan Dekert is one of the characters in Jan Matejko 's painting of the " Adoption of the Polish Constitution of May 3 , 1791 " .