

# Collector's Coins



face value	<b>10 zł</b>
metal	<b>925/1000 Ag</b>
finish	<b>proof</b>
diameter	<b>32.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>14.14 g</b>
mintage	<b>30,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland, on the Eagle's sides a notation of the year of issue: 20-02, an inscription under the Eagle: ZŁ 10 ZŁ, in the rim, an inscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA preceded and tipped with five pearls. Under the left talon of the Eagle the Mint mark:  $\frac{m}{w}$ .

**Reverse:** The bust of king August II the Strong. On the left side a distinction of Order of White Eagle. At the top in a semicircle an inscription: AUGUST II MOCNY. Below in a semicircle dates: 1697-1706; 1709-1733.



face value	<b>2 zł</b>
metal	<b>CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy</b>
finish	<b>standard</b>
diameter	<b>27.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>8.15 g</b>
mintage	<b>620,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland, on the Eagle's sides a notation of the year of issue: 20-02, an inscription under the Eagle: ZŁ 2 ZŁ, in the rim, an inscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA preceded and tipped with six pearls. Under the left talon of the Eagle the Mint mark:  $\frac{m}{w}$ .

**Reverse:** The bust of king August II the Strong. Around an inscription: AUGUST II MOCNY 1697-1706; 1709-1733.

**On the edge** an inscription: NBP eight times repeated, every second one turned by 180°, separated by stars.



On 4 September 2002 the National Bank of Poland puts into circulation collectors' coins depicting the bust of king August II Mocny, Augustus II the Strong of the following face values:

- 10 zł - struck in silver, in proof finish;
- 2 zł - struck in standard finish in CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy, the so called Nordic Gold.

The coins are a continuation of the series "Galaxy of Polish Kings and Princes" initiated by the National Bank of Poland in 1979.

Elector of Saxony Frederick Augustus of Wettin house, later on named August II Mocny, was born on 12 May 1670 in Dresden as a son of

Elector John George III and Anne Sophia, Danish princess. He lived his youth in times of the most intense rise of the influences of French king Luis XIV, visiting courts of Western Europe. He participated in a war with France (in years 1689-92) and Turkey (in years 1695-96). The person of Luis XIV and French model of absolutism constituted for him, as a Saxon elector and later on Polish king, an example to follow.

In 1697 he came to the throne of Saxony. Putting into practice political projects of his father (gaining by Saxony self-government within Reich and independence from Austria), he converted to Catholicism and decided to pretend to the Polish crown. Assuming power in a vast country, highly ranked in Europe and

*Designer of the coins: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*

*Coins were struck by the State Mint SA in Warsaw.*

*Printed by NBP Printing Office*

Design: DECORUM

– Polish Kings and Princes –

renowned for its recent glorious victory over Turkish army at Vienna, made possible for August to dream about independence from Habsburg emperors by winning hereditary crown outside Reich, by instance in one of former fiefs of the Polish Republic. During election most of the gentry voted French candidate, prince de Bourbon Conti, while Conti's adversaries united their forces and with Russian and Austrian support, on 27 June 1697, acclaimed Frederick August of Wettin house Polish king. Polish election revealed main positive feature of August II as a politician – consistency and fast acting. After election – not waiting for an initiative of the majority's favourite candidate, prince Conti – on 27 July August took *pacta conventa* vows (i.e. agreement between the gentry and newly elected king defining main political and financial obligations of the elect), and on 15 September he crowned himself on the castle of Wawel as August II.

Once he gained rule he intended to transform his state into monarchy by the example of Luis XIV. He dreamed about Polish-Saxon union, hereditary throne for the Wettins in the Polish Republic, enhancing royal power, and in the consequence creating great, strong empire under the rule of his successors. The projects contained many advantageous elements for the Polish Republic, among other things conquering Moldavia, Silesia, Livonia and Courland for the sake of a future empire. With all their attractive points they did not however take into consideration international realities. On one hand Poland feared about German domination, on the other hand religiously fanatic Saxons stood in awe of forced religious conversions (i.e. changing one's faith) by the newly christened king according to Roman Catholic order. The successful realization of these plans hindered also the lack of direct frontier between both countries.

As for the foreign affairs August II initially continued proceedings of the king Jan III Sobieski, while domestically aimed to develop trade and industry, education, reorganize the army and enhance the monarch's position. These plans were successfully put into practice in Saxony which under his rule lived a period of industrial and cultural bloom. While in Poland his intentions, especially those regarding introduction of succession to the throne and enhancing royal power, met with strong opposition from the part of the Polish gentry attached to its privileges. This resistance grew more after August II, as a Saxon elector, had declared a treaty with Russia. At last the king's projects involved the Polish Republic in a long and ruinous the Northern War with Sweden (1700-21), taking place in 1701-09 on the territory of Poland which formally did not participate in it.

August II at the head of the Saxon army attacked from the territory of Poland Swedish Livonia. The Saxon army however was defeated and the Swedish invaded the Polish country. The opposition against reformatory measures and resistance against participation of Poland in the war as well as the treaty with Russia were used by Swedish King Charles XII to win support of a part of the Polish gentry, grouped in the Confederation of Warsaw. They refused compliance with the authority of August II

and with Swedish backing on 12 July 1704 elected Stanisław Leszczyński. Leszczyński signed a treaty with Sweden subjugating the Republic of Poland to Charles XII and restored Courland to Sweden. The majority of the gentry, which had not acknowledged Swedish rule, remained faithful to August as a legal sovereign and joined in a Confederation in Sandomierz to protect the King. In 1704 its representatives signed a peace treaty with Russia, in virtue of which the Tsar Peter I declared further help for August II, and after war promised restitution of Livonia. In the consequence of further defeats of Saxons and Swedish invasion on the territory of Saxony August II withdrew from the war and abdicated for the benefit of Stanisław Leszczyński, signing in 1706 a treaty in Altranstädt. Only Russian victory at Poltava in 1709 enabled him – after revoking his abdication as forced – return to the Polish throne. The alliance treaty with the Tsar Peter I the Great, signed in 1709 in Toruń, conditioned however the position of August II from Russian support.

After 1710 August II the Strong thought again about enhancing his power, undertaking the task of treasury and army reforms as well as making an attempt to abolish *liberum veto*, likewise steps leading to liberate the country from Russian supremacy, among other things by getting closer with France. He tried to instil in Poland some Saxon models and – without success – limit omnipotence of commander-in-chiefs; he also fought to guarantee himself an influence on appointments for Church dignities. He wanted to reinforce the state treasury by means of rational running of royal demesne. He sought a source of the country's welfare increase in the development of trade and crafts hence he pursued to expand privileges of towns, reorganize customs policy, he sped up mining sector. Many of his ideas were really interesting and valid. The majority of the gentry however stood in deep awe of royal tyranny's introduction. Yet they realized a difficult situation in the country but did not accept most reforms for fear that it would have abolished their privileges.

Absolutism did not enjoy support of old magnate families therefore August II aimed to create new nobility. It is him to have elevated the rank of the old Czartoryskis family, it is also him to have introduced on a political scene a very talented nobleman Stanisław Poniatowski.

Economic and political crisis, envenomed by excesses of the Saxon army introduced to Poland' as well as fear of the gentry for a possible absolutist *coup d'etat* led to plot by the gentry in 1715 a new anti-royal movement – Confederation in Tarnogród in the district of Lublin. In order to avoid bloodshed in domestic fights both parties agreed on the Tsar's Peter I interference and invasion of the Russian army. Conditions of the agreement between August II and his subjects were confirmed in 1717 by the so-called Sejm Niemy, *Mute Diet* (with fear for breaking off proceedings it was allowed only to a marshal and a deputy to make a speech presenting the tenor of the constitution), which strengthened Russian protection

over Poland. The Tsar became then a mediator in disputes between the Polish King and his subjects. The agreement regulated relations between the Republic of Poland and Saxony. Both countries were meant to be united by one ruler. The weakness of Poland and the King's problems caused that several times Prussia put forward the idea of Poland's partition but the King August II did not accept the offer.

In times of the rule of August the Strong the conflicts risen under the reign of Jan III Sobieski reached the apogee. Further collapse of Sejm as an organ of supreme power, as well as total economic crisis and decline of values among the gentry caused that the rule of August was mainly characterised by deep downfall of the noble Polish Republic in all walks of life.

Tragedy of the King's rule resulted from many adversary junctures of international politics, it annihilated monarch's plans or simply turned against him. Admirer of absolutism had to relinquish the crown in a shameful way. Planning initially to use Peter I as an instrument of one's own politics he became at last a ruler who was formally and practically dependant from Russia. August the Strong not only was unable to carry out his recurrently interesting projects, but many of them ended up with results contrary from those planned initially. Efforts of reforms consolidated conservative public feeling and aversion to all sorts of reforms became rooted for a long time in the gentry's hearts and minds.

August II played a significant role as a patron of culture, especially architecture; Dresden owes him many beautiful buildings, especially Zwinger palace, while Warsaw has among other things the so-called Saxon Axle, palace along with Saxon Garden and palace of Brühl. The monarch granted a permission to Piarists for establishing in Warsaw the first nation wide newspaper „Kurier Polski”, *Polish Messenger*.

In 1705 August II instituted the first Polish distinction – the Order of White Eagle.

August II the Strong featured unbelievable physical strength (hence his byname) and exuberant temper, his life was full of verve and imagination.

He died at night on 31 January by 1 February 1733 in Warsaw.

*Elaborated in NBP in base of:*

1. „Galaxy of Polish kings and princes”, *Czytelnik* 1978
2. „The book of Polish kings and princes” edited by Stefan K. Kuczyński, *Świat Książki* 1999
3. „Polish history from ancient to modern times” Alicja Dybkowska, Jan Żaryn, Małgorzata Żaryn, PWN 1994 and encyclopaedia sources