

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before the official results of the 19th Roofing World Championships in Cracow are announced, I am pleased to present a short history of the Polish roofing trade, this is an important time in our history and we are honoured to have staged this wonderful event. I would like to give you a brief outline of how we began, how we have developed to this present day and describe the current state of the roofing trade in Poland. My presentation will be accompanied by images of the historic buildings, mainly from the region hardly known even by Poles, namely south-eastern Poland – a picturesque area inhabited formerly by the tribes of Łemkowie, Bojkowie and Pogórzanie.

Craftsmanship has been needed ever since we began to build settlements for human habitation. Craftsmanship was already thriving in the early Piast era, long before the Polish state was founded. It happened when groups of people of certain occupations started to separate from the main society. Specialization in these occupations started the phenomenon of craftsmanship.

Biskupin is an example of the oldest settlement where the traces of the first craftsmen of Łużycka culture can be found. It should be noted that in the history of our State, dating back to 966 A.D., there were many ethnic and cultural differences. For example in the 15th century, the territory of Poland stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and so there was great variety in skills and craftsmanship.

Many Polish villages trace their names back to the kind of craft its inhabitants performed, for example Kowale (Blacksmiths), Grotniki (Spearmakers) or Stolarze (Carpenters). In the period between the 10th and 12th centuries, craftsmen moved from villages to towns and immediately became a distinguishable social groups.

In the 13th century, the towns started to be incorporated under the Ułanieckie Law. During this time, a rapid growth of construction was observed in Europe. Starting from the 12th

century, new styles of construction emerged in the churches, initially in France but also later in Central Europe. New buildings of great beauty and size were erected. The local architects were not able to build vast design of a gothic cathedral alone, so architects, artists and construction craftsmen joined them, creating so called 'construction committees'. These committees were not restricted to one place so could always be present where the construction of a cathedral took place. The members of the 'committee' had to comply with special customs and all of the regulations for the project of the building. This is the time when the first assemblies of the particular craftsmanship occupations began – and named "cech" [guild] after the German word "zeichen" [mark, sign], as each of the founded guilds had the marks connected with the profession of its members.

Masonry and carpentry workshops grew and prospered in the towns, and working under the leadership of the guildmaster, spread far to the east. The high quality of the carpentry manufacturing, observed in the gothic and late gothic churches was incorporated into the Orthodox Church architecture. The free carpentry workshops, whilst still remaining in close relations with the masonry, did not start forming guilds until the 16th century. An important stage was the royal assent by the King of the guild statutes of the carpenters, masons and bricklayers in Krakow in 1512, and the founding of the bricklayers guild in Lwow in 1572. The guilds in Gdansk, Wroclaw, Poznan, Torun and Lublin thrived.

It is at this time that we can assume that the carpentry or generally the construction guilds start existing.

By the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century the activity of the construction guilds was at its highest. This was due to the commercial prosperity of the country, including the Russian lands, which in turn, lead to the development of all kinds of construction and architecture. In the latter stages, a very important change occurred as the demand for the late gothic style was coming to an end. The renaissance started changing and buildings became more sophisticated, paving the way for the coming of the baroque period. Eastern and Western

influences came together from the numerous commercial and political contacts with Moldova, Wallachia as well as Muslim Turkey could be distinguished. Lwow, after Cracow and Gdansk was at that time the third cultural centre of Poland.

The guilds have always observed the Christian doctrine in their commercial activities, respecting Christian moral and religious principles.

The guild statutes were accepted by either the king or the town hall, and there was always a strong connection between Christian laws and the rules of the guilds.

I give now a couple of interesting examples of the customs:

For missing a meeting without giving their apologies, the guilty party owed the other brothers a half of barrel of beer. If any of the apprentices married the widow of a craftsman, he was automatically admitted to the guild. If the apprentice wanted to leave his master upon payment, he could only do so on Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. If any of the brothers worked during a holiday, he was punished with the obligation to deliver a stone of wax. In 1671, one of the masters had to pay 3 thalers because his fiancée gave birth 3 months before the wedding day.

Each guild had its own patron saint and was connected with a specific church, in which it had its altar funded, embroidered and looked after by the guild, and next to the altar, a box for candles used in processions was placed. The guild had its banner with the image of the patron saint and its bench in the church.

The guilds also had an important social, political and military meaning, as the armed emergency protection force for the city. Each guild was assigned a specific part of the city walls or a tower that had to be kept in proper condition, and was responsible for buying, maintaining and storing weapons.

The guild came to an end between the 17th and 18th centuries, due to several European and specifically Polish events including wars with the Cossacks and Sweden. In 1772 the monarchs of

Russia, Prussia and Austria signed a pact aiming at the annexation of a vast part of the territory of Poland, and in 1797 they signed the Petersburg Convention which meant that the "Kingdom of Poland" would no longer exist.

The monopoly of the guilds in regard of the craftsmanship manufacturing was eventually abolished in the time of the Congress Kingdom. In 1859 the Russian occupants issued an industrial act allowing the non-guild craftsmen to practice, as at that time poor building was accepted. The construction of factories and the mass development of production also caused the bankruptcy of many workshops because there was not enough demand for their skills.

Craftsmanship organizations went through many changes, from guild federations to chambers of craftsmanship, with the aim of representing the interests of the craftsmanship industry. However the craftsmanship organizations in 19th and 20th century have little in common with the guilds (corporations) from the middle ages. New forms of craftsmanship organizations, even if using the name "guild" are no longer self-regulating organizations, but just a form of licensing of the craftsmanship workshops by the State.

Finally after the fall of communism in Poland, regulations were significantly liberalized and compulsory membership in the guild has been abolished. After the turbulent period of formation of our new economy, new organizational forms started emerging. The strengthening position of big concerns manufacturing and distributing the construction materials, caused many smaller contractors to assemble around them. This was helped by incentives such as training sessions (often free of charge), loyalty programmes, which along with practically the non-existent vocational education, is virtually the only possibility of learning about new products and performance technologies. There was even attractive leisure activities arranged for the best contractors,

The Polish Roofers' Federation is an example of such a new form of organizing and restoring the roofing trade, and is the elite of Poland's roofers.

The PRF [PSD] co-operates with the most significant manufacturers, trading companies, publishers and websites on the market, and issues a magazine for the professionals. It has organized and still organizes training centres preparing young people to the roofing trade, as well as many other training opportunities relating to fixing methods and techniques. The federation co-operates with the chambers of craftsmanships, which retained the privilege of awarding the Apprentice and Master titles, recognized in Europe.

We are pleased that the International Federation for the Roofing Trade, of which Polish Roofers' Federation is a member, recognizing the significance of PRF on the Polish market, entrusted the organization of 19th World Championships – the event promoting both Poland as well as the roofer's profession.

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