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Power, Reform, and Identity: A Postcolonial Analysis of the
Relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician
Szlachta (1772–1817)

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Introduction.

1. Historical Context.

The partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 18th century were some of the most crucial events in European history. One of their many consequences was a decisive shift in the power balance in the region to the benefit of the three states that now possessed the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories. After 1772, the Kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy were faced with the question of how the newly acquired lands were to be ruled and administered by their central governments. In order to get the most benefits, while also securing themselves from possible discontent and upheaval, they had to create specific adaptation policies that were to be applied to the former Polish-Lithuanian lands to smoothly incorporate them into the respective state formations.

The territory acquired by the Habsburg Empire, which received the name „Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria“ (or simply „Galicia“), was no exception to that. Even though at first Maria Theresia was reluctant to participate in dismembering the weakened *Rzeczpospolita*, the Monarchy ended up adding the largest share of territories to its realm in 1772.¹ In 1795, the Empire gained another portion of the *Rzeczpospolita* lands, which would briefly constitute the new crownland of West Galicia and eventually be united with the Old or East Galicia in 1803–1804. Both after the First and after the Third Partition the new territories posed a significant challenge to the Monarchy regarding their future administration. The region was almost universally regarded as one of the poorest and least developed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and its people were considered uncivilized and lazy, unable to bring any benefit to the society.² Any potential gains from Galicia would require years, if not decades, of fundamental transformations, and no consensus existed about whether keeping Galicia permanently was worthwhile.³ As a result, during the first decades of its history within the Habsburg Empire Galicia was subjected to a somewhat chaotic and wide-ranging social, political

¹ Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford 2010) 15.

² Klemens Kaps, *Ungleiche Entwicklung in Zentraleuropa: Galizien zwischen überregionaler Verflechtung und imperialer Politik (1772–1914)* (Wien 2015) 215f.

³ Horst Glassl, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772–1790)* (Wiesbaden 1975) 251.

and economic transformations and reforms. Several elements, however, remained key to the Habsburg strategies in Galicia despite all the changes in the external and internal political circumstances. One of them was the efforts of the Viennese government to engage the noble elites of the *Rzeczpospolita* (known as the *szlachta*) residing in Galicia into state centralization processes and to make them loyal and predictable subjects of the Monarchy. These efforts, as well as the reactions of the *szlachta* toward those policies and their attempts to at least partially secure their former privileged status within the local society, are the main subject of this project. To explore this subject in depth, this dissertation seeks to answer the following central question: How did the Habsburg Monarchy's ruling strategies concerning the Galician *szlachta* evolve between 1772 and 1817, and how did the *szlachta* respond to these policies? What internal transformations and external geopolitical factors influenced the shifting relationship between the Habsburg government and the local nobility?

The time period covered in this research begins in 1772, when after the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Galicia became a part of the Habsburg Monarchy. It ends in 1817, since after the Congress of Vienna, which defined the post-Napoleonic balance of powers in Europe, Galicia was recognized by the European great powers (first and foremost, by Austria itself) as an inalienable Austrian territory and not as a potential subject of territorial negotiations. In addition to that, the Napoleonic wars turned out to be a major test of loyalty for the *szlachta* toward the Habsburgs. After the establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 the *szlachta* in three partition states expected that at some point all former *Rzeczpospolita* territories would be joined under the power of this French protectorate, which would eventually become a resurrected Polish state.⁴ In 1809, the Duchy's troops occupied major parts of Galicia, including its capital city Lviv. Although the troops were initially met with joy,⁵ the allegiance of Galician population, and the *szlachta* in particular, was split between the cause of re-establishing the Polish state and the loyalty to Habsburgs. No *szlachta*-led uprising took place in Galicia even when Austria was at its weakest,⁶ at the same time, many Galician

⁴ Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795–1918* (Seattle 1975) 42.

⁵ Marian Tyrowicz, *Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru do Wiosny Ludów, 1772–1849: Wybór tekstów źródłowych* (Galicia from the First Partition to the Spring of Nations: 1772–1849; Selected Source Texts) (Kraków/Wrocław 1956) 145f.

⁶ Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867* (New Haven 2015) 96.

aristocrats joined the Austrian army, driven by self-interest and the hope that supporting the Habsburgs would secure personal gains.⁷ After a large part of Galicia, including most of the territories acquired by the Monarchy in 1772, was returned under the Habsburg scepter, no major resistance against such a turn of events was demonstrated by the *szlachta*. Many of the noblemen adopted a passive stance, aligning themselves with the Habsburgs when it offered personal advantage, biding their time until the wars were resolved.⁸ Simultaneously, the incorporation of the former West Galician territories into the Duchy of Warsaw did not go smoothly, as the local *szlachta* demonstrated their unwillingness to be directly absorbed by the French protectorate state without guarantees of any special status. For many Galician nobles, the Duchy of Warsaw did not present an attractive alternative to living under the Habsburg rule due to the radical reduction of noble privileges present in the Duchy's legal system. Some of them would even voice their preference for the Habsburg legislation, since it was more favorable toward their prosperity and security than the norms suggested by the Napoleonic Code.⁹ Therefore, it could be concluded that the transformations carried out by Vienna after 1772 influenced the *szlachta* residing in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, and were successful at the very least in creating connections between the local nobility and the Habsburg Empire, which could not be severed even by decades of internal and external crises. These connections would receive their confirmation after the Napoleonic wars, when the 45 years of constant turmoil were concluded by the establishment of the compromise between the Viennese government and the Galician *szlachta*. The calling of the noble Estates in 1817, as well as the festive visit of the emperor Franz I to Galicia the same year and a number of cultural concessions guaranteed to the Polish population of the crownland signaled the willingness of both parties to recognize the status quo and refrain from disrupting it, be it by curbing the *szlachta* privileges even further, or by revolting against the Monarchy in an attempt to regain dominance in the local society, respectively.

⁷ Michał *Baczkowski*, Koncepcje ugody austriacko-polskiej w latach 1790–1815. Niezrealizowana szansa porozumienia? (The Concepts of the Austro-Polish settlement in 1790–1815: Unrealized chance for agreement?). In: *Studia Historyczne* 2 (2011) 127–141, here 134.

⁸ Wacław *Mejbaum*, Galicja po klęsce Napoleona w r. 1812 (1813–1814) (Galicia after Napoleon's defeat in 1812 (1813–1814)). In: *Biblioteka Warszawska* 2 (1913) 105–127, here 118.

⁹ Kazimierz *Krzos*, Z Księciem Józefem w Galicji w 1809 roku: Rząd Centralny Obojga Galicji (With Prince Józef in Galicia in 1809: The Central Government of Both Galicias) (Warszawa 1967) 289.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach.¹⁰

Within the framework of this dissertation project, it is argued that the research on the relationship between the Habsburg government and the Galician *szlachta* would benefit from the application of the postcolonial studies' instruments. Postcolonial studies provide a framework for understanding the mechanisms of imperial domination and the responses of local elites, offering insight into the construction and negotiation of colonial identities. This framework reveals the ways in which imperial rule operated not only through direct governance but also through the production of knowledge and discourse. The Habsburg Monarchy, like other imperial powers, relied on language and representation to define its role as a civilizing force and to establish the legitimacy of its rule. The ideal of the Empire at the time was a centralized state in which all subjects conformed to the idea of the common good, as defined by the ruling dynasty. This vision sought to replace the fragmented and estate-based governance of the *Rzeczpospolita* of the past with a rational, bureaucratic order in which individual or corporate privileges were subordinated to the overarching needs of the state. The policies directed towards the *szlachta* reflected this goal, as their historical privileges and decentralized political traditions were viewed as obstacles to the formation of a cohesive imperial order. At the same time, the *szlachta*, positioned between the imperial authorities and the largely peasant population of the new crownland, developed its own counter-discourse, attempting to maintain its historical status and influence. This dissertation investigates the ways in which the Habsburg administration and the Galician nobility engaged in discursive struggles over authority, legitimacy, and identity, demonstrating how discourse functioned as both an instrument of control and a site of resistance.

Under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the *szlachta* was legally recognized as a homogeneous group, irrespective of differences in wealth, ethnicity, or religion. This framework ensured that all members of the nobility, regardless of material status or regional background, enjoyed the same socio-political rights and privileges.¹¹ By 1772,

¹⁰ Parts of this methodological discussion, including phrasing and conceptual framing, appeared previously in: Oleksandra Krushynska, *Becoming subaltern? The application of postcolonial theories to the relationship between the Galician nobility and the Habsburg monarchy (1772–1815)*. In: *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne* 54 (2024) 591–616.

¹¹ Janusz Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce: rozkwit, upadek, relikty* (Noble culture in Poland: development, decline, relics) (Warszawa ³1983) 72

the *szlachta* had developed a distinct identity centered on the belief that they alone constituted the political nation (*Natio Polonica*) exclusively entitled to rule and make decisions concerning the governance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹² The majority of the *szlachta* were Polish or Polonized and Catholic, yet those of different ethnic origins, particularly Ruthenians, and adherents of Uniate or Orthodox traditions, still identified more strongly with their noble status than with any national or religious affiliation.¹³ The centuries of Polonization and Catholicization in former Red Ruthenian lands resulted in the near-total assimilation of the Ruthenian *szlachta* into the *Natio Polonica*, such that by the time of the First Partition, a distinct Ruthenian noble identity had largely ceased to exist.¹⁴ The only reason for a Polish-Ruthenian nobleman to identify himself as „Ruthenian“ would usually be to justify his right to possess lands on „Ruthenian“ territories; it did not imply any solidarity with the representatives of the lower classes residing there.¹⁵

Following the annexation of Galicia, the Habsburg administration sought to categorize the *szlachta* according to its own imperial framework. This process involved redefining noble status in accordance with Habsburg legal and administrative standards. The poorer *szlachta*, who had enjoyed full noble rights in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were largely stripped of their privileges and reclassified as commoners, while wealthier members of the nobility were divided into distinct categories with varying degrees of status and legal recognition.¹⁶ This restructuring reflects a broader imperial strategy of „divide and rule“, fragmenting the nobility’s traditional unity and reducing their collective political influence. However, throughout the studied period, Habsburg policy did not seek to divide the *szlachta* along ethnic or religious lines. Instead, noble

¹² Igor Kąkolewski, Sozialverfassung und adlige Privilegiensicherung. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller, Christian Lübke (eds.) *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: Ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2011) 61–90, here 77.

¹³ Adam Świątek, *Gente Rutheni, nazione Poloni. Z dziejów Rusinów, narodowości polskiej w Galicji* (Gente Rutheni, nazione Poloni. From the history of Ruthenians of Polish nationality in Galicia) (Kraków 2014) 53.

¹⁴ Henryk Litwin, Catholicization among the Ruthenian Nobility and Assimilation Processes in the Ukraine during the Years 1569–1648. In: *Acta Poloniae Historica* 55 (1987) 57–83, here 65; Janusz Maciejewski, Sarmatyzm jako formacja kulturowa. Geneza i główne cechy wyodrębniające (Sarmatism as a cultural formation. Origin and main distinguishing features). In: *Teksty: Teoria Literatury, Krytyka, Interpretacja* 4, No. 16 (1974) 13–42, here 33.

¹⁵ Świątek, *Gente Rutheni*, 55.

¹⁶ Irena Rychlikowa, *Studia nad ziemiaństwem Galicji. Rzecz o marnotrawstwie badawczego trudu* (Studies on the Galician gentry. A story about the waste of research effort). In: *Przegląd Historyczny* 77, No. 3 (1986) 535–557, here 541.

status was primarily redefined in socioeconomic and administrative terms, in keeping with the imperial objective of establishing a centralized and hierarchical bureaucratic order.

In response to these reforms, the *szlachta* sought to maintain their corporate homogeneity, recognizing that unity was crucial for preserving their political influence within the newly established Habsburg crownland. Throughout the studied period, noble petitions to the Habsburg government repeatedly emphasized the legal equality that had defined the *szlachta* in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. By invoking this tradition, they sought to argue that their collective status had historically ensured stability and effective governance in Galicia. The *szlachta*'s political rhetoric consistently stressed that the egalitarian structure of their estate was not only a foundation of legitimate rule but also a necessary component of Galicia's political and social order. Consequently, this dissertation treats the *szlachta* in accordance with how they were perceived by the principal actors in this study, namely, Habsburg officials and the *szlachta* themselves. Where distinctions such as „magnates“ or „lower *szlachta*“ appear in the sources, they are analyzed accordingly in subsequent chapters. However, where official documents refer more broadly to „*szlachta*“, this study understands the term as referring to all legally recognized nobles, irrespective of material wealth, religious affiliation, or ethnic background.¹⁷

The specifics of the *szlachta*'s position in Galicia is that they simultaneously occupied the role of colonized subjects under Habsburg authority while maintaining their own colonial-like dominance over the majority Ruthenian (Ukrainian) peasant population. The peasantry in Galicia was overwhelmingly Ruthenian in ethnicity and primarily adhered to the Uniate or Orthodox churches, and therefore distant from the *szlachta*, who identified with Polish-Lithuanian Catholic traditions. The *szlachta*'s self-perception as the natural ruling class was deeply rooted in the Sarmatian mythos, a cultural narrative that glorified the Polish-Lithuanian nobility as direct descendants of the ancient Sarmatians, an exceptional and noble people distinct from both western Europeans and the „uncivilized“ populations of the East.¹⁸ This mythos not only

¹⁷ For a broad definition of the *szlachta* according to the *Rzeczpospolita*'s customs, see Michael G. Müller, Adel und Elitenwandel in Ostmitteleuropa. Fragen an die polnische Adelsgeschichte im ausgehenden 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. In: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 50, No. 4 (2001) 497–513, here 500.

¹⁸ Kerstin S. Jobst, A Sacral and Mythical Landscape: The Crimea in the East European Context. In: Prace Filologiczne. Literaturoznawstwo [PFLIT] 1, 9(12) (2019), 11–32, here 16.

reinforced their sense of aristocratic superiority but also shaped their justification for ruling over the Ruthenian peasantry, whom they saw as needing guidance, discipline, and cultural uplift. Just as the Habsburg administration justified its governance over Galicia through the rhetoric of a civilizing mission, the *szlachta* employed similar narratives in relation to the peasantry. Viewing themselves as the bearers of Christian civilization,¹⁹ they framed their dominance as a duty rather than exploitation, reinforcing their claims to political and social power. However, under Habsburg rule, this position was challenged, as the Monarchy redefined itself as the true agent of modernization. The interplay between these competing civilizing discourses reveals how the *szlachta* sought to maintain its hierarchical position within the imperial structure while resisting efforts to subordinate themselves to Habsburg control. This dual status as „colonized colonizers“ shaped the way they articulated their identity within the Empire, as they sought both to resist Habsburg control and to justify their privileged position within Galician society.²⁰

The complexity of the relationship between the Habsburg government and the Galician nobility can be better understood through the application of key concepts from postcolonial theories. One of the most relevant is the notion of „othering“, which explains how the Habsburg administration constructed the *szlachta* as an outdated and unruly class in need of reform. According to Edward Said,

„The development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity [...] involves establishing opposites and otherness whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from us“.²¹

By defining themselves in opposition to the *szlachta*, the Habsburgs justified policies that excluded the Galician nobility from political participation and curtailed their influence while portraying imperial governance as a necessary force for modernization

¹⁹ Robert Born, Sarah Lemmen, Einleitende Überlegungen zu Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa. In: Robert Born, Sarah Lemmen (eds.), *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa, Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Bielefeld 2014), 9–28, here 14f.

²⁰ For the position of the *szlachta* as both the „colonizers“ of *Kresy Wschodnie* and „colonized“ by the three partitioning states in late 18th century see: Maria Janion, *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury* (Incredible Slavicism. Fantasms of Literature) (Kraków 2006) 170.

²¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. (Reprinted with a new afterword, London 1995) 332.

and stability.²² By purposefully putting the natives – in this case, the *szlachta* – in an incomparably inferior position towards itself, the „settler“ – the Habsburg Monarchy – did not only aim at strengthening its status in Galicia, but also prepared the ground for „civilizing“ the land during the future transformations. Despite its alleged „backwardness“, the *Rzeczpospolita* nobility was believed to be capable of improvement to a certain extent,²³ which made the „civilizing mission“ not only possible, but quite desired. Quoting Jürgen Osterhammel, the „civilizing mission“

„...includes the self-proclaimed right and duty to propagate and actively introduce one's own norms and institutions to other peoples and societies, based upon a firm conviction of the inherent superiority and higher legitimacy of one's own collective way of life“.²⁴

The Habsburg administration viewed its policies in Galicia through this lens, presenting reforms as necessary steps towards integrating the crownland into the imperial system and elevating its population to a supposedly higher level of governance and civilization. This discourse, however, was perceived by the *szlachta* as a direct threat to their established way of life rather than an opportunity for alignment with the Habsburg modernization project. Rooted in the belief that their own noble traditions represented the pinnacle of political and cultural perfection, the *szlachta* viewed imperial reforms as an attack on their identity and privileges. They did not see themselves as needing civilization but rather as the last bastion of true nobility and rightful governance.²⁵ Consequently, any attempts to modify their role or integrate them into the Habsburg vision of a centralized state were met with resistance, as they framed these efforts as destructive rather than progressive.

The Habsburg efforts to redefine and control the *szlachta*'s role within the imperial system can be further analyzed through concept of „subalternization“.

²² Miloš Řezník, Neuorientierung einer Elite: Aristokratie, Ständewesen und Loyalität in Galizien (1772–1795) (Frankfurt am Main 2016) 144.

²³ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford 1994) 181.

²⁴ Jürgen Osterhammel, Europe, the „West“ and the Civilizing Mission. Annual Lecture/German Historical Institute, London 2005 (London 2006) 8.

²⁵ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Politische Öffentlichkeit und Verfassung zwischen Königsherrschaft, Oligarchie und Adelsrepublikanismus. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller, Christian Lübke (eds.) *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: Ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2011) 369–396, here 377.

Traditionally, postcolonialism defines subalternity as the exclusion of colonial population from the hierarchy of power built by the metropolis. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak linked subalternity to the absence of a subject in a hegemonic discourse,²⁶ as well as in all lines of social mobility.²⁷ Although these elements were certainly present in the Habsburg policies, their approach to subalternization of the *szlachta* was more nuanced. Under the Habsburgs, the *szlachta* retained certain economic and social privileges. At the same time, the Empire's policies increasingly restricted the nobility's political influence, creating a paradox in which they were expected to integrate into the imperial system while simultaneously losing their historical autonomy. Rephrasing the name of Spivak's essay,²⁸ it could be argued that the goal of Vienna was to ensure that the *szlachta* „could not speak“ – certainly not with a voice of a powerful group able to independently define the future of the land. This dissertation examines how the *szlachta* navigated these attempts at subalternization, using petitions and political discourse to assert their relevance while resisting full integration into the Habsburg state.

Another dimension of Habsburg rule that highlights its contradictions is captured in the concept of „ambivalence“. Using the definition of Homi K. Bhabha, the colonizers are forced to be ambivalent towards the subjects they attempt to „civilize“, since if the mission is successful, and the colonized become equal to their colonizers, they would inevitably revolt against the colonizing power.²⁹ The Habsburg Monarchy, while seeking to assimilate the *szlachta* into its administrative structures, simultaneously feared their influence and potential resistance. This ambivalence resulted in policies that alternated between co-optation and marginalization, reinforcing the instability of the *szlachta*'s position within the Empire. Similarly, the *szlachta*'s own discourse reveals a tension between subordination and assertion, as they navigated their status within the imperial hierarchy. The dissertation explores how this dynamic played out in petitions, correspondence, and noble deliberations, illustrating the ways in which both imperial and local actors engaged in a constant renegotiation of authority.

²⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Leon De Kock, Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa. In: Ariel: A Review of International English Literature 23, no. 2 (1992) 29–47, here 46.

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular. In: Postcolonial Studies 8, no. 4 (2005) 475–486, here 475.

²⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak? In: Laura Chrisman, Patrick Williams (eds.), Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader (London 1994) 66–111.

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London/New York 1994) 86.

Hybridity, another concept central to postcolonial analysis, provides a lens through which to examine the adaptive strategies of the *szlachta*. As defined by Homi K. Bhabha, hybridity is

„...the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination [...sic] For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory“.³⁰

Rather than being passive subjects of imperial rule, the Galician nobility actively appropriated elements of Habsburg political culture while maintaining aspects of their traditional identity. This hybridity is evident in their petitions, formal addresses to imperial authorities, and strategic rhetorical framing, where they blended the language of imperial loyalty with subtle assertions of autonomy. By doing so, the *szlachta* not only resisted complete assimilation but also sought to redefine their role within the empire on their own terms. They voiced their readiness to modify their identity of the once omnipotent group and recognize higher authority in the person of the emperor. They would not, however, put up with their full subalternization, agreeing only to a form of government which would combine both subordination to Vienna and the securement of their privileged position within the Galician society.

Methodologically, this dissertation employs discourse analysis with a postcolonial dimension to critically examine how language, power, and ideology intersected in the governance of Galicia. Discourse analysis, as developed by Michel Foucault, allows for the exploration of how official narratives were constructed, disseminated, and contested. As Foucault stated,

„In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality“.³¹

³⁰ Ibid, 112.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Discourse*. In: Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (Boston 1981) 51–78, here 52.

This perspective is crucial for understanding how Habsburg authorities shaped discourse to reinforce their control over Galicia while limiting the *szlachta*'s ability to assert their own counter-narratives. By focusing on textual sources, including legal acts, bureaucratic correspondence, petitions, and public pronouncements, as well as analyzing historical events and political developments, this research identifies recurring themes, contradictions, and rhetorical strategies that shaped the administration of Galicia. The analysis of imperial discourse reveals the ways in which Habsburg authorities sought to define Galicia as a colonial space, while the counter-discourse of the *szlachta* highlights their attempts to engage with, modify, and resist this framework.

Discourse analysis in this study is structured around several key dimensions. First, it considers the language used by Habsburg officials to frame their governance of Galicia, analyzing recurring motifs such as paternalism, discipline, and rationalization. Second, it examines the counter-discourse of the *szlachta*, paying attention to the ways in which they appropriated imperial rhetoric to argue for their continued relevance. Third, it investigates the intersection of discourse and policy, considering how rhetorical strategies translated into concrete legal and administrative measures. Finally, it evaluates the broader ideological implications of these narratives, considering how they shaped the long-term relationship between the imperial center and the local noble elite.

By applying postcolonial theory and discourse analysis, this dissertation offers a reinterpretation of Habsburg rule in Galicia that moves beyond the dichotomy of domination and resistance. Rather than viewing the *szlachta* as passive subjects of imperial policy, this study emphasizes their role as co-opted elites who, while integrated into the Habsburg administrative framework, nonetheless acted as active agents – engaging with, negotiating, and at times contesting the structures imposed upon them. This methodological approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of colonial rule and elite negotiation, demonstrating that imperial governance was not a unilateral imposition, but a dynamic process shaped by multiple actors. Furthermore, it offers insights into the broader mechanisms of imperial power and the ways in which discourse functioned as a tool of control and contestation in colonial contexts.

3. Research Questions and Structure of the Dissertation.

Based on this theoretical and methodological approach, this dissertation examines the complex relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *szlachta* from the late 18th to the early 19th century. At its core, the study asks:

1. How did the Habsburg Monarchy formulate and implement colonial strategies in the newly acquired Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria?
2. How did the Galician *szlachta* respond to these strategies through adaptation, resistance, and negotiation of their privileged status?
3. To what extent did these interactions reshape both imperial governance and the self-understanding of the nobility within the broader Habsburg framework?

The main body of the dissertation is divided into six chapters, following a thematic-chronological approach that allows for a detailed examination of both the historical developments and the ideologies that influenced the relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *szlachta*. The first section deals with the key differences between the socio-political state of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the wake of the First Partition. Considerable attention is given to the ideological element of the politics of both countries, namely the Enlightened Absolutism principles inspiring reforms in the Habsburg state, and the „golden liberties“ and Sarmatism being the driving forces of the „mixed monarchy“. These differences are looked upon as a pretext of „othering“ of the *szlachta* in Galicia after 1772, and of conducting the civilizing mission in the new crownland. The following chapter examines the initial blueprints of the reforms conducted in Galicia in 1770s–1780s, aimed at erasing the dominant status of former elites and transforming them into uniform representatives of the obedient Habsburg „second society“.³² Their implementation, short-term consequences for the *szlachta* and the emergence of the counter colonial discourse of the Galician nobility, culminating in the negotiations of the early 1790s, is studied in this chapter as well.

The next chapter researches the changes in the discourses of the Habsburg government and the Galician *szlachta* caused by the curtailment of the „enlightened“ reforms and the transfer to the defensive conservative governance approach in the

³² For the definition of the „second society“, see Berthold *Waldstein-Wartenberg*, *Neuer Adel unter Habsburgs Patronanz*. In: Heinz Siegert (ed.), *Adel in Österreich* (Wien 1971) 49–55, here 53.

Monarchy, as well as the Third Partition and the final dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The brief period of the existence of West Galicia, the colonial transformations taking place there and their similarities and differences from the changes conducted in East Galicia after the First Partitions, are dealt with in this chapter as well. It is followed by the study of the attempts to include the Galician *szlachta* into the imperial military structures. It is stated that, since military service was traditionally one of the few activities which the nobility could be engaged in without tarnishing their corporate honor or challenging their role in the estate society, the inclusion of the *szlachta* into the Habsburg army became one of the fundamental elements of colonial transformation strategies. To study the matter, the differences between the Habsburg and the *Rzeczpospolita* militaries before 1772 are given a closer look at the beginning of the chapter, as these differences became yet another component for the „othering“ of the *szlachta* by the Habsburgs. It is also argued that throughout the researched period, the inclusion of the *szlachta* into the imperial armed forces was accompanied by the „ambivalence“ concerning the formation of separate units with a distinct Polish character. Because of this, it is stated that the Habsburg policies concerning the role of the *szlachta* in the military have a distinct potential to be researched from a postcolonial perspective.

Chapter 5 examines the role of the 1809 war in the development of the relationship between the Habsburgs and the Galician *szlachta*. It looks at the Duchy of Warsaw as an alternative project of the Polish nation development, which, however, did not automatically attract even the most patriotic Galician *szlachta*. It is stated that the attitude of the Napoleon's government towards its Polish protectorate and the local nobility contained features of both „othering“ and „civilizing mission“, and that these components were spread over the *szlachta* residing in the parts of Galicia which became the part of the Duchy after 1809. To resist that, the latter attempted to secure special privileges for itself within the political structure of the French protectorate, trying to establish „hybridity“ in its governance system. Parallel to that, this chapter also studies the attempts of the Habsburg government to secure the *szlachta's* loyalty before, during and immediately after the 1809 war while simultaneously refusing to give them even the most symbolic concessions and therefore risk the stability of its absolute power in the crownland.

In the last chapter, the dissertation deals with the establishment of the long-term status quo in Europe after the Napoleonic wars, and its influence over the relationship between the Habsburg Empire and the Galician *szlachta*. It is argued that the emergence of the Kingdom of Poland under Russian protectorate created yet another competitor for the Habsburgs in the struggle for the Galician *szlachta*'s loyalty and forced Vienna to reconsider its colonial strategy and allow the *szlachta* certain symbolic privileges. In its turn, after the loss of Napoleon most of the Galician nobility agreed to recognize the Habsburg absolutist rule and set aside the aspirations for the „hybrid“ governance, as long as its income sources and way of life remained intact.

This approach offers a nuanced perspective on the interaction between Habsburg authorities and the Galician *szlachta*. By examining the Habsburgs' ruling strategies and the responses of the *szlachta* to imperial policies, the dissertation seeks to uncover how colonial strategies in Galicia were shaped by both external and internal forces, and to assess the success of the Habsburgs' long-term efforts to integrate the nobility into their empire. The postcolonial lens further deepens the analysis by focusing on issues of power, resistance, and the changing identities of both the Habsburgs and the local elites.

4. Primary Sources.

The printed sources for this dissertation first and foremost include the collections of Habsburg legislation for Galicia under the names „Edicta et mandata universalia Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae“ and „Sr. K.K. Majestät Franz des Zweyten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die oesterreichischen, böhmischen und galizischen Erbländer“, which proved invaluable for writing the chapters dealing with the establishment of the Habsburg administration in East and West Galicia. In addition to that, many texts relevant for the project were reprinted in the collections such as „Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru do Wiosny Ludów: 1772–1849; wybór tekstów źródłowych“³³ or „Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego“.³⁴ The newspapers (such as *Gazeta Lwowska* or *Gazeta Krakowska*) are listed among the primary sources as well, as

³³ Marian Tyrowicz, *Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru do Wiosny Ludów, 1772–1849: Wybór tekstów źródłowych* (Galicia from the First Partition to the Spring of Nations: 1772–1849; Selected Source Texts) (Kraków/Wrocław 1956).

³⁴ Władysława Jabłońska (ed.), *Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego* (Correspondence of Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński) (Wrocław 1975).

the addresses of the government to the Galician subjects and the petitions of the Galician *szlachta* to the Viennese government were printed several times in the press.

The main body of the unpublished primary sources relevant for this dissertation was found in the Austrian State Archives located in Vienna. In particular, the archive holdings stored in the *Haus, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* that were used for this dissertation include collections „Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium“, the correspondence of the emperor Franz II (I), stored in the „Kaiser-Franz-Akten“, the documents dealing with the „Polish Questions“ from the collections „Staatenabteilungen: Polen III“ and „Staatskanzlei: Polen II“ , and the official correspondence concerning Galicia in holdings under the title „Notenwechsel Italienische, Dalmatinische und Galizische Hofkanzlei“. The documents stored in the *Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv* include the *Hofkanzlei* collections dealing with the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria incorporation into the Monarchy right after the First Partition, and the reports concerning the attitudes of the Galician *szlachta* towards the Habsburg government in the holdings under the title „Stimmung in Galizien“. A substantial body of primary sources is also stored in the *Kriegsarchiv*, mainly dealing with the incorporation of the Galician *szlachta* into the imperial military structures, such as the collections „Galizische Leibgarde“ or „Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten“. The documents relevant for this research encompass the protocols of the Habsburg government bodies discussions concerning the Galician matter, the reports of the Habsburg officials serving in Galicia within the studied period or sent there with a mission of surveying the local circumstances, the correspondence between the central government and the Galician governorate, and the examples of addresses of the *szlachta* towards the Viennese government and the emperor. All these documents are crucial in deconstructing of the „Habsburg“ and the „*szlachta*“ discourses, as even the slightest details in the wording of the texts may be quite characteristic in reflecting the outlook of both parties, as well as their attitude towards one another, and the factors that influenced the narratives at a given moment in time.

However, many of the holdings of the Austrian State Archives relating to the late 18th – early 19th century were either destroyed or heavily damaged in the 1927 fire in the Palace of Justice in Vienna. In order to compensate for that, several research trips abroad were made with the intention of studying the documents unavailable in Vienna.

Unfortunately, the trip to Lviv, Ukraine that was planned for Spring 2022 could not take place due to the outbreak of the full-scale Russian military invasion of Ukraine, which is why the vast collections of the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv could not be incorporated into this research project. The source gap could, however, be partially covered by the holdings of the Polish archives. For instance, a large collection of the materials on Habsburg rule in Galicia is located in National Ossoliński Institute (*Ossolineum*) in Wrocław, where it was moved from Lviv in the 1940s. Out of them, the archive of the Wodzicki noble family has proven to be especially useful, as it contains both manuscripts and printed copies of acts, resolutions and parliamentary reports, statutes, announcements, open letters and newspapers, as well as letters concerning the studied time period from both Galicia and the Duchy of Warsaw. Other notable examples include collections „Akta z czasów Księstwa Warszawskiego, zawierające głównie pisma i zarządzenia różnych ministerstw“ (Files from the time of the Duchy of Warsaw, containing mainly letters and ordinances of various ministries) and „Niektóre fragmenta mające stosunek z wydarzeniami po ostatnim rozbiórce Polski y odrodzenia się iej w części przez utworzenie Xięstwa Warszawskiego, za wsparciem potężnego ramienia wielkiego y niezwyciężonego Napoleona. 1807“. Odpisy materiałów historycznych i wierszy z lat 1796–1814“ (Some fragments related to events after the last partition of Poland and its rebirth in part through the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, with the support of the mighty and undefeated arm of Napoleon. 1807. Copies of historical materials and poems from the years 1796–1814). The National Archives in Kraków preserve records of various Habsburg offices in West Galicia, stored in collections „Akta różne Galicji Zachodniej – fasc. I. Varia Krakowa i Okręgu Krakowskiego (akta różne urzędów Galicji Zachodniej)“ (Files of Various Offices of West Galicia – fascicle I). Miscellanea of Kraków and the Kraków District (various files of the offices of West Galicia) and „Rozporządzenia C. K. Gubernium Krajowego Galicji Zachodniej, władz centralnych (m.in. cesarza), Senatu Rządzącego Wolnego Miasta Krakowa“ (Ordinances of the Imperial-Royal Land Gubernium of West Galicia, central authorities (including the emperor), and the Governing Senate of the Free City of Kraków). Finally, the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw provide invaluable primary sources dealing with the history of the Duchy of Warsaw and the process of inclusion of parts of Galicia into the body of this French protectorate, stored in collections „Archiwum Zamoyskich.

Księstwo Warszawskie“ (The Zamoyski Archive. The Duchy of Warsaw) and „Dokumenty związane z funkcjonowaniem Rządu Centralnego Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obojga Galicji o różnorodnej tematyce“ (Documents related to the functioning of the Central Military Provisional Government of Both Galicias on various topics.).

As the dissertation follows a thematic-chronological structure, primary sources (especially unpublished archival materials) are used across all six chapters according to topic rather than archival provenance. However, certain sections rely particularly heavily on unedited sources. For instance, the analysis of early reforms and the counter-discourse of the *szlachta* (Chapter 2) is grounded in administrative correspondence and reports stored in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* and the *Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv*. The study of the evolving imperial and noble discourses during the West Galician period (Chapter 3), as well as the examination of military integration strategies (Chapter 4), both draw substantially from unpublished military and administrative records held in the *Kriegsarchiv* and the aforementioned state archives. Chapter 5, which explores the 1809 war and Galician integration into Napoleonic structures, relies on materials from Polish and Austrian archives dealing with the Duchy of Warsaw and the Habsburg response to its emergence. Finally, Chapter 6 builds on reports and memoranda from Austrian archives as well as the Wodzicki family archive to analyze the long-term stabilization of the *szlachta's* position in the post-Napoleonic era. Given the heterogeneous and overlapping nature of the archival collections used, this dissertation integrates the source material across chapters in a way that reflects both the complexity and the entanglement of imperial and noble narratives.

5. Research Background.

This research utilizes both contemporary and older texts, acknowledging the distinct advantages and limitations each group offers. While the texts written prior to the mid-20th century do present certain drawbacks, such as outdated language, perspectives that may no longer align with current academic norms, and potential difficulties in accessibility due to being out of print or hard to find, they also hold substantial value. Many of these works contain fully reprinted versions of original sources, which may

otherwise be unavailable or exceedingly rare. Furthermore, older texts provide invaluable insights into the historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts of their respective periods, often preserving attitudes, ideas, and practices that are either overlooked or not fully addressed by contemporary works. In particular, the older studies invaluable for this research project include the „Stosunki poddańcze w dawnej Galicji“ by Roman Rozdolski,³⁵ which is crucial to understanding the agrarian reforms in Galicia after 1772, not least due to the author's access to invaluable primary sources from the Austrian State Archives that were later destroyed or damaged in the 1927 fire in the Palace of Justice in Vienna. The studies „Z księciem Józefem w Galicji w 1809 roku: Rząd Centralny obojga Galicji“ by Kazimierz Krzos³⁶ and „Historia Polski w latach 1796–1815“ by Marian Kukiel³⁷ offer a comprehensive and detailed account of the 1809 campaign in Galicia, a subject that has yet to be fully addressed in the modern literature. While recent studies provide valuable perspectives on the broader context, the depth of analysis found in these earlier works remains unmatched in current scholarship. Furthermore, two fundamental works on the first decades of the Habsburg rule in Galicia, which paved the way for many further research projects cited in this dissertation, „Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien 1772–1790“ by Horst Glassl³⁸ and „Historia ustroju społeczno-politycznego Galicji, 1772–1848“ by Stanisław Grodziski,³⁹ were both written in 1970s. Finally, „Galicja Zachodnia: 1795–1809. Studium z dziejów ziem polskich zaboru austriackiego po III rozbiórce“ by Tadeusz Mencil⁴⁰ provides an exceptionally detailed account of the history of West Galicia, a work that has remained the definitive study on the subject for over 50 years. Despite its age, it continues to be widely cited and remains unsurpassed by any modern research in terms of its depth and coverage.

³⁵ Roman *Rozdolski*, *Stosunki poddańcze w dawnej Galicji* (Serfdom relations in former Galicia) (Warszawa 1962).

³⁶ Kazimierz *Krzos*, *Z księciem Józefem w Galicji w 1809 roku: Rząd Centralny obojga Galicji* (With Prince Józef in Galicia in 1809: the Central Government of both Galicias) (Warszawa 1967).

³⁷ Marian *Kukiel*, *Historia Polski w latach 1796–1815* (History of Poland in the years 1796–1815). In: Stanisław *Lam* (ed.), *Polska, jej dzieje i kultura od czasów najdawniejszych do chwili obecnej*. T. 3: Od roku 1796–1930 (Poland, its history and culture from the earliest times to the present. Vol. 3: From 1796–1930) (Warszawa 1937) 3–94.

³⁸ Horst *Glassl*, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772–1790)* (Wiesbaden 1975)

³⁹ Stanisław *Grodziski*, *Historia ustroju społeczno-politycznego Galicji 1772–1848* (History of the Socio-Political System of Galicia, 1772–1848) (Wrocław 1971).

⁴⁰ Tadeusz *Mencil*, *Galicja Zachodnia: 1795–1809; Studium z dziejów ziem polskich zaboru austriackiego po III rozbiórce* (West Galicia: 1795–1809; A study of the history of Polish lands in the Austrian partition after the Third partition) (Lublin 1976).

The more contemporary body of research dealing with the issues relevant for this dissertation project can be divided into several groups. To start with, a number of studies is devoted to the Habsburg governance in Galicia in the decades following the First Partition, including politics aimed at assimilating the local nobility. Here, one must single out the „Galizien, eine Grenzregion im Kalkül der Donaumonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert“ by Hans-Christian Maner,⁴¹ which considers the political concepts and military strategies concerning Galicia up until the Habsburg Monarchy ceased to exist. The „Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert. Aufbau der österreichischen Verwaltung in Spiegel der Quellen“ by Friedrich Schembor⁴² explores how the establishment of the new administration in Galicia could be observed while studying the primary historical sources, namely the reports and letters of the highest-ranking authorities of that time, as well as the legislation concerning the subject. The inclusion of Galicians into the Habsburg army after 1772 is looked upon in „W służbie Habsburgów: polscy ochotnicy w austriackich siłach zbrojnych w latach 1772–1815“ by Michał Baczkowski.⁴³ „The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867“ by Iryna Vushko⁴⁴ examines the Habsburg bureaucracy establishment in Galicia, and the role the *szlachta* played in the process. Even though it deals mostly with the later time period, the „Zwischen Akkulturation und Assimilation: Karrieren und Lebenswelten Deutsch-Österreichischer Beamtenfamilien in Galizien (1772–1918)“ by Isabel Röskau-Rydel⁴⁵ provides a valuable insight of the assimilation of the newcoming Habsburg bureaucrats into the Galician society. Finally, the dilogy by Miloš Řezník, „Neuorientierung einer Elite: Aristokratie, Ständewesen und Loyalität in Galizien (1772–1795)“⁴⁶ and „Staat und Aristokratie in imperialer Provinz. Ständewesen, Elite und Loyalität in Galizien (1795–

⁴¹ Hans-Christian Maner, *Galizien: Eine Grenzregion im Kalkül der Donaumonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (München 2007).

⁴² Friedrich Schembor, *Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert. Aufbau der österreichischen Verwaltung im Spiegel der Quellen* (Bochum 2015).

⁴³ Michał Baczkowski, *W służbie Habsburgów: polscy ochotnicy w austriackich siłach zbrojnych w latach 1772–1815* (In the service of the Habsburgs: Polish volunteers in the Austrian armed forces from 1772 to 1815) (Kraków 1998).

⁴⁴ Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867* (New Haven 2015).

⁴⁵ Isabel Röskau-Rydel, *Zwischen Akkulturation und Assimilation: Karrieren und Lebenswelten Deutsch-Österreichischer Beamtenfamilien in Galizien (1772–1918)* (München 2015).

⁴⁶ Miloš Řezník, *Neuorientierung einer Elite: Aristokratie, Ständewesen und Loyalität in Galizien (1772–1795)* (Frankfurt am Main 2016).

1817)“,⁴⁷ provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Habsburg policies aimed at integrating the former *Rzeczpospolita* noble elites into the Habsburg imperial structure. With a particular emphasis on the institutional reorganization of the Galician nobility, these works explore the mechanisms of estate-building, the redefinition of aristocratic status within the monarchy, and the evolving relationship between noble elites and the state. While Řezník’s research constitutes an invaluable foundation for understanding the administrative and structural dimensions of this process, its primary focus remains on the formal and legal frameworks governing the incorporation of the nobility. By contrast, the present study applies postcolonial analytical frameworks to examine the strategies of adaptation, negotiation, and resistance employed by the *szlachta* in response to imperial governance. This approach shifts the emphasis from institutional transformations to the broader dynamics of power, identity, and cultural hegemony, offering a perspective that highlights the complexities of Habsburg rule in Galicia beyond the purely administrative sphere.

The second group of texts deals with the radical transformations which took place in the Habsburg Empire starting in 1740, and the various inspirations behind these transformations, including the postulates of the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy. These studies provide an insight into the state of the Monarchy on the eve of the First Partition and therefore assist in understanding why the Habsburg Empire considered itself „civilized“ in comparison to the allegedly „barbaric“ Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Several studies, such as „The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815“ by Charles Ingrao,⁴⁸ „Glanz und Untergang der höfischen Welt: Repräsentation, Reform und Reaktion im Habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat“ by Karl Vocelka,⁴⁹ „Maria Theresa. The Habsburg Empress in Her Time“ by Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger,⁵⁰ and „The Habsburg Empire: A New History“ by Pieter M. Judson,⁵¹ give a broad picture of a time period under focus here, dealing with a number of social, political and economic issues which shaped the character of the empire and its government. The others focus on the 18th century reforms,

⁴⁷ Miloš Řezník, *Staat und Aristokratie in imperialer Provinz. Ständewesen, Elite und Loyalität in Galizien (1795–1817)* (Wiesbaden 2024).

⁴⁸ Charles Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* (Cambridge 2019).

⁴⁹ Karl Vocelka, *Glanz und Untergang der höfischen Welt: Repräsentation, Reform und Reaktion im Habsburgischen Vielvölkerstaat* (Wien 2001).

⁵⁰ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa. The Habsburg Empress in Her Time* (Original: *Maria Theresia. Die Kaiserin in ihrer Zeit*, 2017) (Princeton/New Jersey 2022).

⁵¹ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge 2016).

and the role the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy played in the Habsburg socio-political structure at the time. Here, one must name „Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus“ edited by Helmut Reinalter,⁵² „Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe“ edited by Hamish M. Scott,⁵³ „Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism 1753–1780“ by Franz A. J. Szabo,⁵⁴ as well as „Aufklärung habsburgisch: Staatsbildung, Wissenskultur und Geschichtspolitik in Zentraleuropa 1750–1850“ by Franz Leander Fillafer.⁵⁵

The third group focuses on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its political culture and the part of the *szlachta*’s „freedoms“ and Sarmatian myth had in the said culture. As usually, some studies, such as „History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: State-Society-Culture“ by Ursula Augustyniak⁵⁶, or entries to the „Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit“, edited by Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg and Michael G. Müller,⁵⁷ provide a wide overview of the entire *Rzeczpospolita* state system. The *szlachta* culture and its influence over the state politics came into focus in „Szlachta polska: kultura i struktura“ by Andrzej Zajęczkowski,⁵⁸ the same subject matter is dealt with in somewhat older, but nonetheless valuable works under the titles „Kultura szlachecka w Polsce: rozkwit, upadek, relikty“ by Janusz Tazbir⁵⁹ and „Polska – Rzeczpospolitą szlachecką, 1454–1764“ by Andrzej Wyczański.⁶⁰ A separate group of texts focus on the developments the *szlachta* went through after the partitions. „Drobna szlachta w Galicji 1772–1848“ by Krzysztof Ślusarek,⁶¹ „Zasada „dwóch sumień“: normy postępowania i granice kompromisu

⁵² Helmut Reinalter (ed.), *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus* (Wien 2008).

⁵³ Hamish M. Scott (ed.), *Enlightened Absolutism. Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, (Basingstoke/Hampshire 1990).

⁵⁴ Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism 1753–1780* (Ottawa 1994).

⁵⁵ Franz Leander Fillafer, *Aufklärung habsburgisch: Staatsbildung, Wissenskultur und Geschichtspolitik in Zentraleuropa 1750–1850* (Göttingen 2020).

⁵⁶ Ursula Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: State - Society - Culture* (Frankfurt am Main 2015).

⁵⁷ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2017).

⁵⁸ Andrzej Zajęczkowski, *Szlachta polska: kultura i struktura* (Polish nobility: culture and structure) (Warszawa 1993).

⁵⁹ Janusz Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce: rozkwit, upadek, relikty* (Noble culture in Poland: development, decline, relics) (Warszawa 1983).

⁶⁰ Andrzej Wyczański, *Polska – Rzeczpospolitą szlachecką 1454–1764* (Poland as a Noble Republic 1454–1764) (Warszawa 1965).

⁶¹ Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Drobna szlachta w Galicji 1772–1848* (The minor nobility in Galicia 1772–1848) (Kraków 1994).

politycznego Polaków w sytuacjach wyboru (1795–1815)“ by Jarosław Czubaty,⁶² and chapters of „Die Teilungen Polen-Litauens. Inklusions- und Exklusionsmechanismen – Traditionsbildung – Vergleichsebenen“, edited by Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Andreas Gestrich and Helga Schnabel-Schüle,⁶³ are just a few examples.

The period of Napoleonic wars on the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands and the matter of *szlachta*’s allegiances is looked upon in the next group of studies. To begin with, „Księstwo Warszawskie“ by Barbara Grochulska⁶⁴ and „The Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815: A Napoleonic Outpost in Central Europe“ by Jarosław Czubaty⁶⁵ complement each other in giving a thorough analysis of history of the French protectorate state. „Napoleon and the Szlachta“ by Christopher Blackburn⁶⁶ deals with the complex relationship between the former *Rzeczpospolita* nobility and the French imperial government. The collection „Galicja w Księstwie Warszawskim. 200. rocznica“, edited by Hubert Chudzio and Henryk Żaliński,⁶⁷ is specifically devoted to the incorporation of parts of Galicia into the Duchy of Warsaw and the challenges emerging in the process. Several studies deal with the aftermath of the wars and the position of the former Polish-Lithuanian lands in the post-Napoleon Europe, such as „The Galician Nobility and the Border with the Congress Kingdom before, during and after the November Uprising“ by Hugo Lane⁶⁸ and „Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815“ edited by Bogusław Dybaś.⁶⁹

Last but not least, a separate group of texts is relevant for the theoretical and methodological framework of this dissertation. Aside from the fundamental studies on postcolonialism cited above, this research relies on a vast body of studies dealing with the (post)colonial component of the politics of the Habsburg Monarchy and the relations

⁶² Jarosław Czubaty, *Zasada „dwóch sumień“: normy postępowania i granice kompromisu politycznego polaków w sytuacjach wyboru (1795–1815)* (The principle of „two consciences”: standards of conduct and the limits of political compromise for Poles in situations of choice (1795–1815) (Warszawa 2005).

⁶³ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Andreas Gestrich, Helga Schnabel-Schüle (eds.), *Die Teilungen Polen-Litauens. Inklusions- und Exklusionsmechanismen – Traditionsbildung – Vergleichsebenen* (Osnabrück 2013).

⁶⁴ Barbara Grochulska, *Księstwo Warszawskie* (The Duchy of Warsaw) (Warszawa 1966).

⁶⁵ Jarosław Czubaty, *The Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815: A Napoleonic Outpost in Central Europe* (Original: *Księstwo Warszawskie* (1807–1815) 2011) (London 2016).

⁶⁶ Christopher Blackburn, *Napoleon and the Szlachta* (New York 1998).

⁶⁷ Hubert Chudzio, Henryk Żaliński (eds.), *Galicja w Księstwie Warszawskim: 200 rocznica* (Galicia in the Duchy of Warsaw: The 200th anniversary) (Kraków 2009).

⁶⁸ Hugo Lane, *The Galician Nobility and the Border with the Congress Kingdom before, during and after the November Uprising*. In: Christoph Augustynowicz, Andreas Kappeler (eds.), *Die Galizische Grenze 1772–1867: Kommunikation oder Isolation?* (Wien 2007) 157–168.

⁶⁹ Bogusław Dybaś (ed.), *Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815* (Wien 2021).

and power balance between Vienna and imperial provinces. For example, „Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis“, edited by Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch and Moritz Csáky,⁷⁰ presents a collection of essays on various aspects of the Habsburg colonial strategies and their implementation in various historical period, as well as the general possibility of implementation of postcolonial instruments in studying history of the Habsburg Empire. The book „Konstruierte (Fremd-?) Bilder: Das östliche Europa im Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts“, edited by Christoph Augustynowicz and Agnieszka Pufelska,⁷¹ examines various cases of constructing images of Eastern European territories and societies in Western European discourse. In „Grenzregionen der Habsburgermonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: ihre Bedeutung und Funktion aus der Perspektive Wiens“, edited by Hans-Christian Maner,⁷² the authors focus on the phenomenon of the border regions of the Habsburg Monarchy, whereas Galicia is used as one of the examples; a similar approach is applied in the text concerning Galicia „Das Werden einer Grenze“ by Svjatoslav Pacholkiv⁷³ in „Grenze und Staat: Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867“, and by the group of authors of the „Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the age of Nationalism“⁷⁴ collection, edited by Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher. The book „Daleko od Wiednia: Galicja w oczach pisarzy niemieckojęzycznych 1772–1918“ by Maria Kłańska⁷⁵ and the essay „Das ist nun einmahl slawische Sitte! Die Bewohner Galiziens in Reiseberichten des späten 18. Jahrhunderts“ by Ritchie Robertson⁷⁶ in the collection „Galizien im Diskurs: Inklusion, Exklusion, Repräsentation“ contain a research

⁷⁰ Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (eds.), *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* (Innsbruck 2003).

⁷¹ Christoph Augustynowicz, Agnieszka Pufelska (eds.), *Konstruierte (Fremd-?)Bilder: Das östliche Europa im Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin/Boston 2017).

⁷² Hans-Christian Maner (ed.), *Grenzregionen der Habsburgermonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: ihre Bedeutung und Funktion aus der Perspektive Wiens* (Münster 2005).

⁷³ Svjatoslav Pacholkiv, *Das Werden einer Grenze: Galizien 1772–1867*. In: Waltraud Heindl-Langer, Edith Saurer, Hannelore Burger (eds.), *Grenze und Staat. Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867* (Böhlau/Wien 2000) 518–618.

⁷⁴ Liliya Berezhnaya, Heidi Hein-Kircher (eds.), *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism* (New York 2019).

⁷⁵ Maria Kłańska, *Daleko od Wiednia: Galicja w oczach pisarzy niemieckojęzycznych, 1771–1918* (Far from Vienna: Galicia in the Eyes of German-Speaking Writers, 1771–1918) (Kraków 1991).

⁷⁶ Ritchie Robertson, „Das ist nun einmal slawische Sitte!“. Die Bewohner Galiziens in Reiseberichten des späten 18. Jahrhunderts. In: Paula Giersch, Florian Krobb, Franziska Schössler (eds.) *Galizien im Diskurs: Inklusion, Exklusion, Repräsentation* (Frankfurt am Main 2012) 42–56.

on the perspective of the German-speaking intellectuals on Galicia in the first years after the establishment of the Habsburg administration, and therefore provides a contribution to the analysis of the „Habsburg“ discourse in context of this project. In a broader context, a „civilized“ outlook over the „backward“ Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is given much attention in „„Polnische Wirtschaft“: zum deutschen Polendiskurs der Neuzeit“ by Hubert Orłowski.⁷⁷ The article collection „Post-Colonial Perspectives on Habsburg Galicia“⁷⁸ deals mostly with the processes of inclusion of Galicia into the Monarchy context and the creation of the narratives that would dominate the discourses on the Habsburg Galicia until the very end of its existence. Finally, „The Idea of Galicia. History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture“ by Larry Wolff⁷⁹ examines Galicia through the lens of „intellectual history“, studying the perception of the land and its heterogenous population by both the local and the Empire’s political and intellectual elites.

However, up to this day there has been little research dealing with the application of the postcolonial theoretical framework to the relationship between the Habsburg government and the *szlachta* residing in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria after the Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Such an approach may provide a different perspective not only to this case study in particular, but also open new possibilities of research on the imperial politics on local elites on incorporated territories in Central Eastern Europe both in the Habsburg Monarchy and in the other land empires. In addition to that, this dissertation aims to partially cover the research gap concerning the first decades of the 19th century and the period of the Napoleonic wars in Habsburg Galician history, regarding them as a direct continuation of the colonial transformation period of the 1770s–1790s.

6. Note on Toponym Usage.

Modern English forms of toponyms are used throughout this dissertation where such forms are well-established and widely recognized (for example, Lviv, Kraków, Warsaw), in the interest of consistency and accessibility for an international academic audience. Where no standard English equivalent exists, the most widely accepted local

⁷⁷ Hubert Orłowski, „Polnische Wirtschaft“: zum deutschen Polendiskurs der Neuzeit (Wiesbaden 1996).

⁷⁸ Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne XLII (2012).

⁷⁹ Larry Wolff, The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture (Stanford 2010).

form has been adopted. This approach follows common practice in English-language scholarship and aims to balance clarity with sensitivity to the multilingual and multiethnic character of late 18th- and early 19th-century Galicia. It is not intended to privilege any particular national or linguistic tradition. Toponyms in quoted material – including archival documents, primary texts, and bibliographic references – are retained in the original language and spelling, reflecting the linguistic context in which they were produced.

Chapter 1. Constructing Backwardness: The Habsburg Monarchy in Reform and the *Szlachta*'s Galicia in Contrast.

1. Blueprint for Change: The Habsburg Monarchy's Reform Agenda.

To apply a postcolonial perspective to the relationship between the Habsburg government and the Galician *szlachta* following the First Partition, one must first understand the differences between the internal circumstances of the Habsburg Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century. The description of the two governance systems existing in the early 1770s both suggests the standard to which the former Polish-Lithuanian lands were to be assimilated as they were incorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy and highlights the gap between Galicia and the Habsburg crownlands that had to be bridged during the process. Additionally, such an approach helps explain why the Habsburg Monarchy regarded itself as an enlightened and more developed entity, in contrast to the allegedly „barbaric“ *Rzeczpospolita*. This perception, in turn, justified the radical „civilizing“ transformations that took place in Galicia in the subsequent decades.⁸⁰ Finally, analyzing the *szlachta*'s societal position in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is crucial to understanding why the Habsburg governance strategies in Galicia never let the *szlachta* out of sight and why the *szlachta* assumed the status of „colonized colonizers“ and „subaltern elites“ after the events of 1772.

The decades before the Habsburg Empire participated in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were marked with noteworthy changes in its political, economic and social structure. By the 1740s, the Habsburg dynasty ruled over a diverse landmass populated by numerous national, religious, and linguistic groups. Beginning with Rudolf I of Habsburg (1218–1291), who was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1273, the dynasty gradually expanded its holdings in Central Europe. Through a combination of strategic marriages, inheritances, and conquests, the Habsburgs consolidated their position as a key European power over the following centuries.⁸¹ In 1740, their realm

⁸⁰ See: Franz Leander *Fillafer*, The „Imperial Idea“ and Civilising Missions. In: *Historyka Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012) 37–60, here 42.

⁸¹ *Judson*, The Habsburg Empire, 19–22.

included the Hereditary Lands, the Lands of the Bohemian Crown, the Kingdoms of Hungary and Croatia, as well as the larger part of the Upper Italy.⁸² However, as was typical for larger states in early modern Europe, there was not much truly binding these lands together into one homogeneous state, as they lacked historical or cultural relationships with one another, and often even geographical contiguity.⁸³ The Monarchy did not have a distinctive political identity either, being a conglomerate of duchies and kingdoms ruled by respective local aristocratic oligarchies.⁸⁴ The only factors loosely tying all these territorial units into one state were the ruling dynasty itself and official adherence to the Roman Catholic Church.⁸⁵ The Habsburgs exercised control over various parts of the Empire quite differently. For example, they had direct control over fiscal, administrative, and judicial institutions in their Hereditary Lands (Lower and Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and Tyrol), as well as the Bohemian crownlands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia), but exerted much less control over the Italian territories or the Kingdom of Hungary due to resistance from the local aristocracy.⁸⁶ At the same time, local nobilities enjoyed virtually unlimited power over tax collection (without being directly subject to taxation themselves), the peasant labor force, and judicial institutions. Traditional local authorities, such as the noble Estates, retained their power in most crownlands, often clashing with Viennese regulations.⁸⁷ Positions in central governmental institutions, namely the local chancelleries, were usually occupied by representatives of the 200 most powerful families, who felt more duty to their social group than to the Empire.⁸⁸

The final years of Karl VI's reign (1711–1740) were marked by a significant challenge to Habsburg's power in Europe. Since the emperor did not have any male heirs, the throne was to be inherited by his eldest daughter, Maria Theresia, based on the *Pactum Mutuae Successionis* declared by emperor Leopold I back in 1703 out of fear that the

⁸² Stollberg-Rilinger, Maria Theresa, 80.

⁸³ Reed Browning, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (Phoenix Mill 1994) 17.

⁸⁴ Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism 1753–1780* (Ottawa 1994) 3.

⁸⁵ See: William D Godsey, Petr Mat'a, Introduction: The Habsburg Monarchy as a Fiscal-Military State. In: William D Godsey, Petr Mat'a (eds.), *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Fiscal-Military State: Contours and Perspectives 1648–1815* (New York 2022) 1–33, here 25.

⁸⁶ Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 24.

⁸⁷ Hamish M. Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–90*. In: Hamish M. Scott (ed.), *Enlightened Absolutism. Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, (Basingstoke/Hampshire 1990) 145–187, here 148.

⁸⁸ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 3.

dynasty would otherwise die out. The *Pactum Mutuae Succesionis* principle was a part of specific series of laws that would later become known as the „Pragmatic Sanction“. ⁸⁹ In the long term, this legislation helped ensure the creation of a consolidated state under Habsburg rule. However, immediately after Maria Theresia ascended to the throne, she faced a number of threats from her immediate neighbors that refused to recognize her right to the crown. Weakened by the loss in the Turkish War of 1737–1739 and the participation in the War of the Polish Succession, and possessing largely underfunded and poorly organized armed forces, the Empire could not deter attacks on its realm. ⁹⁰ Friedrich II of Prussia invaded the wealthy and populous land of Silesia, while Elector Karl Albrecht of Bavaria, supported by the French, the Saxons and part of the Bohemian nobility, laid claim to Bohemia and had himself elected Holy Roman Emperor instead of Maria Theresia's husband, Franz Stephan of Lorraine. ⁹¹ These events started the War of the Austrian Succession, and, although Habsburgs eventually secured their rule over the Empire in the 1748 Treaty of Aachen, they lost most of Silesia to Prussia. ⁹²

The war exposed serious issues within the existing social, political and economic conditions of the Monarchy. As Maria Theresia would later write, when she became a monarch, she found herself „without money, without an army, without own experience and knowledge, and finally also without counsel“. ⁹³ While the Habsburg Empire defended its status as a great power in Europe, the losses in war made it acutely aware of its internal issues. The war also revealed the weaknesses of the diffused state – Maria Theresia herself later complained about the egotism of the local noble Estates who acted to the detriment of Vienna by siding with the Monarchy's enemies to secure their power in crownlands. As a result, the centralization of state administration, along with a considerable improvement in its effectiveness became the main incentive of Her Majesty's government. ⁹⁴ Ironically, the main adversary of the Habsburg Monarchy initially served as the primary inspiration for a number of reforms. For instance, the army

⁸⁹ *Browning*, *The War of the Austrian Succession*, 18.

⁹⁰ *Ingrao*, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 168.

⁹¹ Matthew Smith *Anderson*, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740–1748* (London/New York 1995) 72f.

⁹² *Ibid*, 68.

⁹³ Cited after: Barbara *Gant*, „National-Erziehung“: Überwachung als Prinzip. Österreichische Bildungspolitik im Zeichen von Absolutismus und Aufklärung. In: Helmut *Reinalter* (ed.), *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus* (Wien 2008) 97–124, here 97.

⁹⁴ *Vocelka*, *Glanz und Untergang*, 355.

modernization was clearly influenced by the Hohenzollern model, and the introduction of conscription and recruiting districts in the Hereditary Lands was copied from the Prussian system. Moreover, the reforms in administration and primary education were also based on Prussian experience.⁹⁵ Since Friedrich II managed to extract over 50% more tax revenue from Silesia than its previous rulers by implementing a simpler and more efficient collection process, Prussian model of state centralization became a guiding example for the Habsburg Monarchy.⁹⁶

Although the reforms began with the goal of taking revenge on Prussia and strengthening the state's military potential, they would later spread across all spheres of public life, aiming to change the core principles of state administration and the character of Habsburg subjects. It could be argued that the „civilizing mission“, which the Habsburgs began implementing in Galicia in 1772, was a direct continuation of the „civilizing mission“ the imperial government had been conducting against its own state and subjects for the past 25 years. All the policies introduced in the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories aimed at „leveling“ them with the rest of the Empire were less than one generation away from the Monarchy's attempts to transform its society into a well-oiled machine, in which every part and unit would serve the common goal of maintaining the strength, prosperity and integrity of the state. Those resisting the changes, whether local nobilities holding on to their petty interests, or the „lazy“ and „dirty“ peasants of Bohemia and Carinthia unwilling to work harder for the benefit of the state,⁹⁷ were to be inevitably marginalized and „othered“, taking the blame for any failures on the path toward development. In this context, the level of „civilization“ would be directly dependent on the commitment to the imposed transformations.⁹⁸

The pattern of ruling introduced by the reforms would receive the name „Enlightened Absolutism“, or „Enlightened Despotism“, aptly summed up in the famous formula coined by Reinhold Koser: „Everything for the people, nothing by the people“.

⁹⁵ Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy*, 150f.

⁹⁶ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 75.

⁹⁷ Klemens Kaps, *Kulturelle Vorstellungswelten der Politischen Ökonomie: Bilder des habsburgischen Ostens im kameralistischen Diskurs zwischen den Wendejahren 1683 und 1815*. In: Christoph Augustynowicz, Agnieszka Pufelska (eds.), *Konstruierte (Fremd-?)Bilder: Das östliche Europa im Diskurs des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin/Boston 2017) 179–199, here 188f.

⁹⁸ For further definition of the „civilizing mission“, see: Liliya Berezhnaya, Heidi Hein-Kircher, Introduction. Constructing a Rampart Nation Conceptual Framework. In: Liliya Berezhnaya, Heidi Hein-Kircher (eds.), *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism* (New York 2019) 3–30, here 10.

This meant that, even though the well-being of the subjects was prioritized by the government, they themselves were not given any voice in decision-making.⁹⁹ The „greater good“ was to be determined by the sovereign alone, and the subjects were to obey him as children would obey their father, and serve one another as if they were brothers.¹⁰⁰ This automatically made everyone, aside from the monarch and their direct advisors, equal objects of state politics, regardless of their position in society. Although both contemporary intellectuals and scholars of subsequent epochs would debate the application of the term „Enlightened Absolutism“, arguing that the worldview of Enlightenment philosophy was hardly compatible with absolutist rule, both elements were certainly present in the ruling strategies of the Habsburg Monarchy. Maria Theresia herself was quite suspicious of the Enlightenment liberties, and her personal conservatism wouldn't allow her to implement more radical steps, such as softening of the state censorship or significantly curbing the power of the Catholic Church.¹⁰¹ At the same time, a number of her statesmen, including State Chancellor Kaunitz, were adherents of that philosophy, and it had an impact on the upbringing of her son and later co-regent, Joseph II,¹⁰² who would not hesitate to debate his mother on the necessity of the radical societal transformations as soon as he came of age.¹⁰³ As a result, while the earlier decades of Maria Theresia's rule were first and foremost aimed at carrying out state centralization and increasing the efficiency of all branches of administration,¹⁰⁴ the Enlightenment ideas were always present in the socio-political agenda of the government, and their importance only grew with time.

The version of Enlightenment widespread in German-speaking Europe, the *Aufklärung*, was less radical than its English or French counterpart and saw no issue in reconciling the monarchical power and Christianity with its postulates.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, the *Aufklärung* still placed great value on transformations aimed at making better the lives of individuals, and through it – perfecting the state and society. The features of

⁹⁹ Charles *Ingrao*, The Problem of „Enlightened Absolutism“ and the German States. In: The Journal of Modern History 58 (1986) 161–180, here 172.

¹⁰⁰ Rudolf *Palme*, Der Einfluß der europäischen Aufklärung auf die Verfassungsbewegung. In: Helmut *Reinalter*, Peter *Leisching* (eds.), Die polnische Verfassung vom 3. Mai 1791 vor dem Hintergrund der europäischen Aufklärung (Frankfurt am Main et al. 1997) 65–82, here 73.

¹⁰¹ *Ingrao*, The Habsburg Monarchy, 189f.

¹⁰² *Stollberg-Rilinger*, Maria Theresa, 524.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 527.

¹⁰⁴ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 82.

¹⁰⁵ *Ingrao*, The Problem of „Enlightened Absolutism“, 174.

this worldview, such as an emphasis on improving the character and morale of the people through education, the introduction of religious tolerance, the limitation of church power, and loosening barriers between different social groups in terms of access to a better life, were all present in the Habsburg reform plans in the 18th century. The absolutist character of monarchical power would not contradict these good intentions but rather facilitate their implementation. Despite of the general abhorrence felt by many „classic“ Enlighteners towards any monarchical power, let alone the absolutist one, some would prefer this form of government to one with multiple power centers, such as the feudal estate state or even parliamentary democracy. According to them, the enlightened ruler with the best interest of the subjects at heart would do a much better job of improving their existence and bringing the state to prosperity, than a government controlled by multiple interest groups with selfish aspirations.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, even the „voiceless“ subjects of the wise monarch would only benefit from his rule, as long as they obeyed and did not rebel against the orders of the government.

Economically, the reformers in the Habsburg Monarchy were inspired by the mercantilist theory that placed a large emphasis on state control of the economy, especially trade, implemented through strict protectionist measures and stimulation of the export of the finished products.¹⁰⁷ In the Habsburg Monarchy, mercantilism evolved into cameralism, which focused less on overseas trade (due to geographical reasons) and more on increasing domestic production. To stimulate it, the reformers of the Habsburg Empire suggested such measures as reducing internal tariffs and raising external ones, granting subsidies and monopolies to industry, directing consumers towards goods produced domestically, engaging in the usage of untouched land and resources, improving transportation systems, and encouraging population growth.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, cameralists insisted that the economic backwardness of the state was largely caused by the stagnating societal structures that did not encourage industriousness and productivity among the people. Therefore, innovation could be introduced only if the foundation of

¹⁰⁶ Derek Beales, Was Joseph II an Enlightened Despot? In: Ritchie Robertson, Edward Timms (eds.), *The Austrian Enlightenment and Its Aftermath* (Edinburgh 1991) 12–14.

¹⁰⁷ Bernhard Hackl, Die staatliche Wirtschaftspolitik zwischen 1740 und 1792: Reform versus Stagnation. In: Helmut Reinalter (ed.), *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus* (Wien 2008) 191–271, here 192f.

¹⁰⁸ Szabo, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 113f.

society and the mindset of the population were radically transformed, and in this case, the ideas of the *Aufklärung* were to come into place.¹⁰⁹

The planned reforms had the unity of the people in their service to the state and society as the highest ideal and ultimate goal.¹¹⁰ In his *Hirtenbrief* („pastoral letter“) Joseph would write:

„Hence it necessarily follows that in order to act on one's own account one should have no other purpose in one's actions save the utility and the good of the majority. Since the good can only be, namely that which concerns the whole and the greatest number, and likewise all the provinces of the monarchy only form a single whole, and thus can have only one purpose; [...] in all of them nationality and religion must make no difference, and as brothers in one Monarchy all should set to work equally in order to be useful to one another[...].“¹¹¹

Such a unity could hardly be achieved without a groundbreaking transformation of the people's character. Quoting the school textbooks of the reform era, the main virtues of the „righteous citizens“ were „love, loyalty and obedience“, as well as the readiness „to sacrifice all possessions, blood, and life to the service to the Fatherland“. ¹¹² To facilitate any major improvements in the country, the passive subjects of different Habsburg crownlands were to become dynamic and autonomous citizens of one monolithic state, thus bringing benefit to society as a whole.¹¹³ At the same time, any autonomy had to be preceded by bringing the population to discipline and depriving them of idleness and irresponsibility, which were repeatedly condemned in the officials' reports at the time.¹¹⁴ Thus, the measures aimed at encouraging economic self-reliance among the population, such as the expansion of the crafts school system or the dissemination of new agrarian techniques were accompanied by the criminalization of begging and the establishment of workhouses.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 154.

¹¹⁰ Helmut Reinalter, Einleitung. In: Helmut Reinalter (ed.), *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus* (Wien 2008) 9–16, here 10.

¹¹¹ Cited after: Beales, Was Joseph II an Enlightened Despot?, 13.

¹¹² Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens: Erziehung und Unterricht auf dem Boden Österreichs*. Vol. 3, *Von der frühen Aufklärung bis zum Vormärz* (Wien 1984) 508.

¹¹³ Szabo, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 155; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 56.

¹¹⁴ James Van Horn Melton, *Arbeitsprobleme des Aufgeklärten Absolutismus in Preußen und Österreich*. In: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 90 (1982) 49–75, here 56f.

¹¹⁵ Kaps, *Kulturelle Vorstellungswelten*, 186f.

The specific Habsburg version of Enlightened Absolutism was based on three pillars.¹¹⁶ The first one was the monarch, whose personality played a key role in the reforms. The head of the state was believed to be chosen by Providence to serve the state and the people for the greater good, which made his decisions indisputable.¹¹⁷ The Habsburg understanding of monarchy upheld absolute rule as the ideal form of government, rejecting any notion of popular sovereignty or the right to challenge the ruler.¹¹⁸ The second pillar was the key individuals at the ministerial level, whose initiatives revolutionized the Empire at different stages of the reform process. The final pillar was the widespread network of imperial bureaucracy at all levels, from county officials to ministerial councilors. It could be argued that the Habsburg Monarchy was the birthplace of a new type of bureaucracy, which had to be devoted not to the dynasty or the imperial court, but to the state. Such a devotion was to be ensured by completely transforming the approach to recruitment of the state officials: although the highest levels of the service could still be performed by the nobles exclusively, the lower levels were for the first time opened to the representatives of other social groups, as long as they obtained the necessary education.¹¹⁹ The ideal of the bureaucrat of the Habsburg Empire was to fit the description made by Joseph von Sonnenfels in his work „Der Mann ohne Vorurtheil“ – a free man who would voluntarily give himself to the service of the state and sacrifice his individual liberties and privileges, if that would benefit the greater good.¹²⁰ The state, in turn, would repay him by judging his merit not as a member of a certain family, but by evaluating his own talent, professionalism and efforts.¹²¹ For sure, the actual officials would not always correspond to that ideal;¹²² nonetheless, the core transformations in the bureaucracy’s character have significantly influenced the flow of the reforms in the Habsburg Empire.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Szabo, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 6f.

¹¹⁷ Dagmar Freist, *Absolutismus* (Darmstadt 2008) 104.

¹¹⁸ Teodora Shek Brnardić, Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Habsburg Monarchy. In: Balazs Trencsenyi, Márton Zászkaliczky (eds.), *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe* (Leiden 2010) 631–661, here 645.

¹¹⁹ Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 58f.

¹²⁰ Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat*, 27f.

¹²¹ Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy*, 159; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*, 59.

¹²² Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat*, 29–33.

¹²³ See for expanded discussion on Enlightened Absolutism in Habsburg governance: Oleksandra Krushynska, *Strategies of the „civilizing mission“ of the Habsburg government in Galicia after the First Partition of Poland*. In: *Galicja. Studia i materiały* 11 (2024) 533–548, here 535–537.

By 1772, when the Habsburg Empire acquired Galicia, some changes had already been implemented (with varying degrees of success), while others were only being formulated, so that later they would coincide in time with the transformations introduced in the former Polish-Lithuanian territories. The first major set of reforms initiated even before the signing of the Treaty of Aachen were the administrative ones. As previously stated, the position of the central authority in the Monarchy prior to Maria Theresia's ascension was very weak. The noble Estates of the crownlands were maintaining institutions parallel to the central government bodies, and the number of officials of local origin was usually much greater than that of those sent from Vienna. In each crownland, the matter of taxation had to be negotiated with the Estates, and, even when they had agreed to a certain amount of Contribution (*Kontribution*, the main military tax), it was the local and not central government officials who would collect it.¹²⁴ At the same time, the organization of power in Vienna was flawed as well. The decision-making processes were unnecessarily complicated by the number of bodies that bore similar or even identical functions. Such an ineffective system was, among other things, responsible for the string of military failures of the 1730s and the 1740s and had to be optimized as soon as possible.

Already in 1742, the Habsburg State Chancellery (*Haus-, Hof- und Staatskanzlei*), responsible for foreign affairs, was separated from the Austrian Court Chancellery (*Österreichische Hofkanzlei*), thus dividing the bodies of inner and foreign politics. In 1745, the judicial and administrative powers were separated at the highest level by introducing the Highest Revision Court for the Austrian and Bohemian State Chancelleries (*Höchster Revisionsgericht für die österreichischen und böhmischen Staatskanzleien*). The military administration also underwent changes, as in 1745 the number of Court War Councils (*Hofkriegsräte*) was reduced from twenty-five to three; the competencies of their presidents were widened, and Maria Theresia reserved for herself the competence of signing the most important orders. As for the financial administration, the decision-making power was transferred from numerous departments of the Court Chamber (*Hofkammer*) to its united Plenum of eight members. Two new bodies were introduced: the Chamber of Coin and Mining (*Münz- und Bergwesenhofkolleg*), and the Universal Commercial Directorate

¹²⁴ Scott, Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 153.

(*Universalcommerziendirectorium*), which was to implement mercantilist policies.¹²⁵ These transformations served as a preparation for the first stage of an extensive administrative reform, carried out by the Supreme Chancellor of the United Court Chancery (*Oberster Kanzler der vereinigten Hofkanzlei*), Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz, in the late 1740s.

The aim of the Haugwitz's reforms was to provide the Habsburg Monarchy with a standing army of 200.000 men during peacetime, which required a significant increase in the Contribution from the crownlands. To guarantee that increase, political and fiscal power had to be further centralized and separated from the judicial bodies. Such measures would seem impossible in the Estates-controlled lands, but Haugwitz managed to negotiate successfully with the Estates throughout 1748 and convince Maria Theresia to support the suggested plan of the reform that would ultimately enhance her power. As a result, the Estates were given a certain period of time (different in duration for every crownland), when they had to share their privilege of taxes' collection and administration with the Viennese government. Although the Estates were never taken away the right to collect the Contribution, Haugwitz introduced the position of the crown deputies in each crownland to oversee the process; eventually, the state administration absorbed the Estates' agents as well.¹²⁶ Later, they were also deprived of most of the political-administrative duties, except for judicial power. The most significant innovation of the reform was the creation of the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus*, or simply the *Directorium*, which was designed to execute domestic policy in a centralized manner and was headed by Haugwitz himself. The *Directorium* was modelled after the Prussian *Generaldirectorium*, established in 1722, once again using the administrative framework of their rival to enhance the efficiency of the Empire.¹²⁷ In the crownlands, the *Directorium* performed its control through a series of bodies, first named Land deputations (*Länderdeputationen*), and after 1749 – Representations and Chambers (*Representationen und Kammern*), which were overseeing an extensive system of officials appointed by the government (*Kreisämter*, or „district offices“), the lowest level of the centralized bureaucracy. Due to the creation of the *Directorium*, in 1749, the

¹²⁵ Irmgard Plattner, *Josephinismus und Bürokratie*. In: Helmut Reinalter (ed.), *Josephinismus als Aufgeklärter Absolutismus* (Wien 2008) 53–96, here 63f.

¹²⁶ Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 179f.

¹²⁷ Brnardić, *Modalities of Enlightened Monarchical Patriotism*, 650.

separate Austrian and Bohemian Chancelleries were dissolved, their judicial power transferred to the Supreme Judiciary (*Oberste Justizstelle*), and the Court Deputation (*Hofdeputation*) – replaced by the Conference on Internal Affairs (*Conferenz in Internis*) in exercising unitary control over the Hereditary Lands.¹²⁸

The improved system of state administration and tax collection allowed the Empire to nearly double the state revenue by 1754, enabling an increase in the number of the armed forces and enhancing their training and equipment.¹²⁹ By the beginning of the Seven Years' War of 1756–1763, however, the reform had already reached its limit. From the very beginning its capacity was limited, because it did not aim to include the lands of Hungary, Transylvania, the Austrian Netherlands and Lombardy.¹³⁰ The measures introduced by it were not bold enough to overcome the internal weaknesses of the feudal Empire, as the crownland Estates still retained a significant amount of power in their hands.¹³¹ In addition, the consolidation of power in Haugwitz's hands continued, and, by the mid-1750s, the *Directorium* had absorbed virtually all the governmental institutions in Austria and Bohemia (except for the Ministries of War, Justice and Foreign Affairs), whereas the newly established agencies, such as the Police Commission (*Polizeihofkommission*) and the Commission in Charge of Poor Relief (*Stiftungshofkommission*), were re-established as the subsidiary departments of the *Directorium*.¹³² As a result, the *Directorium* quickly became overburdened with the functions it was expected to perform due to an enormous number of bureaucratic duties, and it could not guarantee the unhindered fiscal performance, the very first obligation it was created to fulfill.¹³³ It also became a substantial burden on state finances, as the personnel of the *Directorium* grew fourfold over the decade (from 16 in 1749 to 59 in 1760).¹³⁴

Failure in the war became the ultimate catalyst for further administrative reform, this time led by the head of the Habsburg State Chancellery Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg. Kaunitz put enormous effort into securing a number of diplomatic alliances for

¹²⁸ Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy*, 154; Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 77f.

¹²⁹ Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 184.

¹³⁰ Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy*, 155.

¹³¹ Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 189.

¹³² Franz A. J. Szabo, *Cameralism, Josephinism, and Enlightenment: The Dynamic of Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–92*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 49 (2018) 1–14, here 8f.

¹³³ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 79; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 426.

¹³⁴ Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 81

the Habsburg Monarchy and the great European powers before the war and felt personally wounded by the unsuccessful results of the military campaign (however, it could probably be claimed that the failure of Haugwitz gave Kaunitz a chance to conceal the mistakes of his Chancellery by blaming all the misfortunes on the imperfections of the state administration). Kaunitz already had experience in reorganization of administrative bodies, since he had carried out the reform of the Chancellery in 1753, but it took him several years and a significant loss of Habsburg forces in the battle of Torgau to finally convince Maria Theresia to agree to a new stage of reform.¹³⁵

In December 1760, the monarch finally voiced her approval. The changes began with the creation of the Council of State (*Staatsrat*) of six members (three from higher and three from lower-ranking nobility), which was to play the role of the highest advisory body for Maria Theresia and the overseer of the other highest administrative organs in domestic politics.¹³⁶ Although lacking formal executive power, it was responsible for the reform drafts written throughout 1761. At the end of the year, the *Directorium* was dissolved, and its competencies were given to a number of newly established ministries. The central Bohemian and Austrian Court Chancellery was from now on responsible for political matters, while the financial administration was split into the Treasury (*Schatzkammer*), a Revenue Office (*Reichssteuerramt*) and a Court of Audit (*Rechnungshof*). The Supreme Judiciary acquired a number of new responsibilities. The Aulic War Council (*Aulischer Kriegsrat*) received a new specific department, the Commissariat for Military Supply (*Kommissariat für Militärversorgung*).¹³⁷

On a local level, the *Representationen und Kammern* have been re-named *Gubernien* („Governorates“), which became the main agents of the Habsburg Empire in implementing further transformations in the crownlands. Moreover, the *Gubernien* were given control over the administration of justice, previously left to the competency of the Estates, and the head of the *Gubernium*, appointed by the monarch, was to be united with the office of the head of the Estates.¹³⁸ For several years the activities of the new bodies remained imprecisely defined, and it took another round of reforms to complete the new administrative system. Only in 1765, after several stages of negotiations concerning

¹³⁵ Scott, Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 156.

¹³⁶ Plattner, Josephinismus und Bürokratie, 67.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 156f; Szabo, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 90f.

¹³⁸ Szabo, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 95.

mostly the financial administration, an imperial decision was issued, which described in detail the separate as well as joint duties of the Bohemian and Austrian Court Chancellery, the Court Chamber and the Accounting Chamber (*Rechenkammer*).¹³⁹ This system continued to exist until the end of the reign of Maria Theresia with very minor modifications. As it was the case with the other European monarchies, the pure absolutist ideal of total power centralization could not be achieved in the Habsburg Empire.¹⁴⁰ The results of the Kaunitz's administration reforms were nonetheless quite impressive. By introducing *Gubernien*, the central government became more aware of the issues in separate crownlands and achieved an instrument for imposing its power there more directly. The number of imperial bureaucrats (excluding those employed in the Court), although still lower than that of local officials, rose from 4.000 in 1740 to 6.000 in 1763, and that allowed Vienna break the univocal dominance of the Estates over the local governments.¹⁴¹

Another area which received utmost attention in the reform plans was the agrarian reforms. The economy of the Habsburg Monarchy relied predominantly on agriculture, however, as was the case with the political administration, the conditions of rural production were not centrally regulated. The status of the peasantry and its obligations towards landowners could be different even in the regions of one crownland, ranging from labor services provided by the free peasants of Tyrol and Vorarlberg to direct serfdom in Bohemian lands and the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁴² The previous attempts to systematize and stabilize the agricultural relationship, such as the Bohemian „Robot“ patent of the emperor Karl IV in 1738, resulted in very limited success, as their actual implementation depended fully on the landowners themselves or on local officials who were much more bound to the provincial nobility than to the Crown. As a result, the agriculture in the land showed low production for decades, resulting in a consistent threat of famines.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Friedrich *Walter*, Der letzte große Versuch einer Verwaltungsreform unter Maria Theresia (1764/65). In: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 47, Nr. 4 (1933) 427–469, here 465–467.

¹⁴⁰ *Freist*, Absolutismus, 34.

¹⁴¹ *Scott*, Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 157f.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, p. 178; *Szabo*, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 155f.

¹⁴³ *Szabo*, Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 157f.

On the one hand, Maria Theresia was fully aware of the importance of the protection of peasantry for the well-being of the state. Not only were the peasants responsible for the largest portion of taxation but also provided a base for the regular conscription for the military needs of the country. Moreover, if forced to uprising out of despair, the peasantry could be a very destructive force, and the possibility of massive insurrections could not be ignored by the Monarchy.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, the relationship between landowners and peasantry relied on centuries-old traditions of social organization, especially under conditions of serfdom, where the nobleman played the role of the ultimate authority over the lives of his subordinates. To change the situation, Vienna had to be extra careful and ensure that the regulations of the peasant labor were based more on compromise and agreement than on direct pressure. To make the matters more difficult, even within the highest governmental circles no consensus existed on how much damage the existing land relations constituted.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, no immediate measures were taken in abolishing serfdom, despite all the negative connotations it had achieved and the negative impact it had on the state economy.¹⁴⁶

By the beginning of the 1770s, Maria Theresia had issued several decrees on regulating imperial agriculture, namely the one of 1747 for Transylvania, the *Urbarial* decrees of 1755 for Croatia and of 1756 of Slavonia. The Bohemian *Robot* patent of 1738 was reinforced in the 1750s, and in the 1760s, the focus of reform shifted to the Kingdom of Hungary.¹⁴⁷ In 1771, after numerous uprisings of the peasantry in Silesia the *Robot* patent was issued there, despite protests of the provincial Estates.¹⁴⁸ The success of this legislation was limited, and the initial measures suggested by the Maria Theresia's government, such as limitation of the serfs' labor services to two days per week, had to be re-negotiated with some local Estates.¹⁴⁹ However, these regulations paved way for new regulations that would be much more encompassing, and, ultimately, include Galicia as well. Moreover, the peasants received certain protection from the state as a result of

¹⁴⁴ Michael *Hochedlinger*, Anton *Tantner*, „– der grösste Teil der Untertanen lebt elend und mühselig“. Die Berichte des Hofkriegsrates zur sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Lage der Habsburgermonarchie 1770–1771 (Innsbruck/Wien/Bozen 2005) LV.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, LXVII.

¹⁴⁶ Gerda *Lettner*, *Das Spannungsfeld zwischen Aufklärung und Absolutismus: die Ära Kaunitz (1749–1794)* (Göttingen 2016) 36.

¹⁴⁷ *Szabo*, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism*, 157.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 165f.

¹⁴⁹ Ernst *Wangermann*, *The Austrian Achievement, 1700–1800* (London 1973) 70f.

the Haugwitz's reform, because the establishment of the *Kreisämter* allowed the government to oversee the relationship between the landlord and his peasants, and, if necessary, defend the latter from the arbitrariness of the former.¹⁵⁰

Together with the administrative reforms, the agrarian reforms became crucial in redefining the relationship between the government and the aristocracy.¹⁵¹ As in every feudal state, the nobility was the main power behind most matters both in public and in private life of every inhabitant of the Habsburg realm. The noble landlord was the main authority in his landholdings, with both the serfs and the free people living there being fully dependent on his will. The same was true for the dwellers of cities established and ruled by numerous noble clans, the merchants trading their goods on markets under full control of the aristocracy, and a crowd of officials serving in local bodies and Estates.¹⁵² To add to that, the heterogenous character of the Monarchy resulted in a very diverse character of its nobility. The character of the empire prior to the reforms could be described as rather „federal“, with complex power hierarchies that differed from one crownland to another, and the authority of Vienna not always being recognized for the primary one.¹⁵³

The disloyalty of local nobilities of several of the Habsburg crownlands towards the ruling dynasty during the War of the Austrian Succession¹⁵⁴ proved once again that in order to raise the effectiveness of the state, the role of the nobility in it had to be reestablished. The groundbreaking administration reforms caused a significant reduction of aristocratic Estates' competencies in matters of crownland administration, as well as tax collection, as both matters were integrated into the competencies of the absolutist government.¹⁵⁵ The further weakening of the nobility took place after the introduction of the Cadaster (*Kadaster*), which put an end to one of the most significant privileges of the aristocracy – the exemption from taxation.¹⁵⁶ However, the curbing of noble power was

¹⁵⁰ *Stollberg-Rilinger*, Maria Theresa, 667f.

¹⁵¹ See: Roman *Rozdolski*, Untertan und Staat in Galizien. Die Reformen unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II (Mainz 1992) 4.

¹⁵² Heinz *Dopsch*, Der Österreichische Adel. In: Erich *Zöllner* (ed.), Österreichs Sozialstrukturen in Historischer Sicht (Wien 1980) 25–43, here 25.

¹⁵³ Berthold *Waldstein-Wartenberg*, Neuer Adel unter Habsburgs Patronanz. In: Heinz *Siebert* (ed.), Adel in Österreich (Wien 1971) 49–55, here 49. See also: Jeroen Frans Jozef *Duindam*, Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780 (Cambridge 2003) 272.

¹⁵⁴ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 167.

¹⁵⁵ *Dopsch*, Der Österreichische Adel, 34.

¹⁵⁶ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 310.

not the only intention of the imperial government. In accordance with the general strategy of implementing the „Enlightened Absolutism“ model, every subject of the transformed Monarchy was to serve the state diligently and faithfully to the best of his abilities. The nobility was to be engaged in this process, so that instead of opposing the centralized state, it would become one of its pillars. To quote Joseph von Sonnenfels once again, the aristocracy was „the most dispensable part of the civil society“ and had to therefore dedicate itself to the common good to prove the necessity of its existence.¹⁵⁷ The „internal civilizing mission“ of the Habsburg Monarchy had to, therefore, be spread over the highest classes of the imperial society, engaging them into the ambitious transformation plans and subordinating them fully to the „Enlightened“ central government. If applied correctly, this strategy was to replace the old, personal relationship of loyalty and duty between the monarch and the nobility with a new type of governance that tied the ruler and nobility in common service to the state.¹⁵⁸

This ideal could be achieved, at least partially, as many noblemen of the Empire, especially those who received advanced education abroad, shared the belief system of the *Aufklärung* and saw the need for changes in the Monarchy.¹⁵⁹ To engage more representatives of the most prominent families in state service, they were given positions at the Viennese court. It was believed that the high positions would satisfy aristocratic ambitions of societal prestige while also limiting their power aspirations and demonstrating to them the steadfastness of the throne. This engagement policy was only partially successful, as they could not fully converge the members of „old“ aristocracy into unconditional followers of the Habsburgs.¹⁶⁰ However, the government of Maria Theresia actively engaged itself in widening the aristocratic class of the Empire by guaranteeing noble status to the most loyal and diligent state servants of common descent. This „new“ aristocracy, or „second society“, would indeed become the faithful supporters of the ruling dynasty, as their gratitude towards Habsburgs for the bestowed privileges was much greater than the feeling of the corporate solidarity towards the landowning nobility. Unlike the „old“ aristocracy, the „second society“ was open to foreigners, which

¹⁵⁷ Franz Leander *Fillafer*, *Aufklärung habsburgisch: Staatsbildung, Wissenskultur und Geschichtspolitik in Zentraleuropa 1750–1850* (Göttingen 2020) 26.

¹⁵⁸ Grete *Klingenstein*, *Der Aufstieg des Hauses Kaunitz* (Göttingen 1975) 131.

¹⁵⁹ *Vocelka*, *Glanz und Untergang*, 312.

¹⁶⁰ Hannes *Stekl*, *Zwischen Machtverlust und Selbstbehauptung. Österreichs Hocharistokratie vom 18. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft. Sonderheft 13* (1990) 144–165, here 153.

allowed further leveling of the imperial elites by diminishing the role of local interests of individual clans.¹⁶¹ Together with the drastic limitation of Estates' competencies, the creation of the „second society“ significantly contributed to the centralization of the Habsburg state power, and elimination of the direct threat of the nobility towards the throne.¹⁶²

The reforms were to influence not only the material circumstances of the subjects of the Empire. The transformation „from subjects to citizens“, mentioned above, could not take place without introducing the education reforms. The state of education in the Empire was quite poor at all levels. Since it could not prepare the youth of the Monarchy for a successful career, the families who could afford it would send their sons to Protestant universities of German states, which further contributed to the widespread adoption of the *Aufklärung* postulates among the imperial intellectuals.¹⁶³ This, however, could not solve the general problem of lack of competent officials, as well as generally poor education levels of the population. In addition to that, the education system of the Empire had to be standardized in every hereditary land, in accordance with the general centralization strategy.

The changes started with the educational establishments aimed at the representatives of the upper classes, as they were to become the main source of the reform manpower. In 1746, the *Theresianum* Academy was established specifically to provide education for the state servants of noble descent, aiming at both preparing a sufficient number of the loyal and efficient bureaucrats and attracting noble youth to the state service. The idea was not original by itself, as the Academy was modeled after the *Ritterakademien* – the preparatory schools for the offspring of the noble families, where they were to obtain skills and knowledge suitable for their class (such as military competence, etiquette, languages and dancing). By the time of the *Theresianum* establishment, the *Ritterakademien* were quite widespread in Europe, and it was not even the first school of such a type in the Habsburg Monarchy.¹⁶⁴ It was, however, destined to become the embodiment of Maria Theresia's government and its principles of efficiency

¹⁶¹ *Waldstein-Wartenberg*, Neuer Adel, 53.

¹⁶² Fritz *Posch*, Macht und Mächtige. In: Heinz *Siebert* (ed.), Adel in Österreich (Wien 1971) 19–34, here 32.

¹⁶³ Christine L. *Mueller*, Enlightened Absolutism. In: Austrian History Yearbook 25 (1994) 159–183, here 162.

¹⁶⁴ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 244f.

and practicality of the state service.¹⁶⁵ A number of the *Theresianum* alumni would become the statesmen implementing the reforms of the subsequent decades, as well as influential thinkers of their time.¹⁶⁶ The University of Vienna became directly subordinated to the state in 1753, its finances and administration were turned into the matter of the *Directorium*. The next step, the school reform, began in 1757, the Commission for Education (*Studienhofkommission*) was created at the *Directorium*, which would later, in 1760, be subordinated to the Court.¹⁶⁷ In 1769 and 1770 the local commissions with the same purpose were created in Upper and Lower Austria, respectively.¹⁶⁸ The year 1771 saw the foundation of the *Normalschule*, a teacher training college,¹⁶⁹ but the further negotiations and the resolution of various practical matters postponed the proclamation of the *Allgemeine Schulordnung für die deutschen Normal-Haupt- und Trivialschulen in sämtlichen Kaiserl. Königl. Erbländern*, the plan for the reform, until 1774.¹⁷⁰

To sum up, at the moment of acquiring Galicia the Habsburg Monarchy was still in the midst of ambitious reforms. The widescale goals set in the 1740s had not been achieved yet, and the participation in the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a part of the transformation process itself, as for the Habsburgs it became a step on the way to further strengthening their great power status in Europe. However, the general direction of reforms in the metropole allowed for predicting the changes that the Empire would impose on its new crownland. The centralization of the state administration, the creation of powerful imperial bureaucracy, the drastic limitation of the nobility's political and economic powers while also engaging them into the service for the benefit of the state, the easing of burden over the enserfed peasantry, and, last but not least, the attempts to improve the general character of the population – all these tendencies would soon find their reflection in Habsburg reforms in Galicia conducted in an attempt to fully integrate the land and its people into the body of the Empire. The successes of the earlier reforms and the desire for even greater improvements led the Habsburg government to the creation of a certain standard of a balanced and efficient

¹⁶⁵ *Stollberg-Rilinger*, Maria Theresa, 192.

¹⁶⁶ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 168.

¹⁶⁷ *Gant*, „National-Erziehung“, 104.

¹⁶⁸ *Vocelka*, Glanz und Untergang, 245; *Ingrao*, The Habsburg Monarchy, 365.

¹⁶⁹ *Wangermann*, The Austrian Achievement, 82.

¹⁷⁰ *Gant*, „National-Erziehung“, 115.

state, led by the wise monarch and inhabited by the diligent and loyal subjects. This standard would later become the foundation for the Habsburg colonial policies in Galicia, as the entire strategy of the Empire there would be aimed at bringing the new crownland into accordance with that standard and eliminating or transforming the elements which would prevent that (such as the exceptional powers of the local nobility). Long before the First Partition, the Habsburg Monarchy conducted the „civilizing mission“ concerning its own population, which would spread over Galicia immediately after its acquisition.

2. Galicia and Its Nobility: The *Szlachta*’s Power and „Barbarianism“.

The first mention of the term „Galicia“ (or „Halychyna“, stemming from the city of Halych currently located in western Ukraine) could be attributed to the end of the 10th century. Up to the end of the 14th century a large part of the territories acquired by the Habsburg Monarchy in the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth belonged to a community with predominantly Orthodox Christian population (first the Principality, then the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia) within a conglomerate that historians would later call „Kyivan Rus“. After the ruling Rurik dynasty died out, in 1387 Poland annexed the Galician lands, which for the next four centuries would be subject to the spread of Catholicism (later, to a lesser extent – Protestantism) and Polish cultural influence.¹⁷¹

While being part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the territories of Galicia belonged to different administration units, and therefore did not have any offices, local government organs or courts which would unite them under one jurisdiction. Initially, the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria encompassed around 82 thousand square kilometers and consisted of parts of the Kraków Voivodeship (with duchies of Oświęcim and Zator), Sandomierz, Ruthenian, Bełz, Podolian and Volhynian Voivodeships.¹⁷² Because of such territorial diversity and the absence of strong ties between its different parts it would be difficult to speak of any common regional identity for the inhabitants of future Galicia before 1772, which would make them stand out within the *Rzeczpospolita*.

¹⁷¹ Paul R. Magocsi, Galicia: A European Land. In: Christopher M. Hann, Paul R. Magocsi (eds.), Galicia: A Multicultured Land (Toronto/Buffalo/London 2005) 3–21, here 4; Řezník, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 57.

¹⁷² Grodziski, Historia ustroju, 26f.

The lands taken by the Habsburgs had a symbolic meaning for the Polish-Lithuanian state primarily because of their geographical location. The banks of the Vistula River, or Lesser Poland, have been the core territories of the Polish state since the High Middle Ages, and the city of Kraków, although it lost its capital status to Warsaw long before the partitions, was still regarded as a symbol of Polish sovereignty, so the annexation of its surroundings in 1772 was seen as a profound loss.¹⁷³ At the same time, Galicia had a very advantageous location for participation in international trade, being an important link in the exchange of goods between the fertile agricultural East and the industrialized West.¹⁷⁴ Its vast network of rivers made Galicia a stop on the crossroads of important trade routes: between the Balkan peninsula and the Baltic Sea, Southern Russia and Southeastern Poland, on the one hand, and the whole Central and Western Europe, on the other.¹⁷⁵

Aside from international trade, agriculture was the main source of income for the Galician population. Even in the biggest cities the inhabitants were largely involved in raising crops.¹⁷⁶ The land of Galicia was rather fertile, especially in the river valleys of the San, Dniester and Vistula, as well as Podolia, and most of the territory, except for the highest range of the Carpathian Mountains, was suitable for farming.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, the agriculture in Galicia belonged to the extensive type, relying mostly on the three-field system, as well as primitive and ineffective tools and technologies.¹⁷⁸ The peasantry did not produce impressive results – only about 16% of them were free peasants, who possessed their own land and were motivated to manage it properly.¹⁷⁹ The rest were serfs to noble landlords and had no direct interest in the fruit of their labor. Moreover, the serfs were suffering from drastic living conditions and the oppression and arbitrariness of the landlords and their managers, making serf peasantry in its entirety a rather unproductive force.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³ *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 59f.

¹⁷⁴ Abraham Jacob *Brawer*, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam: eine historisch-statistische Studie über die inneren Verhältnisse des Landes im Jahre 1772 (Leipzig 1910) 84.

¹⁷⁵ *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 64.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 73.

¹⁷⁷ *Kaps*, Ungleiche Entwicklung, 105.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 225.

¹⁷⁹ *Brawer*, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam, 44.

¹⁸⁰ Johann Anton von *Pergen*, Beschreibung der Königreiche Galizien und Lodomerien nach dem Zustand, in welchem sie sich zur Zeit der Revindicirung durch Ihro Kais. Königl. Apostolischen Majestät und besonders im Monat Julius 1773 befunden haben (1773). ÖStA, HHStA, Hausarchiv, Ktn 5, Hofreisen, No.5, fol 457–582; P. 166

Another important source of state income located on the territory of Galicia were the two biggest salt mines of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Wieliczka and Bochnia, as well as several smaller salt mines south of the Carpathian Mountains and east of the San River. Aside from that, the lands of Galicia were rather poor in natural resources, with minor deposits of black coal near Kraków, brown coal in the Carpathians and Podolia, and iron in the High Tatras, between Vistula and San and in the Carpathians. The rather extensive deposits of crude oil would be discovered only under Habsburg rule and would find their economic potential about a century after the First Partition.¹⁸¹

The population structure of the lands of Galicia reflected that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in general. Most of the population could be divided into three major social groups. The first one, being the most powerful and influential, was the nobility, or the *szlachta*. Initially, many of the prominent *Rzeczpospolita* noble families, who had their possessions on Galician territories, such as the Sanguszko, Sapieha and Czartoryski clans, had Ruthenian (Ukrainian) origin.¹⁸² However, after centuries of forced implementation of Polish culture and language almost every member of the *szlachta* considered himself a „political Pole“, that is, a member of the all-noble political and social community, as well as of an exclusive linguistic-cultural community.¹⁸³ Those outside of this community could not fully enjoy the privileges of the nobility, and because of that, by the time of the Partitions the majority of the noblemen residing in Galicia referred to themselves as Poles, despite their quite heterogenous ethnic composition. The same was true for the religious affiliation – although most of the Galician population belonged to the Uniate (Greek Catholic) Church, only the congregants of the Roman Catholic Church were given the whole spectrum of political participation rights, which made the Catholicization of the majority of the *szlachta*, especially of the richest and the most powerful families, inevitable.¹⁸⁴ The adherence to Polish culture and language and the Catholic Church were among the clear markers, which elevated the *szlachta* above the rest of the population. This was especially visible in the regions, where most of the

¹⁸¹ Alison Fleig *Frank*, *Oil Empire. Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge/London 2007) 49.

¹⁸² Tomasz *Kempa*, *The Attitude of Ruthenian Magnates and Nobles toward the Union of Lublin (1569) and the Problem of the Autonomy of Ukrainian Lands within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*. In: *Zapiski Historyczne* 84, No. 4 (2019) 41–72, here 62.

¹⁸³ Janusz *Tazbir*, *Polish National Consciousness in the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. In: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 10, Nr. 3 (1986) 316–335, here 322.

¹⁸⁴ *Magocsi*, *Galicia: A European Land*, 27.

population belonged to other linguistic groups or religious denominations, as it added an element of colonial oppression to the relationship between the noble and common folk. In the case of Galicia, the dominance of the Polish-speaking Catholic *szlachta* over the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Uniate majority had an undisputable colonial element to it, as the nobility claimed that the land was „saved“ by Poland back in the 14th century after years of chaos and devastation, prospered under Polish rule, and had to therefore be grateful for the annexation, and obey the *szlachta* fully. This narrative was so persistent that it would survive decades after the demise of the *Rzeczpospolita*.¹⁸⁵

The proportion of nobility in the population of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (around 8%) was quite large in comparison to the corresponding numbers in the other European states at that time.¹⁸⁶ In Galicia alone, the *szlachta* constituted around 141 thousand people in 19 thousand families out of 2,3 million of the whole population.¹⁸⁷ Formally, all members of the *szlachta* were equal under the law and could enjoy all the same rights and exercise their political influence equally. In reality, however, members of noble families had radically different access to the highest positions depending on the wealth and power of their families.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the whole *szlachta* could be divided into several rather distinguished groups. The first one, the magnates or *możnowładztwo*, were the richest nobles in possession of estates in different parts of the *Rzeczpospolita*. It was the smallest group – only about 4% of the Commonwealth population belonged to magnate families,¹⁸⁹ and only 750 people out of that lived on Galician lands.¹⁹⁰ There were no formal criteria of belonging to that group, as they were not in any way defined by the legislation, but in order to be perceived as a magnate, one had to possess huge amounts of land, as well as exercise political influence at least on a provincial level.¹⁹¹ The next group, the „middle“ or „prosperous“ *szlachta* could usually support themselves economically, but was completely dependent on the magnates in political sense, and had to align with certain parties to have their interests protected.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Burkhard Wöller, Zivilisierungsmission oder Fremdherrschaft? Die Annexion Rotreußens unter Kasimir III. im kolonialistischen Diskurs polnischer und ruthenischer Historiker im österreichischen Galizien. In: *Historyka Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012) 175–193, here 181–183.

¹⁸⁶ Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 244.

¹⁸⁷ Schembor, *Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert*, 49.

¹⁸⁸ Zajęczkowski, *Szlachta polska*, 56.

¹⁸⁹ Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 248.

¹⁹⁰ Schembor, *Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert*, 49.

¹⁹¹ Igor Kąkolewski, *Sozialverfassung*, 71–74.

¹⁹² von Pergen, *Beschreibung*, PP. 50f.

The third group, the poor *szlachta* or *holota* („the naked one“), was simultaneously the most numerous, constituting around two thirds of the whole noble class, and the least influential one. Its members usually possessed little to no property, could not gain independent income to support their families and, therefore, had to give in to the service to the magnates, which made their living conditions close to those of serfs and peasants. At the same time, the *holota* remained an important instrument for the magnates due to the specificity of the Polish-Lithuanian political system, as even the poorest nobles still had the right to participate in elections and decision making in the parliament.¹⁹³

The *szlachta* was a core and defining element of the Polish-Lithuanian state. In the context of the *Rzeczpospolita*’s political culture, the term „nation“ (*Natio Polonica*) was used to exclusively designate the members of the noble ruling class. Because of that, the later appeals to „the nation“ or „the national interests“ in the petitions of the Galician noblemen to the Habsburg government must be understood as appeals to the *szlachta* and its interests, as the *Rzeczpospolita* „nation“ did not include the non-noble population majority.¹⁹⁴ Only in the second half of the 18th century did the widespread adoption of Enlightenment ideas cause the debate on the possibility of including the bourgeoisie into the „nation“, and therefore bestowing it with all the rights of citizenship.¹⁹⁵ In the 1791 Constitution, the concept of the „nation“ was expanded to include all inhabitants of the *Rzeczpospolita*, as belonging to the „nation“ was not defined by social status or the amount of possessions, but rather by the responsibility of protecting the country and ensuring its well-being and freedom (which still did not guarantee equal political rights to every member of the „nation“).¹⁹⁶ The radicalism of the Constitution was not, however, supported by all the *szlachta* members, and the usage of the term „nation“ in a sense of „nobility“ persisted in the *szlachta* writings after the turn of the century.

¹⁹³ Peter Collmer, Soziale Schichtung und Tendenzen des sozialen Wandels in Polen-Litauen am Ende des Ancien Régime. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit (Stuttgart 2017) 619–643, here 638.

¹⁹⁴ Miroslav Hroch, Das Europa der Nationen. Die moderne Nationsbildung im europäischen Vergleich (Göttingen 2005) 111.

¹⁹⁵ Adam Kucharski, The Polish Noblemen’s Nation vs. the Neighbouring Powers. Defending the Independence of the Country and the Freedom of the Nation from the Perspective of the Polish Handwritten Press during the Reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski (1764-1795). In: Bogusław Dybaś, Jacek Bojarski (eds.), Gruppenidentitäten in Ostmitteleuropa (Göttingen 2021) 165–196, here 170.

¹⁹⁶ Wojciech Witkowski, Die Verfassung vom dritten Mai – Ursprung einer modernen Nation und der Idee des „politischen Mannes“. In: Helmut Reinalter, Peter Leisching (eds.), Die polnische Verfassung vom 3. Mai 1791 vor dem Hintergrund der europäischen Aufklärung (Frankfurt am Main et al. 1997) 15–26, here 23.

The sense of the *szlachta*'s exceptionality was fed by „Sarmatian“ origin mythos, which traced the descendancy of the *Rzeczpospolita* noble class to the nomadic Sarmatian tribes that dominated the steppe from about the 3rd century BC to the 4th century AD.¹⁹⁷ The alleged descendants of the Sarmats were endowed with outstanding personal qualities, such as bravery and love for freedom and readiness to defend it at all cost, and were therefore exceptionally capable of administering the state and its people. The rest of the inhabitants of the territories under their control were predestined for unconditional obedience, as any attempt to go against the *Natio Polonica* would end in disastrous results. This mythos served as the mechanism of both inclusion and exclusion for the members of the *szlachta*.¹⁹⁸ On the one hand, the „Sarmatian“ origin was initially believed to be shared by any nobleman born and raised in the *Rzeczpospolita*, regardless of his ethnic, confessional or linguistic background¹⁹⁹ (in later centuries, however, adherence to the Roman Catholic Church became a necessary condition to be recognized as a „proper“ *Rzeczpospolita* nobleman).²⁰⁰ On the other hand, the group was in principle closed to any newcomers both from other social groups and from foreign states. The only way for a commoner to become a nobleman was to get the title from the parliament or the king (the latter could only guarantee individual ennoblement for achievements in military service).²⁰¹ The foreign noblemen could join the *szlachta* by being granted *indygenat*, and that could only take place with the parliament's approval.²⁰²

The attempts of the *szlachta* to safeguard their class from diffusion with other social groups were justified, as the noble title in the *Rzeczpospolita* gave its bearer numerous exclusive privileges, such as the right to own landholdings, the right not to be punished or imprisoned without a viable court verdict, the absolute inviolability of the nobleman's house, the freedom of manorial estates from taxation, the exemption from custom fees, the exclusive access to the „noble dignity“ and the offices of secular and

¹⁹⁷ Maciejewski, *Sarmatyzm jako formacja kulturowa*, 16.

¹⁹⁸ Jerzy Jedlicki, *Der Adel im Königreich Polen bis zum Jahre 1863*. In: Armgard von Reden-Dohna (ed.), *Der Adel an der Schwelle des bürgerlichen Zeitalters: 1780–1860* (Stuttgart 1988) 89–116, here 89f.

¹⁹⁹ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Sarmatia - Sarmaten - Sarmatismus: Gelehrtes Konstrukt, politisches Programm, unifizierende Elitenkultur, politischer Bewegungsbegriff*. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2017) 843–861, here 851f.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 856.

²⁰¹ Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 245.

²⁰² Jerzy Michta, *Nobilitacja i Indygenat w Szlacheckiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Ennoblement and Indigenization in the Noble Republic). In: *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F, Historia* 45 (1990) 355–363, here 357f.

clerical power, and many others.²⁰³ These privileges, or „freedoms“ (*wolności*), constituted a fundament of the „Golden Liberty“, a core point of the *szlachta* culture. According to this worldview, every nobleman was from birth burdened with a task of defending the country from hostilities threatening its people, state, and Catholic faith.²⁰⁴ In return, he would be guaranteed privileges which none of the commoners could dream of, making the noble status equal with citizenship.²⁰⁵ The *szlachta* regarded the Polish-Lithuanian society as a perfect one, where each social group was content with their rights and obligations, and no one dared to encroach on the other's status.²⁰⁶ It should also be noted that the equal access to the „freedoms“ ensured equality within nobility, and guaranteed the „middle“ *szlachta* and *holota* the status inaccessible even to the richest and most influential merchants and city dwellers. The „freedoms“ allowed the poorer nobility to assert their influence in society, as they could invoke their noble status when defending themselves and their property against wealthier and more powerful nobles.²⁰⁷ In the entire *Rzeczpospolita*, the *szlachta* was virtually omnipotent, and subject to a separate jurisdiction.²⁰⁸ As a result, the „freedoms“ were the most precious element of the nobleman's status. Without the „freedoms“, the *szlachta* was largely indistinguishable from the rest of the population, which is why these privileges had to be defended at all cost both against the external powers and the royal central government.²⁰⁹ Given this context, it is not surprising that the Galician *szlachta* strongly insisted on preserving their traditional „freedoms“ in their appeals to the Habsburg government long after the First Partition.

The second group of the population was the free citizens. The bourgeoisie in the Galician lands did not evolve into an independent and prominent social class by the time of the Partitions for two main reasons. The first reason was that the level of urbanization in Galicia was low – only around 13% of the population were counted as „free citizens of Christian faith“,²¹⁰ and only 5% out of 6617 built-up areas had the characteristics of either

²⁰³ Zajęczkowski, *Szlachta polska*, 30.

²⁰⁴ *Tazbir*, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce*, 94.

²⁰⁵ *Augustyniak*, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 246.

²⁰⁶ *Tazbir*, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce*, 51f.

²⁰⁷ Zajęczkowski, *Szlachta polska*, 56.

²⁰⁸ Adam *Moniuszko*, *Prawo sądowe Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej (XVI-XVIII w.). Zarys wykładu z wyborem źródeł* (Court law of the Noble Republic (XVI-XVIII centuries). Outline of a lecture with selected sources) (Warszawa 2017) 17–22.

²⁰⁹ *Kucharski*, *The Polish Noblemen's Nation*, 169.

²¹⁰ *Brawer*, *Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam*, 22.

cities or market places, with more cities in the western part of the land than in the eastern part.²¹¹ Even then, the smaller towns were not much different from the villages, since the main source of income for their inhabitants was either craft or agriculture.²¹² The biggest cities, such as Lviv, Jarosław, Zamość, Rzeszów, Tarnów, Przemyśl, and Krosno, were still mostly built from wood, badly planned and suffering from a low level of hygiene, making living conditions there quite unattractive.²¹³ The second reason was the clear resistance of the *szlachta* (most of all, magnates) towards the idea of an independent and powerful citizenry. Using their political influence, magnates prevented cities from fully exercising their rights of self-governance by appointing loyal people to magistrates or outright buying votes.²¹⁴ Moreover, the nobility in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had the privilege to establish their own cities. Those who possessed extensive landmasses used this as an opportunity to directly profit from crafts and trade, spirit and beer brewing in larger quantities, and selling building plots at higher prices.²¹⁵ As a result, several „private“ cities were founded by the magnates, such as the city Zamość established by the magnate Jan Zamoyski in 1580.

The last group, which encompassed the majority (around 70%) of the population, was the peasants. With the exception of the priests and the privileged free farmers, everyone living outside of the cities was a serf.²¹⁶ Some of the peasants belonged to the direct property of the king or the Catholic Church; the vast majority, however, were subordinate to the *szlachta* landowners. At least on paper, the enserfed peasantry was guaranteed the right to acquire property, and were not to be sold and bought without the land.²¹⁷ In his description of Galicia submitted to Joseph II in 1773 the first Habsburg governor of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria Count Anton von Pergen, mentioned that, depending on the amount of property and the number of days a serf had to work for his master, they were divided into four categories: landed peasant (*kmieć*), small-farm peasant (*zagrodnik*), quarter-peasant (*budnik*) and landless peasant without any property

²¹¹ Ibid, 29–31.

²¹² Ibid, 32.

²¹³ von Pergen, Beschreibung, PP. 156–159.

²¹⁴ Ibid, P. 133. See also: Rudolf A. Mark, „Polnische Bastion und ukrainisches Piemont“. Lemberg 1772–1921. In: Peter Fäßler, Thomas Held, Dirk Sawitzki (eds.), Lemberg – Lwów – Lviv: eine Stadt im Schnittpunkt europäischer Kulturen (Köln/Weimar/Wien 2005) 46–74, here 48.

²¹⁵ Brawer, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam, 31.

²¹⁶ Ludwig von Mises, Die Entwicklung des gutsherrlich-bäuerlichen Verhältnisses in Galizien (1772–1848) (Wien/Leipzig 1902) 9.

²¹⁷ Brawer, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam, 44.

of his own (*komornik*).²¹⁸ Other systematizations included a category such as *chalupnik* (who only possessed a house but no land).²¹⁹ However, the differences between these categories were not very prominent, since in any case, the relations between landlord and serf were based on informal oral contracts and customs. There was no unitary regulation of the amount of labor that the serf owed to his master, as it would be immediately interpreted as a violation of tradition and a limitation of the *szlachta*'s freedoms.²²⁰ The peasants were almost completely deprived of personal rights, such as freedom of movement or marriage.²²¹ In cases of unjust treatment, there were no options for them to appeal to justice, because even if they went to court, it would undoubtedly be biased towards the landlord.²²² If set free, however, the serf would often find himself in an even less advantageous position, as he would simultaneously lose the right to live on his land and own any of his property. Only by gaining the noble status (for example, through adoption or providing special merits to the state) could a peasant get some benefits from freedom.²²³

In addition to the Ruthenian and Polish ethnic groups, which together made up the majority of Galicia's population, the region was home to various ethnic and religious minorities. The most numerous one was the Jewish religious community, constituting around 5–6,5 % of the local population with 150–200 thousand inhabitants.²²⁴ The Jews in Galicia could not be assigned to any of the three groups mentioned above, as they were not subject to the common law of the *Rzeczpospolita*, but to a separate jurisdiction and municipal autonomy. As the Jews were restricted from owning and cultivating land, most of them lived in the cities, specializing on trade and crafts. A significant number, however, were assigned by the *szlachta* to manage their landholdings, and therefore became mediators between the nobleman and his serfs.²²⁵ For that reason the matter of the Jewish population and their rights/status within the Galician society later became

²¹⁸ von Pergen, Beschreibung, P. 169.

²¹⁹ Isabel Röskau-Rydel, Kultur an der Peripherie des Habsburger Reiches: die Geschichte des Bildungswesens und der kulturellen Einrichtungen in Lemberg von 1772 bis 1848 (Wiesbaden 1993) 21.

²²⁰ Schembor, Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert, 54.

²²¹ Brawer, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam, 44

²²² von Pergen, Beschreibung, 191f.

²²³ Brawer, Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam, 45

²²⁴ Rachel Manekin, Galicia. The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, 2010, online under: <https://encyclopedia.yivo.org/article/8> (retrieved 03.10.2024).

²²⁵ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 272–274.

closely intertwined with the Habsburg reforms concerning the *szlachta*. Other notable minorities in Galicia included Germans, Armenians and Karaites.²²⁶

The general weakness of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the last decades of its existence, which ultimately led to the Partitions, was largely influenced by its state system. By the end of the 18th century, it was completely antipodal to that of the Habsburg Monarchy. While the latter drifted towards the absolute centralized monarchy, where the ruler was believed to be given his power by the will of God and was therefore above any other worldly power and independent from the Estates, the *Rzeczpospolita* had the king chosen by the „will of the nation“ (that is, the *szlachta*) and therefore deprived of any chance to centralize power in his hands. The best term to describe the Polish-Lithuanian state would be „mixed monarchy“. ²²⁷ The three pillars of the state were the king, the Senate and the *szlachta* (however, in reality, it was the latter that controlled the former two).²²⁸

With his position depending fully on the will of the noblemen, the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had a very limited amount of state administration under his direct control. In such areas as treasury management, supreme command over the army, the chancellery and foreign policy, which formally belonged to his competence, the king still had to consult with the parliament, his council, or the local assemblies and obtain their, albeit informal, approval. The king was responsible for legislative acts being passed in the parliament as well as for serving as the head of the judiciary, and in his name parliament and the local assemblies were convened, the parliamentary institutions were issued, and international treaties were signed. The greatest personal privilege of the king was his right to appoint individuals to the highest court and land offices (except for military ones), as well as the bishops.²²⁹

The power of the king was further limited by the obligations he accepted while ascending to the throne. To name a few, the king was obliged to summon parliament regularly, to appoint officials for life and without possibility of removal (even if they were

²²⁶ Paul R Magocsi, *Galicia: a Historical Survey and Bibliographic Guide* (Toronto et al. 1983) 224.

²²⁷ Maria Rhode, *Wahlkönigtum und Ständepolitik. Adelsdemokratie oder Magnatenoligarchie?* In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit* (Stuttgart 2017) 205–217, here 205.

²²⁸ Gotthold Rhode, *Die polnische Adelsrepublik um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts.* In: Friedhelm Berthold Kaiser, Bernhard Stasiewski (eds.), *Die erste polnische Teilung 1772* (Köln 1974) 1–26, here 20.

²²⁹ Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 78f.

not fulfilling their duties properly), to receive and dismiss foreign envoys only in the presence of the crown council, to refrain from using his personal seal for sealing diplomatic correspondence, and to avoid declaring war without the permission of the noble Estates. Some restrictions concerned even the personal life of the king, as he could not choose his wife or travel abroad without the approval of the Council of the Senate and parliament, respectively.²³⁰ This way, the king was almost completely dependent on the *szlachta*'s will, and they saw it as their right to disobey the royal authority at any moment.²³¹ Unlike in the Habsburg Monarchy, the kings of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not manage to create a class of officials that would support them in potential conflicts with the *szlachta*.²³² Count von Pergen would even call the king and his ministers „slaves“ to the *szlachta*, since they had to distribute wealth and seats in the Senate (which was reserved for Catholic bishops and high-ranking officials) according to the wishes of the nobility and not the interests of the state.²³³ At the same time, the throne remained an embodiment of state unity and international prestige. Even while largely deprived of decision-making power, the king still was a central figure of the „mixed monarchy“. ²³⁴ In times of large-scale conflicts between magnate clans, the king could be more flexible in his activities by playing on the differences between them,²³⁵ however, he could never become a fully independent figure, as the consensus in Polish-Lithuanian political culture prescribed that the *szlachta* should avoid strengthening the royal power and establishing the „tyranny“ of one ruler at all costs.²³⁶

In line with the proclaimed „responsibility“ of the *szlachta* for all state matters, obtaining a government position was seen as very prestigious and served as a sign of

²³⁰ Ibid, p. 80

²³¹ Satoshi Koyama, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a Political Space: Its Unity and Complexity. In: von Tadayuki Hayashi, Hiroshi Fukuda (eds.), Regions in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present (Sapporo 2007) 137–153, here 143.

²³² Antoni Mączak, Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: władza i przestrzeń (The First Rzeczpospolita: power and space). In: Michał Kopczyński, Wojciech Tygielski (eds.), Rzeczpospolita – Europa: XVI–XVIII wiek. Próba konfrontacji (The Rzeczpospolita – Europe: XVI–XVIII Century. An attempt of confrontation) (Warszawa 1999) 15–27, here 18.

²³³ von Pergen, Beschreibung, P. 41

²³⁴ Michael G. Müller, Kolja Lichy, Die polnisch-litauische Respublica – ein verfassungsgeschichtlicher Sonderweg. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit (Stuttgart 2017) 791–816, here 798; Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, The Political Discourse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Concepts and Ideas (New York 2021) 28, 98.

²³⁵ Wyczański, Polska – Rzeczą pospolitą, 342.

²³⁶ Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, The Political Discourse, 106; Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Politische Öffentlichkeit, 377.

distinction within the formally equal nobility. Even the rather symbolic offices with no real power behind them were valuable, to say nothing of seats in state or local administration.²³⁷ The virtually unlimited control over government began with the legislative bodies. The *Rzeczpospolita* parliament, or the Sejm, was supposed to be uniting all three pillars of the state, with the king representing the laws of the Crown, the Senate – the highest officials and Sejm – the nobility, as well as the provinces of the state²³⁸ (at the same time, no formal division into the lower and upper chamber existed between the Senate and the Sejm)²³⁹. The *liberum veto* principle stipulated that any discussion in the Sejm could be halted and any legislation nullified if even a single representative opposed it. This was intended to ensure that no decision could be made without the agreement of every member, allegedly protecting the state from tyranny.²⁴⁰ As the Sejm brought together representatives of diverse parts of the country, the *liberum veto* was also to ensure that all of their interests would have equal value and not overlooked.²⁴¹ However, exactly this principle led to a steady loss of efficiency of the parliament, as its sessions were often paralyzed due to the lack of unanimous consensus on a certain decision.²⁴² As a result, long before the First Partition the general Sejm had turned into a place of remarkable corruption, since the magnates massively bought the votes of poor noblemen and faced numerous conflicts of local and personal interests²⁴³. When the usual procedures could not be used to invoke the *szlachta*'s power over the king, or when the state found itself without any royal authority in times of *interregnum*, the nobility would resort to confederations – the temporary alliances of the *szlachta*, clergy, and towns and cities created in order to achieve certain goals directly.²⁴⁴ In many cases, confederations would evolve into the *rokosz*, an armed uprising, resulting in civil wars between the followers of different magnate clans and the monarch.²⁴⁵

In the local administration, the weight of the *szlachta* was even more prominent. The power of the central government was represented by a body called *starostwo*, with a

²³⁷ *Tazbir*, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce*, 29f.

²³⁸ *Augustyniak*, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 96f.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 100.

²⁴⁰ *Wyczański*, *Polska – Rzeczą pospolitą szlachecką*, 374.

²⁴¹ *Bömelburg*, *Politische Öffentlichkeit*, 385.

²⁴² *Augustyniak*, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 104.

²⁴³ *Brawer*, *Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam*, 36f.

²⁴⁴ *Augustyniak*, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 107.

²⁴⁵ *Juliusz Bardach*, *Bogusław Leśnodorski*, *Michał Pietrzak*, *Historia państwa i prawa polskiego* (History of the Polish State and Law) (Warszawa 1987) 225f.

starosta appointed by the king being its head. The *starosta* was given a significant number of duties, including collection of taxes for the king and presiding over the local borough court. By the end of the 18th century, however, the effectiveness of the *starostwo* was significantly diminished, and the *starosta* himself was usually chosen among the magnates and saw such a public position as a possibility for further personal enrichment.²⁴⁶ Eventually, the key body of authority in the state turned out to be the *sejmiks* – the assemblies of local nobility in a land or district. The *sejmiks* were not a permanent institution but were gathered in order to fulfill certain tasks. Their area of responsibility was very broad and included, among other matters, the election of deputies to the general Sejm and entrusting them with instructions, the election of candidates to the office of the land judge for the king to choose from, the election of tax collectors and control over their activities, imposition of voivodeship taxes, recruitment of the district military units, and election of the commissars to the Treasury Tribunal of the Crown and voivodeship treasury commissions. The more deteriorated the central authority in the *Rzeczpospolita* was becoming, the more power was transferred to the *sejmiks*. At some point, the general Sejm delegated to the local assemblies even the right to approve fiscal bills and collect taxes, as well as the duty to draw pay from them to the soldiers, which was another symptom of the disintegration of the state.²⁴⁷ Similar to the general Sejm, the *sejmiks* were full of chaos, direct confrontations between various groups of interest, and corruption.²⁴⁸

For obvious reasons, the *szlachta* believed the *Rzeczpospolita* state system to be an ideal form of government, which combined the elements of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.²⁴⁹ They claimed that the absence of a strong central government and the strict limitations of the royal power safeguarded their land from the establishment of a despotic regime.²⁵⁰ The *szlachta* was extremely proud of their state and the role it played on the European continent, appealing to it being the „bulwark“ of Christian Europe (*Antemurale Christianitatis*) and its defender from the hostile forces of the East, such as the Ottoman

²⁴⁶ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 91f.

²⁴⁷ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 112-115

²⁴⁸ von Pergen, Beschreibung, P. 64

²⁴⁹ Koyama, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 144

²⁵⁰ Jarosław Czuby, The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite towards the State in the Period of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815. In: Michael Rowe (ed.), Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe (Basingstoke 2003) 169–185, here 174.

Empire or the Tsardom of Muscovy.²⁵¹ In their turn, the *szlachta* regarded themselves as the essence of this nearly-perfect state, the bearers of its „democratic“ values and dignities, and the noble defenders of Christian faith. Some noblemen would even claim that the critics of „Golden Liberty“ from abroad were actually jealous of the Poles, „the freest nation in the world“, and would do anything to subject it to the horrors of a despotic regime.²⁵²

This sentiment was not, however, widespread in Europe. The absence of a unifying state order, the weakness of the government, the arbitrariness of the *szlachta*, the serfdom practices – all that created quite a grim picture of the *Rzeczpospolita* that went beyond the borders of its neighbors.²⁵³ Already centuries before the Partitions the concept of *Polnische Wirtschaft* was used in German-speaking Europe as synonymous with extreme chaos, laziness and savagery in society.²⁵⁴ The narrative of the *Rzeczpospolita*’s „backwardness“ gained much momentum in the 18th century with the widespread dissemination of both the Enlightenment philosophy and the absolutist government model, as the Polish-Lithuanian state represented a striking antithesis to both.²⁵⁵ The „enlightened“ contemporaries of the *Rzeczpospolita* used it as a negative example of state and society building in order to justify their own worldview, as the gradual weakening of the Polish-Lithuanian state, as well as the misery of its people (aside from the nobility) suggested total unviability of its socio-political organization.²⁵⁶

The position of the enserfed peasantry in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth especially repelled its „enlightened“ contemporaries.²⁵⁷ In the 18th century, the grim conditions of the peasantry in states such as the Russian Empire, the *Rzeczpospolita*, or the Ottoman Empire were very much taken as a symptom of extreme backwardness.²⁵⁸

²⁵¹ Jurko Prochasko, Die Sarmatische Zivilisation. In: Martin Pollack (ed.), Sarmatische Landschaften. Nachrichten aus Litauen, Belarus, der Ukraine, Polen und Deutschland (Frankfurt am Main 2006) 233–248, here 238.

²⁵² Tazbir, Kultura szlachecka w Polsce, 150f.

²⁵³ Rhode, Die polnische Adelsrepublik, 1f.

²⁵⁴ Orlowski, „Polnische Wirtschaft“, 48f.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 60.

²⁵⁶ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Die wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung in Polen-Litauen in der Frühneuzeit – Weg in die „Rückständigkeit“? In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit (Stuttgart 2017) 817–830, here 819.

²⁵⁷ The topic was previously addressed in: Krushynska, Becoming subaltern?, 596f; Oleksandra Krushynska, Koloniale Strategien und postkoloniale Diskurse zwischen der galizischen Szlachta und der Habsburgermonarchie (1772–1815). In: Nordost-Archiv 34 (2025) 48–70, here 54.

²⁵⁸ Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe, 52.

Since the serf had no right to the fruit of his labour, and no possibility to protect his interests legally, there was no reason for him to better his morality or to work more diligently.²⁵⁹ That, in turn, led to the general decline of the local economy.²⁶⁰ In other words, the population of the *Rzeczpospolita* became an object of the „othering“ discourse by its western neighbors long before the actual foreign colonization of its territories began. Since the Polish-Lithuanian nobility occupied dominant positions in the country, it usually became one of the main targets of the degrading narratives from abroad. The *szlachta* was described as uneducated „barbarians“, who spent fortunes on outward attributes of luxury and cared much more about personal status and wealth than on the well-being of the state and the people.²⁶¹ This narrative did not disappear after 1772 – decades after the First Partition, the „enlightened“ visitors of Galicia would be appalled by the arbitrariness of the *szlachta* and the drastic living conditions of the enserfed peasantry. The most famous account was authored by a young German intellectual, Franz Kratter in 1786. Kratter described the local nobility as „inhumane, despicable wild creatures“, who possessed neither honour nor noble upbringing, whiling away their days with games, feasts, and other „immoral entertainment“.²⁶² The serfs in Galicia were „treated by a nobleman in a way he would never treat a horse“,²⁶³ and led overall extremely miserable lives. Kratter, as well as other incomers, blamed the „backwardness“ of Galicia under Habsburg rule not on the effect of reforms, but on the remnants of the *Rzeczpospolita*’s socio-political system that were not yet eliminated in the course of the Habsburgs’ „civilizing mission“.²⁶⁴

The disintegration on every level of the state administration became obvious long before the First Partition. With the prevalence of Enlightenment philosophy, more and

²⁵⁹ von Pergen, Beschreibung, PP. 194f.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, P. 43.

²⁶¹ See: *Tazbir*, Kultura szlachecka w Polsce, 173–175; Larry Wolff, Inventing Galicia: Messianic Josephinism and the Recasting of Partitioned Poland. In: *Slavic Review* 63, no. 4 (2004) 818–840, here 823; Hubert Orłowski, „Polnische Wirtschaft“, 161–165.

²⁶² Franz Kratter, Briefe über den itzigen Zustand von Galizien: ein Beitrag zur Staatistik und Menschenkenntnis, Vol. 1 (Leipzig 1786) 165.

²⁶³ Ibid, 219.

²⁶⁴ For further examples of travel accounts from Galicia during the first decades of Habsburg rule, see: Andreas Kappeler, Die galizische Grenze in den Reiseberichten von William Coxe (1778), Carl Feyerabend (1795–98) und Johann Georg Kohl (1838). In: Christoph Augustynowicz, Andreas Kappeler (eds.), *Die galizische Grenze 1772–1867: Kommunikation oder Isolation?* (Wien 2007) 213–232; *Kłańska*, Daleko od Wiednia, 38–45; Ritchie Robertson, „Das ist nun einmal slawische Sitte!“. Die Bewohner Galiziens in Reiseberichten des späten 18. Jahrhunderts. In: Paula Giersch, Florian Krobb, Franziska Schössler (eds.), *Galizien im Diskurs: Inklusion, Exklusion, Repräsentation* (Frankfurt am Main 2012) 42–56.

more Polish-Lithuanian intellectuals voiced the necessity of groundbreaking reforms, which would eliminate the stagnation of the state and enable it to address the internal and external challenges.²⁶⁵ A prominent Enlightenment intellectual, Stanisław Staszic, claimed that „while the entire Europe is concluding the eighteenth century, Poland is still in the fifteenth one“²⁶⁶ – such a state could not even properly defend its own sovereignty, let alone strive for the status of a great power. The *liberum veto* came under attack the most. According to Stanisław Konarski, another leading intellectual of the time period and author of the four-volume tractate „On an Effective Way of Councils or on the Conduct of Ordinary Sejms“, it was conceived as a protection of freedom from the threat of the monarchical power, but soon became an instrument with which internal and external enemies of Poland prevented its strengthening and paralyzed the activities of state organs.²⁶⁷ Even though the conservatives among the nobility still defended the *Rzeczpospolita*’s state system as the most effective one in Europe, those members of the *szlachta* under the influence of the Enlightenment philosophy also insisted on revitalizing the Polish-Lithuanian society through radical changes. At the same time, even the most „enlightened“ families would not agree to lose their dominant position in the state, and insisted on preserving the serfdom, which remained the foundation of their well-being.²⁶⁸

The voices of reform proponents served as an inspiration for Stanisław August Poniatowski, who ascended to the Polish-Lithuanian throne in 1764. The first years of his reign, the so-called „years of hope“, were marked by attempts to limit the arbitrariness of magnates, strengthen the state administration, and revitalize the legislative power in the land by severely restricting the *liberum veto* application.²⁶⁹ In 1764, it was decided that some issues („economic matters“) could be accepted by the Sejm only by majority voting

²⁶⁵ For further reading on the 18th-century debates within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth regarding the future direction of the state, see Arkadiusz Michał Stasiak, Republican and Monarchical Patriotism in Polish Political Thought during the Enlightenment. In: Balázs Trencsenyi, Márton Zászkaliczky (eds.), *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe* (Leiden 2010) 711–733. See also: Michael G. Müller, *Der polnische Adel von 1750 bis 1863*. In: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. Sonderheft 13 (1990) 217–242, here 221f.

²⁶⁶ Cited after: *Tazbir*, *Kultura szlachecka w Polsce*, 152.

²⁶⁷ Zofia Zielińska, „Nowe świata polskiego tworzenie“. Stanisław August – reformator 1764–1767 („The New Polish World Creation“. Stanisław August – Reformer 1764–1767). In: Angela Soltys, Zofia Zielińska (eds.), *Stanisław August i jego Rzeczpospolita. Dramat państwa, odrodzenie narodu. Materiały z wykładów* (Stanisław August and his Republic. Drama of the State, Rebirth of the Nation. Lecture Materials) (Warszawa 2015) 9–32, here 15.

²⁶⁸ Witkowski, *Die Verfassung*, 18.

²⁶⁹ Jerzy Michalski, Stanisław August Poniatowski. In: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 41 (Warszawa/Kraków 2002) 612–640, here 617.

(however, still retaining *liberum veto* for the important matters of the state, including taxation). New legislation was passed on financial, tax, military and judicial matters. The king together with the Sejm took over the matters of foreign policy from the Department of Foreign Interests. The project of the further unification of the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with the so-called Crown (core Polish lands) was developed, which could ultimately lead to the creation of a uniform state and state apparatus. However, these initiatives were blocked by the opposition in the Sejm (which was already conspiring with the future partition powers, and would later ratify the Partition agreement of 1773), claiming that the existing political system was based on ancient traditions and therefore should never be modified.²⁷⁰ The reforms became one of the main reasons behind the Radom Confederation uprising in 1767, which was initiated by magnates' opposition against the king and his reform-oriented advisors.²⁷¹ Eventually, the curbing of the *liberum veto* received negative reactions from the foreign states, who did not want to lose this instrument of influence over the Polish-Lithuanian politics, as they themselves often bought votes of the poor *szlachta* through their envoys.²⁷² The radical transformations of the „years of hope“ were withdrawn during the sessions of the 1767–68 „Repnin Sejm“, supervised directly by the Russian ambassador.²⁷³ The further attempts to modernize the state and turn it into the constitutional monarchy would be decades later, culminating in a transformation of the entire government system and adoption of the 1791 Constitution. This, however, happened too late to prevent the eventual disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian state in 1795.

The differences between the socio-political composition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Empire in 1770s would become an ideological justification for the latter to conduct radical transformations in the freshly created „Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria“. This way, the politics of the Habsburgs followed the usual pattern of colonial powers attempting to adapt the occupied foreign territories to their rule. The successes achieved during the 1740s–1760s reforms allowed the Empire to look down on the „chaotic“ *Rzeczpospolita* and its territories.

²⁷⁰ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 118–120.

²⁷¹ Michalski, Stanisław August Poniatowski, 618.

²⁷² Zielińska, „Nowe światła polskiego tworzenie“, 28.

²⁷³ Bardach, Leśnodorski, Pietrzak, Historia państwa i prawa polskiego, 297f.

Chapter 2. Colonial Reforms and the Decline of Noble Authority in Galicia, 1772–1791.

1. Colonial Ideologies and the Strategic Vision of Habsburg Reforms.

Initially, Maria Theresia was reluctant about the idea of becoming the co-dismemberer of the *Rzeczpospolita*, claiming that she did not understand the policy „that allows, in the case when two take advantage of their superiority to oppress an innocent, that the third can and must imitate and commit the same injustice, as a pure precaution for the future and convenience of the present“.²⁷⁴ However, the foreign ambitions of the Monarchy would not allow it to evade participation in the partition, as such an act would disproportionately empower both the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire.²⁷⁵ Already in 1768, the plan for the future partition was being developed in Vienna by the State Chancellor von Kaunitz. He believed that the main goal for the Monarchy was not to expand its territory permanently at the expense of the *Rzeczpospolita*, but to get leverages that would make the Habsburg position in politics towards Prussia and Russia more secure.²⁷⁶ In the future, the former Polish-Lithuanian territories could be exchanged for a more prosperous and developed Silesia.²⁷⁷ Already before the First Partition, the Habsburg Monarchy had taken over a territory of Spisz in 1769 and annexed the towns of Nowy Targ and Nowy Sącz with their surroundings in 1770, using ancient Hungarian claims to these territories as a pretext. These annexations did not receive much protest from the already weakened Polish-Lithuanian state and has sped up preparations for the events of 1772.²⁷⁸

The principal agreement on the participation of the three states in the future partition was reached in February 1772. On the first of May, general Andreas von Hadik

²⁷⁴ Cited after: *Wolff*, The Idea of Galicia, 15.

²⁷⁵ Franz A. J. *Szabo*, Austrian First Impressions of Ethnic Relations in Galicia: The Case of Governor Anton von Pergen. In: Israel *Bartal*, Antony *Polonsky* (eds.), *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*. Vol. 12, Focusing on Galicia: Jews, Poles and Ukrainians (Oxford/Portland 1999) 49–60, here 49.

²⁷⁶ *Maner*, Galizien: Eine Grenzregion, 28f.

²⁷⁷ Hans-Christian *Maner*, Zwischen „Kompensationsobjekt“, „Musterland“ und „Glacis“: Wiener politische und militärische Vorstellungen von Galizien von 1772 bis zur Autonomieära. In: Hans-Christian *Maner* (ed.), *Grenzregionen der Habsburgermonarchie im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: ihre Bedeutung und Funktion aus der Perspektive Wiens* (Münster 2005) 103–122, here 106.

²⁷⁸ Jerzy *Lukowski*, *The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795* (London/New York 1999) 57.

received an order to march „along the Vistula river, from the border of the Belz principality to the border of Volhynia and Podolia and the left coast of the Dniester river“.²⁷⁹ The invasion did not meet much resistance from the Polish-Lithuanian army, save for the confrontation with the Bar confederation troops protecting Tyniec and Lanckorona.²⁸⁰ Lviv, the biggest city in the land that would later become the capital of Galicia, was taken on the 15th September. The partition treaty was signed by the three states on 5th August and ratified on 22nd September 1772. The definition of the exact territories involved in the partition, however, had to wait until the signing of the transfer agreement with the Polish-Lithuanian government, and thus the border problem became one of the many matters demanding resolution in the subsequent years.²⁸¹ This way, it became obvious that the new acquisitions would not be traded away immediately and would remain a part of the Monarchy for an indefinite period of time. The Viennese government thus had to develop a strategy on how these lands would be governed and administered, as well as integrated into the Monarchy. At the same time, the Empire had to consider the remaining Polish-Lithuanian state in its Galician policy, since wealthy nobility in the Kingdom continued to own land in the *Rzeczpospolita*. In imperial legislation, these landowners would later be designated as *sujets mixtes*, and the question of their jurisdiction remained unresolved for a long time.²⁸²

To justify its rights over certain *Rzeczpospolita* territories, the Habsburg government commissioned scholars to identify historical support for its claims. As a result, a detailed study entitled „Preliminary Reasoning of the Rights of the Hungarian Crown to Red Ruthenia and Podolia, as well as of the Czech Crown to the Principalities of Oświęcim and Zator“ (*Wywód poprzedzający praw Korony Węgierskiej do Rusi Czerwonej y do Podola, tak iako Korony Czeskiej do Xięstw Oswiecimskiego y Zatorskiego*) was published in Vienna in 1772.²⁸³ Together with the narratives of

²⁷⁹ Cited after: *Glassl*, Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 19.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 32.

²⁸¹ *Pacholkiv*, Das Werden einer Grenze, 537–39.

²⁸² For further information on *sujets mixtes*, see: Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, Les Sujets Mixtes: The Problem of Double Subordination in the Period of the Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Case of Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis. In: *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 19 (2015), 111–134; *Pacholkiv*, Das Werden einer Grenze, 555–58. Extensive documentation on individual cases of *sujets mixtes* is preserved in: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Diplomatie und Außenpolitik vor 1848, Notenwechsel Italienische, Dalmatinische und Galizische Hofkanzlei 6 Von der galizischen Hofkanzlei, 1800–1802.

²⁸³ Christoph *Augustynowicz*, Johann Thomas Trattners (Nicht-)Wirken im neuen Bildungszentrum der Habsburgermonarchie Lemberg. In: Christoph *Augustynowicz*, Johannes *Frimmel* (eds.), *Der Buchdrucker*

„othering“ and „civilizing mission“, this document became the foundation of the Habsburg politics concerning the Galician *szlachta* for the coming decades. According to this study, the claims of the dynasty over the new crownland dated back to 1412. Any *szlachta*'s „freedoms“ established after that date, such as the Sejm's decision of 1573 concerning tax privileges, were thus proclaimed invalid.²⁸⁴ The quasi-historical legitimization of the Habsburg rule over Galicia enabled the dynasty to treat the land and its nobility in any fashion it wanted. Even the creation of the name „Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria“ served that purpose, as it did not correspond to any name of state formation that existed on those territories before. The Habsburg Empire thus fashioned a new reality, following the model described by Albert Memmi with „usurper claim[ing] his place and, if need be. [...sic] defending it by every means at his disposal. [...] He endeavours to falsify history, he rewrites laws, he would extinguish memories – anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy“.²⁸⁵ The invention of this artificial name did not go unnoticed by „enlightened“ contemporaries. However, along with the fact of the annexation, it was largely accepted as an inescapable imperial reality.²⁸⁶

The „civilizing mission“ narrative became a key ideological component of Habsburg politics in Galicia in the first two decades after the acquisition took place.²⁸⁷ Enlightenment principles were seen as universally suitable to any state or social group, with their application leading to inevitable progress and development.²⁸⁸ For the Habsburg government, and especially for Joseph II, Galicia became a potential „experimental field“ for implementation of the most radical „enlightened“ reforms.²⁸⁹ In Galicia, the Habsburgs did not see themselves bound by any need for compromises with the local nobility, as it was the case in the „old“ crownlands. They could thus be quite bold in their future adaptation policies, dismantling any social, political, or economic

Maria Theresias: Johann Thomas Trattner (1719-1798) und sein Medienimperium (Wiesbaden 2019) 79–87, here 85.

²⁸⁴ Vorläufige Anweisungs-Puncte, 29.5.1772. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Hofkriegsrat, Hauptreihe 901, 1772-29-45, without pagination.

²⁸⁵ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London 2003) 96. Previously addressed in: Krushynska, *Becoming subaltern?*, 594; Krushynska, *Koloniale Diskurse*, 51.

²⁸⁶ Kappeler, *Die galizische Grenze*, 217, 224.

²⁸⁷ The presence of the „civilizing mission“ narrative in the first Habsburg decrees in Galicia was previously addressed in: Krushynska, *Strategies of the „civilizing mission“*, 541–545.

²⁸⁸ Michael Confino, *Re-inventing the Enlightenment: Western Images of Eastern Realities in the Eighteenth Century*. In: *Canadian slavonic papers* 36, Nr. 3–4 (1994) 505–522, here 518.

²⁸⁹ Maner, *Zwischen „Kompensationsobjekt“*, 112.

structures of the former regime that did not align with Enlightenment ideals and the centralization tendencies of the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁹⁰ Any failure of the reforms in Galicia at the initial stage of its incorporation would not greatly threaten the integrity of the empire; successful reforms, in turn, would justify similar changes throughout the entire Monarchy and facilitate further transformations in the other crownlands.

The reform-oriented mindset could be observed in the very first documents authored by the Habsburg government and its officials. Already during the march of her troops in Galicia, on 29th May 1772 Maria Theresia issued „Preliminary Instructions“ (*Vorläufige Anweisungs-Puncte*) for the military and civil officials that were to become interim representatives of her government in the new crownland.²⁹¹ In them, she defined the key principles of her future reign in Galicia, which were a direct continuation of the governance style in the Hereditary Lands. The well-being of the monarch was put in direct dependence on the well-being of her subjects, and the new officials had to „win the love and trust of the subjects“ through „mildness and justice“. The living conditions in the new crownland had to be improved by encouraging the growth of domestic production, as well as ensuring an increase in a healthy and physically strong population. Even in times of war, the new officials had to make sure that the economic activities of the population followed the usual course in order to avoid an economic crisis. The *szlachta*’s unique status in Galicia was challenged right away. Foreseeing the possibility of the *szlachta* revolting in the future, the former elites were warned against organizing meetings and spreading manifestos against the new government. Although Maria Theresia named the freedom of her new subjects to be a necessary condition for the land’s prosperity, she explicitly warned against permissiveness and chaos in state administration, which were attributed to the *szlachta*’s omnipotence. Because of that, the monarch at once dismissed the higher-ranking officials of the former regime, who were all from the *szlachta*. The lower-ranking ones were allowed to keep their positions for the time being to ensure an uninterrupted functioning of administration, but they were to promise to work eagerly and diligently, as well as to obey Habsburg representatives in every respect. Those who refused this order or were unwilling to work for the benefit of the new ruler were to be dismissed as well. In addition, the new governor stated in his letter to Kaunitz that

²⁹⁰ *Glassl*, Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 11

²⁹¹ See: *Vorläufige Anweisungs-Puncte*.

preference in filling official positions should be given to Poles residing in Galicia who already spoke German and was used to wearing „German“ clothing, thus aligning with the Habsburg idea of „civilization“.²⁹²

Albeit lacking particular details, the „Preliminary Instructions“ quite directly demonstrated a Habsburg vision of the new Galician order. The approach to governing the crownland was to appear rather mild, with a monarch taking on the role of a caring parent to her new subjects of all ranks. They, in turn, were to obey her and her government implicitly. As the rule of the local nobility in Galicia led to chaos and misery, it only made sense to deprive them of any instrument to influence the future of the land. From the very moment of acquisition, Maria Theresia intended to put the Galician *szlachta* into a position of subaltern elites, leaving no space for their power aspirations.

This sentiment was not shared by everyone in the administration of the new crownland. Namely, count Johann Anton von Pergen, the first Habsburg Governor of the Kingdom, laid out his vision of the new territory, obtained on the basis of personal observations, on the 30th of August 1772 in *Pro Nota*. Von Pergen was a clear proponent of the Habsburg „civilizing mission“ in Galicia, since he claimed that „the current state of the land is very bad and opposes the establishment of good government on all sides. Common folk are depleted and diminished by Russians and Confederates... The nobility and clergy enjoy freedom aggravating all good institutions“.²⁹³ He also believed that the principles of the Habsburg rule in Galicia should be as simple, systematic and „natural“ as possible, and the new administration must work transparently, efficiently and with a greater good in mind, purely in the spirit of the Josephinian ideal of bureaucracy.²⁹⁴ At the same time, he claimed that the *szlachta* in Galicia had to be turned into an ally of the new administration, and not be antagonized by any drastic changes in their status. Von Pergen suggested that some privileges of the *szlachta* had to be retained to win its loyalty towards Habsburgs, at least for the transition period.²⁹⁵ He also considered the possibility of recognizing Galician nobility and clergy *in corpora*, or as an estate, thus guaranteeing them the status of a politically significant group they had in the *Rzeczpospolita*.²⁹⁶ Finally,

²⁹² Röska-Rydel, *Zwischen Akkulturation und Assimilation*, 68.

²⁹³ *Pro Nota des Grafen von Pergen*, 30.08.1772. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Hofkanzlei, Kt. 229, 133 ex Aug 1772, 1–27, here 2.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

the new Governor believed that in order to ensure peace in the crownland, the Habsburg Monarchy was to keep friendly relationship with the remaining Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.²⁹⁷

These suggestions of von Pergen were, however, disapproved by Chancellor von Kaunitz. In response to *Pro Nota*, he claimed that the Galician *szlachta* was not to have any privileges that were not enjoyed by local nobilities in the other Habsburg crownlands.²⁹⁸ For the same reason, the new government had to recognize nobility and clergy only as individual landowners, *singillatim*, without accepting them as an estate entity.²⁹⁹ The Chancellor also did not approve von Pergen's suggestion to keep friendly relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Polish-Lithuanian state. To Kaunitz' opinion, this would only threaten the integrity of the Monarchy's security, as the close connection with the *Rzeczpospolita* would encourage a pro-Polish orientation of the *szlachta* and hinder the formation of the new „national spirit“ in the crownland, that is, the creation of an identity loyal to the Empire and the Habsburg dynasty.³⁰⁰

As further events would demonstrate, it was Kaunitz's and not von Pergen's vision that largely defined the politics of the Habsburg Monarchy concerning the Galician *szlachta*. On any occasion, the government did not hesitate to demonstrate that it did not regard the *szlachta* as equal partners in administration.³⁰¹ Any concessions made to the local elites were granted due to the mercy and kindness of the monarch, and could be revoked at any time, without regard to the interests of the *szlachta*. At the same time, Kaunitz insisted that the *szlachta* could successfully be put to the service of the Monarchy, if stripped of its „barbaric“ *Rzeczpospolita* ways and reeducated in the spirit of the enlightened Empire.³⁰² Because of that, the state had to strive to absorb the *szlachta*

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 7.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 22.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 16.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 22.

³⁰¹ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Inklusion und Exklusion nach der Ersten Teilung Polen-Litauens. Die österreichische, preußische und russländische Regierungspraxis in Galizien, Westpreußen und den weißrussischen Gouvernements Polack und Mahileu im Vergleich (1772–1806/07). In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Andreas Gestrich, Helga Schnabel-Schüle (eds.), Die Teilungen Polen-Litauens. Inklusions- und Exklusionsmechanismen – Traditionsbildung – Vergleichsebenen (Osnabrück 2013) 171–200, here 177.

³⁰² Vortrag von von Kaunitz, 2.09.1773. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, Vorträge 113, 1-36, here 10.

through persuasion, and not confront it right away, so that in the future, the local nobility would develop the sense of „new patriotism“ towards the Monarchy.³⁰³

Both the centralization intentions and the aspiration to „civilize“ local nobility by turning them into obedient and loyal subjects of Maria Theresia were present in the very first patents published by the Viennese government. The acquisition patent was proclaimed on 11th September 1772 and began with referring to the „current Polish situation“ and „the rights to certain provinces that belong to Us from time immemorial“ as the main reasons for annexation.³⁰⁴ With this phrase, Maria Theresia both voiced contempt for the state of affairs in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which then found itself in the middle of a political and social crisis, and established herself as the only legitimate ruler of Galicia due to the artificial historical „rights“ of the St. Stephen's Crown to the new territory. The document concluded with the call to obedience and a threat of harsh punishment to those who violated „Our innate kindness“. ³⁰⁵ In the explicit „Tribute Regulation“, issued on 15th November 1773, the Habsburg rights to the lands of Galicia were recognized „for all eternity“ and „without any pretenses“, paving the way for any transformations Vienna deemed necessary.³⁰⁶

The next document concerning the *szlachta*'s interests from 13th October 1772 contained an order for the Galician landowners to come back to their settlement areas. It began by expressing the persuasion that the acquisition patent „was comprehended by all citizens in the received and abovementioned land, whatever condition and state they belong to“, and that each one of them „behaves himself calmly“ because of it“. ³⁰⁷ The new government then ordered those having possessions in Galicia but not finding themselves there currently to return to the now Habsburg realm within four weeks or to inform the government of any good reason that prevents such a return. Von Pergen claimed that „the Serene Imperial-Royal Majesty is very concerned that every landowner should return to his goods and stay there“, once again stressing out that the obedience to the new regime would eventually benefit the former elites much more than resistance.

³⁰³ Pacholkiv, Das Werden einer Grenze, 534.

³⁰⁴ Edicta et Mandata Universalia Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 11 Septembr. 1772 Initae Possessionis Promulgata (Leopoli 1773) 2.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 3.

³⁰⁶ Continuatio Edictorium et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 28. Mensis Junii Anno 1773. Emanatorum (Leopoli 1774) 19.

³⁰⁷ Edicta et Mandata, 4.

The goods of those who refused to comply with the order would be considered abandoned and sequestered. To further accelerate the return of the noble landowners, von Pergen promised that anyone involved in the recent Bar Confederation uprising would be fully pardoned and never be criminally liable, and that all the religious freedoms of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would remain unharmed.

The document from 16th November 1772 highlighted yet another priority of the Habsburg administration. The enserfed peasantry was the main productive force of agricultural Galicia and had to be therefore accounted for by the new government with strong centralization aspirations. Moreover, since the peasantry constituted the majority of the population of the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands,³⁰⁸ with this regulation the Habsburgs were clearly aiming to take most of their new subjects under strict control. Before the First Partition, the lives of serfs were fully subordinated to the will of the noble landlords, and it was the latter's privilege to punish the serfs for any misbehavior, as well as to retrieve the runaways.³⁰⁹ The patent, however, made the serfs into a matter of government politics, as it proclaimed a prohibition for the serfs to leave the now Habsburg territories, as well as for anyone to assist them in that matter, and the promise of a reward for anyone who would assist the new government in catching those going against the regulation³¹⁰. It did not yet bring any improvement to the lives of the peasantry; however, it had yet again demonstrated that the time of the szlachta's arbitrariness in Galicia had ended, and that the Habsburgs intended to take every matter of life in the crownland under their control.

Another matter that demanded a solution right after the partition was the future status of the crown estates (*królewszczyna*) – lands in the property of the Polish-Lithuanian monarch whose administration (as well as the right to enjoy most of its profits) was given to noblemen as a privilege together with a status of „holders“ (*posesorzy*).³¹¹ On 28th January 1773 von Pergen addressed the issue in the name of Maria Theresia. He began with referring to the recent order to present detailed descriptions of

³⁰⁸ von Mises, *Die Entwicklung des gutsherrlich-bäuerlichen Verhältnisses*, 9.

³⁰⁹ Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland. Volume I: The Origins to 1795*. Rev. ed. (New York 2005) 188, 222; Marcin Konarski, *Legal Issues Related to the Flight of Peasants in Old Poland (14th–19th Century)*. In: *Review of European and Comparative Law* 38 (2019) 7–32, here 18.

³¹⁰ *Edicta et Mandata*, 11f.

³¹¹ Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, 80f.

all land estates in Galicia,³¹² and the fact that many holders of crown estates perceived it as a threat to their future stability. In order to encourage them to provide honest information about the amount and status of their possessions, as well as to demonstrate „the inborn benevolence“ of Her Majesty, it was promised that the possessors would be allowed to keep their status and profits until „the reasons of great importance“ caused the new government to withdraw that right.³¹³ In exchange, the holders were ordered to give an honest account of the lands they administered and the profits they received without claiming any of them as private possessions; they also had to take good care of them and ensure their profitability. Moreover, from now on they were to provide half of those profits to the state treasury, if their share of crown estates was big enough. The document did not specify the amount of goods but proclaimed that those in control of less would be allowed to provide no more than a third of their profits to the treasury. Those trying to avoid their duty to Vienna would be deprived of crown estates' administration altogether. One of the few exceptions to that order were the salt mines, as they were recognized to be strategic to the prosperity of the state and therefore could not bring any income to individuals. The patent thus underlined that the privilege of holding the crown estates now solely depended on the will of the monarch, and not on the century-old traditions of the *Rzeczpospolita*, which meant that it could be withdrawn at any time once it was demanded by the interests of the central government.

The establishment of the new regime necessitated the creation of administrative bodies, which became the focus of subsequent regulations. Maria Theresia issued a decree asserting that „with due diligence she decided to abolish the conflicting [with the current government] offices, dignities or to kindly change them according to the need“. ³¹⁴ The judiciary was the first administrative branch to undergo reorganization. On 20th October 1772, about a month after the formal proclamation of annexation, Count von Pergen signed a key document that emphasized the importance of justice to the well-being of the people, stating that „the Holy Imperial-Royal Majesty has no greater wish than to ensure happiness of each of her subjects in every matter“. ³¹⁵ As the new judicial system had yet to be fully established, judges who had taken their oath under the previous regime were

³¹² Edicta et Mandata, 24f.

³¹³ Ibid, 37.

³¹⁴ Ibid, 6.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 8.

instructed to continue their duties under the new sovereign, delivering verdicts impartially in the name of the monarch. The Governor, representing the monarch, was designated as the supreme authority, and the subjects were encouraged to appeal to him if other legal avenues failed to yield justice. Courts were required to submit comprehensive reports to the Governor, detailing ongoing cases, procedural orders, court traditions, and the scope of their territorial jurisdiction. Concurrently, the inhabitants of Galicia were prohibited from seeking legal redress in foreign courts. Exceptions were made for nobles and officials, who, with special permission from the Governor, could still appeal to courts in the now-foreign territories of the former *Rzeczpospolita*.

On 1st December 1772, von Pergen issued further instructions to the land and town courts, addressing practical matters such as defining the jurisdictions of different courts and standardizing measurements for market transactions. Additionally, judges and *starostas* were once again required to swear allegiance to Maria Theresia, under the threat of „immediate loss of office, contempt, and income“.³¹⁶ Courts were also urged to expedite their proceedings, with a maximum permissible delay of 12 weeks for case resolution. With these measures, the Habsburg administration was clearly asserting itself as a permanent authority in the region, signaling that the changes brought about by the First Partition were not to be viewed as temporary. The population of the new crownland and especially its elites were not to think of „waiting out“ the Habsburgs and had to start adapting to their government as soon as possible. It also demonstrated the utmost interest in all matters of public administration in the new crownland, which could be interpreted as a signal for future fundamental changes.

The high point of the regime change was the paying of tribute by the Galician inhabitants to their new sovereign. The regulation for the ceremony described it as an occasion „to solemnly obtain the rights of Our strong protection and Our maternal love and care“.³¹⁷ There were no obstacles to performing the ceremony, as the territory of Galicia was already „transferred“ to the Habsburg Monarchy, and „no grievances concerning the rights relinquished according to this treaty shall be voiced“. The tribute was to be paid by each of the three feudal estates separately, starting with the clergy. The archbishops and bishops of Galicia had to be present in Lviv on 29th December 1773 and

³¹⁶ Ibid, 15.

³¹⁷ Continuatio Edictorium 1774, 10.

swear allegiance in their own names and in the names of the subordinate clergy personally; the deans of the cathedral chapters, parish priests, abbots, prelates and priors were to do the same through their plenipotentiary representatives. The document stressed that the oath of the Galician nobility was very important to Maria Theresia, but to „save Our beloved sons from unnecessary expenses, when possible“, she permitted them to choose representatives of the district nobility who would then travel to Lviv and take an oath for everyone. In order to ensure that each nobleman accepted the new government and voiced readiness to serve it, the document had an appendix with a text of the oath, which was to be signed personally by every Galician *szlachta* member. The rest of the population, namely the city dwellers, free village inhabitants (the serfs were understandably excluded) and Jews as a separate category, were ordered to take an oath at their places of residence (once again, „to spare the travel expenses“). The ceremonies all over Galicia had to take place on the same day, 29th December 1773. The course of the ceremony was described in great detail, up to the status of the person reading the text of an oath to his subordinates (such as magistrate, holder of crown estates, or kahal rabbi) and the gesture everyone present had to show to accept it. It was noted that the text of an oath had to be fully read, and, if necessary, explained to the audience, so that no misunderstandings or upheavals concerning its content would emerge in the future. The document concluded with the expression of trust of Maria Theresia towards her new subjects and the hope that they would follow the words of their oath, so that „Her highest will and endeavor are fulfilled“.³¹⁸

The format of the „revindication“ ceremony, and of the tribute in particular, had a special meaning for the Habsburg government, since it consciously rejected the existing traditions of the *szlachta* „freedom“ and the dependent status of the *Rzeczpospolita* king, while also establishing a completely new, fully subordinate state of nobility.³¹⁹ In this way, the tribute ceremony was to have an ideological meaning, crowning the emergence of a new regime under supervision of an omnipotent centralized government. Since this government had the best interests of the new land and its inhabitants at heart by default, the only thing the Galicians were allowed to do was to accept the text of an oath without

³¹⁸ Ibid, 21f.

³¹⁹ Miloš Řezník, Shaping a New Habsburg Territory. In: Klaas Van Gelder (ed.), More than Mere Spectacle: Coronations and Inaugurations in the Habsburg Monarchy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (New York 2021) 223–246, here 224.

attempting to change a single word of it, invoking the Enlightened Absolutism formula „Everything for the people, nothing by the people“. Moreover, the new government made sure that each of those swearing allegiance knew exactly which conditions they were accepting. The government thus adopted the role of a „wise parent“, who demanded not just surface obedience, but full submission from the new „children“, aiming at transforming their character and morale for the good of everyone. Taking an oath of obedience for the Galician nobility meant putting away the „childish“ ways of the „chaotic“ and „barbaric“ Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and moving towards joining the circle of „advanced“ Habsburg territories – fully according to the general „civilizing mission“ discourse. Given the exclusive role that the *szlachta* played under the old regime, any changes introduced by the Habsburgs would affect them first and foremost.

2. From Omnipotence to Imperial Order: „Civilizing“ the Galician *Szlachta*.

The Habsburg attempts to institutionalize the Galician *szlachta* and turn them into loyal and useful subjects began right after the acquisition in 1772. As was stated earlier, initially, the views concerning the local nobility were largely defined by Chancellor von Kaunitz, who insisted on not leaving the *szlachta* even the most limited scope of power and influence in the land. Because of that, he opposed the idea of creating noble Estates in Galicia completely. However, Governor von Pergen, who became quite sympathetic to the *szlachta* during his stay in Lviv, eventually managed to convince the Viennese government that neglecting the local nobility altogether could lead to dangerous displays of defiance, and threaten the new regime much more than any concessions to the former elites.³²⁰ The foundation of the Galician Estates with limited scope of competences could therefore become a reasonable compromise between building a strong centralized state and winning the loyalty of the local nobility. The extent of the Estates' future power, as well as their ability to actually influence the local politics, and not just participate in symbolic ceremonies, became a matter of discussion of a Court commission established in 1774.³²¹ The debates resulted in a patent dated 13th June 1775, guaranteeing the

³²⁰ *Glassl*, Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 44f.

³²¹ See: *Continuatio Protocolli in Galizischen Einrichtungs-Sachen* dd. 28. et 29. Martii 1774. In: Ossolineum, *Akta dotyczące Stanów Galicyjskich z lat 1774-1836* (The acts concerning the Galician Estates from the years 1774–1836), 3–54.

szlachta the right to choose representatives for the local Estates. At the same time, the patent put a decisive end to the „Golden Liberty“, as it fixed in written form the restrictions imposed on the local nobility. To begin with, the document ended the formal equality among the *szlachta* members – from now on, they were officially divided into two categories: magnates (those possessing Prince, Count, or Baron titles) and knights. The magnates could be elected to the Estates without any restrictions, while the knights had to pay 75 guilders in taxes per year to obtain that privilege. The poor landless nobility was excluded from elections altogether, since „in other hereditary lands of Ours it is so established, that not all minor nobility, but only those possessing goods“ were allowed to participate in estates representation. Stripped of their election rights and having no means to secure their income, the *holota* was thus practically equalized with the free peasantry in the rest of the crownlands.³²² By introducing tangible differences between the different *szlachta* categories, the Habsburgs could hope to disrupt the traditional „brotherhood“ within the former elites and eliminate their potential to oppose the throne, applying an ancient colonial tactic of „divide and rule“. ³²³ Moreover, the Monarchy aimed to significantly reduce the number of *szlachta* altogether, as each noblemen had to provide irrefutable evidence of his noble status, which many poor aristocrats could not do.³²⁴ However, even those who could prove their nobility and had the right to be chosen for the Estates would not have any potential to create their own agenda. The noble representation was deprived of practically any legislative initiative or decision-making power. The sessions' agenda was to be defined by the monarch; the body had no right to initiate discussions on its own. The main task of the Estates was to implement the sovereign demands and tax postulates, as well as to assist land administration.³²⁵ In accordance with the processes occurring throughout the entire Empire, the nobility in Galicia was to become a pillar of the absolutist monarchial power, and the Estates were to be merely an instrument for that.

The implementation of the 1775 patent continued to be delayed and did not happen within Maria Theresia's lifetime. However, the idea of noble representation in Galicia

³²² Rychlikowa, *Studia nad ziemiaństwem Galicji*, 541.

³²³ Richard Morrock, *Heritage of Strife: The Effects of Colonialist „Divide and Rule“ Strategy upon the Colonized Peoples*. In: *Science and Society* 37, No. 2 (1973) 129–151, here 130.

³²⁴ Ślusarek, *Drobna szlachta*, 121.

³²⁵ *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae*. A Die 1. Mensis Januar. Anno 1775. *Emanatorum* (Leopoli 1775) 98–106.

was not forgotten by Joseph II. The emperor saw the Galician Estates as a model for developing relations between the central government and local elites in the other Habsburg crownlands, thus contributing to further state centralization and unification.³²⁶ Therefore, on 20th January 1782 the next stage of Estates' building in Galicia was fixed in an imperial patent.³²⁷ In it, the key points of the 1775 regulations were confirmed and expanded. The noble status of a potential Estates' member had to be confirmed through an entrance in the general records *Statuum*, supported through testimony of either officials or entitled magnates. The members were guaranteed the privilege of granting *indygenat* to foreigners. Although this privilege had little more than symbolic meaning, it was supposed to console the *szlachta* deprived of most of their former significant rights. The body was to consist of both „magnate“ and „kighthood“ representatives, the clergy members were to be assigned to either of these categories depending on their position within the church hierarchy. The city of Lviv was given the privilege to send two representatives to the sessions, other cities were deprived of it until the moment „they are worthy of this right“. To „encourage“ the Estates and ensure their loyalty, honorary positions were established, nine for magnates and eight for knights. Those holding these could add the privilege signs to their coats of arms. Moreover, the magnates given the highest honorary positions would have their social status equated to that of a royal advisor.

The first session of the Galician Estates took place in September 1782, signifying the tenth anniversary of the „revindication“ in a festive ceremony.³²⁸ In the years that followed, the body's role and influence remained limited, as the Estates were deprived of any substantial political power and were unable to meaningfully impact the land's administration. The legislation concerning the Estates revealed a recurring pattern in Habsburg policy towards the Galician nobility: the use of decorative concessions as a strategy to gain the loyalty of the *szlachta*. Vienna appeared to operate under the assumption that these formalities could substitute for the „freedoms“ lost after the Partitions. This dynamic reflected the tensions inherent in Habsburg rule: while the

³²⁶ *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 285.

³²⁷ *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris Anno 1782. Emanatorium* (Leopoli 1782) 17–23.

³²⁸ See: Marian *Małecki*, *Wydział Krajowy Sejmu Galicyjskiego: geneza, struktura i zakres kompetencji, następstwo prawne* (The Provincial Department of the Galician Sejm: origin, structure, and scope of competences, legal succession) (Kraków 2014) 27f.

Monarchy sought to integrate the Galician nobility through controlled inclusion, it simultaneously reinforced the *szlachta*'s subaltern status by curbing genuine political agency. The Estate's existence thus symbolized a form of colonial governance, where limited autonomy was granted to manage local affairs while real power remained firmly centralized in Vienna. The Estate's restricted scope of power failed to satisfy the political aspirations of the Galician nobility, yet it remained virtually the only institutional venue for the *szlachta* representation, providing a narrow channel through which the nobility could engage with the administration of the land. Consequently, it became an object for negotiations and the pursuit of new forms of coexistence between the imperial government and the former local elite.

The real power in the land belonged to the officials, who represented Vienna in Galicia and were responsible for implementing its instructions. The lack of a powerful central government in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and, as a result, the lack of a historic tradition of institutional building made the introduction of a centralized imperial bureaucracy a truly radical step.³²⁹ The main state organ in the crownland was the Governorate lead by the Governor. Its competencies were for a long time not defined by any written instructions from Vienna, so it had to deal with the broadest scope of issues.³³⁰ To implement government control over the entire Galician territory, the Habsburg Monarchy introduced a new administrative division, creating districts (*Kreise*) – first six in 1775, then 18 in 1782.³³¹ Each of the districts had an administration, which was to become a link between the Governorate and the new subjects. The scope of the district administration's competencies was divided into five categories (*populare, militare, politicum, commerciale, camerale*), which in practice meant that almost any interaction between the local population and the government had to go through the *Kreis*.³³² The lowest units of the administrative territorial division were domains, which consisted of several villages under the power of a noble landlord. Such a format allowed the engagement of the local *szlachta* in the new administration system while also drastically

³²⁹ Stanisław Grodziski, *W Królestwie Galicji i Lodomerii* (In the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria) (Kraków 1976) 52.

³³⁰ Grodziski, *Historia ustroju*, 157.

³³¹ *Continuatio Edictorum* 1782, 24–30.

³³² Wacław Tokarz, *Galicja w początkach ery Józefińskiej w świetle ankiety urzędowej z roku 1783* (Galicia at the beginning of the Josephine era in the light of the official survey of 1783) (Kraków 1909) 19f.

limiting their influence over the commoners, as the landlord was regarded as a government representative, accountable to the district administration and following its instructions. In addition to that, the landlords had to share their competencies with the justiciars and mandataries – officials from outside, employed by the landlords in order to effectively rule their realms. In the cities, the functions of the domains were realized by magistrates.³³³

The appointment of higher officials to administrative positions in Galicia during the 1770s and 1780s aligned with the Habsburg Monarchy's broader „civilizing mission“. To curtail the influence of the Galician nobility within state administration, ideal candidates were often „imported“ from other parts of the empire, such as Bohemia, Moravia, or the German-speaking regions.³³⁴ These areas were perceived as more advanced and aligned with the Habsburg vision of state-building. Officials from these regions were thus considered better equipped to assist the central government in improving the „national character“ of the Galicians and homogenizing the new crownland with the rest of the empire.³³⁵ Additionally, being unconnected to the local *szlachta* ensured their loyalty to the Habsburgs rather than to the regional nobility. Last but not least, this policy was fully in line with the „softer“ colonial approach of the Habsburgs, who believed that the absence of direct military oppression would be more effective in assimilating former Polish-Lithuanian lands (in contrast to Prussian imperialism).³³⁶

The primary challenge associated with employing foreign officials was their unfamiliarity with local languages. Consequently, it was soon mandated that candidates must possess proficiency in at least one Slavic language.³³⁷ This measure was first considered temporary, as the eventual widespread of German language was seen as a necessary precondition for „civilizing“ the land. It would serve as a unifying agent between the crownland and the rest of the empire. Latin, the initial language of official correspondence, was replaced by German following the appointment of Count Heinrich

³³³ Grodziski, *Historia ustroju*, 165–168.

³³⁴ Kłańska, *Daleko od Wiednia*, 14.

³³⁵ Klemens Kaps, Kulturelle Differenzen des Ökonomischen: Galizische Entwicklungsdiskurse im Spannungsfeld räumlicher Funktionalisierung und sozialer Bruchlinien (1772–1848). In: *Historyka Studia Metodologiczne* XLII (2012) 97–116, here 103.

³³⁶ Ursula Prutsch, Habsburg postcolonial. In: Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (eds.), *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis* (Innsbruck/Wien 2003) 33–44, here 36.

³³⁷ Grodziski, *Historia Ustroju*, 169.

Joseph Johann von Auersperg as Governor, and recruitment of officials from German-speaking regions intensified. However, many lower-ranking officials, primarily Polish speakers, struggled with German, hindering administrative efficiency.³³⁸ To address this, a 1785 imperial decree mandated the use of German, emphasizing „the advantages which spread to the whole state when the various provinces of one and the same government are more closely united among themselves by the bond of a common language“. The usage of the German language was prescribed for courts and judicial matters, and court officials were required to learn the language within three years, with German speakers given priority for appointments. Subsequent decrees reinforced compulsory German learning and restricted certain positions to German speakers.³³⁹

The push for German was notably stronger in Galicia than in other Habsburg territories due to the urgent need for qualified officials.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these policies largely targeted the state administration rather than everyday life, making claims of a full-scale „Germanization“ under Joseph II seem overstated. The language policy served as a pragmatic tool to facilitate administrative reforms and integrate Galicia into the imperial framework, rather than as a direct effort to suppress the Polish language and culture. It also brought to light another dimension of colonial entanglement within Galicia. The matter was that nowhere in its language legislation for the new crownland did the Monarchy guarantee official status to the language of the population majority, namely Ruthenian/Ukrainian. In all the official decrees, only Polish was recognized as the local language suitable for official correspondence and public matters.³⁴¹ By acting in this manner, the Monarchy implicitly acknowledged the ethno-religious hierarchy that had existed within Galicia prior to the First Partition.³⁴² The *szlachta* strongly associated the Ruthenian language with the enserfed peasantry, and, as the latter occupied subservient

³³⁸ Daniela Druschel, Die Einführung des habsburgischen Rechts in Galizien. Herrschaftswechsel als Reformmotor für die Straf- und Zivilrechtskodifikation in der Habsburgermonarchie? In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Andreas Gestrich, Helga Schnabel-Schüle (eds.), Die Teilungen Polen-Litauens. Inklusions- und Exklusionsmechanismen – Traditionsbildung – Vergleichsebenen (Osnabrück 2013) 291–320, here 301f.

³³⁹ Dmitrij Timofejew, Rozporządzenia językowe Józefa II dla Galicji (1780–1790) (Language regulations of Joseph II for Galicia (1780–1790). In: *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 15, No. 1 (2015) 59–72, here 63f.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁴¹ Jan Fellerer, Discourse and Hegemony: The case of the Ukrainian Language in Galicia under Austrian Rule (1772–1914). In: Rosita Schjerve-Rindler (ed.), *Diglossia and Power. Language Policies and Practice in the 19th Century Habsburg Empire* (Berlin/New York 2003) 107–166, here 126.

³⁴² See: Jarosław Hrytsak, Der Untergang Sarmatiens. In: Martin Pollack (ed.), *Sarmatische Landschaften. Nachrichten aus Litauen, Belarus, der Ukraine, Polen und Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main 2006) 129–147, here 138.

positions in Polish-Lithuanian society, the Ruthenian language was believed by the *szlachta* to be unsuitable for both high culture and crucial matters of state politics. Fluency in Polish was a necessary prerequisite for any successful career, with the exception of the Greek Catholic Church, which remained a sanctuary for the Ukrainian Church Slavonic language.³⁴³ The poor *szlachta* of Ukrainian origin most frequently chose to use Polish in daily life to emphasize their affinity with the magnates and to distinguish themselves from the peasantry.³⁴⁴ This cultural suppression of the Ruthenians became yet another mechanism of the *szlachta* dominance in Galicia, reinforcing the „colonizer“ status attributed to the local elites.

The Habsburg administration recognized the distinction of the Ruthenians in their new crownland, regarding them as a separate ethnic and religious group with different traditions.³⁴⁵ Although von Pergen made no direct correlation between the social and ethno-religious groups in Galicia, he noted that most of the noble families, „with very few exceptions“, belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, whereas the Ruthenian majority living in the cities and on land were Uniate parishioners.³⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in its attempts to subalternize the *szlachta* the Monarchy chose not to equalize the status of the Polish and Ruthenian languages in public affairs, and not to deprive the *szlachta* of the feeling of cultural superiority over the Ruthenian peasantry. The most probable reason for that was yet again the practicality: by the end of the 18th century, the Ruthenian language lacked the necessary linguistic instruments for official correspondence.³⁴⁷ The introduction of Ruthenian into public matters would have had to be preceded by significantly raising the level of education among the crownland's population, and that, in turn, could not happen without an improvement in their well-being. It could not be said, however, that the Empire neglected the Ruthenian language altogether, as it allowed it to be the language of instruction in parish school for the future Greek Catholic priests. The majority of schools in the crownland would, however, use German and Polish throughout of entire period examined in this research.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Fellerer, Discourse and Hegemony, 129.

³⁴⁴ Ślusarek, Drobna szlachta, 136.

³⁴⁵ von Pergen, Beschreibung, P. 6.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, P. 10, P. 81.

³⁴⁷ Fellerer, Discourse and Hegemony, 130.

³⁴⁸ Michael Moser, Die sprachliche Erneuerung der galizischen Ukrainer zwischen 1772 und 1848/1849 im mitteleuropäischen Kontext. In: Ivo Pospíšil (ed.), Comparative Cultural Studies in Central Europe (Brno 2004) 81–118, here 82f.

As follows, the Habsburg government chose agrarian reforms to be the primary means in positioning the *szlachta* as „colonized colonizers“, thereby exposing how imperial power simultaneously subordinated local elites while instrumentalizing them to extend control over the peasantry. The state administration intended to insert itself as a higher power in the land, to which any serf could apply for defense from the arbitrary actions of the *szlachta*. Such incorporation of the local nobility into the absolutist state would make them quite innocuous and thus eliminate one of the main obstacles to „civilizing“ reforms.³⁴⁹ At the same time, the government initially didn't dare to antagonize the *szlachta* too much, so as not to provoke them into an open revolt. Because of this, the reforms of the 1770s and most of the 1780s avoided drastic changes to serfdom, targeting instead its most exploitative aspects, aiming to curb the nobility's power gradually and leaving some space for negotiations.

The first patent addressing peasantry issues was published on 3rd June 1775. It limited the application of corporal punishment on the serfs, allowing it only in the presence of a state official, and giving the serf the right to complain to the district administration if he considered the punishment to be exceeding his guilt. Monetary penalties, as well as punishments in the form of confiscation of material goods, were forbidden. Landowners were also not allowed to establish new serf duties not mentioned in the „old authentic inventories“ or require the serfs to fulfill those duties in exchange for payment. Both the noble landowners and their hired managers (primarily of Jewish origin) of estate were forbidden to force their serfs or free employees to work on Sundays or during church holidays. At the end of the patent, it was stated that this document was a preliminary measure, and that the improvement of agrarian relations in Galicia would continue.³⁵⁰

Although cautious and limited in scope, the 1775 patent sparked unrest among the peasantry in certain districts, as it fostered hopes of greater freedoms. In response to the growing agitation, the government issued a special directive to local officials, instructing them to clarify to the peasantry that the primary aim of the patent was to „bring to order some domains that are oppressing their subordinates too much“. Peasants were still

³⁴⁹ Dietlind Hüchtker, Der „Schmutz der Juden“ und die „Unsittlichkeit der Weiber“: ein Vergleich der Repräsentationen von Armut in Stadt- und Reisebeschreibungen von Galizien und Berlin (Ende des 18./Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts). Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 51 (2002) 351–369, here 359.

³⁵⁰ Continuatio Edictorum 1775, 85–89.

expected to work honestly and fulfill their duties according to the old inventories, remain obedient and not bring punishment on themselves. In this way, the central government reaffirmed that the 1775 document was far from revolutionary.³⁵¹

The year 1781 saw the emergence of several patents devoted to the improvement of serf's situation and the restraint of noblemen's authority. The first one, issued on 5th of January 1781, defined the scope of duties and rights of the serfs. A tax register (*Dominikal-Fassion*) was created to list the serf obligations considered legal, referring to the „old inventories“. If the landlord added new duties based solely on his discretion, they were to be nullified.³⁵² The patent issued on 1st September 1781 established a legal framework for disputes between landlords and peasants, standardizing proceedings across the entire empire. It granted significant powers to district authorities, positioning them as key players in agrarian politics and enhancing governmental oversight. Peasants were required to first address complaints to their landlords, but if those went unresolved after 30 days, they could escalate matters to the district administration, the Governorate or even the Court Chancellery. This process empowered local authorities to mediate conflicts, further diminishing noble authority.³⁵³ On the same day, 1st September 1781, the third patent was published, defining „the behavior of the serfs towards their landlords“. While cautioning against disobedience and revolt against both the government and nobility, it restricted punitive measures against „misbehaving“ serfs. For the first time, guilty serfs could justify their actions before local authorities or reputable neighbors, and they were empowered to appeal to the district administration for redress if they deemed their punishment unjust. Each punishment had to be properly documented, aiming to prevent excessive harm.³⁵⁴

On 5th April 1782, the proclamation was issued, replacing the „slavery“ of serfdom, despised by the „enlightened“ contemporaries, with „moderate servitude“. In reality, the peasantry's dependence on their landlords persisted, albeit with significant limitations. Peasants were granted the right to marry without landlord permission and to pursue trades or arts. However, labor on the land and associated activities were still required to be performed „obediently“, with the scope of activities dictated by inventory

³⁵¹ *Rozdolski, Stosunki poddańcze* (Vol. 2), 82f.

³⁵² *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris 1781. Emanatorium*, (Leopoli 1781) 3–6.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, 91–105.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 106–110.

prescriptions and imperial decrees. Importantly, it was explicitly stated that no one was allowed „to treat [the peasants] like slaves or to force them to do more under the pretext of the former slavery“. Despite this, the actual scope of emancipation outlined in the document was not as revolutionary as it appeared. To leave their place of settlement in search of work, serfs needed written permission from their landlords and had to provide a replacement „capable farmer“, which often made legal relocation impossible. Furthermore, the 1782 document explicitly referenced agricultural relations „similar to the ones in Our Austrian and Czech hereditary lands“,³⁵⁵ indicating that its primary intention was imperial inclusion and equalizing Galicia with the other crownlands.

On 16th June 1786, the conditions of serf labor were described in great detail: labor could not exceed three days per week (a confirmation of the measure introduced in November 1781) and was limited to a maximum of 12 hours during the warm season and 8 hours in the cold season, with mandated rest periods. Tasks assigned to serfs had to be planned and communicated in advance, allowing the peasantry to organize work on their own land; changes to these plans were permissible only in response to sudden weather changes or unforeseen circumstances. Many obligations imposed on serfs were abolished, even those enshrined in inventories or „ancient traditions“. As was stated in §40, „it is quite unpleasant to Us to force public decree in the jurisprudence up to special cases and circumstances, but We insist that this is the only means of defending Our subjects against various indulgences...“.³⁵⁶ This declaration reinforced the government’s authority over existing power structures, emphasizing that the greater benefit of the people should take precedence over all else.

The reforms of the 1770s–early 1780s sought to improve peasants’ living conditions and productivity while diminishing the landlords’ influence and putting into a dependent position towards the state. Since all the transformations of the period were conceived as preliminary measures in preparation for the all-encompassing tax reform (*Urbarialreform*) across the entire Monarchy, their effect was limited and often fragmentary, leaving significant control over the serfs in the hands of the *szlachta* landowners. At the same time, the aforementioned reforms introduced some groundbreaking changes corresponding to the „civilizing“ and centralizing intentions of

³⁵⁵ Continuatio Edictorum 1782, 34–37.

³⁵⁶ Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris 1786. Emanatorum (Leopoli 1786) 199–219.

the Viennese government. They managed to diminish the landlord's absolute dominance over the serfs, somewhat evening the *szlachta*'s status with that of the local nobilities in the Hereditary Lands. The reforms marked a pivotal moment in the path toward peasant emancipation, reflecting Enlightenment ideals of legal equity and individual rights. The dreaded „slavery“ of the Galician serfs, formerly regarded as one of the main features of the *Rzeczpospolita*'s „barbarianism“, was softened and put within a legal framework, indicating the care of the state for all its subjects. For the first time, serfs were granted legal subjectivity, allowing them to challenge the landlords' dominance in a new system, which aimed to put the *szlachta* in the subaltern position. In a long-term perspective, the increased jurisdiction of the royal government in peasantry matters was intended as a step towards the full subordination of the *szlachta* to Vienna and its objectives.

The intermediate results of the Habsburg reforms can be assessed by looking into the 1783 report of the Court Advisor and the emperor's referent in Galician matters, Johann Wenzel von Margelik. Von Margelik's task was to study the circumstances in the crownland, above all the effectiveness of the district administrations in implementing the changes, and to suggest how the situation could be improved if necessary. To do that, Margelik distributed a questionnaire of 56 questions, dealing with the widest range of social and political matters, to all the heads of Galician districts. He also became acquainted with the living circumstances of the Galician people personally, never hesitating to accept complaints about the arbitrariness of the officials or nobility. The results of this inspection were compiled in a report provided to the emperor in October 1783.³⁵⁷ Since Margelik was a devoted follower of the Sonnenfels' beliefs and Enlightened Absolutism philosophy, he was undoubtedly biased in favor of the reforms, which makes his account of the issues in their implementation even more valuable.

Von Margelik found that Habsburg bureaucracy in Galicia suffered from lack of competent personnel and organizational inefficiencies. He did praise the diligence and determination of many district heads, most of whom were German-speaking, of noble descent and with a considerable experience in Habsburg administration. At the same time, the lower officials were usually recruited among adventurers ready to leave the

³⁵⁷ Die Anmerkungen, und Vorschläge des Hofraths von Margelick über die Königreich Galizien, und Lodomerien betreffend. 20.10.1783. 30.08.1772. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Hofkanzlei, Kt. 232, ad 108 ex Dec 1783, 1–199. See also: *Schembor*, Galizien im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert. 111–153.

Bohemian and German-speaking realms for a new and still unknown crownland. Those individuals often had no suitable qualifications and questionable moral qualities, suggesting a harsh contrast to the Habsburg ideal of the bureaucrat. They had to be „civilized“ themselves before they could carry out the Habsburg „civilizing mission“ in Galicia. To address this, von Margelik suggested creating libraries with literature on political and economic matters and requiring officials to study regularly after office hours. In addition, the district administrations were overburdened with paperwork and often confused by the constant stream of contradictory directives from Vienna. The situation was further complicated by insufficient financing, which fostered corruption in district administrations, contradicting the Habsburg Enlightenment project.³⁵⁸

As the inspection trip took place before the reform of 1785, the language problem remained one of the biggest obstacles in the functioning of the administration. In order to ensure at least some communication with the local population, the district administrations had to go against the Viennese orders and hire Polish-speaking commissioners. However, they in turn were often incapable of writing reports in German for the internal document processing, which further slowed down case resolution. The implementation of Latin as *lingua franca* did not help the matter, as not enough officials spoke it well enough to maintain correspondence. Moreover, writing the orders in Latin was perceived negatively by the domains – they claimed that in the matters of peasantry, the instructions were submitted in such a way that they could have multiple interpretations, leading to misunderstandings and revolts among the serfs. Von Margelik was firmly convinced, however, that the further spreading of German was one of the main instruments in improving the new crownland and the character of its people, and suggested a detailed plan for how the matter could be improved. This plan foresaw, among other things, restricting access to official positions in secular administration and in church hierarchy to those proficient in German.³⁵⁹

The evidence of the district heads in Galicia suggested their ambivalent attitude towards the *szlachta*. Some of them viewed the local nobility with suspicion, believing that the generation that had already experienced the „freedoms“ was lost to the Habsburg Empire, and that the general mischievousness of the *szlachta* left no hope for their

³⁵⁸ See: Die Anmerkungen, Frage 55 (Kreisämtliches Personale) 148–159.

³⁵⁹ Ibid; see also: Frage 29 (Deutsche Sprache) 67–69.

obedience to the new government. Others claimed, however, that with the right government policies, the Galician nobility could be won over and provide not just formal loyalty but full devotion to the Habsburgs. Minimal concessions would demonstrate Vienna's willingness to compromise, which could encourage nobles to cooperate with district administrations, provided they received fair regulations on taxes and profits. Rather than resisting the Empire outright, most landlords prioritized safeguarding their personal interests, making them potential allies if reforms showed practical benefits.

Von Margelik himself placed special hopes on the middle *szlachta* and partially on the magnates, naming the late Prince Lubomirski, Prince Czartoryski and Count Zamoyski as prominent examples of the noblemen diligently serving the new regime. The report also claimed that the younger *szlachta* generation was usually trustworthy, as they believed that the Habsburgs had brought order to the land, which was seriously lacking in the times of the *Rzeczpospolita*, and were ready to serve them. The loyal *szlachta* paid special attention to the upbringing of their sons, making sure they learned German and received their education in Galicia and not in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. That, in turn, gave the new administration hope that in the future, the *szlachta* would largely be transformed into loyal followers of the new regime, and get rid of the „backwardness“ of the *Rzeczpospolita*, thus completing the Habsburg „civilizing mission“. The *holota*, however, remained the most unstable element among the Galician nobility. Since it did not own large land holdings, and did not have to pay as much in taxes as the wealthy nobility, it often felt unbound to the new government, „recognizing no master or order“. At the same time, it maintained the feeling of corporate honor and was quite prone to revolt in case it felt its interests offended. Some district heads even suggested stripping those with low profits of the noble status altogether.³⁶⁰

Since von Margelik arrived in Galicia in the midst of the agrarian reforms, their intermediate effects occupied a significant place in his report. In many cases, a rather big difference between the expectations of the central government and the results of the reforms was already visible. The inventories turned out to be a very unreliable source of legal norms defining the serf's obligations towards the landlord. In the neighboring villages, the amount of prescribed labor could be drastically different, even when all other circumstances were the same. The district heads assessed this situation as nothing more

³⁶⁰ Ibid, Frage 36 (Gesinnungen des Adels) and 37 (Obrigkeitsliche Beamte) 90–96.

than a case of nobility's arbitrariness. The attempts to limit serf's labor obligations to three days weekly led to rather controversial results. After the 1781 decree was published, many domain landlords attempted to increase serf's labor efficiency, counting two days for one or giving the serfs more difficult tasks than usual. Serfs would usually respond by starting their work later and diminishing their productivity. As the decree provided no suggestions on how the time spared could be used for improving the character of the peasants, many of them wasted their free time drinking and idling.

The permission for serfs to complain to the district administrations about the injustices of their landlords did not improve the crownland immediately as well. Although the peasants had to first bring their complaints to domains, they did not believe that the landlords would make decisions conflicting with their interests, and often applied directly to the district administrations, increasing the paperwork burden further. Moreover, according to the report, the serfs would often provoke landlords or their goods' managers to punish them, so that they could complain about it later to the district administration. That, however, did not contradict the fact that in many cases the complaints of the serfs were fully justified, and the domains deserved their punishments.

In addition to that, the 1782 serfdom regulations caused the uncontrollable flow of peasant emigration, which could now be limited neither by introducing fines for accepting runaway serfs nor by establishing new state organs specifically for controlling emigration. Many peasants would leave Galicia for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the emigration from allegedly backward, feudal, and underdeveloped *Rzeczpospolita* to Galicia, which for a decade had been under the rule of an Enlightened monarch, was barely visible. This alone was a serious threat to the concept of the Habsburg „civilizing mission“, as the government failed to create the environment attractive enough for the peasantry, which was one of the key goals of the reform strategies.³⁶¹

As it could be concluded from the reports of the district heads, by 1783 the reforms in Galicia led to mixed results. The Habsburgs managed to diminish the influence of the *szlachta* over the crownlands politics and economy by depriving it of the decision-making powers and establishing its own administration as a valid counterweight to the nobility's

³⁶¹ Ibid, Frage 12 (Unterthans-Prästationen) 28–29, 14 (Robotwesen) 30–32, 25 (Klagen der Unterthanen wider ihre Obrigkeit) 54–75, 26 (Emigration) 56–60.

arbitrariness in the peasantry matters. At the same time, the new regime demonstrated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the local circumstances in the new crownland. Habsburg officials assumed that reform policies successful in other regions of the empire, such as Bohemia or Hungary, could be applied to Galicia without proper adjustment. This overconfidence led to transformations being implemented without proper resources or instruments, which, in turn, led to a failure to significantly improve the life of the Galician peasantry. The reforms slowly but steadily antagonized the landowning *szlachta*, and, even though by 1783 it was not ready to voice its discontent, the events of the subsequent years demonstrated the earnestness of the situation for both the central government and the local elites it intended to subalternize.

The *Urbarialreform* was supposed to become a milestone in the „enlightened“ transformations not only in Galicia, but in the entire Monarchy. It was conceived as an attempt to regulate the taxation in the country in such a way that it would curb the economic power of the local nobilities and, at the same time, enhance the peasant's control over his profits and household.³⁶² The patent establishing reform was published on 10th February 1789. It aimed to give the subjects relief from the burden of obligations towards the landlords, as that was a necessary precondition for the „proportional equalization of ground taxation“. The first part of the text made the amount of taxes dependent on the type of land (the highest one – for pastures and forests, the lowest – for ploughlands and fallows). The landowners were to be informed about the amount of taxes they were to pay in writing, in case of disagreement with that amount the landowning peasantry was allowed to apply to their communities within four weeks to make the matter clear and suitable for them. If a satisfactory solution was not found, the case could be passed to higher institutions, up to the Governorate. This way the peasantry community was given unprecedented powers in collecting the taxes and passing them further to the governmental authorities.

The second part described the obligations of a peasant towards the state and the landlord. The peasant was given the right to keep around 70% of his income, and the other 30 were supposed to be spent on state taxes, as well as on payment of monetary obligations to the landlord. Since the taxes demanded from the government constituted on average 12-13% of gross income, the landlord was left with no more than 17 percent

³⁶² *Rozdolski*, Untertan und Staat, 220.

of it. From now on, the landlord was not allowed to demand anything but monetary payments from his serfs. The right to make voluntary agreements concerning replacement of the monetary obligation by natural or labor ones was still guaranteed, however, these agreements could only be made for a maximum term of three years and with a permission of the district administration. This radical measure was supplemented with a concession to nobility in the very next paragraph – the norm about monetary obligations concerned only the so-called rustic grounds, which were historically „serving the peasantry for settlement and feeding“. The grounds belonging to the nobility directly were excluded from that legislation. The same applied to the poorer peasants not possessing any land – they were still to follow the labor obligations established earlier due to the „protection“ of their landlord. Those obligations could only be replaced by monetary payments, if the landlord wished so.³⁶³ However, even with this concession the Galician landowning nobility was deprived from a significant part of labor which used to work on their grounds, making the successful management of their estates and making profit from them difficult, if not impossible.³⁶⁴ To avoid the immediate dissatisfaction of the *szlachta*, the patent from 26th May of the same year proclaimed delay of the establishment of monetary obligations, allowing the landlords to force their peasants to work for a certain number of days per week; however, their labor had to be paid for.³⁶⁵ The decree from 17th September finalized the reform, transferring the obligation of tax collection from the domains to the peasant communities, which were also given the right to elect representatives responsible for tax collection without any confirmation from either landlord or the government officials.³⁶⁶

The *Urbarialreform* became the crowning achievement of the entire Josephinian period in Galicia. It confirmed the Habsburg's intention to put the *szlachta* into a position of the „colonized colonizers“. The implementation of the reform would transform the enserfed peasantry from mere providers of labor to the nobility to the active subjects of the local economy, previously monopolized by the *szlachta*. The nobility, in turn, would be further deprived of privileges in economic matters, as well as one of the main profit sources. Unlike the previous legislation in serfdom matters, which usually suggested

³⁶³ Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januar. Ad Ultimam December. 1789. Emanatorium (Leopoli 1789) 44–54.

³⁶⁴ *Rozdolski*, Stosunki Poddańcze (Vol.1), 230.

³⁶⁵ Continuatio Edictorum 1789, pp. 116–123.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 163–167.

relatively moderate and „preliminary“ changes, the reform confirmed that the new status-quo would not be temporary. Any hope that the time of the „Golden Liberty“ would return any time soon now had little foundation.³⁶⁷ Because of that, the 1789 legislation caused the harshest resistance from the *szlachta* out of all the reforms of 1770s–1780s.

3. The *Szlachta*'s Response to Habsburg Authority in the Reform Era.

Habsburg annexation of the *Rzeczpospolita* territories initially received little to no resistance from the local nobility. The *szlachta*'s loyalty to the Polish-Lithuanian state did not seem to be too strong immediately after the takeover.³⁶⁸ Governor von Pergen had no doubt in July 1773, that the Galician nobility would eventually get used to the new ruler, learn to respect the order and justice imposed on them, and feel lucky to find themselves under the scepter of a Catholic monarch.³⁶⁹ In their turn, the *szlachta* hoped that the Habsburg Monarchy would impose a „humane“ regime upon them, guaranteeing them peace and security while also not interfering into their lives too much. Some noblemen were even ready to immediately resettle from Warsaw to their landholdings in Galicia, as the Habsburg government suggested more stable and better-regulated living conditions than the weakened *Rzeczpospolita*.³⁷⁰ The example of the Hungarian nobility, which, despite all the centralizing reforms of the past decades managed to keep most of its privileges within the Monarchy, was quite inspiring for the *szlachta*.³⁷¹ However, it soon became obvious that the transition of power would in no way be a smooth process for the *szlachta*, and their status under the new regime, as well as the matter of privileges they were to keep, became the main point of confrontation.

³⁶⁷ Miloš Řezník, Das Landespatriotische Programm der galizischen Stände um 1790: von der polnischen Tradition zur Etablierung eines neuen Landespatritismus. In: Balázs Trencsenyi, Márton Zászkaliczky (eds.), *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe* (Leiden 2010) 735–757, here 742.

³⁶⁸ See: Stanisław Grodziski, Uwagi o elicie społecznej Galicji 1772–1848 r. (Remarks on the social elite of Galicia, 1772–1848) In: Janina Leszkiewiczowa (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo polskie XVIII i XIX wieku* (Polish society in the XVIII and XIX century) Vol. 7 (Warszawa 1982) 145–177, here 149.

³⁶⁹ von Pergen, Beschreibung, P. 46.

³⁷⁰ Pacholkiv, Das Werden einer Grenze, 556f.

³⁷¹ Krzysztof Karol Daszyk, Eroberer oder Anwärtter auf den polnischen Thron. Die Habsburger im Urteil und den politischen Plänen der Polen in der Zeit der Teilungen (1772–1795). In: *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* 121 (1996) 133–154, here 137f.

In anticipation of the 1773 tribute ceremony and the finalization of the inclusion of Galicia into the Habsburg Monarchy, the local noblemen issued a number of addresses to the Viennese government. In those documents, the *szlachta* aimed to demonstrate their position in relations with the new regime and define the matters they deemed essential, such as privileges and elements of noble status that were to remain inviolable no matter what. The 1773 addresses laid the foundation for the discourse of the Galician nobility in relations with the Habsburg government, which would exist throughout the period studied here. According to this discourse, the nobility considered itself a legitimate authority in Galicia both before and after the First Partition. Only their social group possessed the innate qualities necessary to keep this land in order and prosperity. Any attempt by the new government to encroach on this power, to reduce the privileges of the nobility, or to interfere in the relations between the *szlachta* and the commoners, was contrary not only to age-old traditions, but also to the most natural order of things, and therefore would inevitably lead to disastrous consequences. In other words, the *szlachta* was aware of its actual status as colonizers in Galicia, especially relative to the serf peasantry, and did not want to submit to the Habsburgs' attempts of subalternization. At the same time, the Galician nobility did not want a direct confrontation with the Viennese regime or to challenge the status quo, which was formed as a result of the 1772 events. Starting with the 1773 petitions, the *szlachta* tried to create a „hybrid“ power regime in the new crownland, which would involve the division of competences between the Habsburgs and the local nobility. Recognizing the supremacy of Vienna, the nobility simultaneously sought to preserve their influence and „freedoms“ in Galicia in such a way that the First Partition would lead to as few changes as possible in their way of life.

One can look at a few examples of the nobility *desiderata* to get the general idea of their aspirations right after the land's acquisition. The two collective addresses, submitted to Governor von Pergen, had almost identical content. They recognized the Habsburg dynasty as new sovereigns and voiced their agreement with the transfer of power, promising not to revolt against the Monarchy. At the same time, Galician noblemen asked to be recognized as a special, autonomous group within the state system, with certain privileges and the possibility to influence local politics. In more direct terms, that meant the establishment of the noble Estates with the right to submit requests directly to the monarch, bypassing the Governorate or Court authorities, and for each county of

the new crownland to send two representatives to the Governorate, who would then take part in the decision-making processes. If these requests were satisfied, the *szlachta* would retain its status as a corporate power and could potentially exercise its influence at the level of the entire Monarchy. Another demand was to ensure the exclusive right of the *szlachta* to obtain offices in the new crownland and to reserve land ownership to the local *szlachta* only, thus keeping the administration in the hands of the local nobility. Despite the audacity of such demands, the authors clearly did not want to aggravate the Habsburgs right away. They claimed that their intentions would not contradict Vienna's integration plans, as the *indygenat* principle existed in other parts of the Empire, and its application in Galicia would not harm the inclusion process. They also stated that, being the main force in the land (and its „nation“), they had interests equal to those of the country, and therefore had to retain former influence over its politics.³⁷²

The narrative of the colonizer under threat of being colonized can be very directly observed in another petition to the Governorate, written by Count Andrzej Wiesołowski.³⁷³ In his opinion, all accounts of the *szlachta*'s atrocities were taken directly from the texts of „foreign writers“, hostile to the *Rzeczpospolita* and everything it represented. He claimed that the living conditions of the local peasantry were much better than in neighboring countries, which caused considerable immigration in the years preceding the First Partition. The Galician peasant never had to endure anything remotely close to slavery, as he was a free manager of land and means of production. The peasants were not guaranteed the full legal rights of landownership only because they were inherently incapable of being as good owners as the nobility was. The same piece of land was nonetheless usually managed by generations of the same family and brought them the same benefits the owners would have. The noble landlord would only intrude in this management for the benefit of the peasantry, for example, forbidding the sale of cattle or grain if it would impoverish the serfs. He would always deal justly and wisely, and the rare occasions of the *szlachta*'s arbitrariness would always be punished according to the just legislation of the *Rzeczpospolita*.

Wiesołowski thus insistently „othered“ the Galician enserfed peasantry by claiming that they did not possess enough personal responsibility or insight to be given

³⁷² *Řezník*, Shaping a New Habsburg Territory, 236f.

³⁷³ See: *Rozdolski*, Untertan und Staat, 41–49.

complete agency over their life and household. Unlike the *szlachta*, the peasantry was naturally prone to disorganization and mischief. According to him, that was the main reason why any reforms aimed at changing the peasant's legal status in Galicia would be destined to fail. Without being bound to the land through serfdom, they would quickly turn into vagabonds, incapable of staying in one place and establishing successful households. Not surprisingly, Wiesołowski was opposed to giving the peasantry the right to complain about their landlords. If given such a right, many peasants would fall victim to petty grievances and complain about their landlords not because of genuine oppression they experienced, but because of minor issues and inherent evil and hatred. They would also spend large shares of their profits on legal representatives and scribes to submit complaints properly, thus further impoverishing them and ruining their households. Therefore, leaving peasant affairs under the wise control of landlords would be the only suitable decision for the new regime. For the „rare“ cases where true oppression and arbitrariness took place, Wiesołowski suggested appointing a government official in every community to monitor the situation and issue complaints if any crime or abuse occurred. He insisted, however, that any arbitrariness was not in the character of the *Natio Polonica*, and the vast majority of landlords had the best interests of their serfs and the land at heart.

The „wise“ *szlachta* naturally had to preserve their dominant positions in Galician politics after the change of government to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future of the crownland. According to Wiesołowski, the laws of the „mixed monarchy“ were nearly perfect, with no major defect ever found in them, and people were accustomed to the old legislation. Any change or improvement to it thus had to be approved by, the „capable and honest patriots of this Kingdom, who in creating the Code of Laws will abhor the royal Government and the public benefit“. The „patriots“ in this context clearly meant the local noblemen, as the author of the address believed that the Galician population would accept the new legislation much more gladly if it was approved by the former elites. He suggested creating a *szlachta* council next to the Governorate, comprised of the delegates from every part of the Kingdom, which would transfer petitions from the districts to the Governorate, as well as approve the instructions of the Governorate before their implementation. In addition to that, that Wiesołowski demanded freeing the *szlachta* from any taxation, and claimed that the „equalization with Austria or Bohemia [in this matter]

must not take place“. The numerous privileges of the *szlachta*, obtained by their ancestors in battle for the benefit of the country, and the formal equality of individual noblemen had to be preserved as well.

The desires of the *szlachta*, voiced in their addresses to the throne, were contrary to Vienna's intentions to disenfranchise local Galician elites and incorporate them into the centralized absolute monarchy. The central government certainly did not intend to accept these demands and refused to recognize the *szlachta* as a monolithic corporate body. Consequently, their petitions were not perceived as demands of a group with indisputable rights, but rather as those of individuals of noble descent. This gave Vienna more room for maneuver in communication with the local elites. The Empire, however, encouraged the *szlachta* to voice their demands as they were useful to the throne in understanding the newly acquired land better and developing the most effective colonial strategies. Even stripped of most of their privileges and freedoms, the Galician nobility still remained a significant economic and social power in the region, which had to be considered in all transformation policies. Therefore, the petitions of the *szlachta* gave the Habsburgs an overview of how their government was initially received in Galicia and what expectations existed concerning the change of sovereignty.³⁷⁴

It turned out that the attitude towards the Habsburgs was much less hostile than expected. The mere fact that the noblemen instantly referred to „the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria“, accepting the name invented by the Habsburgs, could be interpreted as a sign that they reconciled with the events of 1772 and were now ready to establish a „social contract“ with the new regime. For that purpose, they were willing to suspend any displays of patriotism toward their former country, as preserving personal privileges and status under Habsburg rule was of far greater importance.³⁷⁵ Thus, the Galician *szlachta* „wished for participation in the government of the country while at the same time rejecting the assumption of any responsibility“,³⁷⁶ indicating that a compromise between the new government and the old elites was not entirely impossible.

Engaging with the Habsburg administration further, not all *szlachta* members were insistent on keeping the old order, as some of them shared an Enlightenment mindset and recognized the flaws of the *Rzeczpospolita* government. In his memorial, nobleman

³⁷⁴ See: *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 247f.

³⁷⁵ *Řezník*, Shaping a New Habsburg Territory, 235.

³⁷⁶ *Glassl*, Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 103.

Piotr Krukowiecki acknowledged that the peasantry did not differ from the *szlachta* or any other social group in Galicia in any fundamental way, except for extreme poverty, which is why the reforms to improve their situation were long due. He saw the taxation regulation as a fitting instrument for that purpose, suggesting also that the peasant should have more rights in managing his land, including the right to sell it to another peasant (with the landlord's approval). This way, the land would be cultivated by people who truly invested in the fruit of their labor, ultimately benefiting agriculture and the land's overall economy. Another nobleman, Ignacy Golejewski, voiced harsh critique of the misuse of the „freedoms“ in times of the *Rzeczpospolita*, although he hoped that some of the privileges would be preserved under the new regime.³⁷⁷ As a result, the Viennese government was largely satisfied with the attitudes demonstrated by the *szlachta* in their petitions. According to a report of the Galician Court Deputation (*Galizische Hof-Deputation*), the authors of the documents demonstrated „devotion and submissiveness“ to the new regime, and it was recommended that Maria Theresia express her satisfaction on the matter.³⁷⁸

It would certainly be an exaggeration to claim that the first years of Habsburg rule saw the complete destruction of the nobility's position and its forceful subordination to the alien government, as the radical pro-Polish historians (such as Walerian Kalinka) wrote in the next century.³⁷⁹ That was especially visible in agrarian relations – while trying to improve the lives of the peasantry, the government always demanded that they remained „obedient“ to their landlords, so that the existing peace on the land would not be disrupted. Up to the *Urbarialreform* of 1789, the *szlachta* continued exercising major control through the domains and finding loopholes in legislation to continue supervising the lives and deaths of the serfs. However, the *szlachta* was largely denied a voice in politics of the crownland, as the decision-making powers were unequivocally transferred to the central government, and their implementation – to the foreign officials. While disenfranchising the *szlachta*, the Habsburg government simultaneously tried to

³⁷⁷ *Reznik*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 239f.

³⁷⁸ Vortrag der Galizischen Hof-Deputation d. d. 22. Febr. 1774. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Staatsrat 50, Protokoll II, 1774, 469. See also: Waław Tokarz, *Pierwsze dezyderaty szlachty galicyjskiej (1773)* (The First Desiderata of the Galician Nobility (1773)). In: *Studia historyczne wydane ku czci Profesora Wincentego Zakrzewskiego* (Historical studies published in honor of Professor Wincenty Zakrzewski) (Kraków 1908) 359–369, here 361f.

³⁷⁹ Walerian Kalinka, *Galicja i Kraków pod panowaniem austriackim* (Galicia and Kraków under Austrian rule) (Paryż 1853) 35.

transform its members into exemplary servants of the Monarchy. Special hopes were placed on a younger generation – in 1776, the establishment of a special educational institution in Lviv, *Collegium Nobilium*, was announced. The main goal of this school was to „educate the youth in such a way that they would serve for the benefit of their Motherland and Monarchy someday“.³⁸⁰ The children of the Galician *szlachta* were also assigned places in the Court academies in Vienna, with scholarships granted to the most talented ones.³⁸¹ These measures were in full accordance with the „civilizing mission“ of the empire – it hoped that the mentoring of the *szlachta* youth in accordance with the „enlightened“ aspirations and goals of Vienna would create a strata of diligent noble subjects, who would be at the forefront of the incorporation processes in Galicia.

As the reforms progressed, however, the discontent of the Galician *szlachta* with the new administration only grew. Even though the initial agrarian reforms were not as radical as expected, they still led to a decrease in the noble landowners' incomes, which were majorly reliant on unlimited serf labor.³⁸² Another clashing point with the new regime was the alleged arbitrariness of the Habsburg officials, as well as their incredible incompetence and arrogance towards the former elites.³⁸³ A popular anecdote of the time reported some nobleman or noblewoman (most often, the words are attributed to the Countess Katarzyna Kossakowska) claiming that Vienna must have turned into a very nice place to live recently, since „all the local thieves were sent to Galicia to serve in the state administration“.³⁸⁴

The dissatisfaction of local elites reached its peak after the tax reform of 1789. Until then, resistance of the *szlachta* towards the reforms remained quite passive, and no signs of readiness for an open revolt were visible.³⁸⁵ The 1789 legislation, however, turned into a catalyst for the Galician nobility to attempt to regain their own agency. Already in May 1789 Count Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński sent a memorial to the emperor, in which he expressed the utter dissatisfaction with the measures introduced.

³⁸⁰ Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januar. At Ultimam December. 1776. Emanatorium (Leopoli 1776) 160.

³⁸¹ *Glassl*, Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk, 107.

³⁸² See: Bericht Landrechtspräsidenten von der Mark, 08.10.1793. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kabinettskanzlei, Nachlass Zinzendorf Handschriften 160, 25–43.

³⁸³ *Bömelburg*, Inklusion und Exklusion, 191.

³⁸⁴ *Grodziski*, W Królestwie Galicji i Lodomerii, 49.

³⁸⁵ *Tokarz*, Galicya w początkach ery józefińskiej, 12f.

According to him, the February patent violated the ancient property rights of the *szlachta*, as well as the „voluntary agreement“ between landowning gentry and peasantry. Ossoliński predicted rapid decline of the whole crownland in case the reform was not revoked immediately and suggested that the future changes in agrarian relations would be undertaken only after the approval of the committee, whose members would belong to the noble estate, in order to avoid disastrous results.³⁸⁶ Since Ossoliński acquired a reputation as one of the biggest proponents of the Habsburg government in Galicia, one could only imagine the level of dissatisfaction among those who did not agree with the regime change in the first place.

Ossoliński's memorial, as well as the other *szlachta* addresses against the reform did not initially receive proper attention in Vienna; however, the situation would change very soon.³⁸⁷ It turned out that the moment to introduce the radical taxation reform in the entire Monarchy was chosen quite poorly. The Monarchy found itself in the middle of numerous crises, both external and internal. The French Revolution, which began the previous year, grew into a European security concern. Relations between the Monarchy and its neighbors – the Ottoman Empire, Prussia, and the Russian Empire – were strained, with the possibility of armed conflict always present. Internally, the state was suffering from a number of uprisings among local elites – in Hungary, the Austrian Netherlands, and in Bohemia – owing to the Monarchy's centralization policies and perceived attacks on traditional freedoms and privileges.³⁸⁸ Were such a revolt to break out in Galicia, it would be particularly dangerous, since the rapid and radical reforms simultaneously occurring in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth could entice the Galician noble elites and provide them with a reason to reunify their land with the former country. Such a development might have enjoyed an even greater chance of success were the Prussians to join the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in a conflict against the Habsburgs. Last but not least, the reforms of Joseph II gradually ran out of steam and support, even within the highest government circles. Due to its destabilizing potential, the *Urbarialreform* came in for particularly strong criticism from the highest officials of the empire, who had directly participated in ruling Galicia, including Count Josef Brigido, the Governor at the

³⁸⁶ *Rozdolski*, Untertan und Staat, 227–229.

³⁸⁷ The subsequent topic of the *szlachta*'s addresses in the early 1790s was previously addressed in: *Krushynska*, *Becoming subaltern?*, 601–606; *Krushynska*, *Koloniale Diskurse*, 59–63.

³⁸⁸ *Ingrao*, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 229–232.

time.³⁸⁹ It was clear that to preserve the integrity of the empire, the interests of the *szlachta* had to be given at least some attention.

In January 1790, Joseph II received an anonymous letter from Galicia signed by the „eighty-year-old nobleman“, who claimed to have never „stained himself with lies“ and attempted to tell the monarch the „truth Your Majesty is not aware of“. This document was written in a rather mild tone, refraining from making any demands or threats, but instead begging the emperor to be merciful towards his noble subjects in Galicia. Despite its brevity, the letter managed to touch upon most of the key points of disagreement between the Habsburg government and the Galician aristocracy, all of which would be developed in subsequent writings. The anonymous author complained about the crushing tax burden that his compatriots suffered, the major debts they owed as a result of the agrarian reforms of the last decade, the arbitrariness of the Habsburg officials and their almost innate hostility towards Poles and Polishness, and, last but not least, the neglect of religious morality, the traditional virtue of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, by the new government. The letter strongly implied that Joseph II, as a Catholic ruler, had an obligation to defend that morality. The author seemed to be convinced that the emperor was not aware of all that was transpiring in Galicia, since „addresses sent to your Imperial Majesty seldom get resolution, and most of them have no effect“. In the end, he assured the emperor of his loyalty and claimed that his only intention was to serve his Motherland (which in the context of the letter clearly meant Galicia under Habsburg scepter, and not the *Rzeczpospolita*).³⁹⁰

The letter turned into a catalyst for the shift of Habsburg politics concerning the Galician *szlachta*. Very soon after it was read in Vienna, Governor Brigido received an order from the emperor demanding information on the situation in the crownland. Brigido confirmed that it was quite serious, claiming that the financial burden on the *szlachta* was in fact unbearable, and that the economic and agricultural situation was near ruin. He also remarked on how the crisis was impacting not only the elites, but the peasantry and clergy as well. Brigido did not mention the complaints concerning „hatred against Polishness“ but warned the emperor of pending revolts. In the end, he mentioned that, although the unrest could be temporarily dealt with through violence, over the long term, it would only

³⁸⁹ *Reznik*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 323.

³⁹⁰ Cited after: *Tyrowicz*, Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru, 123–125.

hasten a Polish-Prussian alliance, transforming Galicia into yet another enemy of the Monarchy.³⁹¹

Brigido's report prompted the emperor to form a governmental commission tasked with suggesting ways out of the crisis. The result of the commission's work, issued on 5th February 1790, provided a boost to the Galician *szlachta*. Although the document did not criticize the Josephinian reforms outright, referring instead to „some usefulness of the new system“, it also did not deny their numerous drawbacks, which certainly outweighed their advantages. The text even cast the Habsburg officials in Galicia in a negative light, informing the emperor bluntly that they would certainly not help him „win the trust of the nation“, as they cared much more for their direct personal gains than for prosperity of the crownland. In the end, the commission strongly recommended lowering the amount of taxes expected from Galicia and collecting them „in a more just way“. ³⁹²

Emperor Joseph II died in early 1790, having revoked the *Urbarialreform* shortly before his death.³⁹³ The accession to power of his brother, Leopold II, raised hopes among the Galician nobles that their claims and demands would be recognized, or at the very least, that they would have the possibility of reaching further compromises with the Habsburg government. These hopes had reasons, because the new emperor continued revoking the most radical centralizing reforms of his late brother.³⁹⁴ He had also earlier demonstrated a favorable attitude towards the idea of the noble Estates having more than decorative competencies in the crownlands. Leopold II saw the Estates as a legitimate mechanism for the local nobilities to express their wishes in a way that would not question their subordination to the state, as well as a source of information for Vienna about the atmosphere in the different parts of the Monarchy.³⁹⁵ The *szlachta* could thus use the moment to attempt to reclaim some dominance in Galicia within the Estates framework.

During Leopold's short reign, several notable documents emerged which can be regarded as the fullest and most detailed written account of the Galician *szlachta*

³⁹¹ Władisław *Łozinski*, *Galiciana. Kilka obrazków z pierwszych lat historii galicyjskiej* (Galiciana. A few pictures from the first years of Galician history) (Lwów 1872) 106–111.

³⁹² Cited after: *Ibid.*, 112–116.

³⁹³ Iryna *Vushko*, *Bureaucracy, Enlightenment, and Habsburg Central Europe. Joseph Brigido and Austrian Bureaucracy in Galicia, 1777–1794*. In: *East European Politics and Societies* 25, Nr. 4 (2011) 792–812, here 803.

³⁹⁴ Peter *Dickson*, *Monarchy and Bureaucracy in Late Eighteenth-Century Austria*. In: *The English Historical Review* 110, No. 436 (1995) 323–367, here 332f.

³⁹⁵ Miriam *Levy*, *Leopold II, Joseph von Aschauer, and the Role of the Estates*. In: *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 38 (1986) 197–222, here 199.

discourse of the period under examination here. The „Reflections on the Constitution of Galicia, the Causes of Its Decline, and the Means by Which to Restore the Land“ (*Betrachtungen über die Verfassung von Galizien, die Ursachen Seines Verfalls und die Mittel, dem Lande Wieder Aufzuhelfen*) was printed in brochure form in spring 1790. Like the January letter, it was published anonymously (though the text suggests that the author or authors were of noble descent) but was written in a much harsher and more demanding tone. It began with a description of a nearly perfect relationship between the landlords and serfs in the times of the Commonwealth, where „several thousands“ of the former provided for „about three million and hundreds of thousands“ of the latter, and both groups enjoyed a peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence.³⁹⁶ The landlord had an obligation to care for the wellbeing of his serfs, for the security of their property, as well as for their souls, and so, would pay the local priests and finance church services from his own pocket.³⁹⁷ The occasional uprisings, such as that led by Bohdan Khmelnytskyi in the 17th century, took place, ostensibly, owing to the „the movement of people from a state of barbarism to that of civilization“.³⁹⁸

The abolition of a „mixed monarchy“, where the king was „merely the first citizen of the Motherland“,³⁹⁹ meant an end to the centuries-old traditions, which had previously guaranteed the prosperity and honor of the land. The author(s) adhered to the principles of Polish-Lithuanian political culture, which maintained that absolutist rule by a single „despot“ was inherently incompatible with the pursuit of the common good of society.⁴⁰⁰ In the *Rzeczpospolita*, everyone had solemnly fulfilled their duty, while the intrusion of the new government brought about only chaos and immorality.⁴⁰¹ The text accused Vienna of sending people who had no understanding of local conditions to serve as officials in Galicia. These foreigners harbored serious prejudices against the local population, seeing them as barbarians in need of civilizing and not as equals worthy of

³⁹⁶ Ernst Traugott von Kortum, *Magna Charta von Galizien oder Untersuchung der Beschwerden des Galizischen Adels pohnischer Nation über die österreichische Regierung* (Jassy 1790) 283.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 290f.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 284f.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 294f.

⁴⁰⁰ Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Citizen, Fatherland and Patriotism in the Political Discourse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*. In: Balazs Trencsenyi, Márton Zászkaliczky (eds.), *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe* (Leiden 2010) 255–281, here 266.

⁴⁰¹ von Kortum, *Magna Charta*, 312–314.

heeding.⁴⁰² Since the new government did not care to study the land thoroughly, the reforms aiming at making the lives of the peasantry better actually worsened the situation, nearly ruining the local economy. Moreover, the Habsburg „civilizing mission“, aimed at equalizing the peasantry with the nobility, contradicted the natural order of things and would only cause catastrophe similar to that experienced during the French Revolution.⁴⁰³

Following a long list of accusations against the Habsburg government, the author(s) expressed their hope that the new emperor would be more cooperative and listen to their demands. The „foreign“ officials had to be replaced by representatives of the local magnates.⁴⁰⁴ The latter were to be given virtually all authority over the land, with the Governor appointed by the emperor only serving as the symbol of the monarchy and possessing an overall control function.⁴⁰⁵ To ensure smooth communication between the crownland and the central government, a separate Court Chancellery for Galicia could be created, with its members being chosen among the local *szlachta*.⁴⁰⁶ The *Betrachtungen* ended with another expression of hope for a positive resolution of the matter, but also an indirect threat to the Habsburg Monarchy, claiming that the Polish nobleman would always fight against his oppressors when stripped of „freedoms“, and that the landowners would not hesitate to lead the plot against the government if their voices were not heard.⁴⁰⁷

The blueprint of the future „Constitution“ for Galicia under Habsburg rule was indeed being prepared by the „Secret Committee for Galician Affairs“ under the support of the noble Estates. In early 1790, a delegation of six Galician noblemen, led by Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, came to Vienna to present it to the emperor. The initial version of the project, presented to the Court in May 1790, was very bold and uncompromising, fully corresponding to the tone of the *Betrachtungen*. If accepted, this „Constitution“ would practically bring back the *Rzeczpospolita* governance system, with the Habsburgs having only nominal authority and no competencies without the approval of the noble Estates. Even the formal features of the Habsburg presence were to be significantly reduced – for example, the name for districts had to be changed from a „disgusting“ German *Kreise* to a Polish *starostwa* to satisfy the „patriotic feelings“ of the people. The

⁴⁰² Ibid, 295.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 335.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 351f.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 354.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, 357.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid, 330.

German language in the official documents had to be fully replaced by Latin and Polish.⁴⁰⁸ Despite the boldness of the document, the government accepted it as the starting point for negotiations and voiced readiness for concessions in a number of matters that were crucial for the *szlachta*.⁴⁰⁹ The delegation handed over the rewritten document to Leopold II on 19th September 1790 under the title *Charta Leopoldina*. This time, the intended „hybridity“ between Habsburgs and the *szlachta* in the crownland government was more pronounced. This document was also written in a milder tone, stressing the benefits the symbiotic government would bring both parties.

The *Charta* turned the Galician noble Estates into the main body of local authority. They were to be given the widest competencies in all spheres of public life, from the introduction and approval of legislation to the control over local finances and education. They would also have ultimate control over the key official positions in the crownland, either by filling them directly or by giving the emperor a limited number of candidates to choose from. The Estates were to send a representative to the Viennese Court, so that he would defend the interests of the crownland in the central government. In order to prevent potential accusations of defending only the corporate interests of the noble class, the *Charta* suggested that the Estates should also contain representatives of the cities' population (and not just of Lviv, but of other major cities as well), clergy, the highest bureaucracy, and even the advocates of the peasantry (the latter, however, would only be given an advisory voice). At the same time, the *Charta* strictly demanded that only those born in Galicia could be elected to the Estates; this right would be denied even to naturalized foreigners possessing local goods. Only locals had the knowledge and understanding of the crownland necessary to ensure its well-being. The only languages available for official interactions would still be Latin and Polish (the latter named „the language of the land“, thus ignoring the Ruthenian language completely). The excessive bureaucracy had to be drastically diminished. The remaining foreign personnel of the district administrations could keep their positions in the interim period, except for „a few persons hated by the people“, but was to be eventually replaced by locals. In accordance with the general *szlachta* discourse, the project justified the necessity of noble privileges

⁴⁰⁸ Stanisław Grodziski, Projekt konstytucji dla Galicji z 1790 r. („Charta Leopoldina“) (Draft constitution for Galicia from 1790 („Charta Leopoldina“) (Kraków 1981) 17–51.

⁴⁰⁹ See: Observations sur le mémoire des députés de Galicie. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 5-3, without pagination.

and demanded the restoration of serf labor obligations as the only way of saving the local economy. According to the *Charta*, the Galician population was used to the authority of the *szlachta*, and would not fully accept a different power. The *szlachta*, in turn, felt personal responsibility for the people in Galicia as a part of their class honor, and always acted for their benefit. In addition to that, the involvement of the wealthy *szlachta* in state administration would prevent the spread of corruption.

If the project was implemented, there would hardly be a sphere in Galician politics left where the emperor could exercise his power completely without the intervention of the Estates. Most of the decisions of the Estates were to be approved by the emperor, however, he could not suggest any changes to these decisions, but could only approve or decline them completely. He was to send his representative to each session of the Estates. Additionally, he could also choose three candidates for the speaker of the Estates position for the Estates to choose from, but these candidates had to belong to the landowning nobility born in Galicia. In district administrations, the emperor was given the competency to choose the head (only among the landowning local nobility) and three out of six members of the local council, the other three members were to be chosen by the Estates. *Charta* also strongly recommended the emperor to choose two members among the local *szlachta*, and one – among the bourgeoisie, „to keep the balance between estates“.

In return, the *Charta* suggested full recognition of Galician subordination to the Habsburg crown. The text accepted the „revindication“ narrative of the Empire, calling Galicia „an old Hungarian province“ (which did not, however, mean the nullification of all the *szlachta* „freedoms“ just because they were not guaranteed by the Monarchy). The authors proclaimed their duty to „seek stronger ties with the ruling dynasty“. Throughout the text, the Habsburg monarch was called „the king“, thus suggesting a continuation of the old Polish-Lithuanian political traditions. It was also suggested that by accepting the title of the King of Hungary during the coronation, the future Habsburg rulers would adopt the title of the King of Galicia and Lodomeria. To ensure the stronger ties between Vienna and Lviv, the delegation proposed that future Governors to be chosen among the Habsburg princes of the blood. Finally, the very name *Charta Leopoldina* was to

symbolize the *szlachta*'s personal gratitude towards Leopold II, and the text of the *Charta* was to be read on every opening of the Estates sessions in the years to come.⁴¹⁰

Although the *Charta* did not oppose the general idea of Galicia belonging to the Habsburg Monarchy, it did come out strongly against most principles accompanying the Viennese government, such as the absolutist centralization of the state and the curtailment of the influence wielded by nobles over local administration. It also reinforced the *szlachta*'s claim to a unique right to authority in Galicia and to unchecked control over its population. The *Charta* thus aimed to protect the *szlachta*'s dominant social position without directly confronting the Habsburgs, navigating a complex colonial dynamic of acquiescence and resistance. If the text had been adopted, it would effectively resurrect the *szlachta* „Golden Liberty“ within the Kingdom, even if covered by a thin layer of formal loyalty towards the emperor.

In spite of this, the document was accepted by the Habsburg Monarchy as a starting point for negotiations. In January 1791, a special Court Commission issued a critical evaluation of the project, warning of potential separatist tendencies and threats to the integrity of the state. It also cautioned against granting excessive privileges to the Galician nobility, emphasizing the risk of neglecting the broader population. The adoption of the Constitution of 3rd May 1791 in Warsaw complicated the matter further, serving as a potential inspiration for the Galician *szlachta* to distance themselves even more from the Habsburg government.⁴¹¹ The members of the delegation still believed that their affair could be resolved approvingly – in a letter to his cousin in February 1792 Ossoliński expressed hope that the emperor himself would „treat our land better than before“, especially after being advised by Governor Brigido against propagating the Josephinian system of land administration.⁴¹² A new commission was convened shortly thereafter, which could have issued a different comment, however, the sudden death of the emperor in 1792 put an end to all discussions concerning the *Charta Leopoldina*. The new emperor, Franz II, turned out to be a much stronger proponent of state centralization than his father. Ossoliński still hoped that the change of monarch could galvanize the Galician affair, and even tried to start new negotiations concerning the „constitution

⁴¹⁰ Grodziski, Projekt konstytucji, 53–159.

⁴¹¹ Malecki, Wydział Krajowy, 31.

⁴¹² Jabłońska, Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego, 37. See also: *Řezník*, Das Landespatriotische Programm, 753.

project“, however, they would never be realized.⁴¹³ The project never came up into discussion with the government again, and, in April 1793 the delegation was sent home „in a proper manner“. ⁴¹⁴

The first two decades of the Habsburg Galician history were the time of the biggest and most daring changes that the imperial government attempted to introduce in its new crownland. These reforms had a very ambitious goal of „civilizing“ Galicia and its inhabitants while aligning it with the rest of the territories of the „enlightened“ Monarchy. The initial strategy to transform Galicia into the model example of the Enlightened Absolutism practices failed, however, due to the significant lack of knowledge and understanding of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories.⁴¹⁵ The new regime tried to balance between disenfranchising the *szlachta* and involving it in the Habsburg state-building project, on the one hand, and provoking the indigenous elites to an open revolt, on the other. This ultimately resulted in half measures that satisfied none of the groups involved, including the Habsburg officials themselves.

The *Urbarialreform*, declared at the end of Joseph II’s reign, represented the government’s last attempt at a comprehensive restructuring of Galicia’s socio-economic landscape. However, its radical disregard for the interests of the Galician *szlachta* triggered clear resistance, leading to the reform’s swift abandonment. Nonetheless, an analysis of the petitions submitted by the Galician nobility immediately following the First Partition and in the early 1790s suggests that, rather than seeking to overturn Habsburg authority, the *szlachta* was largely preoccupied with preserving its own privileged status within the new colonial order. The authors of these petitions immediately recognized the Habsburgs as a legitimate power in their homeland and were ready to treat it as a party in compromise negotiations, and not as a usurper to be eliminated. The closest both Habsburg government and Galician *szlachta* came to reaching consensus were the negotiations concerning *Charta Leopoldina* project. They would ultimately prove, however, that the aspirations of the Habsburg and the *szlachta* were too opposite to be reconciled. The former still aimed at absolutist control over the

⁴¹³ *Jabłońska*, Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego, 39.

⁴¹⁴ *Daszyk*, Eroberer oder Anwärter, 146.

⁴¹⁵ Hans-Jürgen *Bömelburg*, Aufgeklärte Beamte gegen barock-katholische Adelseliten. Ein Vergleich der österreichischen und preussischen Verwaltungspraxis in Galizien und Westpreussen (1772–1806). In: Walter *Leitsch*, Stanisław *Trawkowski*, Wojciech *Kriegseisen* (eds.), Polen und Österreich im 18. Jahrhundert (Warszawa 2000) 19–40 here 33.

crownland, while the latter wished to be recognized as a legitimate power in Galicia with nearly unlimited authority and very little accountability to Vienna. While the Habsburgs could not abandon their attempts to subalternize the *szlachta* and bring it under the absolutist state model, most of the *szlachta* would not accept the loss of its privileges at any cost. Following the death of Leopold II and the ascension of his son, Franz II (I), the Habsburg Empire shifted its focus from radical reforms to preserving the stability and unity of the realm amid the intense upheavals of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This change in direction curtailed any further experimentation in domestic affairs. Combined with the rapidly evolving international landscape, this shift had immediate implications for Habsburg policies toward the former Polish-Lithuanian territories and their nobility.

Chapter 3. Stability over Experiment: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *Szlachta* during and after the Third Partition.

1. The Third Partition and the Habsburg Monarchy: Establishing West Galicia.

Twenty years after the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the „noble republic“ once again fell victim to its powerful neighbors and was deprived of 307,000 km², more than half of its sovereign territory at the time. This time, however, the Habsburg Monarchy did not take part in the partition, as it was heavily entangled in the War of the First Coalition. This abstention was in no way voluntary – aware of the occupation of the Polish-Lithuanian lands, Vienna expected to be invited to the partition negotiations and hoped to receive some territorial compensation. Contrary to these wishes, the Habsburg Empire was faced with the fact of the Second Partition after its ratification.⁴¹⁶ To accept its results and join the treaty between the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, the Monarchy demanded territorial compensation at the expense of the still-untouched *Rzeczpospolita* lands, which would secure the Habsburgs from the northeast and let it concentrate its efforts on the war with revolutionary France.

The area between the Vistula and Bug rivers was particularly desired. Control over the city of Kraków, with its symbolic significance and strategic position, was central to the Monarchy's ambitions.⁴¹⁷ Possession of the old Polish capital and all its relics would have a symbolic value for the owner, and, even though the decisive elimination of the *Rzeczpospolita* was not yet agreed upon, the occupation of Kraków would undoubtedly deal a blow to Polish-Lithuanian statehood and suppress the willingness of its people to resist foreign rule.⁴¹⁸ In addition, Kraków's fortress posed a potential military threat to the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. Even after 20 years of possessing Galicia, the Empire was not entirely confident of the loyalty of its noble elites in the face of Polish patriotic sentiments widespread in early 1790s, as has already been demonstrated in

⁴¹⁶ Zbigniew Góralski, *Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski* (Austria and the Third Partition of Poland) (Warszawa 1979) 32f.

⁴¹⁷ Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland*, 170f.

⁴¹⁸ Michał Baczkowski, *Czy Kraków mógł zostać stolicą Galicji na początku XIX wieku?* (Could Kraków have become the capital of Galicia at the beginning of the 19th century?). In: *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Historyczne* 136 (2009) 49–56, here 52.

Chapter 2. Securing Kraków would be a direct continuation of the Habsburg colonial strategy in Galicia, as it would strengthen the Monarchy's inner security and significantly weaken the ties between the Galician *szlachta* and the remaining Polish-Lithuanian state.⁴¹⁹

At first, both Prussia and Russia understandably hesitated to assist the Habsburgs in satisfying their ambitions concerning the *Rzeczpospolita*'s territories. However, the sudden outbreak of the Kościuszko uprising in 1794 allowed not only the Danube Monarchy to fulfill its goals, but also all the three partitioning states to eliminate the „Polish question“ in international relations and move it almost entirely into the sphere of domestic politics for the following 123 years, with only occasional resurfacing during moments of major upheaval. Although the ultimate goal of the uprising was the full liberation of the former Polish-Lithuanian lands from foreign domination, the insurgents primarily targeted Russian forces, with Prussia being a secondary focus. Kościuszko believed that the Habsburg Empire would eventually become a crucial ally in restoring Polish-Lithuanian sovereignty. This hope, widely shared among his followers, stemmed particularly from the fact that the Habsburg Monarchy had not participated in the Second Partition – unaware as they were of the Vienna's negotiations regarding potential territorial compensation.⁴²⁰ Among the pro-uprising *szlachta* on both sides of the border, rumors circulated that the Viennese government would gladly transfer the territory of the crownland to resurrected Poland in the event of uprising's success.⁴²¹ Although this statement was unsupported by evidence, its emergence confirms the Galician *szlachta*'s conviction that the Habsburg government could be persuaded to compromise with the wishes of the local elites, and that the nobility in Galicia held significant influence in the crownland even after decades of foreign rule.

As Kościuszko sought Habsburg favor (or at the very least neutrality), he immediately reassured Vienna that he did not consider himself an enemy of the Empire, and that the territory of Galicia lay beyond the intentions of the insurgents.⁴²² His supporters were ordered the following: „the borders of the imperial-royal territories are

⁴¹⁹ Robert H. Lord, The Third Partition of Poland. In: The Slavonic Review 3, No. 9 (1925) 481–498, here 489. See also: Góralski, Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski, 38.

⁴²⁰ Góralski, Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski, 43.

⁴²¹ Stanisław Schnür-Peplowski, Z przeszłości Galicyi (1772–1862) (From the past of Galicia (1772–1862) (Lwów 1895) 121.

⁴²² Lukowski, The Partitions of Poland, 169f.

to be kept intact, respected, and neighborly, friendly peace is to be maintained, and the citizens of the Austrian state are not to be persuaded or drawn to the service of the *Rzeczpospolita* by any means or ways, and even in general, no appearance is to be given that through the insurrection any unrest might have been aroused among the inhabitants, or regarding the administration of imperial-royal territories“. At first glance, this order could be interpreted as a refusal by Kościuszko to recognize Galicia as an inalienable Polish-Lithuanian territory, as the land and its population were merely a pawn in pleading for Habsburg support. In reality, however, the leader of the uprising foresaw that Galicia would join the rebuilt Polish-Lithuanian state after diplomatic negotiations, and not through a violent takeover. The favor of the Habsburgs toward the resurrected *Rzeczpospolita* could be ensured through the marriage of one of the Habsburg archdukes with a princess of Saxony and one of the potential successors to the Polish throne, Maria Augusta. To compensate Vienna for territorial loss, it would be guaranteed Silesia, a land that for decades had been the most desired goal of the Habsburg foreign policy. As for the *szlachta* in Galicia, Kościuszko demonstrated his interest in their loyalty through the choice of a mediator in negotiations with the Habsburgs. The mission was entrusted to Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, a man who had already demonstrated both his loyalty to the Viennese court and persistence in defending the „freedoms“ of the Galician *szlachta* during negotiations concerning the *Charta Leopoldina* project in 1791.⁴²³ Thereby, the Galician nobility could be reassured that its interests would not be forgotten during the negotiations, and no attempt at disenfranchisement would be made this time.

The attitude of the Galician *szlachta* towards the uprising and its goals was split. On the one hand, despite all the attempts of Kościuszko to stay on amiable terms with the Habsburg Monarchy, he could not prevent parts of the local *szlachta* from expressing their enthusiasm for the uprising. Politically active Galician noblemen left Galicia to fill the ranks of the insurgents, various aid collections among the nobility were organized, and meetings of those planning assistance to Kościuszko forces took place. The most radical noblemen were talking about overthrowing the Habsburg administration without waiting for external support, however, most uprising supporters believed that the return of Galicia to the Polish-Lithuanian state would be peaceful.⁴²⁴ On the other hand, the revolutionary

⁴²³ Schnür-Peplowski, *Z przeszłości Galicyi*, 124.

⁴²⁴ Góralski, *Austria a trzeci rozbiór Polski*, 69f.

slogans of the uprising and the clearly republican views of its leader resonated quite badly with the worldview of many Galician magnates, who were already deeply affected by the events of the 1789 French Revolution.⁴²⁵ Even though the subalternization strategies of the Habsburgs over the past few decades had guaranteed the Galician *szlachta* at least some stability and prestige, as well as a substantial income, they had also restricted the *szlachta* from influencing the politics of the crownland any longer. Nevertheless, their social status and economic position remained largely intact. The cancellation of the most radical Josephinian reforms during the short reign of Leopold II, as well as his readiness to consider the *szlachta*'s demands in the form of the *Charta Leopoldina* just a few years earlier, gave the nobility hope that in the future, the Habsburgs might be even more favorable towards their *szlachta* subjects, and that the hybridity in the crownland administration between the central government and the local noble elites would eventually manifest itself. At the same time, the spread of the Kościuszko uprising throughout Galician territory would undoubtedly disrupt even this flawed stability and overturn the remaining privileges of the local aristocracy. Moreover, the radicalism of the insurgents, their intransigence towards their enemies and the plans of radical agrarian reforms after the successful elimination of the foreign element in Polish-Lithuanian politics caused fear among the Galician *szlachta* for their personal well-being.⁴²⁶ This sentiment was fueled by noble refugees fleeing to Galicia from the Kraków and Sandomierz voivodships.⁴²⁷ For many nobles, especially those with considerable wealth, personal well-being, even when guaranteed by a colonial government, turned out to be much more valuable than loyalty to the „native“ Polish regime, as the goals of this regime did not correspond to their private aspirations. As had happened before and would happen many times in the future, many of these noblemen decided to wait and act according to the development of further events.

⁴²⁵ Arnon Gill, *Freiheitskämpfe der Polen im 19. Jahrhundert: Erhebungen, Aufstände, Revolutionen* (Frankfurt am Main 1997) 37.

⁴²⁶ See: Claudia Kraft, *Das „Staatlich-Administrative“ als Feld von Aushandlungsprozessen zwischen alten und neuen polnischen Eliten Ende des 18. und zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts.* In: Karsten Holste, Dietlind Hüchtker, Michael G. Müller (eds.), *Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure - Arenen – Aushandlungsprozesse* (Berlin 2009) 21–48, here 31; Łukasz Jewuła, Tomasz Kargol, Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Dwór, wieś i plebania w przestrzeni społecznej zachodniej Małopolski w latach 1772–1815* (Manor house, village and presbytery in the social space of Western Lesser Poland in the years 1772–1815) (Kraków 2015) 134–137.

⁴²⁷ *Reznik*, *Neuorientierung einer Elite*, 451f.

As for the Habsburg Monarchy itself, its position during the uprising was quite complicated. Despite all the efforts of Kościuszko to appease Vienna and ensure it of its purely amiable strategies, the uprising posed a clear threat to the integrity of the Habsburg realm. At the beginning of the uprising, the Habsburgs had only 10,000 troops stationed in Galicia, a number certainly not sufficient to resist Kościuszko's troops if the uprising spilled over into Habsburg territory. In addition to that, the Monarchy was deeply concerned about the „Jacobin“ ideology of the uprising and the potential influence it could have over its own subjects of Polish origin.⁴²⁸ At the same time, initiating a direct confrontation with Kościuszko could be dangerous for Vienna as well. A direct clash with the insurgent troops would undoubtedly turn even more Galicians against the Habsburgs and could even motivate them to open revolt. Attacking Kościuszko would be harmful to the Empire's logistics as well – because of the ongoing war with revolutionary France, it highly depended on transporting grain to its troops via territories controlled by the insurgents. In the case of conflict with Kościuszko, the campaign in Western Europe would most likely be lost for the Habsburgs, adding yet another threat to the external security of the Empire.⁴²⁹

For all the above-mentioned reasons, the Monarchy assumed a waiting position with regard to the uprising, concentrating instead on ensuring internal stability in Galicia. On 9th April 1794, an edict was issued to the Galicians, warning them not to join the ranks of the uprising. The Poles under Habsburg rule were ordered to „behave calmly, hereby declaring that in the case of discovered participation, this order is issued to all Our Local Governments and Offices, to prohibit [the participants] from further residence, and to take utmost care that our thought and will, in order to maintain public peace, by this regulation, be marked by everyone without exception, and be fulfilled“.⁴³⁰ The police surveillance measures within Galicia were enhanced, those suspected of assisting the insurgents or spreading their propaganda in Galicia and preparing revolt there were detained and punished (although it should be noted that the arrests were not

⁴²⁸ *Lukowski*, *The Partitions of Poland*, 171.

⁴²⁹ *Góralski*, *Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski*, 75.

⁴³⁰ Reskrypt Cesarza Franciszka II do jego Polskich Podwładnych (Rescript of Emperor Franz II to his Polish Subordinates) 09.04.1794. In: Ossolineum, *Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Akta różne odnoszące się do spraw politycznych i administracyjnych ziem polskich zaborów pruskiego, austriackiego i rosyjskiego z lat 1787–1834* (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Various records relating to political and administrative matters of the Polish territories under Prussian, Austrian, and Russian partitions from the years 1787–1834), 79f.

widespread).⁴³¹ While the uprising was gaining momentum, Vienna was transferring troops to Galicia from Bohemia and Moravia, leaving behind just enough forces to defend the fortresses and ensure internal peace.⁴³²

The waiting strategy of the Habsburgs dominated until summer, when the occupation of Kraków by the Kingdom of Prussia made the Habsburg troops enter the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on 30th June 1794. As was the case in 1772, Vienna took considerable effort to find justification for its participation in the partition, and present itself as a benevolent future ruler, who had to be obeyed at all costs for the benefit of the subjects. The „historical“ arguments of the 1772 „Preliminary Reasoning“ were spread over the territories of Lublin and Sandomierz voivodships. An emphasis was also placed on the Habsburg intention to secure the territory of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria from the dangerous influence of the uprising. The cases of border violations by Kościuszko followers were used as a direct pretext for the intrusion. The Habsburgs aimed at presenting themselves as „liberators“ of the (former) *Rzeczpospolita* territories, claiming that the behavior of Russian and Prussian troops towards Poles would be much more hostile, should they take over those territories. Here one can notice the continuation of the Habsburg colonial discourse in relation to the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories, asserting that they were consciously choosing a „softer“ governance approach in comparison to Prussia and Russia and hoping to gain better control over their new subjects this way. The commander of Habsburg troops, Field Marshal Lieutenant Joseph von Harnoncourt, took one step further and claimed that the people of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had no chance to stay united within a sovereign state, and that the Habsburg monarchy took part in the Third Partition almost involuntarily, forced to do so by its more aggressive and persistent neighbors. As a result, it would not get any real profit from the entire operation, certainly not at the cost of the *Rzeczpospolita*.⁴³³ Following the 1772 pattern, the Empire did its best to present itself not as an aggressive state taking away parts from a country already lying in ruins, but rather as a victim of circumstances, attempting to gain at least some benefit from the very disadvantageous position in which it found itself due to the actions of other partitioners. Any future colonial transformations in the occupied lands could therefore be presented as

⁴³¹ Góralski, *Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski*, 84.

⁴³² *Ibid*, 100.

⁴³³ *Ibid*, 135–136.

a forced step aimed at ensuring stability within the country, and therefore one that would require unconditional compliance by the new subjects.

The loss of the uprising at the battle of Maciejowice in October 1794 meant that nothing would prevent the partitioning powers from finalizing the dismemberment of the Polish-Lithuanian state. For the Habsburgs, it also meant that the threat of anti-imperial uprising in Galicia was significantly diminished, and that they could implement their policies on newly captured lands regardless of the opinion of their own Polish subjects. The newly appointed State Commissioner in Lublin, Antoni Baum, reassured Vienna that the inhabitants of the occupied land, including the high nobility, trusted the Habsburg Monarchy and „wished it to take even more territories“ so that they would not end up in possession of the Russian Empire.⁴³⁴ Given the behavior of Russian regiments on the *Rzeczpospolita* territories during 1794 campaign, this statement seems to be at least partly justified.⁴³⁵ The same sentiment could be observed in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria – already after the partition, in August 1796 Russian troops were stationed at the Galician border, ready to enter its territory at any moment with an official pretext of aiding the Habsburgs in maintaining security over the borderlands in uncertain times. Since the Habsburg forces were quite scattered at that time, the Romanov troops could well hope to occupy the crown land without significant effort. However, their presence at the border was met with great discontent from the Galician *szlachta*, who clearly demonstrated allegiance to the Habsburgs in this matter. The Galician noble Estates of the Kingdom even suggested summoning a national militia in order to defend the crownland from a Russian invasion, which eventually did not take place.⁴³⁶

The Third Partition was finalized in early 1795. The area of the Habsburg share constituted around 48,000 sq. km. with 1,3 million inhabitants.⁴³⁷ It included parts of Kraków and Sandomierz voivodships, an entire Lubelskie voivodship, parts of Chełm land, Podlachia, Southern Masovia and Brzesko voivodship. The new border of the empire now laid along the rivers of Bug (up to the mouth of Narew), Vistula and Pilica.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 28.

⁴³⁵ Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland*, 172.

⁴³⁶ Zbigniew Góralski, *Die Grenzdemarkationen in Polen nach der dritten Teilung (1795–1797)*. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 2 (1971) 212–238, here 228f.

⁴³⁷ Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, *Dzieje Galicyi: jej stan przed wojną i „wyodrebnienie“* (The history of Galicia: its condition before the war and its „separation“) (Warszawa 1917) 28.

⁴³⁸ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 33.

The population of the newly annexed territories was more ethnically homogeneous than that of the 1772 acquisition. The majority of inhabitants were Polish-speaking Catholics, with approximately 20% belonging to the Greek Catholic Church and speaking Ukrainian/Ruthenian, and around 10% identifying as Jewish.⁴³⁹ Consequently, the dominance of the *szlachta* in these lands was rooted somewhat less in ethnic and religious distinctions and more in social hierarchies compared to the „old“ Galicia.

The creation of a new administration on the occupied lands began even during the border demarcation processes, when the limits of the new crownland were not yet fully recognized. After considering several alternatives, Emperor Franz II decided to create a new territorial entity out of the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands with the name „West Galicia“ (the territories under Habsburg rule since 1772 now bore the name „East Galicia“) with a capital in Kraków. He believed that direct subordination to Vienna would let West Galicia avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and lengthy paperwork proceedings, which would undoubtedly occur if the new lands were attached to the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria and had to correspond with central government via Lviv’s mediation.⁴⁴⁰

On the surface, the establishment of Habsburg administration in West Galicia almost literally followed the blueprint of the 1772 acquisition. However, even the smallest changes in wording and patterns in the first Habsburg patents and addresses to the population of the new crownland clearly reflected the fundamental changes in imperial ideology and governance strategies. Unlike his grandmother and uncle, Franz II was much less inspired by the Enlightened Absolutism postulates and the desire to conduct risky reforms. His ascendance to the throne occurred simultaneously with the unfolding of French Revolution, which reactionary contemporaries almost unanimously blamed on the spread of the Enlightenment ideas.⁴⁴¹ As a result, the first years of the Franz’s rule were marked by transition to a conservative and defensive approach to state governance, caused by the fear of the spread of revolutionary tendencies to the Habsburg realm and aimed at preserving the status quo in the empire.⁴⁴² Whereas Joseph II valued creativity, self-reliance, and dedication to the state in his officials, Franz I emphasized hierarchy,

⁴³⁹ Karsten *Holste*, Herrschaftsstrategien der Teilungsmächte. In: Michael G. *Müller* (ed.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 3, Die polnisch-litauischen Länder unter der Herrschaft der Teilungsmächte (1772/1795–1914)* (Stuttgart 2018) 43–86, here 48.

⁴⁴⁰ *Mencel*, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 38.

⁴⁴¹ *Fillafer*, *Aufklärung habsburgisch*, 455, 457.

⁴⁴² *Judson*, *The Habsburg Empire*, 89.

subordination, and respect as essential qualities in the civil service. He also reinforced the authority of the Monarchy, marking a shift toward a more structured system of governance. One of the later governmental decrees reflected this change, confirming the emperor's views by prioritizing the monarch's central role and asserting the need for obedience and respect within the bureaucratic structure to ensure both the inner and outer stability of the state.⁴⁴³ Any hints of local autonomy in administrative matters that appeared in the last year of Joseph II or during the short reign of Leopold II were eradicated and replaced with strong centralist tendencies.⁴⁴⁴

On the former lands of the *Rzeczpospolita*, a shift in ideological discourse became evident even before the Third Partition. Shortly after Franz II ascended the throne, a document emerged entitled *Prüfung Galiziens, oder freymüthige, aber wahrhaft patriotische und unpartheyliche Abschilderung Galiziens*. The author of the document chose to remain anonymous, but internal evidence suggests that he was a high-ranking government official whose primary concern was the welfare of the Empire. On the one hand, he expressed sympathy for the local population, both noble and common, and criticized the agrarian reforms of the 1770s and 1780s. In his view, the abolition of serfdom had impoverished the crownland by dismantling its traditional economic structures without offering viable alternatives.⁴⁴⁵ He even proposed reintroducing serf obligations in the form of „voluntary agreements“ between landlords and peasants, with the government acting as a guarantor of fairness.⁴⁴⁶ Harsh portrayals of the local nobility as „barbaric“ or „wild“ were notably absent from the text. Instead, the author highlighted the „natural“ bond between the *szlachta* and peasants that had existed prior to the Partitions, a relationship he framed as mutually beneficial.⁴⁴⁷ He also recounted instances of nobles providing selfless aid to their serfs during times of hardship.⁴⁴⁸ On the other hand, the author's softer stance toward the Galician nobility did not translate into advocating for their increased influence in local governance. He firmly believed that Galicia's peaceful and prosperous future could only be ensured through unwavering

⁴⁴³ Waltraud Heindl, *Gehorsame Rebellen: Bürokratie und Beamte in Österreich* (Wien 2013) 50f.

⁴⁴⁴ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 33.

⁴⁴⁵ *Prüfung Galiziens, oder freymüthige, aber wahrhaft patriotische und unpartheyliche Abschilderung Galiziens*, In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten, Ktn 10, No.1, 1–159, here 14.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 89.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 31.

reliance on the Habsburg Monarchy. Any attempt by the aristocracy to challenge imperial authority, he warned, would plunge the land into chaos and violence similar to that of revolutionary France.⁴⁴⁹ In the centralized structure of absolute monarchy, guided by the wisdom of the emperor, there was no room for shared authority. The text made no mention of guaranteeing the *szlachta*'s „freedoms“ or rights that would position them as partners to the Habsburgs. Instead, it emphasized the necessity of the *szlachta* submitting to the emperor's „fatherly care“.⁴⁵⁰ The document described Galicia as „the youngest daughter“ of the Monarchy, a designation that, according to the author, entitled it to „special fatherly protection“ from the central government.⁴⁵¹ Yet this paternalistic framing left the *szlachta* deprived of any significant decision-making powers. While the author's rationale differed *somewhat* from earlier colonial discourses, he continued to advocate for the subordination of the *szlachta*. Although the notion of a „civilizing mission“ lost its harshness, the colonial undertones of Habsburg policy toward the Galician nobility remained firmly in place.⁴⁵²

While the *Prüfung* was not explicitly cited in any official decrees, the policies implemented during Franz II's reign closely adhered to its framework, particularly in continuing to subalternize the *szlachta* by denying them an independent „voice“ in local administration. On 14th February 1794, the emperor addressed his Galician subjects with a call to obedience and non-participation in any gatherings or events threatening the integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy then beginning to take place on the Polish-Lithuanian territories: „We respect and appreciate with the greatest satisfaction the observed obedience and love of peace and order in our subjects in Galicia, and that they did not participate in any plans and plots in relation to new varieties and temptations in Poland“.⁴⁵³ The main attraction of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories was their natural and population resources, which the Empire desperately needed due to its continuous participation in wars against revolutionary France.⁴⁵⁴ Additionally, West Galicia became the Empire's new frontier of defense against its neighbors in the event of military conflict.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 78.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid, 157.

⁴⁵² Previously discussed in: *Krushynska*, *Becoming subaltern*, 606f.

⁴⁵³ Cited after: *Schnür-Peplowski*, *Z przeszłości Galicyi*, 120.

⁴⁵⁴ *Mencel*, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 296.

At the same time, its border location increased the risk of losing crownland in war.⁴⁵⁵ Because of this, the incorporation of the new crownland into the body of the Monarchy had to be done in such a way that the resources invested did not exceed the potential benefits to the empire, and that it did not create additional risks to internal stability. This made all long-term and multi-stage reform plans aimed at fundamentally changing the character of the territory and its elites inexpedient.

To further illustrate the shifts in Habsburg politics towards their subjects, one should look at the texts of the very first documents and instructions given to the West Galician population. In the first sentence of the acquisition patent dated 21st March 1796, which generally followed the pattern of the 1772 document, the emperor vaguely mentioned the „current conditions“ that had caused the „full dissolution of the former Polish Kingdom“.⁴⁵⁶ The partition treaty was mentioned as an accomplished event, without any attempt at justification or historical reflection; the plans for improvement of the new territory were omitted, except for a short remark that „Our intentions shall be aimed at the welfare of the incorporated provinces“. The emperor appointed Johann Wenzel von Margelik for the plenipotentiary commissioner and demanded that his new subjects obey him fully, without waiting for the official tribute ceremony. Unlike the 1772 decree, the 1796 document required the immediate removal of all the Polish-Lithuanian coats of arms, replacing them with imperial emblems – a symbolic erasure of local identity that reflected the colonial intentions of the Empire. This action, occurring less than two years after the Kościuszko uprising, revealed how the visible remnants of the Polish-Lithuanian statehood had become an amplified threat to monarchical security. The patent also mandated that all public prayers in West Galicia be directed „for Us and Our most serene Noble House,“ emphasizing the importance of performative loyalty. The insistence on these external signs of regime change delivered a clear message to the population: any expression of allegiance to the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian state was unacceptable, even in its absence.

⁴⁵⁵ *Maner*, Zwischen „Kompensationsobjekt“, 116. See also: Burkhard Wöller, Galizien als geographisches Integrationsproblem. Fremdverortungen und mentale Kartierungen des habsburgischen Kronlandes in der deutschen und österreichischen Geografie. In: *Kakanien revisited* (03.06.2010), online under <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/BWoeller1.pdf> (retrieved 25.03.2025) 3f.

⁴⁵⁶ Sr. k.k. Majestät Franz des Zweyten Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die Oesterreichischen, Böhmischen und Galizischen Erbländer: Vom 1. Januar bis Letzten Junius 1796 (Wien 1796) 117–119.

The next patent, published on 25th March 1796, contained an order to West Galician inhabitants to come back to their settlement areas. Unlike the 1772 document on the same subject, it was written in a much more formal and aloof way. The return had to take place because the emperor saw no reasons for the inhabitants to put off such a step – he promised to grant the new crownland the same religious freedoms that existed in the rest of the Empire. He also mentioned the „mild procedure“ which led to the acquisition of the *Rzeczpospolita* territories, reflecting a colonial narrative that sought to mask imperial conquest with the language of benevolence and order. An interesting parallel could be drawn with a similar patent published under the name of Maria Theresia – while she promised that anyone involved in the recent Bar Confederation uprising would be fully pardoned and not held criminally liable, Franz II was in no hurry to grant amnesty to the participants of the Kościuszko uprising. Because of this, one might draw conclusions, that the events of 1794 left a much bigger impact on the Viennese government than the 1768–1772 crisis.⁴⁵⁷

On 3rd April 1796 the imperial government issued a prohibition for the serfs to leave the new Habsburg territories, as well as for anyone to assist them in that matter, and the promise of a reward for anyone who would assist the new administration in catching those violating the regulation.⁴⁵⁸ The document stated that the territories of the new crownland were to „all receive order and peace, the property must be protected, the justice must be implemented, and these beneficial effects of Our care must be distributed to all classes without difference“. Reflecting on the unlimited power of the nobility in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, especially the scope of power the landowners had over their serfs, one cannot help but wonder if such a choice of words signaled the abrupt and definitive end of the „freedoms“ for the *szlachta* in a new crownland. By referring to „all classes without difference“ and removing the right to define the destiny of the serf from a noble landowner, the emperor established the government in West Galicia that stood above any previously existing power structures, even the centuries-old privileges of the aristocrat. This move exemplified the centralist ambitions of Franz II, which were even more pronounced than those of Maria Theresia. Unlike her, Franz II felt no need to placate the Galician nobility for fear of their allegiance shifting back to the Polish-

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 120f.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 123–125.

Lithuanian Commonwealth, whose power had been effectively neutralized. The Habsburg government could therefore more assertively pursue the subjugation of the *szlachta*, accelerating the process of rendering them subaltern subjects within both East and West Galicia.

As was the case after the First Partition, the Habsburg government placed great value on the symbolic transfer of government over the crownland, which occurred during a festive ceremony. The free residents of West Galicia were to pay a tribute according to instructions published on 13th June 1796. They were to be divided into three estates (clergy, nobility and commoners), and each of them had to take an oath to their new emperor in the same manner as it was performed in Eastern Galicia in 1773. This time, the central government did not bother to justify the meaning of the ceremony for the benefit of either West Galicia or the Habsburg Monarchy. The instructions were issued in a very precise and laconic manner, and, although Franz II referred to his „fatherly care and love“ towards West Galicians at the end of the text, he otherwise refrained from showing any emotions or personal interest in the matter of obedience of his new subjects, unlike Maria Theresia did in her respective patent. Moreover, this time the texts of an oath towards Habsburgs were given only in Latin, and not in Polish. This, along with rapid removal of the Polish-Lithuanian heraldic from display, could be taken as a sign of hostility towards any public manifestation of Polish national identity. This signal appeared especially directed at the noble *Natio Polonica*, whose status and way of life faced the most profound changes among the entire population of the new crownland. Prior to the Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the *szlachta* believed itself the carrier of the state's essence, and the sole group defining the agendas of its existence. The matter of the Polish nationhood was thus almost identical with the *Rzeczpospolita szlachta* culture, and the tolerance towards the Polish-Lithuanian symbols could be interpreted permitting further *szlachta* arbitrariness. The centralist aspirations of the new government demanded therefore, that the public space of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories be cleared of the attributes of the former regime as soon as possible.

The ceremony itself took place in Kraków on 17th August of the same year. On behalf of the emperor, the oaths of Galicians were accepted by the plenipotentiary Court

Commissioner Karl von Auersperg.⁴⁵⁹ Among the *szlachta* members paying tribute to the new government were representatives of the most prominent aristocratic families of the former *Rzeczpospolita*, such as Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, Stanisław Małachowski, Franciszek Żeleński, Antoni Ledóchowski, Antoni Lanckoroński and many others.⁴⁶⁰ More than anyone, they must have understood that the disintegration of Polish-Lithuanian state marked radical changes in their socio-political status. Even after the First Partition, the Galician magnates discontented with the Habsburg administration had an option to return to the Polish-Lithuanian state and pursue their political aspirations there, without any concessions to the Habsburg „civilizing mission“. After 1795, however, the *szlachta* in both Galicias faced no alternative but to build their future in close dependence on the Habsburg government, either by seeking some compromise with it, or attempting resistance.

2. The Galician *Szlachta*'s Response to the Third Partition.

The initial response of West Galician noble elites to the news of the signing of the partition treaty and the elimination of the *Rzeczpospolita* was rather passive, as the future existence of the new Habsburg crownland remained undefined.⁴⁶¹ By the time of the official tribute ceremony, however, many of the local noblemen had decided to use the occasion to address their new government and attempt to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with Vienna. These petitions, both from individual noblemen and the *szlachta* groups, contained many political requests aimed at securing the privileged position of the local aristocracy after the regime change. The petitioners also wanted to prevent full absorption of West Galicia into the Monarchy and to provide it with a certain degree of autonomy. For example, the *szlachta* wanted to ensure the usage of Polish language in administration matters and official correspondence. Still influenced by the notion that the Habsburg Monarchy was the most favorable towards the Poles and the Polish-Lithuanian

⁴⁵⁹ Stanisław Grodziski, Postulaty szlachty Galicji Zachodniej z okazji hołdu w 1796 roku (Demands of the nobility of Western Galicia on the occasion of the homage in 1796). In: *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 20, No. 2 (1968) 81–93, here 84.

⁴⁶⁰ Tadeusz Mencil, Magnateria polska Galicji w polityce władz austriackich w latach 1795–1809 (The Polish magnates of Galicia in the policy of the Austrian authorities in the years 1795–1809). In: Janina Leskiewiczowa (ed.), *Ziemiaństwo Polskie 1795–1945 (Polish gentry 1795–1945)* (Warszawa 1985) 27–84, here 45.

⁴⁶¹ Góralski, *Austria a Trzeci Rozbiór Polski*, 271.

state out of the three partitioning states, some noblemen even requested the government „to preserve the name of Poland, Polish language and Polish administration“. A crucial matter for the *szlachta* was also the calling of noble Estates in West Galicia, following the example of East Galicia.⁴⁶²

To get an idea of the general aspirations of the West Galician *szlachta* at the time, one should look at an anonymous document, which closely followed the pattern of East Galician petitions to the Habsburgs in early 1790s. It tried to establish a hybrid regime satisfying both the central government and the local nobility and guaranteeing their equal participation in decision-making processes. The document bore the name „Humble Address to His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty from the Citizens of West Galicia“ (*Pokorne przełożenie do Jego Cesarsko-Królewskiej Apostolskiej Mości od Obywatelów zachodniej Galicji*). It became yet another manifestation of the Galician *szlachta* discourse, attempting to resist the Habsburg strategies of subalternization while also seeking to build a hybrid power regime beneficial to both what might be termed the colonial government and the indigenous elites. It contained aspirations and fears almost identical to the ones voiced by the East Galicians in the early 1790s; however, it also quite eloquently reflected the shifts in nobility's rhetoric concerning its position in the Habsburg Monarchy structure.

The document was written in a very humble tone and did not contain any threats or direct demands; it was in no way a detailed project for a compromise relationship with the ruling dynasty. Moreover, the authors asserted that they represented the *szlachta* and not the whole nation, in contrast with the general belief of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility that the *szlachta* was indeed the only „true“ Polish nation. Since this belief had caused resistance from the Habsburg government during the consideration of the *Charta Leopoldina* project, it could be assumed that the authors of the „Humble Address“ added this formulation to the text to make it more credible. The text could also be regarded as a reflection of the evolving mindset of the *szlachta*, which after the Third Partition had lost hope of remaining the leading force in the crownland and no longer dared to lead negotiations from a position of unlimited power.

⁴⁶² Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 57-59.

In the very first sentence, the authors lamented the destiny of the West Galician *szlachta*: „It is sad for us to stop being Poles“.⁴⁶³ At the same time, they accepted the destruction of the *Rzeczpospolita* and its government, and were ready to change not just their allegiance but their identity as well. The wording „when we were Poles“ is repeated several times throughout the text; the authors clearly put their identity in direct dependence on the government they were subordinate to, although they were not ready to use the name „Galicians“ freely. They admitted that the events of the 1794 uprising posed a direct threat to their well-being; at the same time, „during the violent transfer from one form of government to another in Poland, our compatriots in Galicia were enjoying peace“. That made the West Galician nobility hope that the Habsburg government would provide them with the similar conditions of favorability and care; in return, they promised the emperor their loyalty and trust, as they had already learned „the price of a good government“. The „Humble Address“ suggested a very important concession to the central government – despite the clear value that most *szlachta* members placed on preserving the status of Polish language in public life, the authors of the project asked the emperor to temporarily allow its usage in political matters and Latin in court proceedings. This would have allowed young West Galician noblemen to enter state service; once all of them learned German well enough, it was proposed that German would become the sole official language. Thus, at least part of the West Galician *szlachta* accepted the Germanization of the land as an inevitable future.

According to the „Humble Address“, the favorability of the Habsburgs toward the *szlachta* had to primarily concern the inviolability and security of their property. The authors asked Franz II to confirm not only the property rights „provided to our ancestors by Polish rulers“, but also all the „freedoms and privileges of primacy in private and public life“. They accepted in advance the radical changes in the taxation regime that were awaiting West Galicia and would undoubtedly mirror the reforms implemented after the First Partition. The *szlachta* dared only to humbly request an easing of tax burdens on

⁴⁶³ Pokorne przełożenie do Jego Cesarsko-Królewskiej Apostolskiej Mości od obywatelów Zachodniej Galicji (Humble Address to His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty from the Citizens of West Galicia). In: Ossolineum, Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Akta różne odnoszące się do spraw politycznych i administracyjnych ziem polskich zaborów pruskiego, austriackiego i rosyjskiego z lat 1787–1834 (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Various records relating to political and administrative matters of the Polish territories under Prussian, Austrian, and Russian partitions from the years 1787–1834), 85–96.

the crownland due to the suffering it had endured during the uprising and its suppression. However, they would not fully accept the cancellation or severe limitation of serfdom. Remembering the disastrous results that such an action brought to East Galicia less than a decade ago, the authors tried to persuade the emperor to be cautious with any peasantry reforms. In their opinion, the landlords in Galicia would themselves gladly provide peasants with land „through a secure and permanent arrangement“, whereas the intrusion of a foreign administration unfamiliar with local social relations would once again lead to the impoverishment of the entire population. For the same reason, they argued that the official positions in West Galicia should be given to the locals rather than officials „imported“ from other Habsburg lands. They also wanted to ensure that these positions would be taken by individuals who could pass „a practical exam“, meaning they possessed sufficient knowledge and skills. This was a clear critique of the East Galician administration, where many officials lacked those qualifications.

The project of creating noble Estates for West Galicia was a key aspect for the „Humble Address“. The Josephinian regulation from 1782 was accepted as a blueprint of the future Estates; however, the authors wanted the parliament meeting in Kraków to have a much bigger scope of power than the Lviv one. The West Galician Estates were to establish direct communication with Vienna without the Governor's mediation and were to have a right to protest against unwanted decisions of the emperor. In addition, the members of the Estates were to elect two noblemen from among themselves to assist the Governor in ruling the crownland. Since none of the noble representations in the Habsburg Monarchy exercised such autonomy at the time, the bold suggestions of the *szlachta* practically condemned the „Humble Address“ to failure. However, the authors saw the Estates as crucial to an effective provincial administration, once again applying the argument that the *szlachta* knew local circumstances and that it would be much better for the central government to cooperate with them than to antagonize them.

In the end, the „Humble Address“ demonstrated that even after the disintegration of the Polish-Lithuanian state, the *szlachta* would not fully abandon the narrative of being the dominant power in the land. Fully aware of the disenfranchisement that their East Galician compatriots had to go through in the 1770s and 1780s, the West Galician *szlachta* attempted to avoid this fate and establish a mutually beneficial coexistence with the foreign regime. At the same time, they were aware that they did not have sufficient

leverage over the Habsburgs and could only rely on their goodwill. Because of that, the *szlachta* offered concessions that they would not have agreed to during the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and that would have been more in line with the imperial centralization policies than any previous documents of similar content.

Vienna initially reacted to the stream of petitions from the West Galician *szlachta* by agreeing to some minor concessions while not touching the more fundamental matters. On 14th January 1797, *Gazeta Krakowska* issued an imperial decree in response to „the numerous petitions of the *szlachta*“, which postponed the convening of the noble Estates „to the times when the inhabitants of West Galicia are used to Habsburg rule“. The usage of Latin and Polish languages was allowed only in conjunction with German, and the Poles were promised minor positions in local administration and courts.⁴⁶⁴ Von Margelik was informed that the central government did not want to receive any more addresses from the local *szlachta*, as the architecture of the future crownland could only be decided in Vienna. At the same time, the emperor agreed to receive deputation from the West Galician nobility and the highest clergy. The *szlachta* was represented by noblemen with reputations for being the most loyal to the Habsburgs – Antoni Ledóchowski and Franciszek Żeleński. At first, their mission was solely to express gratitude to their new monarch and to pay him tribute in person. Apart from asking for the right to provide *indygenat*, no other requests were allowed.⁴⁶⁵ However, the delegation had prepared yet another memorial to Franz II, which, after receiving approval from the Court Chancellery, was presented to the emperor during an audience on 1st March 1797.⁴⁶⁶

The text of the memorial, as well as the response to it, was printed in *Gazeta Krakowska*.⁴⁶⁷ The text began by acknowledging that the destiny and happiness of the West Galician inhabitants were now in hands of the emperor and his government – therefore, it was in the *szlachta*’s best interest to win over his adherence. Franz II was praised for being „incomparable“ to other monarchs in his ability to govern, as „they have

⁴⁶⁴ Doniesienie Jegomości Grafowi Małachowskiemu w Rzeczniowie (Report to His Excellency Count Małachowski in Rzecznioów). In: *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 28 (05. 04. 1797) 11f.

⁴⁶⁵ *Mencel*, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 62.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 64.

⁴⁶⁷ Memoryal Najjaśniejszemu Monarsze Franciszkowi II Cesarzowi Królowi podany od Franciszka Żeleńskiego orderu orła białego kawalera, i Antoniego Ledochowskiego orderu S. Stanisława kawalera, delegowanych Zachodniej Gallicyi, na audiencji 1. Marca 1797 roku (Memorial to His Serene Highness Monarch Franz II the Emperor and King given by Franciszek Zelensky, Knight of the Order of the White Eagle, and Antoni Ledochowski, Knight of the Order of St. Stanislaus, delegated from West Galicia, at an audience on 1st March 1797.). In: *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 103 (24. 12. 1797) 1–3.

only one nation to rule, one set of traditions and needs, one language and one character to control“. The Habsburg monarch, on the contrary, managed to govern a multi-ethnic empire, being able to guarantee each nation’s freedom in exercising their traditions and character, as long as each of them „bows before the throne“. Therefore, West Galicia considered itself more lucky than other parts of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as it had become a part of a state, where „no nation rules over another one“. The authors referred to the 1794 insurrection as well, claiming that „not only did His Majesty not use his power to destroy the existence of the Polish people, but at the same time, when the entire land was suffering from the hardships of war, he gave those Poles, who wanted nothing but peace, shelter and security in his own realm“.

The requests of the delegation were much more modest even in comparison to the „Humble Address“, to say nothing of the documents of the early 1790s. The emperor was asked to spare the inhabitants of West Galicia from the offenses their East Galician counterparts had to suffer at the hands of foreign officials for the past 25 years. He was also petitioned to allow the use of the Polish language in official correspondence. This time, the *szlachta* did not mention the meaning the language had for the *Natio Polonica*, most probably anticipating that such an argument would only alienate the colonial government with its centralization intentions. Instead, they referred merely to the practicality of such a solution – not many inhabitants of West Galicia could speak German fluently, and the translation of all documents would take up too much time and resources, sabotaging the application of the new government’s policies. The document expressed the conviction that His Majesty would listen to the requests expressed in previous petitions and allow West Galicia to have its own noble Estates, as the East Galician *szlachta* had been provided with such a right long ago. The matter of separate Court Chancellery for both Galicias clearly bore the greatest importance for the authors, as it took the most space in the text. The delegates tried to convince the emperor that both East and West Galicias were crucial to the prosperity of the Habsburg Empire due to their large territory and abundance of agricultural riches. To rule these crownlands most efficiently, one had to constantly study their internal circumstances in great detail. If established, the Court Chancellery for both Galicias would allow them to become equal to other crownlands and to be fully integrated into the body of the Empire. Finally, the authors asked Franz II to provide the West Galician *szlachta* with compensation for the almost total loss of cash

reserves. The recent trade protection treaty between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Habsburg Empire prohibited them from bringing grain to Gdańsk and let to the loss of all potential profit from trade with England. The authors did not intend to persuade the emperor to break the treaty but requested him to at least allow them to import wheat, whereas trading other types of grain could take place after further considerations.

The emperor's response to this memorial was very brief and did not have any of the protocolary expressions of gratitude toward his new subjects or promises of just rule that were contained in earlier addresses. He promised to establish a Court Chancellery for both Galicias, and even to bestow it with responsibility for all the matters of justice in the crownlands. No other requests were honored with answers. In this way, the Habsburg government unequivocally demonstrated to its West Galician subjects that any decision concerning the future of the land would be made without their participation. Such a dismissive approach reinforced the subaltern status of the West Galician nobility, stripping them of agency and further embedding the crownland within the colonial framework of the Empire from the very moment of its acquisition.⁴⁶⁸

The failure of the memorial from 1st March 1797 put an end to the attempts by the West Galician *szlachta* to establish compromise with Vienna through peaceful negotiations aimed at a mutually beneficial solution. It did not, however, diminish the desire of the *szlachta* in both East and West Galicias to regain power over the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands. An alternative way to do that seemed to have emerged right after the Third Partition. The destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian state made many prominent noblemen leave their places of residence in fear for their freedom and liberty, which led to the emergence of several Polish émigré networks in Europe. Numerous groups gathered under the protection of the countries which could potentially assist the Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta* in restoring *Rzeczpospolita*'s statehood due to their antagonism towards the partitioning states; the greatest expectations were related to the governments of revolutionary France and the Ottoman Empire. The noble residents of Galicia did not stand aside in the creation of conspiracies aimed at resurrecting Poland – the biggest one, under the name *Centralizacja* emerged in Lviv before the 1794 uprising and engaged in assisting the Kościuszko force. After his defeat, it became even more numerous, attracting

⁴⁶⁸ See: Johannes *Feichtinger*, Habsburg (post)-colonial. Anmerkungen zur Inneren Kolonisierung in Zentraleuropa. In: Johannes *Feichtinger*, Ursula *Prutsch*, Moritz *Csáky* (eds.), Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis (Innsbruck/Wien 2003) 13–32, here 14.

emigrants from different parts of the former Polish-Lithuanian state. *Centralizacja* networked with all the major Polish conspiracies at the time and played a crucial part in plans for the future insurrection.⁴⁶⁹ However, the leader of the organization, Walerian Działuszycki, firmly believed that the Habsburg Monarchy would be an ally to the Polish forces in the matter of rebuilding the sovereign state. As was the case for many Galician noblemen at the time, he clung to the possibility of establishing a hybrid crownland administration together with the Habsburgs. In his 1794 memorial to the emperor, he expressed his unconditional loyalty both to *Rzeczpospolita* and to the dynasty of Habsburgs, stating that, in his opinion, the success of the *Natio Polonica* lay solely in the union between the two.⁴⁷⁰

A similar sentiment was shared by many Galician noblemen, who, despite the deprivation of agency they experienced under the Viennese government, still regarded the Habsburgs as the main guarantors of their personal well-being. Because of that, the members of *Centralizacja* decisively rejected the plan suggested to them by the émigré conspirators, which foresaw the union with the Kingdom of Prussia and the enthronement of a representative of the Hohenzollern dynasty in a future Polish-Lithuanian state. For the Galician *szlachta*, hopes for a future insurrection relied on the perspective of a union between France and Habsburgs against Russia and its constant ally, Prussia.⁴⁷¹ In turn, the central body of the conspirators, the *Zgromadzenie Narodowe*, could not be completely sure of the loyalty of the East Galician *szlachta*, who – after more than 20 years of Habsburg rule – were not eager to initiate a revolt against Vienna, and hesitated even to support the insurgent impulse from outside. This, in itself, serves as evidence that since 1772, the Habsburgs successfully secured the loyalty – or at least the cautious neutrality – of the East Galician *szlachta*, persuading the nobility to prioritize alignment with Vienna in exchange for personal security rather than engaging in active resistance or insurgent collaboration with an uncertain outcome.

⁴⁶⁹ Marian Kuciel, *Historia Polski w latach 1796–1815* (History of Poland in the years 1796–1815). In: Stanisław Lam (ed.), *Polska, jej dzieje i kultura od czasów najdawniejszych do chwili obecnej*. T. 3: Od roku 1796–1930 (Poland, its history and culture from the earliest times to the present. Vol. 3: From 1796–1930) (Warszawa 1937) 3–94, here 10.

⁴⁷⁰ Marian Kuciel, *Próby powstańcze po trzecim rozbiórce: 1795–1797* (Uprising attempts after the Third Partition: 1795–1797) (Warszawa 1912) 10–12. See also: *Daszyk*, *Eroberer oder Anwärtter*, 151f.

⁴⁷¹ Kuciel, *Próby powstańcze*, 170f.

Meanwhile, the Viennese government was aware of the suspicious movements of people across the imperial borders and the regular contacts of the Galician *szlachta* with the Polish-Lithuanian nobility in the other partition states. At first, the Habsburgs did not pay attention to this information, firmly believing in the general loyalty of their subjects. This sentiment was reflected in an address to Galician residents issued on 28th August 1796 – the central government claimed to have no doubt that the *szlachta* knew better than to associate themselves in any way with the revolutionary French government due to the unequivocal and radical anti-aristocratic policies and militant atheism of the latter.⁴⁷² All the attempts of the Russian or Prussian governments to warn the Habsburgs of the impending dangers were regarded as efforts to cause chaos within the state and use it for their own benefit – this suspicion was only confirmed once Catherine II suggested sending her troops into East Galicia to „help the empire defend its realm“ while the majority of the Habsburg troops were fighting against France. However, the evidence of a conspiracy network developing around and within both Galicias eventually made the Viennese government take precautions.

In May 1797, the leaders of a potential uprising were questioned. Some of them, including Dzieduszycki, were arrested, while those left free were made to understand that the government was aware of the conspiracy and would not allow any more disturbance within the Habsburg territory. At the same time, the armistice in Leoben, signed between the Holy Roman Empire and the French Republic, came into effect.⁴⁷³ This put an end to any hopes of Polish conspirers for French support in their struggle against the partitioning states, as a peace treaty between France and Prussia had already been signed in 1795, and antagonizing Russia because of Polish independence aspirations was certainly not in the best interests of France. The Ottoman Empire would not fight Russia even in a coalition with France when that was still conceivable; now, it distanced itself from the insurgents even further.⁴⁷⁴ Without external help, any uprising plans by Poles were doomed to defeat, as they did not have enough manpower or resources to conduct successful operations

⁴⁷² Odezwa od Jego Cezarsko-Królewskiej Mci. Pełnomocney Zachodnio-Galicyjskiej Nadworney Kommissyi (Appeal from His Imperial and Royal Plenipotentiary Western Galician Court Commission) 28.08.1796. In: Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, [Akta różne Galicji Zachodniej - fasc. I]. Varia Krakowa i Okręgu Krakowskiego (akta różne urzędów Galicji Zachodniej) ([Various Records of West Galicia] – fascicle I, Varia of Kraków and the Kraków District (miscellaneous records of the offices of West Galicia), 41–43.

⁴⁷³ *Kukiel*, Próby powstańcze, 210.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 179.

against the three partitioning powers. The Galician *szlachta*, never particularly inclined to revolt against the Habsburgs, grew even more reluctant in the absence of any credible hope for external support. Even those among the noblemen opposing Vienna recognized that a self-reliant insurrection would be futile and only jeopardize the precarious position of the *szlachta* within the Empire.

A desperate attempt of intrusion into Galicia through Bukowina was made by Brigadier Joachim Denisko, one of the leaders of the *Zgromadzenie Narodowe*. On 26th of June he led a group of 200 insurgents across the imperial border with the intention of moving deep into Galician territory. Ideologically, Denisko relied on the manifesto of the *Zgromadzenie Narodowe* issued in March of the same year – a very Jacobin-like document promising to equalize all the classes of a future Polish society, cancel serfdom and guarantee property confiscations and the death penalty for anyone who would not support the insurgence. It could be argued that the intrusion was destined to fail from the start, as its radical intentions would undoubtedly antagonize the landowning Galician *szlachta*. The latter had already demonstrated that it would much rather follow the colonial regime guaranteeing them security and stability than the „native“ government that would overturn their way of life.⁴⁷⁵ In addition, Denisko was known for his cooperation with the Russian secret police, which provided another argument against his receiving support from the nobility in Galicia.⁴⁷⁶ Denisko's demise came just four days from the start, as on 30th June 1797, his group was defeated by the regular Habsburg army.⁴⁷⁷ Earlier that year, a similar fate befell the conspiracy of Franciszek Gorzkowski, a lower nobleman planning a peasant uprising both against the central government and the local magnates. In a manifesto distributed among the population of Habsburg Podlachia he called for an armed struggle for the freedom of Poland, and for „liberty, equality and fraternity“ in the most revolutionary sense of the terms. Gorzkowski and his plans were brought to the attention of the Habsburg administration by the local noblemen much earlier than they could reach a wider audience.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ See: *Wandycz*, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 27.

⁴⁷⁶ Andrzej *Chwalba*, *Reaktionen auf die Auflösung Polen-Litauens im Land und in der Emigration*. In: Michael G. *Müller* (ed.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden*. Band 3, *Die polnisch-litauischen Länder unter der Herrschaft der Teilungsmächte (1772/1795–1914)* (Stuttgart 2018) 87–101, here 94.

⁴⁷⁷ Stanisław *Grodziski*, *Eligiusz Kozłowski*, *Polska Zniewolona 1795–1806* (Poland Enslaved 1795–1806) (Warszawa 1987) 29f.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30–32.

Both attempts at an anti-Habsburg insurrection in Galicia demonstrated that, despite all the subalternization attempts by Vienna, the *szlachta* still possessed substantial importance in the crownland. No other population group had managed by then to develop a distinct socio-political identity with clear goals and intentions. Without the support of the local nobility, any anti-Habsburg campaign in Galicia was destined to fail. This, in turn, meant that the Habsburgs could have profited from reconciliation with the *szlachta*, as the mutually beneficial hybrid administration would guarantee the *szlachta*'s support of the Habsburg administration in both Galicia and, consequently, ensure stability on the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories in times of crisis. This thesis was confirmed by Walerian Dzieduszycki after his arrest. During interrogations he insisted that the intentions of *Centralizacja* were in no way aimed against the Habsburg Monarchy. „As a Pole and as a Galician“, he believed the Russian Empire to be the biggest enemy of both him and his new government, that of the Habsburgs. Dzieduszycki claimed that in his opinion, the best form of government for the resurrected Poland would be that of a „moderate monarchy“ with diminished powers of the central government, which potentially could have been established by the Habsburg Empire. This monarchy could have benefited from a personal union with Poland and would then have better chances of overcoming the other two partitioning states and establishing a more beneficial system of international relations in Europe.⁴⁷⁹ Since these ideas corresponded to the beliefs Dzieduszycki expressed in his earlier writing, they should not be regarded as merely the attempts to justify himself and mitigate the potential conviction. Moreover, it is worth noting that both in his earlier addresses and in his confession, Dzieduszycki repeatedly used the term „Galicians“ and not „Poles“ to describe himself and his adherents. This might serve as further evidence that the members of the Polish-Lithuanian conspiracy network in Galicia were not opposed to the Habsburg administration in the crownland and had adopted the new, „pro-Habsburg“ identity, thus demonstrating the fruits of the Habsburg „civilizing mission“. The appeals to give the nobility more space in Galician politics were, however, once again ignored by the Viennese government. In times of crisis, the government of Franz II chose to adhere to its centralization strategies, and could not conceive of abandoning its colonial control over the native nobility even partially.

⁴⁷⁹ Kukiel, *Próby powstańcze*, 269-270

The failure of the conspiracy in 1797 led to a slowdown in the *szlachta* political activities in both Galicias. After years of devastating struggle and the economic crisis it caused, most of the local nobility found themselves too demoralized to actively defend their rights and privileges.⁴⁸⁰ For the Habsburg government, this meant a long-awaited stability within the realm and a chance to direct its efforts towards incorporating West Galicia into the body of the Empire. In December 1797 the now Minister of Police von Pergen assured the emperor, that, despite „individual cases“ of subjects prone to dissent, the population of both East and West Galicias was now peaceful, and content with the „calm, gentle and just Austrian government“. The territories and their nobility still demanded careful attention from the central government in order to avoid future instability, but von Pergen was convinced that, eventually, under good governance „any concern of an uprising will disappear by itself“. ⁴⁸¹

The next year, von Margelik reported to Vienna that there was no reason „to be afraid of revolutionary or dangerous movements in West Galicia“, as the inhabitants there demonstrated „attention and susceptibility“ toward the new government.⁴⁸² The same rhetoric was used by the governor of East Galicia at the time, Jan Gaisruck, who claimed that in the crownland entrusted to him, nobility was openly showing their „happiness and satisfaction“. ⁴⁸³ In his report from 23rd April 1798, the Vice Chancellor of the Galician Court Chancellery Count Franz Xaver von Woyna claimed that there was no significant evidence of any anti-Habsburg conspiracies in both crownlands, as well as no contacts between the emerging Polish legions in Italy and the Galician *szlachta* that deserved attention from the central government. In von Woyna’s words, most noblemen were satisfied with their government, and happy that their land had now found itself under Habsburg administration. Those leaving East and West Galicias to join Napoleon’s legions were usually representatives of a younger generation not yet aware of the benefits that Habsburg rule could give them. At the same time, in von Woyna’s words, many

⁴⁸⁰ *Chwalba*, Reaktionen auf die Auflösung, 87.

⁴⁸¹ Allerunterthänigste Note des Staatsministers Gf. Pergen 27.12.1797. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 90-12, 111–125, here 120f.

⁴⁸² Nota des Galizischen Hofkanzleis 04.03.1798. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Diplomatie und Außenpolitik vor 1848, Notenwechsel Italienische, Dalmatinische und Galizische Hofkanzlei 5 Von der galizischen Hofkanzlei, 1774–1799, 97.

⁴⁸³ Nota des Galizischen Hofkanzleis 07.03.1798. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Diplomatie und Außenpolitik vor 1848, Notenwechsel Italienische, Dalmatinische und Galizische Hofkanzlei 5 Von der galizischen Hofkanzlei, 1774–1799, 98f.

szlachta members felt uncertainty concerning their future, as they had lost their income and privileges due to the events of the past few years and had not yet gotten used to their new position. There was no need to strengthen police measures in the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands or conduct investigations to identify potential dissenters – the Vice Chancellor believed that the full loyalty of local nobility could be gained if the government made an effort to take their concerns seriously and demonstrate readiness for at least some cooperation.⁴⁸⁴

It is difficult to say how much of these words represented an objective assessment of reality, and how much was an attempt to appease the central government as well as themselves. However, since the political atmosphere in both Eastern and West Galicia remained mostly calm for more than a decade after these documents were written, one could conclude that the *szlachta* residing on Habsburg territories did indeed place more value on rebuilding their personal position in cooperation with the colonial regime, and largely gave up the idea of dissent – at least for a while. Moreover, the time of partitions fostered a conviction among the *szlachta* that, among the three partitioning states, the Habsburg Monarchy was the most „just“ one, which created the most favorable regime for preserving Polish-Lithuanian „republican“ traditions. Therefore, cooperation with the Habsburgs could not be considered a betrayal of the interests of the *Natio Polonica*.⁴⁸⁵

3. The Habsburg Administration of West Galicia: *Szlachta* Politics in the Inter-Crisis Era.

Signing the peace treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797 eliminated the threat to the Habsburg Monarchy from the side of the revolutionary France at least for a few years. The émigré cells of the Polish movement were thus deprived of their greatest ally. Devoid of external support, the Galician *szlachta* did not make any further attempt to challenge the authority of foreign government in their realm. Moreover, after 1797, none of the West Galician noblemen dared to contact Vienna with even a moderate suggestion of mutually beneficial cooperation between the central government and the indigenous

⁴⁸⁴ Franz Xaver von *Woyna*, Nota des Galizischen Hofkanzleis 23.04.1798, In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Diplomatie und Außenpolitik vor 1848, Notenwechsel Italienische, Dalmatinische und Galizische Hofkanzlei 5 Von der galizischen Hofkanzlei, 1774–1799, 108–110.

⁴⁸⁵ *Daszyk*, Eroberer oder Anwärter, 154.

elites. The limited Habsburg actions aimed at winning the loyalty of the local *szlachta* through appeasement were inspired solely by the evidence provided by the Habsburg officials stationed in the crownland, and not based on any wish expressed directly by the *szlachta*. Only through the mediation of officials could the „voice“ of the local elites reach the Viennese government. In this regard, West Galicia was considerably different from other crownlands of the Monarchy – even at the time of stark centralization tendencies, local nobilities usually had influence over politics of their provinces, as their share in administration bodies was considerably high.⁴⁸⁶ Thus, the subalternization strategy of the Habsburg government concerning the Galician *szlachta* was continuously implemented.

As stated earlier, in its adaptation policies in West Galicia Vienna largely followed the blueprint of the transformations applied to the gains of 1772, eliminating their most radical and potentially disruptive elements. For that reason, many of the issues affecting local elites in East Galicia at the beginning of its Habsburg history found their reflection in its Western counterpart as well. To optimize the administration system, a separate Court Chancellery was established for both Galicias on 23rd November 1797.⁴⁸⁷ Its competencies included not only the usual political matters, but also „all incoming legal disputes and other court matters“. This decision, however, did not eliminate the usual obstacle on the way towards effective governance, that is the lack of competent local officials. The emperor believed that the suitable official for the new crownland had to correspond to an ideal of an Enlightened Absolutism bureaucrat – efficient, well-educated, honest and loyal to the Monarchy. Aside from that, he had to be aware of the specificities of the land (or be able to learn them quickly) and to regard its development and prosperity as his highest priority. In reality, the social and economic crises in the crownland and the high cost of living there drove away many potentially capable employees; those who came often lacked the necessary knowledge and skills and were susceptible to corrupt relationships with local magnates. The centralist character of the Monarchy caused exponential growth of paper circulation between Vienna and the local government – the latter often could not make even the most mundane decisions without the approval of the former. This, in turn, led to a delay in the consideration and resolution

⁴⁸⁶ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 314.

⁴⁸⁷ *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris 1797 Emanatorum* (Leopoli 1798) 93f.

of cases, and to a decrease in the efficiency of the entire local administration. The issue of language was another problem - although German was declared the official language, communication with the local population turned out to be impossible without knowledge of Polish. At first, Vienna attempted to solve this problem through redirecting Germanized officials of Polish origin from Eastern Galicia, but there were not enough of them to significantly improve the system. In both Galicias, the majority of officials in 1790s were still coming from the German-speaking crownlands, and only about a half of the bureaucrats could speak Polish well enough to communicate with the local population.⁴⁸⁸ Only in the final years of West Galician existence would the Habsburg Monarchy allow the *szlachta* members to occupy lower positions in local governance bodies, but they still constituted a minority in the bureaucratic apparatus.⁴⁸⁹ The decision-making process was further complicated by the large number of intermediate bodies and the foreign nature of senior officials, who did not seek to interact with the local elites on an equal footing. Thus, fears about possible oppression from Habsburg officials voiced by the West Galician *szlachta* in their addresses to the throne turned out to be well-founded.⁴⁹⁰

The incorporation strategies of the West Galician *szlachta* into the centralized Monarchy essentially mirrored the policies of Maria Theresia and Joseph II in similar circumstances. For sure, the character of the Monarchy did not foresee dual power or even broad pluralism in any of its parts. Instead, the central government tried to win the allegiance of the *szlachta* through guaranteeing them symbolic privileges and benefits, which played little to no role in the power system of the crownland but could increase the sense of self-importance of individual noblemen. The Polish-Lithuanian noble titles were eliminated, but very soon replaced by the imperial titles. The West Galician nobility that received crown estates from the *Rzeczpospolita* king „to lifelong possession“ was allowed to keep it, with the exception of those actively engaged in 1794 insurrection. *Szlachta*’s youth was guaranteed the exemption from conscription into the army.⁴⁹¹ To engage a new generation of aristocrats in imperial service, the emperor issued a decree on 19th June 1801 providing selected young Galician aristocrats with scholarships for studying at the

⁴⁸⁸ Röska-Rydel, *Zwischen Akkulturation und Assimilation*, 77f.

⁴⁸⁹ Krzysztof Ślusarek, *Austria wobec polskiej szlachty z Galicji w latach 1772–1861* (Austria towards the Polish nobility from Galicia in the years 1772–1861). In: *Studia Historyczne* 55, No. 2 (218) (2012) 185–200, here 195.

⁴⁹⁰ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 301–303.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

Theresianum in Vienna.⁴⁹² The document unequivocally referred to these scholarships as a way to win the trust of the crownland population, as the emperor once again referred to himself as a „father“ of his West Galician subordinates, emphasizing that „the well-being of children depends solely on trust into the local officials“. The education provided by the academy was expected to shape noble offsprings into model bureaucrats of the Empire, who would simultaneously enjoy the support of locals due to their origins. The decree placed high value on „morality“ of potential students, asserting that those who failed to comply with the standards of the Academy, would be sent home without a chance to finish their education. Thus, the scholarship was simultaneously a reward for those young noblemen who corresponded more closely to the imperial standard of „civilization“ and „development“.

The matter of calling the noble Estates in West Galicia remained unresolved throughout its entire existence. The authors of the *szlachta*'s addresses in 1796–97 referred to the Estates in East Galicia as a successful example of aristocratic representation, and wanted this model extrapolated onto their territory. However, the last session of Eastern Galician Estates took place in 1788, and any continuation of its procedures would not be automatic and required certain preparations. In 1803–1804, after the principal decision to unite West and East Galicia had already been made, discussions took place between the emperor, Court Chancellery members and the East Galician governor Józef von Urmenyi concerning the future of nobility representation in the united crownland. The 1782 patent of Joseph II was accepted as a fundament for the future Estates right away, and the discussions concerned mostly technical and protocol matters. None of the discussion participants ever assumed that the Estates would be anything but a very formal and decorative representative body. In an opinion of Court Chancellery, the republican traditions of the *Rzeczpospolita* led to the chaotic nature of the previous sessions of the East Galician noble Estates in 1780s. Now, since the local aristocracy was more used to the imperial system, one could expect that the future sessions would be

⁴⁹² Przepisy względem przyjmowaniu szlachty galicyjskiej do akademii tereziańskiej ustanowione (Regulations established regarding the admission of the Galician nobility to the Teresian Academy) 19.06.1801. In: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, Rozporządzenie rządu austriackiego w Galicji zaraz po jej zaborze. Druki: Rozporządzenia, wypisy chronologiczne, patenty cesarskie itp. z czasów tzw. Galicji Zachodniej z lat 1796–1809 (Regulation of the Austrian government in Galicia immediately after its annexation. Printed materials: regulations, chronological excerpts, imperial patents, etc. from the period of the so-called West Galicia from the years 1796–1809), 161–165.

orderly and correspond to the general character of the monarchical traditions. Therefore, Chancellery officials believed that the process of „civilizing“ the Galician *szlachta* over the past decades brought certain positive results. The Estates with very limited power could thus become exactly that concession that the *szlachta* demanded: a signal to Galician nobility that they had the same privileges as the nobility in other crownlands, and therefore had no reason to feel deprived by the central government.⁴⁹³ However, after numerous rounds of discussions the project of a new Estates regulation for united Galicia was approved by the Court Chancellery only in 1808, and never received formal approval of the emperor.⁴⁹⁴

Another matter that directly concerned the interests of the West Galician *szlachta* were the planned peasantry reforms in the new crownland. The objective of the reforms was to ensure that the integration of the new crownland with the rest of the Empire proceeded more seamlessly, minimizing the risk of challenges to Vienna's authority. Already in 1796, the government announced the principle of the irremovability of peasants from the land, as well as a ban on the exchange of peasant lands and duties by their landlords without the consent of the district administration.⁴⁹⁵ On 17th January 1799, the emperor issued three patents concerning the status of peasantry in West Galicia.⁴⁹⁶ The first one canceled personal serfdom of peasants and allowed them to move into cities to learn trade. They could even leave the realm of their landlord to settle down on lands of another nobleman, provided that they found someone to replace them. In subsequent documents, the peasantry was encouraged to inform the official bodies (both the district administration and the courts) about abuses conducted by the nobility and seek governmental protection against such abuses. At the same time, Franz II did not experiment with the allowed amount of serfs' duties or attempt to regulate them in any way. Bearing in mind the negative experience of his uncle 10 years prior and following the advice of Commissioner von Margelik, he avoided engaging in direct confrontation with the landowning *szlachta*. As a result, the status of peasantry in West Galicia saw little

⁴⁹³ Dokumente zu den Beratungen über die Verfahren des Galizischen Landtags nach der beabsichtigten Vereinigung Ost- und Westgaliziens 1804/1803. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 1 Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium, 1781–1812, 151–216.

⁴⁹⁴ Mencil, *Magnateria polska Galicji*, 64, 76.

⁴⁹⁵ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 457.

⁴⁹⁶ Sr. k.k. Majestät Franz des Zweyten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die Oesterreichischen, Böhmischen und Galizischen Erbländer: Vom 1. Januar bis letzten Dezemb. 1799 (Wien 1800) 3–37.

improvement due to the efforts of Vienna. Even the cancellation of serfdom did not bring any significant changes, as the condition of finding a replacement for each serf leaving his master's realm was often impossible to fulfill. The governmental guardianship over abused peasants remained largely on paper as well – as in East Galicia, the landlord remained the primary arbiter for the peasant's appeal, and the consideration of the case most often ended there.⁴⁹⁷ Therefore, the reforms of Franz II actually favored the local nobility more, as they allowed the landlords to continue using serf labor as the main means of production without any significant limitations. In this regard, the Empire clearly placed higher value on the stability of the new crownland and believed the emancipation of serfs to be of lesser value than the peace of mind of the landowning *szlachta*. As the serfdom reforms of the 1780s became the most significant stumbling block between the Habsburgs and the East Galician *szlachta*, the new government evidently decided to downgrade the radicality of the transformations it conducted.

The entire history of West Galicia's separate existence encompassed less than a decade, coinciding with armed conflicts shaking the entire European continent. It is no wonder that the reforms conducted there were not given the utmost priority by the Viennese government, and did not result in any groundbreaking transformation in the position of the local elites. Some intermediate assessments of the studied time can be found in the reports of two Habsburg officials at the highest level. The first report was written in 1801 by Freiherr Anton von Baldacci, a member of the Galician Court Chancellery sent to the new crownland on a mission to study its conditions and the preliminary results of the adaptation policies. The document clearly demonstrated the adherence of its author to the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy and his belief in the necessity of groundbreaking transformations aligned with its spirit across all former *Rzeczpospolita* territories. At the very beginning, von Baldacci expressed his hope that eventually, after the proper application of Habsburg policies, West Galicia would reach „the level of culture that the other hereditary lands already enjoy“.⁴⁹⁸ This narrative of a „civilizing mission“ is present throughout the document and is applied to all societal groups, especially the *szlachta*. Von Baldacci did not spare harsh words in his

⁴⁹⁷ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 458.

⁴⁹⁸ Anton von Baldacci, *Bereisung von Westgalizien durch Anton Freiherrn von Baldacci 1801*. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Nachlässe der Kabinettskanzlei Baldacci 1, 1–588, here 24.

characterization of the upper class of the Polish-Lithuanian society – in his opinion, most of the *szlachta* were very selfish and interested solely in personal gains and demonstrating „outer glitz“.⁴⁹⁹ The permissiveness of the *szlachta* was, in von Baldacci's view, one of the main reasons behind the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian state, which is why the author approved the emperor's decision not to establish the noble Estates in West Galicia until the general situation in the crownland was completely stabilized.⁵⁰⁰ However, von Baldacci insisted that the *szlachta* still played an incredibly important role in West Galician society, and the loyalty of the new subjects, which would have an immediate effect on the success of the transformations, could only be won through cooperation with the local elites. Therefore, von Baldacci suggested including the West Galician *szlachta* into the reform plans of the government and engaging their interest in its outcomes. For example, they had to be provided with sufficient education, especially in agricultural matters, so that the nobility could raise the effectiveness of agricultural production in the land and increase both their own and state profits.⁵⁰¹ Since the *szlachta* liked the outer attributes of power so much, they were to be generously awarded with titles and symbolic privileges, which would not change their influence over local politics, but would increase their feeling of self-importance.⁵⁰² For the same reason, von Baldacci strongly advised establishing the noble Estates in West Galicia after the transition period. Even as a symbolic institution, the Estates would give the local *szlachta* the feeling that their interests were considered by the central government, and, in turn, leave them less space for potential rebellion.⁵⁰³

The author regarded the numerous complaints of the nobility about the hostilities of Habsburg officials and the deeply flawed provincial bureaucracy as completely justified, noting that he himself saw many proofs of it while travelling through West Galicia the year before. To solve the matter, he strongly recommended that the emperor invest more resources in preparing officials for service in the new crownland. Not only should the better-skilled personnel be chosen, but those sent to West Galicia needed to

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid, 120.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid, 317.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid, 500.

⁵⁰² Ibid, 526.

⁵⁰³ Ibid, 561.

take time and effort to get to understand its inner circumstances and the way of life of its people before working in the administration.⁵⁰⁴

A significant part of the document focused on the peasantry of West Galicia as the most important resource for the crownland's prosperity. According to von Baldacci, the current state of the relationship between the landlord and his serfs posed the biggest problem, since the landowners were uninterested in improving the living circumstances of their serfs or winning their loyalty, and instead caused fear and hatred among them. This, in turn, drastically reduced the productivity of peasantry labor, had damaging effect on their morale and caused extremely high levels of alcohol consumption.⁵⁰⁵ The Habsburg annexation of West Galicia had improved the peasant's position, as serfdom had been abolished and the serfs were given more possibilities to seek state protection against the nobleman's arbitrariness.⁵⁰⁶ At the same time, the Habsburg state increased the tax burden on peasantry, which made their lives even harder in some respects. For that reason, von Baldacci strongly advised against using the reforms in East Galicia for a literal blueprint for its Western counterpart – although the peasantry reforms were of utmost importance, they had to be carried out cautiously and with regard to the interests of the crownland and its different social groups.⁵⁰⁷ Overall, von Baldacci claimed that rapid improvement of circumstances in West Galicia should not be awaited, but remained optimistic concerning the eventual outcome of the reforms, believing that the Habsburg Monarchy was capable of fully incorporating West Galicia into its state system and making the lives of its inhabitants better.⁵⁰⁸

In its rhetoric, von Baldacci's report was fairly similar to the one written by von Pergen for Joseph II nearly 30 years prior. Its perception, however, was quite different. By the early 19th century, the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy had largely lost its appeal in the eyes of the Habsburg government, and the Empire lacked both the resources and motivation to conduct groundbreaking reforms in any of its parts. As a result, West Galicia was never viewed as a testing ground for the implementation of „civilizing“ transformations. All the reforms conducted there were aimed at securing the Habsburg realm and minimizing risks associated with the incorporation of a new territory, which

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, 565f.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 159, 507.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid, 161.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid, 508.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid, 460.

had previously operated under a political regime very different from that of a centralized absolutist monarchy. Therefore, the Empire did not attempt to immediately change the character of the *szlachta*, nor did it try to deprive it of its income sources right away. To be sure, the political influence of the *szlachta* was significantly curbed, but the reasoning behind it was purely pragmatic. As a result, the large-scale proposals of von Baldacci were mostly not implemented, giving way to short-term actions to solve urgent problems related to issues of state stability. It is possible to speculate that the strategy concerning the new crownland and its nobility could have been altered after the end of armed conflicts shaking the European continent, once the Habsburg Monarchy was no longer required to invest so many resources into its armed forces, but the existence of West Galicia was too short-lived to test that assumption.

The second report was written by the governor Józef von Úrményi in 1804, after the unification of both Galicias had occurred. Unlike the reports of von Baldacci and von Pergen, this document dealt solely with the Habsburg administration on former Polish-Lithuanian lands, and focused on societal issues primarily from this perspective. The problems it addressed correspond to ones that von Baldacci named among the biggest obstacles on the way to transformations in the Galicias. The Habsburg offices were overburdened with paperwork and hampered by complicated instructions.⁵⁰⁹ The officials sent to Galicia lacked the skills to do their job properly and showed no interest in the land they were supposed to administer; most of them had never travelled even within their own district.⁵¹⁰ The majority of officials were German-speaking, and the lack of Polish-speaking employees negatively affected the general effectiveness of the Habsburg offices.⁵¹¹ An interesting remark was made concerning the relationship between the officials and the local nobility – instead of influencing the *szlachta* and improving their „morale“ and behavior through good example, the Habsburg officials were themselves assimilated into local habits, adopting the *szlachta*’s love of luxury and excessive spending. That, in turn, caused the increase of corruption among them.⁵¹² Regarding the peasantry, the general chaos in administration left them unaware of the actual amount of their obligations concerning the landlord and the state. All the attempts to make them

⁵⁰⁹ Władysław Studnicki, *Memoriał Gubernatora Urmenyi z r. 1804* (Memorial of the Governor Urmenyi from 1804). In: *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 18, No. 1 (1904) 57–74, here 59.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 65.

fulfill these obligations caused the peasant to complain to the district administration, which increased the amount of paperwork even more. Overall, von Úrményi characterized the peasant population in Galicia as „demoralized“ due to the lack of interest in the fruits of their labor and uncertainty about the future.⁵¹³ To improve the general situation in the crownland, the governor recommended first and foremost improving the skills of the officials by providing them with a specific education (noting that some attempts at this had already been made in West Galicia and had produced impressive results). He also suggested drastically optimizing the personnel of Habsburg offices and improving communication between them, dismissing those employees who lacked discipline or dedication to their work, eliminating unnecessary positions and establishing new roles which would improve the administration, such as accountant departments in every district. He also insisted that the highest local officials travel regularly around the territories entrusted to them to exercise control over their subordinates and increase knowledge of local conditions.⁵¹⁴ Like many of his contemporaries, von Úrményi still believed a dedicated bureaucracy to be the core of a perfect state system and saw its improvement as the ultimate solution to societal problems.

Both reports demonstrate that the transformations which took place after the Third Partition led to less than impressive results, even considering the moderate intentions of the Habsburg government compared to the ones set in 1770s in Eastern Galicia. In addition, they show that the existence of two separate Galicias did not contribute to the effectiveness of state administration in either crownland. To improve the situation and introduce some cost savings, a decision was made to unite Eastern and West Galicias, or rather, to have Eastern Galicia absorb the Western one. The incorporation of the new crownland into a territory that shared significant similarities in population, customs, and historical ties, while also being regarded as already successfully integrated into the Habsburg Monarchy, held the potential to facilitate a more natural and smooth integration process. On 15th July 1803, the governmental decree stipulated that the capital of the united crownland would be transferred to the city of Lviv, and the governor of the Eastern

⁵¹³ Ibid, 70f.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, 72f.

Galicia would gain control over the Western one as well.⁵¹⁵ The former West Galician lands did not retain any features of autonomy, and the offices located in Kraków (except for some lesser ones, such as the postal administration, the book censorship committee or the general commandant's office) were moved to the new capital. The liquidation of state bodies predictably caused dissatisfaction among many employees who now lost their positions, but in general, the process of unification went relatively smoothly and was largely completed by 1804.⁵¹⁶

However, the success of this event was rather moderate. Not only were the planned cost savings not achieved, but the unification of both Galicias and their noble elites occurred on paper, but not in character. Unlike its Western counterpart, East Galicia was under an influence of the Habsburg governance for an entire generation. Decades of foreign rule and its accompanying reforms fostered the emergence of a „Galician“ identity among the Eastern Galician szlachta. This identity enabled them to reconcile their sense of national distinctiveness and allegiance to the traditions of the *Rzeczpospolita* with loyalty to the Habsburgs and service to the Empire – provided such service offered them stability, security, and personal advantage. Such an identity could not have fully developed within West Galician nobility during the short period of Habsburg rule there. The differences between the noble elites of the two parts of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria would manifest themselves very soon, during the 1809 war, when they had the opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Habsburgs – or lack thereof – in action.⁵¹⁷

In conclusion, one could argue that the years of existence of West Galicia coincided with the short period of relative calm between major upheavals for the Habsburg Monarchy. The consequences of the 1794 insurrection, the Third Partition and the War of the First Coalition had made the imperial government more pragmatic in its policies concerning the new crownland, sacrificing long-term and large-scale „civilizing“ reform plans in favor of immediate benefits and maintaining societal stability. The Monarchy retained the safer elements of the East Galician transformation blueprint while abstaining from anything potentially dangerous and revolutionary. Great importance was also given to various symbolic gestures designed to demonstrate the emperor's „parental

⁵¹⁵ *Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris 1803. Emanatorum.* (Leopoli 1804) 151.

⁵¹⁶ *Mencel*, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 309f.

⁵¹⁷ *Hugo Lane*, *Szlachta outside the Commonwealth. The Case of Polish Nobles in Galicia*. In: *Zeitschrift Für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 52, No. 4 (2003) 526–542, here 540.

care“ over his new subjects without expending many resources. That included providing the most promising representatives of noble youth with scholarship to study at the Theresian Academy or bestowing the local *szlachta* with imperial titles.

In their turn, the *szlachta* in both West and East Galicia was too demoralized and exhausted after all the upheavals they had endured to mount any opposition to the foreign government at that time. They attempted to adapt to the new circumstances and regulations. As a result, the late 1790s to early 1800s became a period about which Joseph Rohrer, a police commissioner born in Vienna, who traveled across Galicia in 1802-1803, could write that „barely any national antagonism was present in Lviv“, as the local *szlachta* and the Habsburg officials coming from the other parts of the Empire found common ground quite easily.⁵¹⁸ As late as 1806, the governor of united Galicia, Joseph von Ürményi, assured the emperor that the general attitude of the *szlachta* towards the Habsburg administration was positive, and suggested that certain representatives of the local aristocracy should be rewarded for their loyal and proactive service to the Empire.⁵¹⁹ It could have seemed, that after a decade of turmoil and transformations, the local elites and the colonial regime had reached an understanding. This understanding, however, would prove to be very fragile quite soon.

⁵¹⁸ Joseph Rohrer, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise von der türkischen Gränze über die Bukowina durch Ost- und Westgalizien, Schlesien und Mähren nach Wien* (Wien 1804) 151f.

⁵¹⁹ Allerunterthänigste Note des galizischen Landesgouverneurs von Ürményi, den Ausweis der ausgezeichneten galizischen Landesinsassen begleitend 15.05.1806. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 51, without pagination.

Chapter 4. The *Szlachta* in Uniform: Galicia's Nobility within Habsburg Imperial Military Frameworks.

1. Before the First Partition: Contrasts in Noble Service between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy.

Both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy shared a tradition of noble inclusion in their military structures, where service to a monarch or a feudal overlord was a key aspect of noble identity and honor. However, by the 18th century, the state of the armed forces of both countries reflected fundamental differences in their state structure and societal organization. The *Rzeczpospolita*'s reliance on a decentralized, noble-dominated military underscored its resistance to modernization and contributed to its vulnerability and decline. In contrast, the reforms that took place in the Habsburg Monarchy in the mid-18th century caused a major shift in the principles of nobility's participation in the military service. While the nobility retained a significant role, their participation was redefined within a meritocratic framework, limiting the exclusivity of noble privilege and emphasizing standardized service requirements. Moreover, the Habsburg military became a tool for integrating the heterogeneous nobility of the empire, fostering a shared sense of loyalty to the imperial state and the ruling dynasty.

As the inclusion of former Galician elites into the centralized Monarchy became a key priority for the Habsburg government, their integration into imperial military structures was chosen as a primary instrument of colonial adaptation. It was believed that military service would naturally become the area where the *szlachta* would most gladly apply their talents for the benefit of the Empire, as it would not tarnish their class honor or challenge their role in the estate-based society. The Habsburgs already had multiple positive experiences with the *szlachta* serving within the ranks of the imperial army, dating back to the Thirty Years' War. The decisive participation of the Polish-Lithuanian units in the Battle of Vienna in 1683, as well as in the suppression of Rákóczi's rebellion in 1703–1711 and the Seven Years' War was still fresh in the memory of the Empire. Moreover, for the many *szlachta* members, the imperial army provided a chance to obtain the experience of battlefield service and true military glory – an opportunity they were

mostly deprived of in their home country.⁵²⁰ The most notable example of an upper nobleman who devoted himself to the Habsburg military career would probably be Prince Andrzej Poniatowski, the younger brother of the last Polish-Lithuanian ruler and the father of the future Minister of War of the Duchy of Warsaw, Józef Poniatowski. Prince Andrzej received the rank of Lieutenant-General in 1760 and Field Marshal in 1771, both while serving the Habsburgs. The *szlachta* volunteers obtained a rather positive image within the Habsburg military, especially in the cavalry.⁵²¹ The new government hoped that the lower *szlachta* of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria would be especially loyal to Vienna if allowed to join the imperial armed forces and build careers there.⁵²² It was also believed that the prospect of a military career and all the material and immaterial benefits it brought would distract the lower *szlachta* from engaging in conspiracies against the Habsburgs, or starting a massive rebellion – an action that the Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta* had a reputation of being prone to.⁵²³ In this way, their engagement in the centralized imperial armed forces would become yet another feature of the Habsburg „civilizing mission“ concerning the *szlachta*, as, if successful, it would transform the „chaotic“ Polish-Lithuanian nobility into obedient servants of the Empire while cultivating a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to serve.

To fully examine the process of the *szlachta* inclusion into the imperial military from a postcolonial perspective, it is crucial to first study the state of the armed forces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy, with particular attention to the role of the nobility within these systems at the time of the First Partition. The decentralized state of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not possess significant permanent armed forces in its service throughout most of its history. Some units were established to defend the vulnerable part of the state border, namely the southeastern frontier, however, no similar entities could be organized on the other

⁵²⁰ See: Claudia Kraft, Polnische militärische Eliten in gesellschaftlichen und politischen Umbruchsprozessen 1772–1830. In: Helga Schnabel-Schüle, Andreas Gestrich (eds.), *Fremde Herrscher – fremdes Volk: Inklusions- und Exklusionsfiguren bei Herrschaftswechseln in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main/Wien 2006) 271–295, here 279.

⁵²¹ See: Freiherr Reviczky an Staatskanzler von Kaunitz, 05.12.1778. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, Polen II 42, 134–136, here 134.

⁵²² Bernhard Schmitt, Der polnische Adel in den Armeen Preußens und der Habsburgermonarchie. Inklusion und Exklusion neuer Untertanen im Militär (1772–1806). In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Andreas Gestrich, Helga Schnabel-Schüle (eds.), *Die Teilungen Polen-Litauens. Inklusions- und Exklusionsmechanismen – Traditionsbildung – Vergleichsebenen* (Osnabrück 2013) 359–376, here 361.

⁵²³ Ibid, 364.

Rzeczpospolita territories.⁵²⁴ During its participation in wars on the European continent, the Polish-Lithuanian state had to rely on temporary formations consisting mostly of domestic mercenaries, private units organized by the magnates,⁵²⁵ and, at times of greatest threat to the existence of the country, such as the *Potop* („Deluge“) of 1655–1656 – the „expeditions“ consisting of commoners.⁵²⁶ The participation of the *szlachta* in the Polish-Lithuanian army became one of the key elements of its defense doctrine. Serving the state during its military campaigns was the only major duty a Polish-Lithuanian nobleman had to perform in exchange for the numerous privileges guaranteed by the *Rzeczpospolita* traditions.⁵²⁷ Great importance was placed on the so-called *pospolite ruszenie* - the *levée en masse* of the nobility, declared on a national scale by the king (from the end of the 15th century – with Sejm approval) in times of war.⁵²⁸ For the *szlachta*, sacrificing one's life for the Fatherland was regarded as the highest form of service to the nation.⁵²⁹ Traditions of honor demanded that the *szlachta* fulfill their duty to serve through direct participation in campaigns while providing their own equipment and weapons. At the same time, the state guaranteed its noblemen compensation for any material losses incurred during war, as well as a monetary wage for their services.⁵³⁰ Over time, the *szlachta* gradually lost its enthusiasm for serving the monarch and the crown on the battlefield, preferring to engage in the management of their land estates or influence local administration through political intrigues in various parts of the country.⁵³¹ Many noble-born officers of high rank were incompetent in military affairs, treating their service as yet another symbolic feature of their prestigious status.⁵³² However, the nobility still considered itself to be the „knighthood“ of the *Rzeczpospolita*, its military elite and primary defenders, which was usually cited as the main reason for opposing taxation of the upper classes. This, in turn, severely limited the government's budget for establishing any permanent regular units.⁵³³ The privileged position of the *szlachta* turned the Polish-Lithuanian army into one of the

⁵²⁴ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 150.

⁵²⁵ Ibid, 152.

⁵²⁶ Ibid, 160.

⁵²⁷ Zajęzkowski, *Szlachta polska*, 30.

⁵²⁸ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 151.

⁵²⁹ Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Citizen, Fatherland and Patriotism*, 274.

⁵³⁰ Bardach, Leśnodorski, Pietrzak, *Historia państwa i prawa polskiego*, 91f, 113f.

⁵³¹ Augustyniak, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 151.

⁵³² Paweł Majdański, *Armia w przebudowie – wysiłki szlachty na rzecz uzdrowienia sił zbrojnych w okresie stanisławowskim* (An army in transition – the nobility's efforts to reform the armed forces during the Stanisław era). In: *Roczniki Nauk Prawnych* 26, No. 3 (2016) 39–61, here 39.

⁵³³ Bardach, Leśnodorski, Pietrzak, *Historia państwa i prawa polskiego*, 229.

weakest in Europe,⁵³⁴ and undermined the state's ability to defend itself against foreign invaders, leading to its eventual demise in the late 18th century.

To add to that, the absence of a unified permanent command structure of the military, which was torn between various magnate families, as well as its regular underfunding and failure to adequately pay the mercenaries, led to its steady disintegration and demoralization. The ideals of „defending the Christian faith“ and „serving the Motherland“ could not substitute for a regular and sufficient wage for soldiers, and the petty power struggles among their commanders had a negative effect on their personal loyalty. The reliance on the nobility in all matters of state administration put another hurdle in the path towards modernizing the armed forces of the *Rzeczpospolita*. Since the noble levy was regarded as the sole force suitable for defending the country in times of need,⁵³⁵ and all attempts by kings to centralize the military were perceived as yet another attempt to establish a despotic regime,⁵³⁶ the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth barely participated in the „military revolution“ taking place in other European monarchies in the 17th century.⁵³⁷

As a result, by the 18th century the state was already going through processes of effective demilitarization.⁵³⁸ At the same time, magnates actively created their private armies, and attracted poor noblemen under their banners by promising to use their connections at court and parliament to guarantee their clientele significant favors. Even commoners readily joined these private formations, since the magnates offered the possibility of future ennoblement in exchange for loyal service, thus drastically improving the commoners' social and political status.⁵³⁹ The magnates constructed fortresses on their properties, equipping them far better than the central government could afford to equip their defenses. The private magnate troops would often take over the state's responsibility

⁵³⁴ Michał *Baczowski*, Das polnisch-litauische Heer nach den Reformen. Der Krieg gegen Russland 1792 und der Kościuszko-Aufstand 1794. In: Christian *Ortner* (ed.), Polen-Litauen und die Habsburgermonarchie zur Zeit Maria Theresias. Symposium 10. November 2017. Acta Austro-Polonica 10 (Wien 2018) 171–185, here 171.

⁵³⁵ Robert I. *Frost*, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the „Military Revolution“. In: James S. *Pula*, Marian B. *Biskupski* (eds.), Poland and Europe: Historical Dimensions (New York 1994) 19–47, here 39.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵³⁸ Wojciech *Kriegseisen*, Zwischen sächsischem Absolutismus und goldener Freiheit? Politische Praxis, Reformentwürfe und Reformansätze bis 1763. In: Hans-Jürgen *Bömelburg*, Michael G. *Müller* (eds.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit (Stuttgart 2017) 477–494, here 487.

⁵³⁹ *Augustyniak*, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 159.

to defend its borders and population by joining the governmental forces in campaigns against external or internal enemies,⁵⁴⁰ however, their main purpose was to enable magnate families or their coalitions to fight against one another. Unlike the state military, the private magnate forces did not suffer from a lack of funding.⁵⁴¹ Since the existence of an independent army is regarded as one of the main features of a sovereign state, it could be argued that the emergence of private magnate armies turned rich noblemen landholdings into quasi-state formations, and the entire Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into a land of permanent internal hostility with a high potential for open conflict.

Considering the above, it should be no wonder that by the end of the 18th century the *szlachta* was not eager to apply their talents and resources for the benefit of the state military. For the richer nobility, service in the army was considered no more than a prestigious sinecure, providing access to wealth and privileges with minimal obligation to actually engage in combat or military training. In many cases, even small children or the elderly were registered as members of the state troops, so that their families could add the honor of military service to their status.⁵⁴² For the poor *szlachta*, service in the state forces did not provide much opportunity for social or material advancement, as, in addition to constant underfunding, their career prospects were usually quite limited.⁵⁴³

The disastrous condition of the state defense was quite obvious by 1764, the year that Stanisław August Poniatowski ascended to the throne. Among the vast number of reforms which took place during his reign, the reforms of the armed forces encountered perhaps the greatest obstacle due to the opposition of the Russian Empire.⁵⁴⁴ However, certain changes were introduced even before the First Partition, when the parliament approved a significant raise in wages for the soldiers, as well as the overall military budget. The military forces received administrative bodies under direct governmental

⁵⁴⁰ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Die polnisch-litauischen Magnaten als imperiales Personal und übergreifende Herrschaftselite. In: Stephan Wendehorst (ed.), Die Anatomie frühneuzeitlicher Imperien (Berlin/München/Boston 2015), 195–210, here 199.

⁵⁴¹ Mikołaj Dueholm, With Fire and Sword: Military Factors in the Disintegration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In: Central Europe Yearbook 3 (2021) 71–90, here 87.

⁵⁴² Majdański, Armia w przebudowie, 42.

⁵⁴³ Zajęczkowski, Szlachta polska, 46.

⁵⁴⁴ Wojciech Kriegseisen, Die Reformpolitik Stanisław August Poniatowskis: Grundlage, Programme, Trägerschichten, Resultate. In: Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Michael G. Müller (eds.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 2, Frühe Neuzeit (Stuttgart 2017) 495–511, here 501.

control. Separate Polish and Lithuanian Treasury Commissions and Military Commissions were established together with local treasury commissions throughout the country, which took over tax collection and directly paid out the soldiers' wages.⁵⁴⁵ In 1765, the Nobles' Academy of the Corps of Cadets of His Royal Majesty and the Commonwealth was established in Warsaw. Its main goal was to provide military and civil education for the young noblemen. Since the financing of the academy was fully placed on the state budget, the descendants of the poor *szlachta* could also join its ranks and potentially gain a pathway for social advancement through future state service. For nearly 30 years the academy was led by prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, who eventually managed to successfully combine his services to both Stanisław August Poniatowski and the Habsburg dynasty.⁵⁴⁶ Among other things, the Academy sought to create the future military elite loyal first and foremost to the king and not to their noble compatriots, thus contributing to the centralization and strengthening of the state.⁵⁴⁷ These changes signified the beginning of transformations in the entire structure of the Polish-Lithuanian military, however, the subsequent reforms implemented after 1772 did not concern the *szlachta* of Eastern Galicia.

Prior to the reforms inspired by Enlightened Absolutism reforms in the mid-18th century, the Habsburg Empire suffered from military challenges similar to those present in the „noble republic“. The general motivation of nobility to engage in state military service was quite low, as it did not provide many career opportunities for the lesser aristocracy due to persistent nepotism and favoritism within the highest officer ranks. These positions were occupied almost exclusively by members of the highest and court nobility, which in itself was a very narrow and closed social group. The military elite, in turn, shamelessly engaged in buying and selling the officer commissions, regardless of the qualifications or talents of potential candidates, which ultimately caused poor performance on the battlefield.⁵⁴⁸ The armed forces of the empire lacked a unified structure – as much as 80% of the highest-ranking nobles at some point owned private regiments, over which they retained significant independence from the sovereign. The matter was further complicated by the multiethnic makeup of various regiments, and the

⁵⁴⁵ *Augustyniak*, History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 164.

⁵⁴⁶ *Majdański*, Armia w przebudowie, 43.

⁵⁴⁷ *Kraft*, Polnische militärische Eliten, 276.

⁵⁴⁸ Thomas Mack *Barker*, Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy: Essays on War, Society, and Government in Austria, 1618–1780 (Boulder 1982) 18.

lack of a single standardized ranking system.⁵⁴⁹ In addition the administrative chaos, the Habsburg army suffered from persistent underfinancing, caused by the general economic crisis within the Monarchy, and the misappropriation of funds by the officers in charge.⁵⁵⁰ As a result, the military service was not particularly attractive to the Habsburg nobles who were not already a part of the system and could find no personal benefit in it.⁵⁵¹

This status quo certainly did not satisfy the imperial government. As the War of Polish Succession and the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1737–39 demonstrated, the incompetence and corruption within the officer corps had a disastrous impact on the battlefield operations and could no longer be tolerated.⁵⁵² Already during the discussion of future reforms, it became clear that the centralization of state and the reduction of nobility's role in administration had to be spread over the military forces. At the same time, military reforms needed to address another critical issue and provide an opportunity for aristocracy to become integrated into the new, „enlightened“ state. The army was believed to be „the weapon of the government“, an essential element of its foundation.⁵⁵³ In true spirit of the Enlightened Absolutism, the officer of the Habsburg Empire was expected to be a perfect state servant, who would serve the Monarchy and its people on the battlefield just as loyally and diligently as his civil counterparts would in their offices. The character of an ideal Habsburg officer and his necessary talents were summed up by the Field Marshal Count Leopold Joseph von Daun, the leading advisor of Maria Theresia in military matters:

„...intelligence is the distinguishing feature of the body of officers, just as the courage is that to the soldiers... Experience by itself is incapable of enabling one to acquire military knowledge in a systematic way. A foundation of theory is necessary, if you want to equip yourself to carry out important military functions. It is not enough for a commander to master weapons.

⁵⁴⁹ Michael *Hochedlinger*, *Mars Ennobled. The Ascent of the Military and the Creation of a Military Nobility in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Austria*. In: *German History* 17, No. 2 (1999) 141–176, here 143–145.

⁵⁵⁰ *Barker*, *Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy*, 18.

⁵⁵¹ See: Michael *Hochedlinger*, *Austria's Wars of Emergence 1683–1797* (London/New York 2013) 305f.

⁵⁵² *Hochedlinger*, *Mars Ennobled*, 149.

⁵⁵³ Johann Christoph *Allmayer-Beck*, *Wandlungen im Heerwesen zur Zeit Maria Theresias*. In: *Schriften des Heeresgeschichtlichen Museums in Wien* 3 (1967) 7–24, here 23.

He must also be conversant with books, maps, and topographical sketches. He must own a precise understanding of the fundamental principles of military knowledge“.⁵⁵⁴

Engaging more noblemen into military service made them a part of a new state project without sacrificing their class honor. This especially concerned the members of lesser nobility, as many of them lacked legitimate occupation and had to be engaged in some sort of productive activity for the benefit of the state so that they would not become a potentially disintegrating force in the future. For that reason, a goal of the government was to make military service prestigious for more noblemen. This was no easy task, as the state budget could not allow for simple increases in officers' wages, and, just as their Polish-Lithuanian counterparts, Habsburg aristocrats were reluctant to spill their blood for the idea of serving the state. The solution was once again suggested by von Daun – the government had to nurture a sense of belonging among noblemen choosing army service by richly awarding them with non-material privileges, military decorations, and a sense of security in old age.⁵⁵⁵

The changes began by introducing standardized uniform for generals and officers of the Habsburg army.⁵⁵⁶ Not only did it support the standardized ranking of the individual regiments within military forces, but those wearing the uniform now possessed a very significant privilege to be able to attend court ceremonies, regardless of their birth social status.⁵⁵⁷ Introducing new uniforms became a part of a larger shift in Habsburg noble politics, which foresaw opening career advancement possibilities in the military for lesser noblemen.

Another part of this decision was to grant the descendants of poor noble families access to proper military education. Before the 1750s, the young nobility with military career ambitions would either stay in their respective crownlands and attend local *Ritterakademien*, or go abroad to get education in Halle, Leiden or other foreign universities. Both paths would usually not lead to service in the imperial military.⁵⁵⁸ The creation of the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt in 1751 was therefore

⁵⁵⁴ Christopher *Duffy*, *The Army of Maria Theresa: The Armed Forces of Imperial Austria, 1740–1780* (Vancouver/ London 1977), 44.

⁵⁵⁵ Johann Christoph *Allmayer-Beck*, Erich *Lessing*, *Das Heer unter dem Doppeladler: Habsburgs Armeen, 1718–1848* (München 1981) 59f.

⁵⁵⁶ See: *Hochedlinger*, *Austria's Wars of Emergence*, 312–314.

⁵⁵⁷ *Hochedlinger*, *Mars Ennobled*, 150–152.

⁵⁵⁸ *Duffy*, *The Army of Maria Theresa*, 24.

aimed at strengthening the foundation of the centralized Habsburg state. The students of the academy were chosen both among the children of nobility, and the descendants of common-born officers that demonstrated exceptional courage and loyalty, as well as the civilian officials that had loyally served the state for no less than 20 years. The education was free of charge and therefore open to impoverished noble families. The Wiener Neustadt Academy was a matter of great interest and importance to Maria Theresia personally, and she closely supervised its activities. As she revealed in the instruction to the first commander of the academy, Count von Daun himself, his goal had to be to provide the monarch with „hardworking officers and honest men“. ⁵⁵⁹ The academy was not the only way for the nobility to receive military education – another opportunity was the *Savoyische Ritterakademie*, opened in Vienna in 1746 and taken under governmental control in 1756. In it, the basic education provided by the Piarist order was combined with military and technical subjects. ⁵⁶⁰ Even more focus on the technical component of the military was placed in the Engineer Academy. The establishment was originally founded in 1717 by Charles VI but did not achieve a degree in quality and was eventually closed in 1755. A reorganized establishment emerged in 1756 under the name Engineer Academy (*k.k. Ingenieursschule*). Although the academy was open for nobility, many of its first students were descending from commoners, as traditionally army's technical branches were regarded as the major inlet for common folk. ⁵⁶¹ Therefore, the Engineer Academy was regarded as a rather „democratic“ educational establishment, aimed at creating a new military elite out of the most capable and talented young men of the empire.

In her efforts to attract more noble youth into the new academies, Maria Theresia sent their descriptions to the Austrian and Bohemian Estates, so that as many aristocratic families would get to know them as possible. The initiatives did gain popularity among lesser nobility; the higher aristocracy, however, found them to be of little attraction, which made the monarch quite surprised that „no one was willing to take advantage of these favors“. ⁵⁶² To address the matter, a military academy specifically aimed at the sons of wealthier aristocracy was created in Vienna in 1755. It was supposed to provide them

⁵⁵⁹ *Allmayer-Beck*, Wandlungen im Heerwesen, 22. See also: Richard *Bassett*, For God and Kaiser: The Imperial Austrian Army, 1619–1918 (New Haven 2015) 120f.

⁵⁶⁰ *Hochedlinger*, Mars Ennobled, 154.

⁵⁶¹ *Stollberg-Rilinger*, Maria Theresa, 401.

⁵⁶² *Duffy*, The Army of Maria Theresa, 29.

with education which did not immediately limit their future prospects to an army career; however, the Noble Military Academy failed to attract the attention of the higher Habsburg nobility and had a very brief existence.⁵⁶³ The preparatory school in Vienna, aimed at giving primary education to children at the age of seven or eight in preparation for studying at the Wiener Neustadt Academy, met a similar fate. Originally, it was intended for both the noble and common families, but even the impoverished aristocracy was reluctant to send their sons to the school. As a result, just one year after its opening, the preparatory school was only open to the „children of officers“.⁵⁶⁴

The introduction of advanced, centralized military education underscored the Monarchy's realization that the nobility's potential engagement in military service depended heavily on the tangible benefits they could derive and the sense of gratitude they might feel toward the crown for granting privileges. For the higher nobility, however, the central government had little to offer – especially during peacetime, when opportunities for rapid career advancement or significant material rewards were scarce. On the other hand, while the lesser nobility stood to gain more from participation in these transformative policies, their class honor and traditional autonomy often created resistance to fully submitting to the monarchy's authority.⁵⁶⁵

Faced with these limitations, the monarchy pursued an innovative and ambitious solution: expanding the nobility itself. By opening the ranks of the aristocracy to individuals who demonstrated unwavering loyalty and served the empire faithfully in arms, the Habsburg state sought to create a new elite, free from existing family ties and obligations to various clans and networks. Their allegiance would be firmly rooted in gratitude to the throne and the state – the very entities responsible for elevating their social status and granting them privileges previously beyond their reach.

On 9th September 1752, Maria Theresia issued a resolution promising ennoblement to any officer who diligently served the state in the army for ten years. While this proclamation initially had little practical impact, a more concrete policy emerged five years later, during the Seven Years' War. The Court Council issued a circular guaranteeing hereditary ennoblement by inclusion into the *Ritterstand* for officers who

⁵⁶³ *Hochedlinger*, Mars Ennobled, 156f.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 154f.

⁵⁶⁵ *Barker*, Army, Aristocracy, Monarchy, 36.

maintained an unblemished career of 30 or more years. The application process was costly, which prevented the lowest classes from entering the nobility.⁵⁶⁶ Nonetheless, this decision faced revision, as the government hesitated to provoke the established imperial nobility by granting „newcomers“ automatic equality with the aristocracy of hereditary lands and unrestricted access to estate representative bodies.⁵⁶⁷ Instead, officers who applied for noble status and met the strict criteria for „unblemished service“ were granted personal ennoblement. This practice paved the way for the emergence of a distinct „service nobility“ – a social group personally loyal to the throne and thus ready to execute its decisions without the autonomous ambitions characteristic of the hereditary aristocracy. By demonstrating that loyal service to the state, whether on the battlefield or in civil office, would be generously rewarded with significant social mobility, the Monarchy cultivated a dependable elite. This „second society“, as it came to be called in the 19th century, gradually gained prestige and influence across the Empire.⁵⁶⁸ Unlike the traditional hereditary aristocracy, whose privileges and loyalties often rested on long-standing local traditions and familial networks, the service nobility owed its elevated status entirely to the Monarchy. As a result, it represented a vital instrument for the centralized state, embodying the enlightened absolutist ideal of merit-based governance and unwavering fidelity to the crown.

To provide the most excellent officers with a special reward, the bearers of which could feel themselves even more distinguished among the other members of the military, the order of Maria Theresia was established in 1757. The members of the order were chosen among the imperial officers for their exceptional bravery or ingenuity in battle, regardless of their social background, ethnic or religious affiliation. They would be decorated by the Grand or Knight's Cross – both awards provided their bearers with significant privileges, including a pension after the service end. The order membership did not automatically lead to ennoblement to commoners; however, it opened a way to a remarkable social mobility, and many of those who received Grand Cross or Knight's Cross would very soon make exceptional careers, either entering the noble strata of

⁵⁶⁶ Ilya *Berkovich*, Michael *Wenzel*, The Austrian Army. In: Bruno *Colson*, Alexander *Mikaberidze* (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars: Volume 2, Fighting the Napoleonic Wars* (Cambridge 2023) 106–128, here 116.

⁵⁶⁷ *Hochedlinger*, *Mars Ennobled*, 163.

⁵⁶⁸ Adam *Wandruszka*, Die „Zweite Gesellschaft“ der Donaumonarchie. In: Heinz *Siegert* (ed.), *Adel in Österreich*. (Wien 1971) 56–67, here 57.

society or moving upwards within it.⁵⁶⁹ This way, membership in the Order of Maria Theresia became a distinction for the „new“ military elites of the Habsburg Empire, and meant, among other things, adherence to the ideals and aspirations of the central government in exchange for recognition of personal achievements.

As it can be seen, by the early 1770s, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy had diverged drastically in their military and nobility structures. The *Rzeczpospolita*, with its decentralized system, was weakened by magnate-controlled private armies, leaving the state militarily fragmented and ineffective. While some early military reforms were being initiated, they had not yet yielded meaningful results by 1772. In contrast, the Habsburg Monarchy had already succeeded in integrating its nobility into a centralized military apparatus, using military education, bestowment of privileges and the promise of ennoblement to create a loyal, disciplined elite. This strategy served to curtail the destabilizing potential of the nobility, ensuring military service was not just a means of defense but also a tool for political control. By the 1770s, the Habsburgs' successful reforms allowed them to position themselves as a model of „civilized“ governance, with their military serving both as a stabilizing force and a reflection of their centralized imperial order. The Polish-Lithuanian fragmented nepotistic military and the Habsburgs' centralized armed forces with an emphasis on meritocracy represented different approaches to governance and state-building, further deepening the divide between the „barbaric“ *Rzeczpospolita* and the „enlightened“ Empire. As a result, engaging the Galician *szlachta* in the Habsburg armed forces was a way of both utilizing their military potential for the imperial benefit, and bringing them into line with the Habsburg vision of an efficient state. These intentions mirrored what had already been done to the nobility of the Hereditary Lands earlier, where the Habsburgs had used military service and imperial loyalty as tools to subdue and transform the nobility into a more docile and controllable class.

2. The Galicians' Encounter with the Habsburg Regular Army.

⁵⁶⁹ *Hochedlinger*, *Mars Ennobled*, 169f. See also: Fritz *Posch*, *Macht und Mächtige*. In: Heinz *Siebert* (ed.), *Adel in Österreich* (Wien 1971) 19–34, here 33.

Despite the general strategy to turn the *szlachta* into loyal servants of the Empire and to eventually remove all the traces of their „uncivilized“ and „chaotic“ *Rzeczpospolita* past, the imperial government soon felt that it had to abstain from too much inclusion of the *szlachta* into its military structures. During the first decades of its rule in Galicia Vienna still regarded local nobility to be too suspicious and potentially disloyal to automatically provide them with the same status and privileges the officers of the other crownlands possessed. To put this into a postcolonial perspective, one could say that the Empire was facing the challenge of ambivalent attitudes towards their Galician noble subjects.⁵⁷⁰ By elevating the status of the *szlachta* in the military formations (and thereby acknowledging them as worthy subjects of the Monarchy or at least „civilized“ enough), the Habsburg Empire would give them the instruments to eventually engage in direct opposition towards itself. Moreover, a fear persisted that if put in separate corps or regiments, the former Polish-Lithuanian noblemen would preserve their national identity and not be fully integrated into imperial service.⁵⁷¹

For that reason, the politics of *szlachta* inclusion into Habsburg army during the first decades of the new regime in Galicia were rather inconsistent, trying to keep a very fragile balance between, on the one hand, giving local noblemen a chance to demonstrate their abilities and loyalty on the battlefield, and, on the other hand, not granting them full equality with other Habsburg officers. This was especially visible in the process of creating new army units out of Polish-Lithuanian volunteers. As this subchapter shall demonstrate, it was usually preceded by a hefty discussion of whether or not a new corps or regiment should have a distinct „Polish“ character, so that the Empire could benefit from an act of formation ideologically as well, and not give its subjects an environment to create conspiracies against the new government.

Immediately after the First Partition, the Habsburg government was reluctant to create separate units within its regular army that would incorporate Galician noble-born officers. The emperor's answer to the proposal of Major General von Schütz to establish Polish units, supported by voices within the Galician *szlachta*, was that „under current circumstances the Emperor does not regard creation of new corps and taking of foreign

⁵⁷⁰ See: *Bhabha*, *The Location of Culture*, 86.

⁵⁷¹ Edith *Kotasek*, *Feldmarschall Graf Lacy: ein Leben für Österreichs Heer* (Horn 1956) 122f.

troops to the highest service to be necessary“.⁵⁷² This reluctance may have stemmed from the initial lack of long-term Habsburg strategy concerning Galicia, since the new territory was not believed to be a permanent acquisition by many in the highest circles of the Empire.⁵⁷³ Following the advice of Count Franz von Lacy, president of the Court War Council, the emperor adopted a policy of dispersing Galician noblemen across existing military units. Von Lacy believed this approach would hasten their Germanization and integration into the imperial framework.⁵⁷⁴ By scattering Galician officers rather than forming separate Polish units, the Monarchy sought to undermine the collective identity of the Galician *szlachta*, depriving them of an institutional base from which they could potentially consolidate power or assert their cultural distinctiveness, and therefore threaten the Empire.

The situation changed after the beginning of an international crisis, which would evolve into the War of the Bavarian Succession. By early 1778, the Habsburg government found itself in a rather threatening situation, seeing that the newly acquired *Rzeczpospolita* lands would be vulnerable to direct attack if not properly defended. The immediate threat to the Empire's integrity was so pressing that the creation of a separate Polish unit, previously seen as a risk, was now deemed a necessity. The Galician General Commando proposed forming a volunteer Uhlan regiment composed of both the Galician *szlachta* and Polish-Lithuanian noblemen. To evaluate the recruitment potential of the *szlachta*, the Habsburg envoy in Warsaw asked for an opinion from Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, who regarded the matter rather favorably, suggesting that his noble compatriots would gladly join the ranks of the imperial army within a separate unit.⁵⁷⁵

The regiment was created on 4th September 1778 under command of an Austrian noblemen of Irish descent, Colonel Henrich O'Donnell. It would be hard to say which group was predominant within the ranks of the new formation – the „Polish“ (that is, the

⁵⁷² Hofkriegsrat an Generalmajor von Schütz 25.05.1772. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Hofkriegsrat, Hauptreihe Akten 933, 1772/75/2, without pagination.

⁵⁷³ Bernhard *Schmitt*, *Wie Sand am Meer – der Polnische Adel in den Militärischen Bildungseinrichtungen der Teilungsmächte*. In: Helga *Schnabel-Schüle*, Andreas *Gestrich* (eds.), *Fremde Herrscher – Fremdes Volk : Inklusions- und Exklusionsfiguren bei Herrschaftswechsels in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main/Wien 2006) 333–358, here 338.

⁵⁷⁴ See: Franz Moritz *von Lacy* an Kaiser Joseph II, 08.12.1774. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 1, 1784/5/1, without pagination.

⁵⁷⁵ See: Freiherr *Reviczky* an Staatskanzler von Kaunitz, 18.03.1778. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, Polen II 41, 126–129.

volunteers coming from lands still within the Polish-Lithuanian border) or the „Galician“ one, as many of those born in what was now the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria would name „Poland“ as their birthplace.⁵⁷⁶ At the same time, the regiment had an indubitable „Polish“ element within its foundation – five out of six commanding officers were Poles, the vast majority of members spoke Polish as their first language, and the elements of the Uhlan uniform bore the Polish names, analogous to ones used in the *Rzeczpospolita* forces (*czapka* and *kurtka*). The regiment also possessed traditional Polish structure – its members were to be divided into *towarzysze* („companions“, that is junior cavalry officers) and *poczty* („retinue“, assistants to *towarzysze*, usually, but not necessarily, of low social background). Although administrative matters in regiment management were to be resolved in German, no restrictions were placed on the language of commands, which were eventually given in Polish. The general organization of the regiment did correspond to the Polish-Lithuanian and not Habsburg tradition – the O'Donnell's unit became the first lance-armed light cavalry regiment in Austrian history.⁵⁷⁷ By incorporating Polish-Lithuanian organizational methods and allowing Polish language and customs to persist within the unit, the empire sought to leverage the loyalty and martial traditions of the *szlachta* while subtly reframing these traditions within an imperial framework.

Those Poles and Galicians who joined the regiment in hopes of achieving military glory were deeply disappointed. The formation of the unit dragged on until February 1779, and officers' positions were finalized only in April of that year, mere weeks before the signing of the peace treaty. While awaiting completion, the regiment was stationed in Czech Silesia, plagued by a lack of supplies and the hardships of prolonged inactivity. The unit was dissolved immediately after the war, as it was foreseen in the founding convention; those willing to continue military service were sent to existing regular units of the Habsburg army.⁵⁷⁸ The regiment's short existence was marked by severe challenges, including poor discipline, epidemics, and widespread desertion due to unfulfilled promises of Habsburg command to guarantee all the joining Poles career

⁵⁷⁶ *Baczkowski*, W służbie Habsburgów, 38.

⁵⁷⁷ See: An Kaiser Franz II, 04.09.1778. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten, Hauptreihe, Akten 2540 Akten des Generalkommando Lemberg 1778-1815, 1778-19-354.

⁵⁷⁸ Michał *Baczkowski*, Die Galizischen Freikorps im Bayerischen Sukzessionskrieg 1778-1779. In: Zofia *Kowalska* (ed.), Aus der Geschichte Österreichs in Mitteleuropa - Heft 1: Geschichte (Wien 1998) 112–126, here 120.

advancement.⁵⁷⁹ The short existence of the Uhlan regiment highlighted the ongoing hesitation of the Habsburgs to fully integrate or empower its new subjects within military structures, even in the presence of a more immediate threat to the state's security. Despite those difficulties, the regiment set an important precedent for the future, that is the establishment of new units led by Galician Polish officers of noble descent, with uniforms and organizational structures rooted in the *Rzeczpospolita* traditions.

The next stage in the creation of a permanent Galician cavalry regiment began in 1781, when Emperor Joseph II issued a resolution ordering the formation of an Uhlan regiment composed of recruits from the Galician and Polish-Lithuanian *szlachta*. This regiment was also to include career officers from the Habsburg army, who would transfer their expertise to the new generation of recruits.⁵⁸⁰ The formation process stretched over three years, and it was not until 21st October 1784, that Joseph II officially proclaimed the creation of the Uhlan regiment. The regiment was initially designed to include 300 *towarzysze* and 300 *pocztowy*. Although conceived for the ongoing conflict with the Netherlands, a subsequent order on 5th November extended its existence, mandating its reorganization into two Polish cavalry divisions that „could be preserved as a National Corps in times of peace as well.“ The uniform of the new regiment incorporated recognizable elements of the *Rzeczpospolita* army, a move to appeal to the traditions of the „noble republic“ and foster loyalty among the recruits. Volunteers for the regiment were sought in Galicia, Bukovina, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with specific instructions that 240 members were to be drawn from Galician inhabitants that had already demonstrated their loyalty in cavalry and infantry service and possessed the requisite skills for handling horses.⁵⁸¹ A notable achievement of Habsburg propaganda was the successful recruitment of members from prominent magnate families into the regiment's officer corps. Among these, Józef Poniatowski would later leave a lasting mark on European military history. Other distinguished officers included Michał Wielhorski, Piotr Wodzicki, and Jerzy Ożarowski.⁵⁸² This integration of the high-ranking *szlachta* simultaneously allowed the Habsburgs to leverage the prestige of the magnates to

⁵⁷⁹ Jerzy *Michalski*, *Polska wobec wojny o sukcesję bawarską* (Poland and the War of the Bavarian Succession) (Wrocław 1964) 32.

⁵⁸⁰ Oscar *Teuber*, *Die österreichische Armee von 1700 bis 1867* (Wien 1895) 238.

⁵⁸¹ Karl Anton *von Jedina*, *Geschichte des Kaiserlich Königlich Österreichischen Ersten Uhlanen-Regimentes* (Wien 1845) 1f.

⁵⁸² *Baczkowski*, *W służbie Habsburgów*, 45.

legitimize the regiment, and to neutralize the potential nationalist aspirations of the *szlachta* while asserting the imperial authority.

From the very beginning of its existence, the new regiment posed challenges for the entire structure of the Habsburg army, as its organizational structure did not correspond to any model applied in the imperial army. On the one hand, it was built on principles intrinsic to so-called *Freikorps*, or free regiments – that is, it was to have volunteer members, recruited among subordinates of both the Habsburgs and the *Rzeczpospolita* king. On the other hand, unlike a typical *Freikorps*, it was to have regular career officers at its command and a permanent character, not tied to any ongoing armed conflict.⁵⁸³ By establishing the regiment, Emperor Joseph II appeared to pursue a delicate and paradoxical objective: to create a permanent military unit with a distinctly Polish character while simultaneously integrating it into the regular structure of the standing imperial army. There was no understanding of how to apply the new unit for the immediate benefit of the Monarchy – as a result, it turned out to be almost as short-lived as the O'Donnell's regiment. It did not take part in any military campaigns and spent most of its existence stationed in Vienna. As the emperor himself stated on 4th December 1785, „the Uhlan regiment, by its nature, cannot be effectively used against the enemies without support from other cavalry units“, which is why he ordered the regiment to be dissolved, and its divisions, which were now three, to be divided among the regular *Cheveau-léger* regiments of Lobkowitz, Löwenehr and Modena. The divisions were allowed to keep some „Polish“ elements in their uniforms, and their members were still supposed to be recruited among Galicians and Poles, who were then to train and practice with special enthusiasm.⁵⁸⁴ This restructuring was intended to align with the broader Habsburg strategy in Galicia: incorporating members of the local *szlachta* into imperial military units and molding them into loyal Habsburg soldiers and officers. However, integrating nominally „Polish“ divisions into regular „German“ regiments undermined this goal. The move failed to attract significant numbers of Galician noble volunteers and further strained relations between the central government and the local elites.

The late 1780s presented another opportunity for the Galician *szlachta* to secure their own Uhlan regiment within the Habsburg military. As discussed in Chapter 2, the

⁵⁸³ Franz Moritz von Lacy, Allerunterthänigste Note 25.12.1784. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 24, 1784/142/53, 117–119.

⁵⁸⁴ von Jedina, Geschichte des Kaiserlich Königlich Österreichischen Ersten Uhlanen-Regimentes, 4.

final years of Joseph II's rule were marred by a number of external and internal crises. The fragility of the Monarchy opened a window of opportunity for the Galician *szlachta* to express dissatisfaction with the existing conditions in the Kingdom and voice their demands aimed at reestablishing the relationship between the crownland nobility and Vienna. The establishment of a distinct military unit with a clear Galician character could serve as a powerful gesture of trust from the imperial authorities toward the *szlachta*, particularly during a period of acute geopolitical tension. This became especially important in 1789, when the Habsburg Monarchy was under direct threat from a union between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Aside from the obvious necessity to defend Galicia from potential invasion, it could be argued that successful recruitment of the *szlachta* members to the imperial army would prevent them from joining the enemy side. Given the *Rzeczpospolita*'s strong opposition to any recruitment of its subjects by Habsburg forces on Galician territory, it is plausible to suggest that this underlying motive inspired Vienna's policies.⁵⁸⁵

The idea of creating separate Uhlan volunteer units for defending Galicia consisting of locals was first voiced by the regular Polish officers of the Habsburg army in the wake of the war with the Ottoman Empire in 1788. Although the Court War Council initially dismissed these suggestions, the worsening geopolitical situation, particularly along the Empire's northeastern borders, brought the proposal back into consideration. On 19th November 1789, the War Council approved the creation of volunteer Uhlan corps and infantry battalion under command of Karl O'Donnell, who, due to his Galician origin, was aware of local circumstances and was believed to be able to ensure the successful and rapid formation of new units.⁵⁸⁶ This strategy turned out to be rather successful – recruitment into the new Uhlan corps, supervised directly by lieutenant Kürner, a former adjutant of Heinrich O'Donnell, was finished by the end of April 1790, and the new unit was comprised of 799 members divided into two divisions. However, the Habsburg government was wary of stationing this „Polish“ corps in Galicia, fearing that, in the event of conflict with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Galician recruits might feel stronger allegiance to their former compatriots than to their new rulers. Consequently, the

⁵⁸⁵ See: Benedykt de Caché an Staatskanzler von Kaunitz 27.06.1789. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatskanzlei, Polen II 51, 242–244.

⁵⁸⁶ Michał *Baczkowski*, *Szarży podobnej dawno nie widziały dzieje! Ułani galicyjscy 1778–1918* (Charges like this have not been seen in history for a long time! Galician Uhlans 1778–1918) (Kraków 2011) 29.

Uhlan corps was immediately redeployed to Moravia, where it was integrated into the *Cheveau-léger* regiments of König and Modena.⁵⁸⁷ Thus, the imperial center confirmed its mistrust of the indigenous elites, reflecting fears of divided loyalties and the persistent marginalization of local agency.

Unlike its predecessors, the history of this unit did not, however, end with the ceasefire and signing of a peace agreement. The period of its formation coincided in time with the negotiations concerning the *Charta Leopoldina* in 1790. Among the reforms suggested by the project, the noble authors suggested that the emperor create „national regiments“ in Galicia, comprised of those born in the land and led by officers of local origin. The existence of these regiments was to be sponsored by taxes collected in the Kingdom. The authors voiced their dissatisfaction with „Polish“ Uhlan units being united with Habsburg regular regiments under foreign commandment and flags, as they regarded such actions for „a sign of distrust and fear“ of the central government towards the Galician *szlachta*. According to the project, the decision to create separate Galician units would give its members the utmost motivation to fight not only in the name of the Empire, but for the glory „of our Motherland“, which in the context of *Charta Leopoldina* meant the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria and not the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁵⁸⁸ This proposal reflected the broader spirit of the *Charta*, which sought compromise and balance between the imperial throne and the crownland. Moreover, the nobles envisioned that funding these regiments through taxes collected in Galicia would grant local elites greater influence over their formation and recruitment. In this way, the creation of permanent Galician units symbolized both a practical military measure and a potential step toward hybridity in the crownland administration.

The establishment of permanent Galician regiments was one of the more feasible aspects of the *Charta Leopoldina* for emperor Leopold II, as it required minimal compromise and aligned with the broader needs of the Habsburg Empire in times of crisis. As early as summer 1790, the Uhlan divisions recruited in Galicia were reunited into one corps, and on 1st August 1791 it was transformed into a regular Uhlan regiment within the structure of the Habsburg army. The regiment initially consisted of 1208 soldiers and 133 officers, led by Colonel Anton von Schubirz.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁷ *Baczkowski*, W służbie Habsburgów, 49.

⁵⁸⁸ *Grodziski*, Projekt Konstytucji, 48f.

⁵⁸⁹ *von Jedina*, Geschichte des Kaiserlich Königlich Österreichischen Ersten Uhlanen-Regimentes, 9f.

While the regiment marked a significant shift in the integration of the Galician upper class into Habsburg military structures, it did not entirely replace existing volunteer formations. The uprising in the Austrian Netherlands caused emperor Leopold II to establish a volunteer Uhlan corps under command of Bernard Degelmann on 1st September 1790. Even though the recruitment campaign took place in Galicia and was aimed at the local *szlachta*, as well as the immigrants from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the result did not possess a distinctly „Polish“, let alone „Galician“ character. The reluctance of the *szlachta* to enlist stemmed from growing anxieties over an impending conflict between Austria and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The fear of being deployed against their homeland – a struggle deeply intertwined with questions of national allegiance and colonial subjugation – led to widespread avoidance of service and even mass desertions from existing Galician units. In the end, the Habsburgs managed to recruit mostly poor city dwellers with little to no combat experience. Among the officers, only five were Polish by origin, the rest were recruited among Austrian officers from regular regiments. Because of that, the initial plans to create yet another Uhlan unit according to the *Rzeczpospolita* model had to be modified, and the Degelmann’s corps was rather similar to Habsburg *chevau-léger* regiments in its structure.⁵⁹⁰

The future of the unit was directly dependent on developments in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During the peak of the military reforms in 1791–1792, most local nobility preferred to serve in their own army rather than seek a career abroad, as it was seen as a matter of dignity. As a result, recruitment for Degelmann’s Uhlan corps struggled, attracting mostly adventurers of dubious reputation and deserters from the *Rzeczpospolita* army. The loss of 1792 war against Prussia and the failure of 1794 Kościuszko uprising changed the situation for the benefit of the Habsburgs, who managed to recruit numerous members of the corps among the refugee noblemen attempting to find shelter in Galicia. While this campaign eventually resulted in a Polish-majority rank-and-file, the officer corps remained largely Austrian: by 1798, only three out of forty officers were of Polish origin.⁵⁹¹ This imbalance highlighted a colonial dynamic in which imperial

⁵⁹⁰ *Baczowski*, W służbie Habsburgów, 50.

⁵⁹¹ See: Oscar *Kielmansegg*, *Schwarzenberg-Uhlanen 1790 bis 1887* (Tarnów 1887) 305–328.

authorities exploited local military traditions while restricting upward mobility for those they recruited.

Unlike the regular Galician Uhlan regiment established in 1791 – intended to incorporate elements of the Galician nobility into the Habsburg military structure – the Degelmann corps functioned primarily as a pragmatic solution to Vienna’s immediate security concerns. Initial plans to recruit primarily from the noble class were quickly abandoned in favor of mass enlistment, prioritizing quantity over quality. The corps was first intended for deployment in the Austrian Netherlands, but its role later expanded to serve broader imperial needs. In the end, the Degelmann’s corps (which in 1793 was given under the command of the Prince Karl von Schwarzenberg) did turn out to be a rather successful integration project – out of all conditionally „Polish“ units at Habsburg’s service at the time, it became the most active on the battlefield, and brought the most glory to its members. After the appeasement of the Austrian Netherlands in 1791, it fought in numerous campaigns conducted by the Monarchy in subsequent years, starting with the war with France in the spring 1792. Those Polish and Galician noblemen who became members of the corps demonstrated loyalty to Vienna regardless of the dramatic events unfolding in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1792–1795. This loyalty, however, reflected the pragmatism of the *szlachta* much more than their ideological commitment. As in many colonial contexts, military service provided a means of survival for the former *Rzeczpospolita* elites gradually losing their own state. After signing the Peace of Campo Formio, the volunteer corps was not dissolved, but transformed into a Second regular Uhlan Regiment of the Habsburg army – the one created in 1791 from now on bore the name of the First Uhlan regiment.⁵⁹² Thus, the Monarchy acknowledged the strategic value of the *szlachta* within its regular military forces while deliberately restricting their access to command positions, reflecting the Habsburg government’s ambivalent stance toward the *szlachta*.

Participation of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Third Partition and the creation of West Galicia posed a new challenge to the Empire with regards to elites’ inclusion. The *szlachta* of the new crownland, deprived of its former power privileges and unbound by loyalty towards now non-existing state seemed to be suitable candidates for recruitment into Habsburg military, where they could build careers and earn a respectable status while

⁵⁹² Ibid, 29.

serving the new regime. Already at the final stage of 1794 insurrection remnants of Kościuszko forces suggested themselves to be immersed into the Habsburg regular army with the status of a „Polish corps“, but at the time, the suggestion was declined by Harnoncourt.⁵⁹³ In 1796, however, the fears of „revolutionary element“ being brought within the empire by the insurgents subsided, and Harnoncourt himself started recruiting potential noble candidates for a new Uhlan unit in the freshly acquired Habsburg lands.⁵⁹⁴ In his turn, Commissioner von Margelik voiced a suggestion to create a „national regiment“ out of volunteer representatives of the West Galician *szlachta*. Another project was created by the emperor’s agent in the new crownland, Franz Josef Jekel. According to it, an entire cavalry corps of 25 thousand members was to be created.⁵⁹⁵ While none of these proposals were formally adopted, the Habsburg government issued an appeal to Western Galicians on 28th August 1796, signaling serious consideration of a new „Polish“ military unit – particularly in light of ongoing war in Italy. The West Galician Court Commission expressed full confidence in the new Habsburg subjects, and suggested, that every inhabitant of the land wishing „to defend the Motherland“, regardless of whether he was able to pay for his maintenance during campaign and equipment, immediately joined the volunteer corps, which was not even established formally at the time. The former Polish-Lithuanian officers who wished to enter Habsburg service were allowed to keep their ranks and promised rewards for industrious and efficient service. Every potential member of the corps was to be allowed to keep his uniform and officer marks after the end of campaign as a sign of special recognition from the government. Those not willing to engage in combat personally were encouraged to contribute to charity donations for the benefit of the new corps, „following a noble example of honorable patriots of other hereditary lands“. ⁵⁹⁶ The appeal thus framed enlistment and assistance to

⁵⁹³ Mencil, *Galicja Zachodnia*, 21.

⁵⁹⁴ Von Harnoncourt an Marquis de Chasteler, 01.03.1796. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten, Hauptreihe, Akten 1018 Militärische Besetzung Polens, 1796-3-3 1/3, 39f.

⁵⁹⁵ Michał Baczkowski, *Galicja a wojsko Austriackie: 1772–1867* (Galicia and the Austrian military: 1772–1867) (Kraków 2017) 39.

⁵⁹⁶ Od Jego Cezarsko-Królewskiej Zachodnio-Galicyjskiej Nadwornej Komisji (From His Imperial and Royal West Galician Court Commission) 28.08.1796. In: Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie, Rozporządzenia C. K. Gubernium Krajowego Galicji Zachodniej, władz centralnych (m.in. cesarza), Senatu Rządzącego Wolnego Miasta Krakowa (Ordinances of the Imperial-Royal Land Gubernium of West Galicia, central authorities (including the emperor), and the Governing Senate of the Free City of Kraków), 615–617.

the imperial army as an act of patriotic duty, subtly reframing the *szlachta*'s identity within the imperial structure.

The idea of creating volunteer corps did receive some approval among the West Galician *szlachta*. They were ready to present around 6000 volunteers for it, under the condition that the government would limit its campaign of forcefully recruiting former Kościuszko insurgents now living in both Galicias into the regular Habsburg army units.⁵⁹⁷ Eventually, the project received strong disapproval from Field Marshal Lacy, as he once again expressed distrust in loyalty of the Galician noble subjects. He was especially against the recruitment of West Galician nobility and gathering them in one volunteer corps, as the West Galician *szlachta* had just become subordinate to the Habsburg scepter and was yet to prove its loyalty to the Empire.⁵⁹⁸ Additionally, the actual number of those willing to enlist proved insufficient to form a combat-ready corps.

The next appeal towards the crownland population was published in *Gazeta Krakowska* on 30th April 1797 under the authorship of an anonymous „friend of the Motherland“. However, the text bears clear traces of governmental influence, if not outright authorship by an imperial official. The author tried to persuade his compatriots to support emperor and the Habsburg Monarchy in the fight against revolutionary France, reminding them of all the kindnesses bestowed by the „government full of humanity“ over the former Polish-Lithuanian territories. At one point, he desperately begged West Galicians to „follow the example“ of other imperial subjects and contribute to the defense of the Empire against its enemies.⁵⁹⁹ The very existence of such a desperate appeal suggests widespread reluctance among Galicians to enlist in the Habsburg military. For the *szlachta*, this hesitancy was further reinforced by the recent formation of the Polish Legions in Italy, which many saw as the first step toward regaining national independence. At this point in time, the Habsburg Monarchy could hardly suggest an alternative to politically active nobility that would make them gladly join the ranks of imperial army. Due to the reservations from both the side of the government and the potential candidates the Western Galician volunteer corps project was abandoned. Those

⁵⁹⁷ Czuby, Zasada „dwóch sumień“, 511.

⁵⁹⁸ Franz Moritz von Lacy, Allerunterthänigste Note 17.09.1796. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 68, 1784/300/35, without pagination.

⁵⁹⁹ Do moich wspól-obywatelów zachodniej Gallicyi. In: *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 35 (30. 04. 1797) 11f.

noblemen willing to join the Habsburg army were eventually assigned to the Second Uhlan regiment.⁶⁰⁰

In a few years, the Habsburg government returned to the idea of forming new Uhlan units from the Galician *szlachta*. The Second Coalition War saw active participation of both Galician Uhlan regiments, the members of which often demonstrated exceptional bravery and loyalty towards Viennese throne. Even when facing Polish Legions loyal to Napoleon during the Italian campaign, the Galicians remained steadfast in Habsburg service, with no documented cases of mass desertion to the enemy's side.⁶⁰¹ This loyalty inspired emperor Franz II to consider creating an entire noble Uhlan corps out of Bukovinian and Galician aristocracy. A detailed project was submitted by major Adam von Mier, a member of the First Uhlan regiment, who suggested that the new corps should have around 1200 members, and each of its 6 squadrons would have 60 *towarzyszy* and 12 soldiers. The author especially stressed out that the unit would have to rely on the old *Rzeczpospolita* traditions of the *szlachta* privileges and „freedoms“, making service appealing not only to nobles within the Habsburg realm but also to those outside it – including Polish noblemen serving in Napoleon's legions.⁶⁰²

However, this proposal met with unequivocal opposition from Field Marshal Archduke Karl, whose skepticism was undoubtedly shaped by recent conspiracy attempts involving the *szlachta*. He raised both financial and political concerns: first, he argued that forming an entire Uhlan corps would place an excessive strain on the imperial treasury, especially since peace had already been secured with the French Republic, reducing the immediate threat to the Monarchy's stability.⁶⁰³ More importantly, he doubted the reliability of a unit composed entirely of young Polish noblemen, fearing that their concentration in a single corps could pose a security risk. Additionally, he saw no broader benefit in granting such exceptional privileges to the Galician and Bukovinian nobility, as it could set an undesirable precedent for other crownlands. Instead, he suggested establishing yet another Uhlan regiment, in order to provide noblemen living

⁶⁰⁰ Baczkowski, Szarży podobnej, 35.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid; Czuby, Zasada „dwóch sumień“, 508.

⁶⁰² An den k.k. Herrn Major Grafen von Mier aufgebengene Errichtung eines Uhlanen Regimentes in Galizien betreffend. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kriegsministerialakten, Akten 4, 1801-11-5, without pagination.

⁶⁰³ Erzherzog Karl an Kaiser Franz II 10.02.1801. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kriegsministerialakten, Akten 4, 1801-11-5, without pagination.

in both Galicias with means corresponding to their respective needs, as well as with an extensive and beneficial opportunity to enter the highest service, and to exclude the possibility that they would be dangerous to the state due to their revolutionary aspirations.⁶⁰⁴ The regiment was thus represented as a reasonable compromise between giving the Galician *szlachta* a possibility to implement their corporate and national pride within imperial military structures, and keeping the *szlachta* harnessed within tight organizational framework.

The latter project was eventually accepted, and on 1st March 1801 the regiment was established under preliminary command of major von Mier. To further engage the Galician *szlachta* into imperial military, from now on each of 3 Uhlan regiments was to have 48 cadet positions reserved specifically for the nobility of the former Polish-Lithuanian territories. After 4 years of service, the cadets were to be promoted to officers' positions. The costs for maintaining cadets were to be borne by the noble Estates of both Galicias, with the Eastern one taking the bigger share, as it was to provide more cadets.⁶⁰⁵ The recruitment of cavalymen for the new regiment was to take place solely in Galicias and Bukovina.⁶⁰⁶ Among the three regular Uhlan regiments established in Galicia before the War of 1809, the Third Regiment most directly reflected the Habsburgs' broader strategy of incorporating the *szlachta* into imperial service. Unlike previous regiments, which had been formed in response to immediate military needs, the Third one was created during a relatively peaceful period, with recruitment focused primarily on noble lineage rather than wartime necessity. The underlying aim was to establish a long-term tradition of noble military service rather than simply addressing short-term manpower shortages. The concessions provided by the Habsburgs to the Galician *szlachta* while creating the Third Regiment were the biggest the Empire could afford in times of internal and external constraints. At a time when Vienna was carefully managing its fragile relationship with the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories, any further privileges risked destabilizing the delicate balance of power. Nevertheless, in a symbolic gesture, Emperor Franz formally confirmed the „Polish national character“ of the Third Uhlan Regiment in April 1806, and proclaimed that it would continue to receive recruits solely from the

⁶⁰⁴ Erzherzog Karl an Kaiser Franz II 19.02.1801; 20.02.1801. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Kriegsministerialakten, Akten 4, 1801-11-5, without pagination.

⁶⁰⁵ Erich Freiherrn Riedl *von Riedenau*, Geschichte des k. und. k. Uhlanen-Regimentes Erzherzog Carl Nr. 3 von Seiner Errichtung im Jahre 1801 bis zur Gegenwart (Wien 1901) 16f.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, 20.

united Galicia.⁶⁰⁷ Given the widespread fear of concentrating „Polishness“ within specific military units at the time, this proclamation could be seen as a permissive gesture, aimed at balancing the recognition of Polish identity within the military with the need to maintain imperial control and prevent the rise of nationalist sentiments that could challenge Habsburg authority.

During the studied time period, the *szlachta* attitudes towards service in the Habsburg army were generally favorable. Joining the imperial army ranks did not tarnish a reputation of an aristocrat by itself, as long as he remained loyal to the ideals of his *szlachta* identity. In some cases, such as with Józef Poniatowski, serving the Habsburgs even elevated fame and glory of its bearer. According to the conclusions of the special Sejm Commission, convened at the time of his fighting in the Austro-Turkish war, the diligent service of Poniatowski on the battlefield provided not only him, but the entire *Natio Polonica* with glory, and therefore should not be held against him.⁶⁰⁸ The broader engagement of the *szlachta* from both sides of the border in imperial army building depended on a number of internal and external circumstances. For many *Rzeczpospolita* noblemen, service for the benefit of Habsburgs did seem to be a sure way to gain material wealth and social prestige, especially in the first years after 1772, when no viable alternative existed, given the disintegration of the Polish-Lithuanian military. Those, who did not believe that Galicia would ever return to the „noble republic“, regarded military career to be a way of demonstrating loyalty and ensuring incorporation into Habsburg high society, as well as retaining noble privileges to a degree allowed by the „enlightened“ Danube monarchy.⁶⁰⁹

In the early 1790s, however, the rapid military reforms in the *Rzeczpospolita* caused massive desertion of the *szlachta* from imperial service – at that point, many of them were already disappointed by the lack of career prospects guaranteed to the nobility of other crownlands.⁶¹⁰ The ambivalence of the central government towards the *szlachta* in the military did have a rather negative effect on their enthusiasm, which made service in the reformed Polish-Lithuanian army all the more attractive. The results of the Third

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 37.

⁶⁰⁸ Miloš Řezník, Habsburgische Sozialisierung und Polnischer Patriotismus – Fürst Józef Poniatowski als „Österreicher“? In: Claudia Reichl-Ham (ed.), Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig: Symposium 8. November 2013, Acta Austro-Polonica 6 (Wien 2014) 69–101, here 82.

⁶⁰⁹ Czubyty, Zasada „dwóch sumień“, 499.

⁶¹⁰ Baczkowski, W służbie Habsburgów, 74.

Partition and the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian state deprived the *szlachta* of this alternative, and made many of them seek ways to regain their place in society under the Habsburg regime. With the onset of the wars against revolutionary France, joining the Habsburg army gained an ideological component. The „Sarmatian“ ideals of the conservative *szlachta* made the fight against the „godless, anticatholic and greedy for power“ republic (and later – against the rapacious empire of Napoleon) into their duty of honor.⁶¹¹ The signing of Lunéville peace and dissolution of the Polish Legions deprived the *szlachta* of yet another hope to restoring their national statehood, and left them with the necessity to find their place within the shifting and uncertain geopolitical landscape. Thus, the *szlachta*’s attitude towards serving the Habsburgs was deeply rooted in self-interest, reflecting a pragmatic loyalty. Their engagement with the imperial army was mostly driven by the tangible benefits it afforded them – whether in terms of social prestige, material wealth, or the preservation of their noble status. This approach mirrored the broader relationship between the *szlachta* and the Habsburgs: loyalty and service were extended only when they aligned with the *szlachta*’s personal and collective interests, often ensuring their survival within an empire that simultaneously offered both opportunities and constraints. In this sense, the *szlachta*’s loyalty was not unconditional but was shaped by the dynamics of power, privilege, and self-preservation within an imperial context.

In addition to that, the Habsburg strategy of integrating the *szlachta* into the imperial army can be seen through a postcolonial lens as a classic „divide and rule“ tactic. The noblemen integrated into imperial army structures mostly belonged to the poorest layer of the *szlachta*. Unlike in Prussia, no compulsory recruitment of the lower *szlachta* took place – the Habsburgs attempted to attract them as volunteers. As a result, many of the soldiers in Uhlan regiments registered themselves as „noblemen“.⁶¹² Even while serving at the lowest positions, they were still recognized as nobility, which allowed them to retain a certain self-image and dignity.⁶¹³ However, those, who benefitted the most

⁶¹¹ Michał *Baczkowski*, Die Polen in der österreichischen Armee in der Zeit der Kriege gegen Frankreich (1792–1815). In: Claudia *Reichl-Ham*, Irmgard *Nöbauer* (eds.), Polnisch-österreichische Kontakte sowie Militärbündnisse 1618–1918 (Wien 2009) 153–163, here 161.

⁶¹² Bernhard *Schmitt*, Der Militärdienst und die Neuformierung adeliger Eliten in den habsburgischen und preußischen Teilungsgebieten 1772–1830. In: Karsten *Holste*, Dietlind *Hüchtker*, Michael G. *Müller* (eds.), Aufsteigen und Obenbleiben in europäischen Gesellschaften des 19. Jahrhunderts. Akteure – Arenen – Aushandlungsprozesse (Berlin 2009) 49–62, here 60f.

⁶¹³ *Ibid*, 62.

from serving the Habsburgs on the battlefield, still belonged to the magnate families, as the career advancement depended mostly on family network ties and protection from generals and regiment chiefs. Around 20 thousand Poles went through Habsburg military ranks between the years of 1778 and 1815,⁶¹⁴ but only 7 were rewarded with a general title, most of them due to political reasoning.⁶¹⁵ This hierarchical structure within the military further reinforced social and political divisions within the Galician noble class, introduced by the legal division of the *szlachta* into magnates and knights in 1775. By doing so, it aimed to prevent a unified challenge to imperial authority from the *szlachta*, thereby confirming Vienna's suspicions about the Galician nobility.

A few words should be said in this subchapter concerning the support provided to Habsburg army by the civic nobility of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. An obligation to maintain imperial army units was indirectly placed on Galician magnates after the First Partition, when the central government placed garrisons on the landholdings of rich landowners.⁶¹⁶ However, in 1790s and early 1800s, when the Monarchy found itself in constant armed struggles and actively engaged Galicians in its military campaigns, financial support from the locals became quite necessary for the maintenance of the army units. The Habsburg Empire abstained initially from creating new taxes for military purposes, as the tax burden over the Galician *szlachta* was already quite large and caused discontent among crownland elites. Instead, Habsburgs chose to make the charity donations a voluntary cause, hoping that such campaigns would serve a dual function: not only securing much-needed funds but also reinforcing the loyalty of Galician society by fostering a sense of ideological attachment to the Empire. The promotion of voluntary contributions can thus be interpreted as a strategic application of soft power, subtly aligning the interests of the local nobility with imperial priorities while avoiding direct coercion.

For most members of the *szlachta*, however, donations to the army were less an expression of genuine support for the imperial cause and more a pragmatic strategy to demonstrate loyalty to the Viennese government. It also provided a means of ensuring better conditions for their compatriots serving on the battlefield, thereby reinforcing solidarity within the Galician *szlachta*. Additionally, participation in charity donations

⁶¹⁴ Czuby, Zasada „dwóch sumień“, 490.

⁶¹⁵ Baczkowski, Galicja a wojsko Austriackie, 85.

⁶¹⁶ Grodziski, Historia ustroju, 41.

was one of the few avenues through which noblewomen of Galicia could actively engage in the political life of the Kingdom without relying on male mediation. In this sense, the Habsburgs' reliance on voluntary contributions reflected a broader imperial tactic of co-opting local elites through selective inclusion while maintaining a rigid hierarchy that ultimately served the interests of the central government. By appealing to the *szlachta*'s self-interest and sense of noble duty, the Empire ensured their compliance while avoiding the open resistance that might have arisen from direct taxation or forced military conscription.

The first official campaign of collecting charity donations began in both Eastern and Western Galicia in August 1796. An appeal to the West Galician inhabitants was placed in *Gazeta Krakowska* on 11th September,⁶¹⁷ the appeal from governor Gaisruck to „his“ Galicia was made on 30th August.⁶¹⁸ The first text largely reiterated the West Galician Court Commission's appeal from 28th August but added an introduction highlighting the threats posed by the enemy to the entire local population, urging active participation in the „defense of the Motherland“. The *szlachta* was the first group mentioned:

„...the nobility, which for centuries, due to its bravery in the field, the full implementation of the interests of the state, and the upliftment of the national spirit, has been the pride and model of every formed nation, sees its gloriously obtained rights, privileges and titles trampled underfoot, its properties gained through work and merits in the Motherland devastated, its residences plundered, its families stripped of all their dignities, and itself equaled with the last of its household“.

It is striking that, at a time of crisis, the Habsburg Monarchy seemed to „forget“ that in the past two decades it was responsible for policies, which many *szlachta* members regarded as „humiliation“ and „stripping of all dignities and properties“ as well. Now the Empire tried to present itself as a defender of the *szlachta*'s special status and awaited its obedience and support in response. The appeal to East Galicians, by contrast, was much shorter and more direct, simply urging all inhabitants to contribute to the „common good“ in the face of enemy attack, without a distinct address to the local nobility. The reason for

⁶¹⁷ Wezwanie obywateli Jego Cess: Krol: Zachodnio-Gallicyyskiey pełnomocney Nadworney Kommissyi. In: *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 72 (11. 09. 1796) 1–3.

⁶¹⁸ *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 77 (28. 09. 1796) 5.

such differences between the two texts could be that in East Galicia, Habsburg administration felt its position to be much more secure due to a longer presence and believed that local nobility would not need extra persuasion to provide support for the imperial forces.

The first charity donation campaign engaged many nobility representatives of both Galicias, among them Counts Karol and Bonifacy Ossoliński, Countesses Elżbieta and Teofila Sapieha, Counts Jan Piotr and Hiacenty Małachowski, Countesses Dembińska, Branicka and Dembowska, Count Wodzicki, Chamberlain Morsztyn, Countess Elżbieta Lubomirska, Count Aleksander Zamoyski, Countess Katarzyna Kossakowska and Count Walerian Dzieduszycki, as well as Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. The participation of such prominent personalities, some of them not long ago being engaged in anti-Habsburg activities, as well as the significant sum of nearly 53 thousand guldens collected within a few months, were presented in Habsburg press as an unquestionable success and evidence of great mutual understanding between local elites and central government. After 1796, however, none of the charity donation campaigns achieved that level of participation. Already the following year the Habsburg government introduced compulsory war bonds in the Galicias, which drastically diminished the willingness of locals to voluntarily donate for the Habsburg army. In 1797 and 1799 campaigns only collected around 7 thousand guilders each year, in the years 1800–1801 – less than a few hundred per year. At first, the local *szlachta* continued to make small contributions to the cause, hoping that their participation would guarantee them favors from the government, but, after these hopes turned out to be futile, the Galician nobility largely ignored donation collections. After 1801 and up to 1809 war the Habsburg administration did not carry out any charity campaigns, only occasionally receiving donations from the most loyal *szlachta*, such as a 1 thousand guilder gift of Antoni Ledóchowski in 1804 or 10 thousand guilders from Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski in 1808.⁶¹⁹ This pattern of declining participation in charity donations reflects a broader dynamic of transactional loyalty between the local elites and the imperial center. Initially, the *szlachta* engaged in these campaigns not out of genuine allegiance to the Habsburgs but as a calculated move to secure imperial favor. However, once it became clear that their contributions would not translate into tangible benefits, their willingness to

⁶¹⁹ Baczkowski, W służbie Habsburgów, 98–100.

cooperate diminished. This selective engagement with imperial initiatives further underscored the *szlachta*'s fundamentally self-interested approach to Habsburg rule, which meant supporting the Empire only when it served their own status and security, rather than out of any deep-seated loyalty.

3. Civilizing through Service: The Younger *Szlachta*'s Role in the Habsburg Military.

Aside from including experienced noblemen into imperial military structures, the Habsburg government attempted to take steps that would let the younger *szlachta* become faithful servants of the monarchy on the battlefield. Unlike the strategies discussed in the previous subchapter, these strategies were more long-term, aimed not at quickly resolving urgent military issues, but at rearing the younger *szlachta* in the „civilized“ Habsburg spirit, giving them proper military education and experience of serving, as well as demonstrating how diligent service could be profitable and prestigious under new regime. The engagement of younger *szlachta* had a strong symbolic element, as it allowed Vienna to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate with those noble Galicians who had been less influenced by the „barbarianism“ of the *Rzeczpospolita*. By providing military education and career advancement within the imperial system, the monarchy sought to tie the younger *szlachta*'s identity and future prospects to the empire, ultimately making them into model subjects and servants of the „enlightened“ Empire. Thus, the engagement of the younger nobility into the military service became a crucial feature of the Habsburg „civilizing mission“ in Galicia.

The tradition of the so-called Household Guards (*Leibgarden*) being present at the Viennese court was established during the rule of Maximilian I. These units were given the task of ensuring personal security of the royal family, both in Hofburg and during their travels in the country and abroad. Another function of the Guards was purely representative, as, according to the court etiquette at the time, their presence was to demonstrate the grandiose and power of the Habsburg dynasty. The members of the Guards were chosen among distinguished officers of the imperial army, both of noble and common descent. Prior to the First Partition, separate Guards were established in 1760 for the Hungarian nobility, as a way of rewarding it for assistance provided to Her Majesty

during the War of Austrian Succession, and the Venetian aristocracy in 1767. In both „national“ Guards the members belonged solely to the noble class, thus raising the prestige of guard service, and giving the monarch an opportunity to demonstrate willingness to recognize and accept crownland nobilities without actually giving them any chance to considerably influence imperial or even local politics.⁶²⁰

After acquiring the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, the Habsburg government remembered the format of national household guards and started considering its suitability for the Galician *szlachta*. The idea was first mentioned by Joseph II in a memorandum to his mother, in which he addressed many issues concerning the administration of the crownland. Since the ambitious plans of the emperor foresaw total transformation of Galicia, he believed that more long-term strategies of land governance were crucial for its future prosperity, and that included plans of engaging Galician noble youth into the productive service for the benefit of the country. Concerning the household guard, Joseph II suggested that 50 young noblemen from Galicia join the Hungarian Guard. He specifically stated that the *szlachta* should wear their national Uhlan uniform at Viennese Court, thus preserving a visible difference between them and the rest of the guardians. In monarch's opinion, that would „without a doubt make a very good impression on the nation, and once these people were educated and learned languages, they could later also get jobs in the province“.⁶²¹ At the same time, this „recognition“ could be seen as a paternalistic gesture, where local identity was redefined within the framework of imperial dominance. By preserving elements of their national uniforms, the Habsburgs acknowledged the „Otherness“ of the Galician nobility in a way that reinforced their subordinate position within the broader imperial order.

The initial plan went through several rounds of discussion, and by 1782 it was decided that the Galician nobility would not join the already existing guard of a foreign crownland but would have one of their own. The diploma establishing the Royal Noble Galician Household Guard was issued on 16th November 1782. At the very beginning of the document, the emperor proclaimed that the creation of the Galician Guard was to

⁶²⁰ Andreas *Gestrich*, Die galizischen adeligen Leibgarden am Wiener Hof: Ein Beispiel Habsburgischer Inklusionspolitik nach den Teilungen Polen-Litauens. In: *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit* 17, no. 1 (2013) 41–63, here 45–47.

⁶²¹ *Joseph II*, Bericht des Mitregenten Joseph über die Zustände in Galizien, 18.05.1780. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Hofkanzlei, Kt. 230, 1 ex September 1780, 9–23, here 20.

demonstrate „the highest trust“ of the ruling dynasty towards its new subjects, and that it would enjoy the direct patronage of the Habsburgs. The Hungarian Guard was to serve as a model for the new unit, which was to be recognized as a military corps. The Captain of the Guard was to be provided with „the highest military rank“; he and the commanding officers were to be chosen solely among „the Galician nation“. The candidates to the Guard were to be chosen by the Galician Estates, both from those who had already served in the regular army and the sons of „honored families“ with no previous military experience (later the symbolic privilege to choose candidates was revoked).⁶²² All the Guardians were to be provided with officer ranks of the Habsburg Empire and all the related privileges, including access to Viennese Court „up to the second antechamber“. After six years of diligent service, those Guardians wishing to continue their service in the regular army were to be given promotion of one degree; those wishing to serve in civic administration were to be given this opportunity as well. At the end of the document, Joseph II once again stated that the creation of the Galician Noble Guard aimed at giving the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria the same status and dignity the other crownlands enjoyed.⁶²³

The matter of financing the Guard was not addressed in the diploma of 16 November, however, it was previously decided by the emperor and the Court Military Council that the Galician Noble Estates would bear the responsibility of maintaining the Guard, following the example of the Hungarian Noble Estates. This decision subtly reinforced the Monarchy's control while presenting the Guard's creation as a „supreme grace“⁶²⁴ to the *szlachta*, fostering an illusion of mutual cooperation. While the nobility was expected to finance the Guard, this arrangement also tied them more closely to the central authority, ensuring their participation in the imperial system. The symbolic elements in the Guard's uniform, such as the use of „Polish“ colors and decorations,⁶²⁵ further reflected the delicate balance of recognition and control. It acknowledged the crownland's distinct identity but framed it within the broader imperial narrative. This

⁶²² *Gestrich*, Die galizischen adeligen Leibgarden, 51f.

⁶²³ Emil *Paskovits*, Die Erste Arciärenleibgarde Seiner Majestät des Kaiser und Königs: Ein Rückblick auf ihre hundertfünfzigjährige Geschichte (Wien 1914) 44–46.

⁶²⁴ Hofkriegsratsprotokoll, 19.6.1781. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Leibgarden, Galizische adelige Leibgarde 1 Akten in genere, 7–23, here 18.

⁶²⁵ Józef *Wawel-Louis*, Wojskowa reprezentacja Galicyi po pierwszym rozbiórce (The military representation of Galicia after the First Partition). In: *Przegląd Polski*, Rok Trzydziesty Pierwszy 122, No. 366 (1896) 502–527, here 507.

allowed the Habsburgs to integrate Galician nobility into their power structure while maintaining a hierarchy that kept local elites fully dependent on the central authority.

The establishment of the Royal Noble Galician Household Guard was an important symbolic and practical initiative, with Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski being chosen to head the unit. His status as a trusted ally of the Habsburg government and his prior military and educational experience made him an ideal figure to lend prestige to the Guard.⁶²⁶ The officers of the Galician Guard were all Polish and of noble origin, as well as possessing considerable battlefield experience in the Habsburg military; some were even decorated with the Crosses of the Maria Theresia Order.⁶²⁷ The Guard's creation was framed as an honor to Galicia, which was intended to motivate the local nobility to prove their loyalty and worthiness of this „special grace“. The tragic irony that the ceremony marking the Guard's inauguration on 30th December 1781 led to the death of Prince Schwarzenberg, who had represented the Monarchy, is an evocative moment in the history of the unit.⁶²⁸ As the Guard continued to take part in court events, it not only symbolized the integration of Galicia into the Habsburg Monarchy but also acted as an educational tool, preparing young noblemen for future roles in both military and civic administration. The emphasis on languages, law, and military skills demonstrated the Habsburgs' strategic long-term interest in shaping Galician nobility into loyal and effective members of the imperial system.⁶²⁹

As the years went by, the service in Galician Household Guard gradually lost attractiveness in the eyes of the crownland nobility. Since it did not guarantee significant career advancement for its members and did not give them an opportunity to engage in military campaigns and achieve rewards on a battlefield, the Guardians quickly lost their enthusiasm to remain at Court. After creation of the Galician Uhlan regiment in 1784 many of them left Vienna to join the new unit, which caused further understaffing of an already incomplete Guard.⁶³⁰ The Guard did not prove itself to be an effective educational establishment, either, as both the teaching and the engagement of the young *szlachta* in studying was not on high levels.⁶³¹ Last but not least, the maintenance of the Galician

⁶²⁶ *Řezník*, Habsburgische Sozialisierung, 70f.

⁶²⁷ *Wawel-Louis*, Wojskowa reprezentacja Galicyi, 508–511.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid*, 512.

⁶²⁹ Maja *Lüdin*, Die Leibgarden am Wiener Hof (Universität Wien 1965) 82.

⁶³⁰ *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 455.

⁶³¹ *Lüdin*, Die Leibgarden, 83.

Guard placed a burden on the Habsburg treasury – a burden which it constantly tried to ease by cutting the costs of equipping the individual members or paying for the teachers' services.⁶³² As a result, by the end of 1780s the Guard could not suggest much to the Galician *szlachta* in exchange for their service at the Court except for an honor to wear a quasi-Polish uniform and participating in the ceremonies aimed at glorifying the foreign regime. Contrary to the emperor's intentions, it did not become an effective instrument of nobility's inclusion or bringing up a new generation of the loyal and obedient *szlachta*. Because of that, the attention of Habsburgs shifted from the Guard to creating and maintaining the „Polish“ units in the regular army, as they could bring more tangible benefit to the Empire.

After the death of Joseph II his successor, Leopold II, who was even more indifferent towards the Guard, made a decision to reorganize it. On 10th January 1791, the imperial rescript was published, according to which the Galician Guard was dissolved, and „some of its members“ were to join the German Imperial Royal Guard (*K.K. Arcièren-Leibgarde*), existing from 1763.⁶³³ The patent from 18th February of the same year specified the details of this step – the German Guard was to have one Senior Officer, two sergeants and thirty Guardians chosen among noble Galicians, and they were to be united into a separate section. Each Galician entrant would receive the rank of second lieutenant, and as a nominal concession to the Galician Noble Estates, they were permitted to submit a list of candidates from each crownland district for imperial approval, though preference was given to those with prior service in the Habsburg army.⁶³⁴ The official justification for these changes centered on improving the education of Galician noble youth. Therefore, after the dissolution of the Galician Household Guard the emperor attempted to give the young *szlachta* more opportunities to study and obtain necessary knowledge and skills for the future imperial career, be it in the military structures or civic administration. The emperor attributed the waning interest in the Guard to the limited access of noble families to quality education. To address this, he promised to reserve 40 fully funded places in the Wiener Neustadt Academy for young Galician noblemen.

⁶³² Michał Baczkowski, Die Galizische Leibgarde (1781–1816). In: Jahrbuch des Wissenschaftlichen Zentrums der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien 5 (2014) 185–192, here 186.

⁶³³ Ankündigung vom kais. königl. galizischen Landesgubernium, 26.01.1791. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Leibgarden, Galizische adelige Leibgarde 1 Akten in genere, 210–213.

⁶³⁴ Continuatio Edictorum et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A Die 1. Januarii Ad Ultimam Decembris 1791 Emanatorum. (Leopoli 1792) 23–26.

Moreover, those who would choose to continue a military career after graduating from the Academy would have the necessary equipment paid for by the state treasury. At the same time, the emperor expected scholarship holders to demonstrate diligence in obtaining knowledge and skills in the Academy, as well as exemplary behavior. Those refusing to comply with these requirements were to be dismissed and sent home. Once again, the Viennese government demonstrated its intention of rewarding those who were willing to align themselves with the imperial vision of „development“ – one that prioritized integration into Habsburg structures at the expense of the distinct Galician noble traditions. Those who resisted assimilation found themselves increasingly marginalized within the system.

The dissolution of the Galician Household Guard caused rather negative reactions among the local nobility. Although it did not enjoy much popularity throughout its existence, it did represent a nominal equality between Galicia and other crownlands of the Monarchy. In addition, it allowed the *szlachta* to preserve some outer attributes of the *Rzeczpospolita* noble culture while serving at the Viennese Court. The integration of Galicians into the German Imperial Royal Guard stripped them of these distinctions – no longer could they wear a „Polish“ uniform or function as a distinct entity within the imperial framework. As the reorganization of the Guard took place at the same time as the negotiations concerning *Charta Leopoldina*, this matter was addressed there as well. According to Józef Ossoliński's letter from 12th January 1791, the *szlachta* delegation attempted to protest emperor's decision, as the dissolution of the Galician Household Guard signified „the loss of a position of a separate nation“. ⁶³⁵ The extent to which their arguments influenced Leopold II remains unclear. However, the fact that the Guard was not entirely disbanded but merely reorganized, and that Galician noble youth were granted access to elite military education, was certainly at least partially due to Ossoliński's efforts. ⁶³⁶

In any case, the idea of a separate Galician Household Guard did not lose its symbolic meaning for the *szlachta* in the subsequent years. Even in 1804, once emperor Franz II placed an obligation on Galician landlords to partially finance the German Imperial Royal Guard, many of them stated that they would gladly comply with the

⁶³⁵ *Jabłońska*, Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego, 27.

⁶³⁶ *Řezník*, Neuorientierung einer Elite, 455.

requirement, if the unit with the pronounced „national“ character was established once again, according to the model of the Galician Household Guard set in 1782.⁶³⁷ Their response underscored that the Galician nobility continued to see military service as not just a duty, but a means of preserving their own identity within an empire that sought to subsume it. These aspirations remained unanswered, however, and the service of the Galician *szlachta* at Habsburg court took place solely within the ranks of the German Imperial Royal Guard.

As the years went by, however, it turned out that even in this format, the general level of education in the Guard was not satisfactory for the purposes of incorporating the *szlachta* youth into the body of the imperial service.⁶³⁸ In addition, despite promises of the central government, the service in the Guard once again did not guarantee further career in imperial administration or military.⁶³⁹ Since the membership in the Guard did not present much prestige to the rich Galician landowners and their family members, its candidates were mostly chosen among the poor *szlachta*, whose sons usually did not have enough protection or connection to safeguard a good and profitable position after the end of the service. This way, the German Imperial Royal Guard generally failed to become a successful adaptation instrument for the Galician noble youth, as well as its „national“ predecessor. Despite that, the membership of Galicians in the Guard continued in the following decades. On 15th March 1799, the Court Commission decree proclaimed that the young *szlachta* from West Galicia was given the same rights as their Eastern counterparts to join the Guard.⁶⁴⁰ The number of Guardians, as well as its organization, stayed the same.

The service in the German Imperial Royal Guard decisively lost its appeal for the Kingdom *szlachta* after the emergence of the Duchy of Warsaw. Once the 1809 war started, the remaining Guardians were transferred to the acting army regiments due to the lack of educated officers, and the Polish department of the German Imperial Royal Guard

⁶³⁷ Gouverneur Urmenyi an Hofkanzler Ugarte, 24.08.1804. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Leibgarden, Galizische adelige Leibgarde 1 Akten in genere, 600.

⁶³⁸ Wegen Verbesserung des Lehrsystems bei der Adelichen Leibwache, Gallizischer Abteilung. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Leibgarden, Galizische Leibgarde 2 Akten in genere und in specie, A, B, A-C, ad Nr. 98 ex Martio 1794.

⁶³⁹ *Gestrich*, Die galizischen adeligen Leibgarden, 60.

⁶⁴⁰ Sr. k.k. Majestät Franz des Zweyten Politische Gesetze und Verordnungen für die Oesterreichischen, Böhmischen und Galizischen Erbländer: Vom 1. Januar bis letzten Dezemb. 1799 (Wien 1800) 94f.

ceased to exist.⁶⁴¹ The unit was never reinstated, marking the final failure of this imperial project to reconfigure the identity of the Galician noble youth within the Habsburg order. Since the Guard failed to offer the self-seeking *szlachta* genuine pathways to imperial power or substantial privileges, its ultimate failure was inevitable – revealing the limits of Habsburg colonial policies, which sought loyalty without granting real agency.

In the meantime, many Galician noble families took the opportunity to have their children educated at the Wiener Neustadt Academy at treasury cost. The crownland was guaranteed specific privileges compared to other crownlands in the matter – it had the largest number of places reserved directly for the offsprings of the *szlachta*, and the financial contributions required from its Estates were the lowest in the Habsburg realm. To avoid accusations of unequal treatment and unjust preference towards the Kingdom, the government decided to grant the Galician alumni of the Academy the ranks of sergeants to the Household Guard, and not the officer ranks, as was planned initially.⁶⁴² For some Galician noblemen, education at the Wiener Neustadt Academy became the first step toward building a successful military career – out of 70 alumni from 1791 to 1806, seven acquired a rank of Staff Officer, and nine became Lieutenant Commanders or Captains.⁶⁴³ The curriculum of the Academy was aimed at giving the students knowledge sufficient for both military and administration career, as well as education corresponding to a high status of the Habsburg officer.⁶⁴⁴ The Wiener Neustadt Academy thus became a more effective integration mechanism for the Galician *szlachta* than the Household Guard. In particular, it partially eliminated one of the biggest obstacles Galicians faced on the path to a successful career in the military, namely the lack of sufficient German language skills (the Guardians repeatedly demonstrated poor knowledge of German, even though the learning of the subject was supposed to be among their primary activities).⁶⁴⁵ Studying at the Academy, however, did not guarantee automatic incorporation into the Habsburg officer corps as well, as the potential candidates still had to rely on a reliable network of family or other social connections to obtain a prestigious position.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴¹ Ferdinand von Trauttmansdorff, Nota an eine löbl. kaiserlich königliche Hofkanzley, 31.01.1810. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, Leibgarden, Galizische Leibgarde 2 Akten in genere und in specie, 217 ex. Novembri 808.

⁶⁴² Schmitt, *Wie Sand am Meer*, 350.

⁶⁴³ Schmitt, *Der polnische Adel*, 366.

⁶⁴⁴ Schmitt, *Wie Sand am Meer*, 350.

⁶⁴⁵ Gestrich, *Die galizischen adeligen Leibgarden*, 59.

⁶⁴⁶ Schmitt, *Wie Sand am Meer*, 355f.

In conclusion, it would be safe to say that the Habsburg tactics for engaging Galician *szlachta* into imperial military structures lacked a well-thought long-term strategy. The initial plan to leverage military service as a means of „civilizing“ the *szlachta* and transforming it into loyal servants of the Empire failed to provide clear pathways for inclusion or tangible rewards. The Habsburgs viewed their military system as a model one, where the nobility served the state in the army rather than pursuing their private interests, in stark contrast to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the nobility often acted out of personal or regional concerns. However, the fear of allowing the *szlachta* to gather in separate units prevented Monarchy from giving the Kingdom nobility sufficient opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills for the benefit of the Empire, even at times when the *szlachta* itself was rather interested in serving the Habsburgs. Instead, the creation of Galician units – whether *Freikorps* or regular regiments – was largely reactive, aimed at addressing immediate military needs rather than executing a coherent, long-term vision for integration. Only the establishment of the Third Uhlan regiment occurred in relatively peaceful times, but the initial plan for its creation was severely modified due to the suspicions of the government towards its Galician subjects, and therefore made the regiment into a rather symbolic concession towards the *szlachta*. Similarly, the Galician Household Guard, originally intended to bring the *szlachta* closer to the Habsburg elite, devolved into little more than a ceremonial body, offering few privileges or career prospects. While the scholarships to the Wiener Neustadt Academy enabled some Galician alumni to build military careers, these instances were exceptions, and the broader impact on the *szlachta*'s engagement with the empire was minimal.

The Habsburgs' lack of vision in the matter resulted in growing disinterest of the Galician nobility towards participating in imperial army building. Even the civic *szlachta* of the Kingdom gradually lost engagement in supporting the imperial army, as the participation in charity donation campaigns in 1790s – 1800s has clearly demonstrated. The Habsburg government failed to create a compelling opportunity for those Galicians who wanted to seek glory on the battlefield without fully sacrificing their national or class honor. As a result, when presented with an alternative in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw, many Galician noblemen would illegally leave their homeland and join the ranks of the

French protectorate, hoping to eventually contribute to the resurrection of their national state.

Chapter 5. The 1809 War and the Galician *Szlachta*: A Test of Loyalty.

1. The Duchy of Warsaw: Between Polish Renewal and French Domination.

In the mid-1800s, Habsburg rule in Galicia appeared secure. The process of uniting East and West Galicias was complete. The *szlachta*, once uncertain about their place in the Empire, seemed to have reached a stable position of mutual content. However, beneath this surface stability, a new crisis was on the horizon. Although Galicia had been spared the direct devastation of the Monarchy's military campaigns, the crownland bore a heavy economic burden. The prolonged wars against France had already led to stagnation in Galicia's predominantly agrarian economy, while relentless conscription further impoverished the local nobility.⁶⁴⁷ Unlike battlefield regions that could petition for tax relief, Galicia remained responsible for sustaining the Monarchy's economy despite a near-total lack of investment and increasing difficulties in international trade.⁶⁴⁸ This growing economic strain created dissatisfaction among the Galician noble elites, setting the stage for a shift in political loyalties.

The establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 introduced a powerful new factor into the region's political landscape. For those Galician noblemen dissatisfied with the Habsburg rule, the Duchy symbolized a potential step toward the restoration of an independent Polish state, giving them hopes of reclaiming the political dominance they had once enjoyed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Yet, as events unfolded, it became clear that the Duchy was not a perfect alternative to the imperial subjugation. While it revived the idea of Polish sovereignty, it also imposed limitations that many members of the *Natio Polonica* found unappealing. The Duchy of Warsaw was never a simple resurrection of the old „noble republic“, but rather an entity shaped by Napoleonic France's power ambitions. The Duchy was regarded first and foremost as a tool for Napoleon's broader strategy and used to exert pressure in international politics while extracting its human capital. Crucially, Napoleon shared the Habsburgs' belief that the

⁶⁴⁷ Blackburn, Napoleon and the Szlachta, 73f.

⁶⁴⁸ Maria Jarosiewiczówna, Polacy pod rządem austriackim na początku XIX wieku (The Poles under Austrian rule in the early 19th century). In: Biblioteka Warszawska 3 (1913) 568–599, here 569f, 577.

former inhabitants of the *Rzeczpospolita*, particularly its noble elite, required a „civilizing mission“ dictated entirely by the French government. This new political reality clashed with the traditional expectations of the *szlachta*, who had long been accustomed to their noble privileges and near-unrestricted freedoms.

As a result, in 1809 many members of the Galician nobility found themselves caught between two imperfect choices: continued allegiance to the Habsburg Monarchy or alignment with a Napoleonic creation that did not fully meet their aspirations. To understand the complex decisions facing the Galician *szlachta* during the war of 1809, one must first examine the socio-political structure of the Duchy of Warsaw, the role of the *szlachta* within it, and its relationship with the French Empire. Only through this lens can one fully understand the factors that influenced shifting loyalties in this critical period.

By the mid-1800s, Napoleon had no concrete long-term plans for the former Polish-Lithuanian territories within his empire-building strategy. His understanding of the „noble republic“ was largely shaped by Claude-Carloman de Rulhière’s „The History of Polish Anarchy“, which painted an unflattering portrait of the *Rzeczpospolita*’s political and social structures. This reinforced existing „enlightened“ stereotypes about Polish governance, depicting it as chaotic, corrupt, and incapable of self-sustained stability.⁶⁴⁹ The patriotism of Polish legionnaires, their selflessness and bravery were detached from the stereotypical selfishness and narrow-mindedness of the *szlachta*.⁶⁵⁰ This distinction was crucial in shaping French policy toward the Polish lands: while Polish soldiers could be useful instruments of Napoleonic expansion, the former *Rzeczpospolita*’s nobility was considered unfit for self-rule without external guidance. Napoleon’s reluctance to grant Poland full sovereignty stemmed not only from political pragmatism but also from ideological convictions deeply rooted in colonial discourse. His rhetoric often echoed the same themes used by the Habsburgs and other partitioning powers to justify their control over Polish lands. Just as Austria had framed its annexation of Galicia as a mission to bring order to a dysfunctional and declining state, Napoleon portrayed his intervention in Poland as a civilizing mission. The establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw in 1807 was presented as an act of benevolence and an opportunity for

⁶⁴⁹ Grochulska, Księstwo Warszawskie, 13.

⁶⁵⁰ Bronisław Zamorski, Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku. Studium historyczne (Poland from 1807 to 1815. A historical study) (Lwów 1870) 16.

the *Natio Polonica* to be reformed under French guidance. The subsequent reforms were praised as tools to replace the „anarchy“ of the past with „wise and liberal“ governance,⁶⁵¹ reinforcing the idea that Polish independence, if it were ever to materialize, could only exist under French protectorate. French officers, upon entering Warsaw in 1806, did little to hide their disdain for the local population. Their descriptions of Polish society closely mirrored colonial perceptions of „uncivilized“ lands: they referred to Warsaw’s residents as „barbarians“ and mocked the local *szlachta* for their alleged primitiveness, noting their supposed preference for „wooden huts“ and „animal furs“.⁶⁵²

Such attitudes positioned Poland not as an equal ally in Napoleon’s plans but as a subordinate entity, existing primarily to serve French ambitions. Multiple scenarios for the „Polish question“ were considered, but none involved granting full and unconditional sovereignty. Initially, Napoleon explored the idea of a Polish kingdom under Prussian Hohenzollern rule to weaken Russia. When Prussia rejected the proposal, he considered rebuilding Poland under the authority of Alexander I. In both cases, a future Polish state was not seen as an independent actor but as a bargaining tool in larger geopolitical negotiations. Napoleon deliberately withheld any firm commitments to his Polish supporters, repeatedly stating that they must first „prove themselves worthy of being a nation“.⁶⁵³ Even as his battlefield victories allowed him to adopt a more favorable tone in proclamations to the Poles, such as asserting that France had never recognized the partitions and that Polish independence must be restored, his underlying motives remained unchanged. The „liberation“ of former Polish-Lithuanian territories always had the primary goal of securing a reliable buffer state under French influence.⁶⁵⁴ For Napoleon, Poland’s future was too deeply entangled in the broader European power struggle to ever warrant a definitive solution on its own terms.⁶⁵⁵

The Duchy of Warsaw’s origins trace back to Napoleon’s meeting with the former *Rzeczpospolita*’s statesmen Józef Wybicki and Jan Henryk Dąbrowski in Berlin in November 1806. With the *Grande Armée* advancing into Polish-inhabited lands, Napoleon sought local support. To achieve that, the French emperor allowed Wybicki

⁶⁵¹ Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 43.

⁶⁵² Grochulska, *Księstwo Warszawskie*, 47.

⁶⁵³ Marian Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża polskiego w epoce napoleońskiej, 1795–1815* (The history of the Polish armed forces in the Napoleonic era, 1795–1815) (Poznań 1912) 105.

⁶⁵⁴ Zamorski, *Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku*, 14.

⁶⁵⁵ Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 15.

and Dąbrowski to issue an address urging Poles to fight for liberation under his banner, portraying him as a savior of their Motherland. The narrative of this address would, in a way, reflect and determine the entire relationship between Napoleonic France and the former Polish-Lithuanian lands that would later constitute the Duchy of Warsaw. It is quite remarkable that the language of this address was not very different from the calls of the partitioning powers, in particular those issued by the Habsburg Monarchy to its Galician subjects, to fight for their respective governments. Dąbrowski and Wybicki presented the French emperor as an almost divine liberator of Poland, who was sent to an „orphaned“ people to avenge them and give them back their state. Because of his military genius and „invincibility“, his decisions or plans were not to be disputed or even questioned. Instead, true Polish patriots had to provide the emperor with every power they had, as well as „their hearts and bravery“, in order to prove „their value“ as a true Nation.⁶⁵⁶ Such a characterization of Polish struggle as a test of national worthiness reflected broader colonial paradigms, wherein subjugated peoples were required to demonstrate their utility to a dominant imperial power as a prerequisite for sovereignty. Napoleon's support for the Polish cause was thus not an unequivocal endorsement of independence but rather a conditional arrangement, dependent upon the strategic value of his allies to his broader geopolitical ambitions.

On 3rd November 1806, the first units of the *Grande Armée* led by Dąbrowski and Wybicki entered Poznań, where they were met with unprecedented joy and enthusiasm from local inhabitants. Spreading like wildfire, the insurrection met little to no resistance from the remaining Prussian forces, and by the end of the month the French troops were already entering Warsaw, which was destined to become the capital of the future quasi-state and its eventual namesake.⁶⁵⁷ On 30th November, Louis-Nicolas Davout entered the city as Napoleon's viceroy on the Polish territories occupied by France. His very first order concerned joining the Continental Blockade and the renunciation of British goods – a decision which would later have a dramatic impact on the Duchy's economy. On 5th December, the preliminary administration of the Polish

⁶⁵⁶ See: Ossolineum, Niektóre fragmenta mające stosunek z wydarzeniami po ostatnim rozbiórce Polski y odrodzenia się iej w części przez utworzenie Xięstwa Warszawskiego, za wsparciem potężnego ramienia wielkiego y niezwyciężonego Napoleona (Some fragments related to events after the last partition of Poland and its rebirth in part through the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, with the support of the mighty and undefeated arm of Napoleon), 1807, 13f.

⁶⁵⁷ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 16–18.

territories was created in form of two chambers consisting of Poles serving „in the name of King and Emperor Napoleon“, one responsible for the general administration, the other one – for the justice system.⁶⁵⁸ These chambers were replaced on 14th January 1807 by the Ruling Commission led by the president Stanisław Małachowski, one of the main creators of the 1791 Constitution.⁶⁵⁹ Through the appointment of prominent Polish-Lithuanian noblemen as Commission members, the continuity of the statehood was implied; at the same time, the Commission was quite aware that it owed its existence to Napoleon personally. In their address to the inhabitants of „Poland conquered over the Prussian king“, Małachowski and other members once again called on their fellow citizens to show their gratitude for the „benevolent care“ of the emperor through multiplying their efforts in serving the Motherland. The paradox of liberation, brought about through yet another foreign intervention, was thus laid bare. The government functions were given to the General Directorate, in which Prince Józef Poniatowski (who had prior to that led a private life following the failure of the 1794 insurrection) was appointed as the head of the War Department.⁶⁶⁰

The ultimate recognition of the results of the military campaign took place after peace negotiations between France, Prussia, and Russia in Tilsit in early July 1807. The peace treaty stripped Prussia of most of the territories it acquired during the 1792 and 1795 partitions, uniting them into the quasi-independent Polish state.⁶⁶¹ The name „Duchy of Warsaw“ was chosen at the request of Alexander I, who was quite hesitant to allow any resurrection of Poland that could cause weakening of his own realm. Even on a symbolic level, the mention of the name „Poland“ posed a threat to the power of partitioning states.⁶⁶² Officially, the treaty foresaw the rule of king Friedrich August of Saxony as the Duke of Warsaw, however, the new state found itself under French protectorate throughout its whole existence.⁶⁶³ One of the articles declared the establishment of a political order in the Duchy which would guarantee freedoms and

⁶⁵⁸ *Zamorski*, *Polska od 1807 do 1815 Roku*, 18.

⁶⁵⁹ Ossolineum, *Akta z czasów Księstwa Warszawskiego*, zawierające głównie pisma i zarządzenia różnych ministerstw (Records from the time of the Duchy of Warsaw, primarily containing documents and decrees from various ministries), 1f.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 3f.

⁶⁶¹ Dominic *Lieven*, *Russland gegen Napoleon: die Schlacht um Europa* (Original: *Russia Against Napoleon: The True Story of the Campaigns of War and Peace*, 2010) (München 2011) 67.

⁶⁶² Hubert *Zawadzki*, *Between Napoleon and Tsar Alexander: The Polish Question at Tilsit, 1807*. In: *Central Europe* 7, No. 2 (2009) 110–124, here 121.

⁶⁶³ *Blackburn*, *Napoleon and the Szlachta*, 33.

rights to its inhabitants and „tranquility“ to its neighbors,⁶⁶⁴ thus clearly attempting to stabilize the continent and to prevent future disruptions of this balance. For Napoleon, this declaration was quite acceptable for the moment. In line with his strategies so far, the fate of the Polish lands to him was inseparable from ensuring the alliance with Russia and eliminating Prussian threat.⁶⁶⁵ Through Tilsit negotiations, he achieved both goals and established the new international order in Central Europe, which allowed him to redirect his resources toward battling Great Britain and its allies. While Napoleon exploited Polish aspirations for independence, his commitment remained strictly tactical, dictated by broader geopolitical calculations.⁶⁶⁶ In the end, this independence was as much a product of colonial calculation as it was of national aspiration. The Polish allies of Napoleon, however, were much less satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. Their faith in an almost mystic invincibility and omnipotence of Napoleon was so strong, that the Treaty of Tilsit and its concessions caused widespread disappointment among the Duchy's inhabitants. The introduction of the Saxon king as the future ruler was especially alarming, as many Poles feared that their lands would simply be transferred from one German-speaking foreign kingdom to another.⁶⁶⁷

Yet, the inhabitants of the Duchy and their noble elites had little choice but to accept their place in this new order, focusing their efforts not on the ideal of full independence, but on securing the fragile sovereignty that had been promised to them, however limited that sovereignty might be. This turned out to be quite difficult to accomplish. The very Constitution of the new state was not approved by the will of the *Natio Polonica*, thus decisively breaking with the traditions of the „noble democracy“. The entire discussion between the proponents of the 1791 Constitution and those willing to build a modern state suited for the contemporary challenges was made null and void by Napoleon in Dresden on 22nd July 1807. Napoleon famously stopped Stanisław Kostka Potocki, the chairman of the Education Chamber in the Ruling Commission, who

⁶⁶⁴ Kukiel, *Historia Polski*, 48.

⁶⁶⁵ Tekla Krotoska, *Stosunek Talleyrand'a do sprawy polskiej w dobie I. Cesarstwa i Kongresu Wiedeńskiego (1806–1814)* (The Attitude of Talleyrand towards the Polish Question during the First French Empire and the Congress of Vienna (1806–1814) (Kraków 1935) 55.

⁶⁶⁶ Jarosław Czubaty, *Das napoleonische System in Europa und das Herzogtum Warschau*. In: Michael G. Müller (ed.), *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden*. Band 3, *Die polnisch-litauischen Länder unter der Herrschaft der Teilungsmächte (1772/1795–1914)* (Stuttgart 2018) 103–127, here 117.

⁶⁶⁷ Kukiel, *Dzieje oręża Polskiego*, 144.

was presenting the final draft of the *szlachta*'s constitutional proposal, claimed that the inhabitants of Duchy needed „to be given a different Constitution“, and proceeded with dictating the document himself.⁶⁶⁸ The result was the political system very different even from the one suggested by the 1791 Constitution, let alone the traditional Polish-Lithuanian government based on the *szlachta*'s privileges and „freedoms“. ⁶⁶⁹ Napoleon's version centralized power in the hands of the king of Saxony, who was proclaimed the „source of law“ and granted all executive powers. ⁶⁷⁰ The Duchy's two-chamber parliament, though created, had severely limited competencies, dependent on the will of the king. The system undermined the traditional role of the *szlachta* in governance, as the Chamber of Envoys included not only 60 noble members but also 40 common-born, thereby diluting their exclusive political privileges (although in local dietines, the noblemen would still remain the only group entitled to vote).⁶⁷¹ Despite these changes, fears of foreign control persisted. Even though Articles 83 and 84 promised that only subjects of the Duchy could hold offices and that Polish would be the official language of the bureaucracy,⁶⁷² these provisions could not entirely allay the anxieties that once again, foreign powers – this time Napoleon's Empire – were defining the politics of the state. One could say that, from the *szlachta*'s perspective, the political system of the Duchy was not too different from the one imposed by the Habsburg Monarchy after the partitions. The *szlachta* was stripped of most of its decision-making powers, both directly and indirectly, while all authority was concentrated in the hands of a foreign government.

The centralized state system was only a part of the Duchy *szlachta*'s concerns. Article 4 of the new Constitution cancelled the serfdom on Duchy lands. Despite reflecting the „civilizing“ aspirations of Napoleon, this article brought more chaos than order, depriving the country and its noble elites of the major productive force. Much like the agrarian reforms implemented by the Habsburgs in Galicia, this measure did not lead to true emancipation of the peasantry, but rather served to subjugate the landowning nobility to a stronger centralized authority. The measure turned out to be too radical, and,

⁶⁶⁸ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 38.

⁶⁶⁹ *Kraft*, Das „Staatlich-Administrative“, 33.

⁶⁷⁰ *Dziennik Praw [Księstwa Warszawskiego]* T.1 (1808–1810) (Journal of Laws [of the Duchy of Warsaw] Vol. 1 (1808–1810) no. 1–12 (Warszawa 1808) IV.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid*, XX–XXII.

⁶⁷² *Hauptmann Just*, Das Herzogtum Warschau von seinen Anfängen bis zum Kampf mit Österreich 1809. In: *Mitteilungen des k.u.k. Kriegs-Archivs* 4, No. 3 (1906) 1–124, here 60.

as a compromise, a governmental decree from 21st December of the same year stated that the former serfs were guaranteed a right to personal freedom and to leave their place of living without the consent of the landlord. However, the peasant had to leave behind the land plot, animals, crops, all the buildings and even tools if he chose to live elsewhere, making his moving virtually senseless. At the same time, the decree did improve the legal status of the peasant, guaranteeing him the right to be represented in court and defended from entering contracts with landlords out of coercion.⁶⁷³ Thus, the government signaled to the landowning nobility that it no longer recognized their authority over the peasantry, asserting the state's ultimate power in mediating social and economic relations. This shift not only weakened the landlords' traditional dominance but also hinted at a broader restructuring of political authority, potentially paving the way for the further disenfranchisement of the *Natio Polonica* within the French protectorate.⁶⁷⁴ The legal transformations continued on 1st May 1808 with the introduction of the Napoleonic Code as the civic code of the Duchy. It eliminated the social status as the foundation of rights and privileges for an individual – from now on, every subject of the Duchy, regardless of possession of a noble title, was guaranteed the right to own land and to profit from it. The Code also ensured the creation of the uniform court system, which was supposed to ensure legal equality of all Duchy inhabitants. This caused stern opposition from the landowning *szlachta* as, together with the 1807 December decree, that meant further erosion of their unique status in the state, as they were supposed to be treated as equal before the law with their former serfs.⁶⁷⁵ Such a development disrupted long-standing traditions that were integral to the identity of the *Natio Polonica* – an identity that even the partitioning powers had failed to eradicate. As a result, the Duchy of Warsaw was increasingly viewed with skepticism, not only by the landowning *szlachta* within its borders but also by their counterparts across the former *Rzeczpospolita*. For many Galician magnates, who followed the establishment of the French protectorate quite closely, the Duchy was less a promise of the resurrection of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and more a vehicle for revolutionary currents spilling over from France – an unsettling prospect that threatened their own well-being.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ Dziennik Praw [Księstwa Warszawskiego], 9–11.

⁶⁷⁴ See: Müller, Der polnische Adel, 223, Gill, Freiheitskämpfe der Polen, 58.

⁶⁷⁵ Blackburn, Napoleon and the Szlachta, 39.

⁶⁷⁶ Reznik, Staat und Aristokratie, 160.

With these radical reforms Napoleon was clearly aiming at building a completely new state on the foundation of secularism, respect for individual rights and bourgeois economic development. The latter was to be ensured through introduction of the Trade Code in 1809, which allowed trade and industrial activities to both the *szlachta* and city dwellers, providing the common born merchants with an ultimate legal protection.⁶⁷⁷ The remnants of feudalism and its exclusive „freedoms“, guaranteed only for the aristocrats, had no place in this new proto-capitalist society. Thus, for Napoleon’s empire, the Duchy functioned as a colonial project, with its own civilizing mission importing French legal and administrative structures to reshape society along imperial lines. This imposed modernization served not only to strengthen Napoleon’s control but also to justify his rule under the guise of progress, mirroring broader patterns of European colonial governance.

The reforms, however, turned out to be too rapid for the Duchy society. The introduction of legal equality was systematically sabotaged by the local nobility, who used the low-quality translation of the Napoleonic Code to interpret the court cases to their benefit.⁶⁷⁸ Furthermore, there was no attempt to conceal the total dependence of the Duchy on the French Empire, since all the major decisions over Duchy’s domestic and foreign politics were made in Paris. Implementation of these decisions was controlled by the French residents in Warsaw, who were interfering even into the minor affairs. The transfer of power did not ease the burden of military expenses at the slightest. The Duchy had to sacrifice to the French army a significant number of its male population, who, instead of fulfilling the expectations of patriots and reuniting the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories under the Duchy flag, were made to fight for a foreign cause in Spain.⁶⁷⁹ The economy of the land, already impoverished by the previous military campaigns, was declining more and more each year, as the joining of the Continental Blockade restricted access to foreign markets.⁶⁸⁰ After 1807, the Duchy of Warsaw functioned primarily as an extension of Napoleon’s state. While Napoleon offered vague promises of further territorial expansion, in reality, he exploited the Duchy as an economic and military base for his broader imperial ambitions. Its governance and resources were shaped by the

⁶⁷⁷ *Grochulska*, Księstwo Warszawskie, 113.

⁶⁷⁸ *Blackburn*, Napoleon and the Szlachta, 39.

⁶⁷⁹ Jarosław *Czubaty*, The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite towards the State in the Period of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815. In: Michael Rowe (ed.), *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe* (Basingstoke 2003) 169–185, here 172.

⁶⁸⁰ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 97f.

demands of war, with the military, rather than the aristocracy, emerging as the dominant force within the state.⁶⁸¹

Still, it would be an exaggeration to claim that the Duchy's political system and its dependence on Napoleon were seen as unequivocally negative by the entire *szlachta*. On the contrary, many noblemen welcomed the radical changes and justified their introduction. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist slightly more than a decade earlier, and the memories of the discrepancies and weaknesses caused by the *szlachta*'s virtually unlimited power were still fresh. The 1791 Constitution brought some improvements to that anarchic order but could not eliminate it entirely or prevent the dissolution of the impaired state. For many noblemen, the introduction of a centralized state and a strong government was synonymous with political and economic progress. After decades of living under the rule of centralized state, they were aware of its benefits and no longer associated it with the despotism aimed exclusively at destroying the old Polish-Lithuanian customs.⁶⁸² The new order could also mean hope for rebuilding Poland as a modern and prosperous state, which would eventually take its rightful place among European nations. In addition to that, the political system of the Duchy opened the possibilities for the descendants of the poorer *szlachta* families to enter the government service and build a military or civil career there, as long as their values and aspirations coincided with those of the French protectorate.⁶⁸³

As for the dependence on Napoleonic France, it was accepted as a necessary condition for achieving true sovereignty in the future. At the time of all-European unrest, it would be quite naïve to hope to restore and defend Polish independence without relying on any of the greater powers. Since half of the continent, among them states much stronger than the Duchy, had already pledged their allegiance to the French emperor, there was no shame for Poles of the Duchy to obey him as well. The personal charisma of Napoleon, his reputation of „liberator“ and „enlightened emperor“ caused his enormous popularity among the Duchy nobility. Moreover, the *szlachta* was used to having foreign rulers as their protectors long before the Partitions and was able to protect their interests

⁶⁸¹ Jens Boysen, Für Napoleon oder für Polen? Polnische Militäreinsätze zwischen 1795 und 1815 als Versuche staatlicher Existenzsicherung im Schatten der Großmächte. In: Martin Hofbauer, Martin Rink (eds.), Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig. Verläufe, Folgen, Bedeutungen 1813–1913–2013 (Berlin/Boston 2017) 175–194, here 188.

⁶⁸² Czubyty, The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite, 175f.

⁶⁸³ Jedlicki, Der Adel im Königreich Polen, 93.

even in a half-dependent state.⁶⁸⁴ For these reasons, being a client state of the French Empire was preferable to having no state at all, especially since the Duchy offered its inhabitants a chance to preserve their national identity, something which was largely denied to them in Prussia.

Perhaps the one who could best capture the hopes and disappointments of his compatriots and reassure them of their anxieties was the philosopher and activist, the most prominent representative of Polish Enlightenment, Hugo Kołłątaj. In 1808, he issued a memorial under the title „Remarks on the present situation of that part of Polish land, which since the Treaty of Tilsit has been called the Duchy of Warsaw“ (*Uwagi nad teraźniejszym położeniem tej części ziemi polskiej, którą od pokoju tylżyckiego zaczęto zwać Xięstwem Warszawskim*), better known under its Latin motto, „Nil desperandum!“. In it, Kołłątaj praised Napoleon as the bringer of justice for the weak. The mission of Napoleon was not only to liberate Poles, but ultimately, to create a balanced and peaceful world for years to come, to „make the lives of unhappy humanity better“. ⁶⁸⁵ Because of that, Napoleon had to be trusted completely. The economic hardships and sacrifices made by the Duchy inhabitants would eventually pay off, as they were to „redeem our homeland from slavery“; ⁶⁸⁶ the political reforms, however unpleasant they would be for some, would turn the people into model citizens of a future developed and prosperous state. ⁶⁸⁷ Those, who were disappointed after the Tilsit treaty, were not to forget that it only signified the first stage of the Polish state rebirth, as eventually, all the parts of the former *Rzeczpospolita* would be liberated from the foreign governments and reorganized according to the Duchy model. ⁶⁸⁸ Kołłątaj foresaw the long and hard work ahead of all the patriotic Poles, but promised that their descendants would „reap with joy and blessing an abundant harvest“ of their efforts. ⁶⁸⁹ Kołłątaj’s words reflected a broader elite sentiment – one that did not see Polish dependence on France as a betrayal of national

⁶⁸⁴ *Czubaty*, The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite, 172f.

⁶⁸⁵ Hugo Kołłątaj, *Uwagi nad teraźniejszym położeniem tej części ziemi polskiej, którą od pokoju tylżyckiego zaczęto zwać Xięstwem Warszawskim. Nil desperandum!* (Remarks on the present situation of that part of Polish land, which since the Treaty of Tilsit has been called the Duchy of Warsaw. Nil desperandum!) (Leipzig 1808) 101.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 196.

⁶⁸⁷ Grzegorz Figiel, „Nil desperandum“: uwagi Hugona Kołłątaja na temat powstania i perspektyw Księstwa Warszawskiego („Nil desperandum“: Hugo Kołłątaj’s remarks on the creation and prospects of the Duchy of Warsaw). In: *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F, Historia* 62 (2007) 113–120, here 119.

⁶⁸⁸ Kołłątaj, *Uwagi nad teraźniejszym położeniem*, 184.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 222.

aspirations, but as a calculated strategy to secure a future place within the ranks of modern, sovereign European nations. In doing so, they mirrored the logic of many colonial elites who, rather than resisting foreign dominance outright, sought to prove their worth by adopting the very systems imposed upon them and engaged in self-orientalizing discourse. The result was a peculiar contradiction: while formally striving for sovereignty, the Duchy's *szlachta* reinforced the structures of dependency that ensured their subordination to an imperial center.

By 1809, the Duchy of Warsaw remained an unfinished political entity, an evolving project rather than a fully realized state. For Poles still residing within the partitioning states it symbolized not only the possibility of reunification but also the broader aspiration for national sovereignty. The Duchy suggested that Polish independence was no longer a distant ideal confined to historical memory but an actively unfolding process in which they might still participate. The territory that would soon find itself at the center of this political transformation (and for a brief period occupy a crucial position in European affairs) was none other than the (still) Habsburg-controlled Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria.

However, for the Galician nobility, the prospect of incorporation into the Duchy of Warsaw presented a complex and ambivalent choice. While the Duchy embodied the hope of national restoration, it also entailed the erosion of the entrenched social and economic privileges that even the Habsburg Monarchy had largely preserved, including serfdom and the *szlachta*'s separate jurisdiction. The integration into the Duchy, despite its promise of political sovereignty, implied the necessity of accepting a centralized state structure that was increasingly at odds with the traditional socio-political order of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. Thus, the Galician *szlachta* faced a fundamental dilemma: whether to prioritize the preservation of their material and legal privileges under Habsburg rule or to embrace the uncertain yet ideologically compelling vision of Polish national rebirth. This tension between pragmatic self-interest and national aspirations would shape their political alignments and influence their engagement with the broader Napoleonic project in the years to come.

2. *Szlachta*, War, and the Reshaping of Territory in 1809.

Ever since the hopes of resurrecting a Polish state under French patronage started being realized, the noble elites of Galicia followed the unfolding of events with great attention. The November address of Dąbrowski and Wybicki was illegally brought into the Kingdom and, together with smuggled newspapers and leaflets from Warsaw, it captured the minds of numerous young Galician Polish noblemen. To participate in liberating their Motherland, they secretly crossed the border, usually without hope of ever returning home legally, and joined the insurrection army.⁶⁹⁰ In his letter to the chief of the *Grande Armée* staff from 19 November 1806 Dąbrowski wrote that he already received delegates from the Galician *szlachta*, who expressed their readiness to join the uprising. These delegates were then received by Napoleon himself, who stated that France was at peace with Austria after the Pressburg treaty of 1805 and had no intentions of further antagonizing the Habsburg Monarchy over the Polish cause.⁶⁹¹ Another reason for disregarding Galicia was that Napoleon did not actually believe it had enough passionaries to follow him, which made the risk completely unworthwhile. Galicia was absent from agenda of the Tilsit negotiations, and a few attempts to get support for an anti-Habsburg revolt in the subsequent years did not receive attention neither from Warsaw nor from Paris.⁶⁹² However, the situation in Galicia remained quite unstable and unpredictable, as the rapid impoverishment of the land and its elites and the neglect of the central government towards the *szlachta*'s interests caused further dissatisfaction with the ruling dynasty.

The Habsburg Monarchy had not initially recognized the 1806 insurrection and the creation of Duchy as legitimate threats to itself. It was firmly believed that the revolt would not spill over into Austrian lands.⁶⁹³ In December 1806 the acting Governor of Galicia, Christian von Wurmser, wrote a report on the Kingdom, in which he persistently tried to prove the stability of the situation and the loyalty of locals. According to him, even the social groups mostly inclined to betray the Habsburgs, namely the poorer *szlachta* and lower Catholic clergy, were too interested in preserving the status they had under the Habsburg rule. The magnates and higher clergy were not that interested in the

⁶⁹⁰ Krzos, *Z księciem Józefem w Galicji*, 36f.

⁶⁹¹ Andrzej Syta, *W blasku napoleońskich orłów* (In the glow of Napoleonic eagles) (Warszawa ²1986) 24.

⁶⁹² Maria Jarosiewiczówna, *Galicja a sprawa polska* (Galicia and the Polish matter). In: *Biblioteka Warszawska* 2 (1912) 245–286, here 274f.

⁶⁹³ *Řezník*, *Staat und Aristokratie*, 162.

insurrection either, as it would not give them back the privileges they had in the old *Rzeczpospolita*, and the burdens of creating their own government and supporting the court would be too heavy. The city dwellers had little interest in politics and much more in their own prosperity, and the peasantry, however numerous it was, remained too uneducated to understand the reasons behind the uprising and too angry with their landlords to support them in any risky activities. Furthermore, all these social groups were too antagonistic towards one another to unite for a common cause, which safeguarded the empire from unrest even further.⁶⁹⁴ The report of von Wurmser proved the persistence of colonial narratives in the official Habsburg discourse – as 30 years before, the Monarchy tried to present the Galician inhabitants, and especially its nobility as selfish and underdeveloped Others, and itself – as the only possible organizing and disciplining power in a heterogeneous society. What had disappeared entirely, however, was the rhetoric of a „civilizing mission“. Preserving stability became a far more pressing concern for the Monarchy than pursuing a long-term transformation strategy that, as the past attempts have proven, would not guarantee a positive outcome neither for the central government nor for the Kingdom itself.

The reality, however, was far less reassuring for the Habsburgs than von Wurmser's account suggested. It was true, that a few attempts of noble anti-Habsburg conspiracies within Galicia were uncovered long before they could disrupt peace in the Kingdom, but the general feeling of unrest became more obvious with each passing week. The taxes were collected with great difficulties and in ever smaller quantities, and the disciplinary actions of the government were met with passive aggression, as if to demonstrate that the Habsburg administration would lose its power quite soon, and all the punishments it imposed would become irrelevant.⁶⁹⁵ To bring the land back to obedience, Vienna started implementing two contradictory colonial strategies, neither of which ultimately achieved lasting success. On the one hand, stark repressive measures were introduced, among them police control over „suspicious“ subjects to detect and neutralize Duchy and French agents, as well as conspirators against Austria. This category mostly included the ever problematic *sujets mixtes* whose ambivalent status gave them a pretext to cross the border frequently and potentially engage in subversive activities for the

⁶⁹⁴ *Jarosiewiczówna*, *Galicja a sprawa polska*, 259f.

⁶⁹⁵ *Jarosiewiczówna*, *Polacy pod rządem austriackim*, 595.

benefit of the enemy. The mere fact of travelling to a hostile territory did not inflict any repressions, but even the slightest suspicion towards a nobleman for serving France or Duchy would cause loss of his freedom of movement, or sometimes even deportation to Vienna to isolate him from compatriots.⁶⁹⁶ Special attention was given to potential French spying in Galicia. In his 1809 report, Prince Klemens von Metternich, then an ambassador to Paris, expressed little doubt about the existence of a widespread insurgency network in Galicia, identifying representatives of the wealthiest noble families as its key figures.⁶⁹⁷ In reality, the existence of such a network was questionable, but this suspicion led to further investigations, culminating in a list of 150 „suspicious“ Galician aristocrats submitted to emperor Franz in March 1809. While these aristocrats were not subject to direct repression, the list itself reinforced the perception of Galicia as a potential powder keg.⁶⁹⁸

The second strategy focused on taking swift measures to ensure that Habsburg rule appeared more attractive to the Galician noble elites than the uncertain prospects offered by the Duchy of Warsaw. Initially, the Viennese government operated under the assumption that its advantages were self-evident – after all, the Duchy’s radical constitution stripped the *szlachta* of even more privileges than the Habsburgs had, while sacrifices made in service of France often brought more hardship than meaningful progress toward national liberation. However, yet another project for the reorganization of the imperial administration in Galicia, presented by the delegation of the *szlachta* to the emperor in April 1808,⁶⁹⁹ revealed the naivety of the Habsburg government’s assessment. The text of the document unequivocally demonstrated that, despite more than three decades of subalternization attempts by the Habsburgs, the *szlachta* had not abandoned attempts to establish a hybrid regime in Galicia, considering itself a rightful source of power in the land. The authors voiced their loyalty to the Habsburg government, claiming that any concessions to the Galician *szlachta* would first and foremost benefit the Monarchy itself, as „the small sacrifices“ of the absolutist power would prevent the Empire from „losing everything“. The establishment of the Duchy gave the Galician *szlachta* an additional argument in negotiations with Vienna – the authors directly stated

⁶⁹⁶ Jarosiewiczówna, *Galicja a sprawa polska*, 254f.

⁶⁹⁷ Emil Kipa, *W przededniu wojny 1809* (On the eve of the 1809 war) (Lwów 1914) 5f.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁶⁹⁹ Sur le Systeme de l’Organisation & de la Regie du Royaume de Gallicie. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 51, without pagination.

that the creation of the quasi-sovereign Polish state under French protectorate „continued to inspire“ the independence aspirations of Poles (once again, clearly referring to the *Natio Polonica*) in all three partitioning states. The authors also provided a comparison between the Russian and Prussian policies concerning their Polish subjects, praising the former for „governing them with methods that, after the loss of their Motherland, were very pleasing and flattering to the Poles“, and blaming the latter as it „spread to the Polish lands an entirely foreign form of governance and laws from her other provinces, established the German language, which was scarcely used in Poland, and set conditions under which no Pole could have any opportunity for career advancement“. This neglect of the *szlachta* ultimately led to the creation of the Duchy. Thus, the suggestions in the project were not to be ignored by the Habsburg Monarchy, if it wanted to preserve peace and stability in Galicia, as

„the reform [...] is absolutely necessary for many reasons, primarily because, on the one hand, the inhabitants witness the revival of a government rising from the ashes – one that, while not identical to the ancient Polish state, is nonetheless national in character. On the other hand, they see the Russian government, which has decided to govern the Poles according to principles aligned with their national spirit“.

Throughout the document, the *szlachta* authors persisted in their attempts to secure the influence of the local nobility over the crownland politics, asking the emperor to ensure exclusive access of the local nobility to the top positions in the crownland administration. The noble Estates were to be reestablished and given competencies comparable, if not exceeding those of officials appointed by Vienna. The capital of the crownland was to be transferred to Kraków, stressing its status of an ancient capital of the *Rzeczpospolita*, the emperors of the Habsburg Monarchy and their wives were to possess the title of the Kings and Queens of Galicia, thus establishing hereditary continuation regarding the traditions of the „noble republic“. In addition to that, the document asked Franz I to ensure the access of a greater number of the Galician noblemen to the commanding positions in the Habsburg army, and to allow usage of the Polish language in the official matters.

In many regards, the 1808 project repeated the demands of the *Charta Leopoldina*, proving that the *szlachta* has not given up on their attempts to get back the dominating

positions in the Galician governance. The authors did not, however, consider the fundamental changes in the governance style of the Monarchy that took place since 1791. The conservative and defense-oriented government of Franz I was much less prone to concessions to the local nobility in times of crisis than that of his father. Because of that, the project would not be even considered for negotiations with the central government. Moreover, the reaction of the Galician Governor at the time, Franz von Hauer, to the document demonstrated that the discourse of the Habsburg officials concerning the Galician *szlachta* has not much evolved beyond the „Othering“ discourse of the early 1770s. The author depicted the *szlachta* as a self-centered group aiming only at personal power and glory, which was to be achieved through „titles, decorations and honors“. Because of the fundamental flaws of its character, the *szlachta* was not suitable for playing any significant part in the Galician administration; as a result, the governor would only allow symbolic concessions to the local nobility (such as bestowing them with titles and honors they valued so much) in order to appease the *szlachta* without giving them the chance to harm the integrity of the Monarchy. The noble Estates could be resurrected, but purely as a decorative enterprise, without any real power behind it. As for the language matter, von Hauer could imagine limited usage of the Polish language for the time being, and suggested that the issue would resolve itself, as the future generations of the Galicians would be proficient in German due to the widespread of the imperial education.⁷⁰⁰

Both the 1808 project and the reaction of von Hauer demonstrated that in the wake of the 1809 war, neither the *szlachta* nor the Habsburg administration was ready to give up on their positions in the struggle between the colonial government and the local elites. The Galician nobility still saw itself as the ruling power in the land, the neglect of which would only lead to disastrous results. The Habsburg government, in its turn, was in no way ready to subdue itself to the demands of the *szlachta* and share its power over Galicia with them, even when it became clear that discontent with local elites could be quite dangerous to Vienna. This position was further illustrated by an anonymous memorial from an Austrian official in Lviv to the Presidium of the Imperial and Royal Police Court Office (*Präsidium der k. k. Polizei Hofstelle*) in the spring of 1809. The plan proposed fostering loyalty among the *szlachta* by strengthening their connection to the ruling

⁷⁰⁰ Bericht von Franz von Hauer, 11.03.1809. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 51, without pagination.

dynasty. It suggested appointing one of the archdukes as general governor, dividing his time between Lviv and Kraków, and having the emperor crowned King of Galicia in the Wawel Cathedral to reinforce a succession linked to the former Polish-Lithuanian monarchy. The governor would be chosen from the local magnates, assisted by a select group of compatriots as secret advisors. The proposal also advocated reassembling the Galician Estates with limited powers, particularly over tax collection, as a gesture of Habsburg trust. Economic incentives were to be introduced by leasing the cameral goods of the Kingdom to the most loyal nobles under favorable terms. While the taxation system was to be improved, the author offered little detail on how this would be achieved. Increased investment in infrastructure was another strategy, aiming to demonstrate Vienna's long-term commitment to the crownland. In the final point, the memorial suggested exploiting tensions between the Polish and Ruthenian populations by supporting the Greek-Catholic Church to win over its parishioners, thereby leveraging local divisions for imperial gain in a true „divide and rule“ fashion.⁷⁰¹

As it can be seen, the measures suggested by the anonymous author were too sketchy and could not resolve the issues troubling the Galician *szlachta*, let alone bestow loyalty even on the more self-seeking aristocrats who remained indifferent or suspicious towards the Duchy. Though some of its points overlapped with the suggestions of the 1808 project, its implementation would not alter much in the position of the *szlachta* within the Galician administration, which, after all, was the primary intention of the *szlachta desideria*. However, even those limited measures turned out to be too radical for the central government and were not even considered for discussion. Instead, the stream of Habsburg propaganda over Galicia grew wider every day, trying to make an impression of the enthusiasm of locals towards Austria, and their willingness to defend it in future battles.⁷⁰² It, however, proved however largely ineffective. The Galician *szlachta* mostly remained divided between a politically engaged pro-Duchy minority and a passive majority that simply awaited the course of events. Crucially, ethnic distinctions played little to no role in shaping political allegiances. Even the *szlachta* of Ruthenian origin, despite its distinct heritage, identified primarily with the *Natio Polonica* and showed a

⁷⁰¹ Michał Baczkowski, Projekt reform politycznych w Galicji w 1809 roku (The political reform project in Galicia in 1809). In: *Studia Historyczne* 38, No. 3 (1995) 353–363, here 355–357.

⁷⁰² Michał Baczkowski, Austriacka propaganda w Galicji w latach 1795-1815 (Austrian propaganda in Galicia from 1795 to 1815). In: *Studia Historyczne* 42, No. 3 (1999) 361–374, here 368f.

clear inclination to support the Duchy of Warsaw if it were to move toward Galicia's „liberation“.⁷⁰³ Decades of the Habsburg rule could not fully overturn the dominance of the *Natio Polonica* in Galicia, and even the upper clergy of the Greek-Catholic Church, which was socially elevated as a result of Habsburg church policies, felt more connection to the *szlachta* of the crownland than to the Ruthenian peasantry they were meant to serve.⁷⁰⁴

To take a radical approach to the issue, the Habsburgs decided to seize the initiative and attack the core of the threat to their realm. If successful, the destruction of the Duchy and occupation of its territories would bring double benefit. Aside from eliminating the „seductor“ of his subjects in Galicia, Franz I would achieve a favorable position in future negotiations with either Prussia or Russia, depending on which of them would be prone to creating a new anti-Napoleon coalition in exchange for the Duchy's territories.⁷⁰⁵ The advancement of the Habsburg army through the Duchy, which started on 14th April 1809, was lightning fast, and in just one week, Warsaw fell to the mercy of the invaders.⁷⁰⁶ At the beginning of the campaign, archduke Ferdinand issued a proclamation to the Duchy's inhabitants, asking them to stop assisting Napoleon in the name of peace and stability in Europe. He also claimed that Austria was not trying to take foreign territories, but merely to „liberate“ them from French control, and promised „everyone, who lost [...] independence and existence, as well as rights, to return them, to give Europe back order and long-awaited tranquility“.⁷⁰⁷ Such promises were clearly aimed at winning over the Duchy's citizens through presenting the Habsburg Monarchy as the one trying to restore a just regime existing before the intrusion of chaos in a form of French Empire. This rhetoric mirrored the Habsburgs' earlier justifications during the

⁷⁰³ Vadym *Adadurov*, Halyts'ki rusyny u kontseptsiiakh pol's'koi polityky Frantsii ta Avstrii 1805–1812 rokiv (Galician Ruthenians in the concepts of Polish politics of France and Austria, 1805–1812). In: *Ukraina v mynulomu* 9 (1996) 38–60, here 42. See also: *Świątek*, *Gente Rutheni*, 55.

⁷⁰⁴ Oleh *Turij*, Der „ruthenische Glaube“ zwischen Katholizismus und Orthodoxie 1772–1848. In: Christoph *Augustynowicz*, Andreas *Kappeler* (eds.), *Die Galizische Grenze 1772–1867: Kommunikation oder Isolation?* (Wien 2007) 199–212, here 203.

⁷⁰⁵ *Czubaty*, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 64.

⁷⁰⁶ *Kukiel*, *Dzieje oręża Polskiego*, 174.

⁷⁰⁷ Odezwa Arcy- Xięcia Ferdynanda wkraczającego do Xięstwa Warszawskiego w czasie kampanii w roku 1809 (The manifesto of Archduke Ferdinand entering the Duchy of Warsaw during the campaign of 1809), 14.04.1809. In: Ossolineum, *Niektóre fragmenta mające stosunek z wydarzeniami po ostatnim rozbiórce Polski y odrodzenia się iej w części przez utworzenie Xięstwa Warszawskiego, za wsparciem potężnego ramienia wielkiego y niezwyciężonego Napoleona. 1807* (Some fragments related to events after the last partition of Poland and its rebirth in part through the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, with the support of the mighty and undefeated arm of Napoleon), 122f.

partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Just as they had cloaked imperial ambitions with the guise of benevolent rulers in 1772 and 1795, they now portrayed themselves as the rightful restorers of order amid foreign turmoil. Their claims of „liberation“ followed colonial logic, framing themselves as saviors of subject peoples while consolidating imperial power. In this way, the Habsburgs' actions in the Duchy reflected their long-standing pattern of expanding their state under the pretext of restoring order and security.

The population of the Duchy, however, was not influenced by the Austrian propaganda in the least, and did not accept the Habsburg troops favorably.⁷⁰⁸ Though the resistance against the foreign invasion quickly proved futile due to the enemy's superior numbers and position, the surrender of the Duchy was seen as a national tragedy. At the same time, the Duchy's Minister of War Józef Poniatowski, who was blamed by many as a traitor despite his battlefield heroism, found an unexpected opportunity to turn the losses into a long-term opportunity for further restoring the integrity of the Polish state. After retreating from Warsaw, his forces regrouped, absorbing reinforcements from Modlin, Serock, and Praga. In early May, they entered former West Galicia, the poorly defended rear of the Habsburg army, where they hoped for supplies, volunteers, and support from the local population.⁷⁰⁹ Despite the lack of support from the French, their movement met little to no resistance from the remaining Austrian troops and culminated on 18th May in taking over Sandomierz. Poniatowski understood that the ultimate fate of the Kingdom's territories would be decided by Napoleon himself, who at the time was engaged in battling Austrians near Vienna and would undoubtedly use the Galician card in future peace negotiations. For that reason, Poniatowski was cautious to maintain the balance between encouraging Galicians to join his troops and support the Duchy army with donations⁷¹⁰ and advising them not to follow his orders too eagerly, so that, in case Austria would retake the Kingdom in the future, the Duchy supporters would not be punished severely

⁷⁰⁸ Odpowiedź imieniem obywatelów Xięstwa Warszawskiego na odezwę Arcy- Xiecia Ferdynanda do nich pod dniem 14tym kwietnia roku 1809 (The response on behalf of the citizens of the Duchy of Warsaw to the manifesto of Archduke Ferdinand to them on 14th April 1809), 16.04.1809. In: Ossolineum, Niektóre fragmenta mające stosunek z wydarzeniami po ostatnim rozbiórce Polski y odrodzenia się iey w części przez utworzenie Xięstwa Warszawskiego, za wsparciem potężnego ramienia wielkiego y niezwyciężonego Napoleona. 1807 (Some fragments related to events after the last partition of Poland and its rebirth in part through the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, with the support of the mighty and undefeated arm of Napoleon), 123–127.

⁷⁰⁹ Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 66f.

⁷¹⁰ Stanisław Kunasiewicz, *Lwów w roku 1809 (L'viv in year 1809)* (Lwów 1878) 49.

as traitors.⁷¹¹ For the same reason, he would not support the idea of an all-Galician insurrection, suggested to him by Joachim Owidzki, one of the Galician *szlachta* delegates to Duchy headquarters in Lublin on 15th May, as Poniatowski foresaw that the French emperor would not regard it favorably either.⁷¹²

The situation developed much faster than the Duchy Commander-in-Chief had anticipated. A Duchy unit initially sent to Lviv to demonstrate the army's size and maintain initiative entered the city triumphantly on 27th May.⁷¹³ The city was guarded by a 4000-strong Austrian garrison, but mainly composed of Polish reservists, raising concerns that they might refuse to fight their compatriots. As a result, Lviv was surrendered without resistance.⁷¹⁴ The Duchy unit, led by Lieutenant Starzyński, was met with jubilation as crowds poured into the streets, removing Habsburg symbols.⁷¹⁵ The only exceptions from the overall excitement were the Habsburg officials, who feared for their safety due to reports of Polish cruelty in the Austrian press. This apprehension was shaped by the longstanding Habsburg portrayal of Poles as a „barbaric“ and unruly people, often depicted in the imperial narrative as a threat to order and civility. When General Roźniecki arrived the next day, he reassured them there was no danger. Under Roźniecki's instructions, lower-ranking Habsburg officials were allowed to retain their positions to ensure smooth administration, but with the condition that Polish citizens would be assigned to monitor them.⁷¹⁶ The officials were also required to swear allegiance to the new regime and sever ties with the old one, which they did in large numbers.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹¹ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 71.

⁷¹² Krzysztof *Daszyk*, „Odzyskujemy ojczyznę...“ Galicjanie wobec przyłączenia ich kraju do Księstwa Warszawskiego („We are reclaiming our homeland...“ Galicians in regard to the joining of their land to the Duchy of Warsaw.) In: Hubert *Chudzio*, Henryk *Żaliński* (eds.), *Galicja w Księstwie Warszawskim: 200 rocznica* (Galicia in the Duchy of Warsaw: The 200th anniversary) (Kraków 2009) 10–33, here 19.

⁷¹³ Bronisław *Pawłowski*, *Z dziejów kampanii 1809 roku w Galicji Wschodniej* (From the history of the 1809 campaign in East Galicia) (Lwów 1928) 4f.

⁷¹⁴ Vadym *Adadurov*, *L'viv u napoleonivs'ku epokhu* (Lviv in the Napoleonic Era). In: Visnyk L'vivs'koho universytetu. Seriiia istorichna. Spetsial'nyy vypusk: L'viv. Misto–suspil'stvo–kul'tura 3 (1999) 209–231, here 221.

⁷¹⁵ *Kunasiewicz*, *Lwów w roku 1809*, 82–84.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93–99.

⁷¹⁷ Deklaracja lojalności wobec Rządu Centralnego urzędników Galicyjskiego Rządu Krajowego (Declaration of loyalty to the Central Government by the officials of the Galician Regional Government). In: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Dokumenty związane z funkcjonowaniem Rządu Centralnego Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obojga Galicji o różnorodnej tematyce (Documents related to the functioning of the Central Provisional Military Government of Both Galicias on various topics), 103f.

The attitudes of the local *szlachta* toward the Duchy's takeover of Lviv were ambivalent. While many welcomed the change, their support was not immediate or unconditional. On 28th May, pro-Duchy aristocrats gathered at Count Teodor Potocki's palace to organize a formal reception for generals Roźniecki and Kamiński and to affirm their loyalty.⁷¹⁸ A few days later, on 3rd June, the Galician Noble Estates issued a welcome address to Prince Poniatowski, thanking him for „restoring our common Motherland“ and pledging their support.⁷¹⁹ However, their allegiance was carefully negotiated. On 13th June, they sent a similar address to Napoleon, in which they not only confirmed their loyalty but also petitioned him to „allow us to express our desires and requests“.⁷²⁰ From the outset, the nobles resisted passive integration into the Duchy's system, seeking to safeguard their privileges and influence. This cautious and pragmatic approach reflected a broader pattern in East Galician political culture, shaped by decades under Habsburg rule. Over time, the local *szlachta* had developed a distinct sense of identity, balancing the *Rzeczpospolita* heritage with loyalty to the empire that had granted them new titles and secured some of the former „freedoms“ which were now at clear risk. As a result, many chose to wait and observe before openly siding with the Duchy, hoping to secure the best possible outcome. The staunchly pro-Polish Stanisław Kunasiewicz, who documented Lviv's history during the 1809 campaign, lamented the self-interest of some nobles, remarking that they had been „so demoralized by their bondage [...] that their first concern was to safeguard their new German titles, and for those laughable ambitions, they abandoned [...] their own dignity and national traditions“.⁷²¹ At the same time, none of the local aristocrats then dared to openly voice their loyalty towards Habsburgs, or unwillingness to be a Duchy citizen, with one minor exception being the unique case of Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. As an Austrian Field Marshal, he felt

⁷¹⁸ Kunasiewicz, *Lwów w Roku 1809*, 79.

⁷¹⁹ Adres hołdu wdzięczności dla K. J. Poniatowskiego od Stanów Galicji (Address of gratitude to Prince J. Poniatowski from the Estates of Galicia), 3.06.1809. In: *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich, Księstwo Warszawskie, T. I. Akta związane z działalnością St. Zamoyskiego jako prezesa Rządu Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obydwóch Galicji* (The Zamoyski Archive, Duchy of Warsaw, Vol. I. Records related to the activities of Stanisław Zamoyski as President of the Provisional Military Government of Both Galicias), 128.

⁷²⁰ Adres Stanów Krajowych Galicyjskich do Napoleona (Address of the Local Estates of Galicia to Napoleon), 13.06.1809. In: *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich, Księstwo Warszawskie, T. I. Akta związane z działalnością St. Zamoyskiego jako prezesa Rządu Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obydwóch Galicji* (The Zamoyski Archive, Duchy of Warsaw, Vol. I. Records related to the activities of Stanisław Zamoyski as President of the Provisional Military Government of Both Galicias), 161.

⁷²¹ Kunasiewicz, *Lwów w roku 1809*, 78f.

himself incapable of aiding Duchy troops, as a former Polish-Lithuanian statesman, he could not openly oppose the French protectorate state. To give him the way out of this loyalty dilemma, as well as to provide him with an alibi for a case of Duchy's defeat and return of Habsburg administration, Poniatowski proclaimed Czartoryski a prisoner of war, at the same time guaranteeing the latter right to stay in his mansion at Puławy if he gave a word of honor that he would not harm the advancement of Duchy's troops or establishment of new government in any way. Such a promise was gladly given.⁷²²

However cautiously Poniatowski sought to maintain control over Galician lands, he had to establish at least some preliminary administrative structures in the newly acquired territories. Following the French model of administering occupied territories, on 20th May he appointed Rajmund Rembieliński, former prefect of the Płock Department, as General Commissary of Galicia. Acting in the name of the Commander-in-Chief „under the laws of war“ Rembieliński was granted powers extending from appointing officials and restructuring administration to controlling the police, approving arrests, managing public property, and overseeing military equipment and supplies.⁷²³ Though his competencies ensured the effectiveness of army provisioning, they also alienated the local nobility, who felt their exclusive place in society was being disregarded.⁷²⁴ By imposing a General Commissariat in Galicia, Poniatowski virtually treated the territory as occupied rather than liberated from the Habsburg power – first and foremost, a source of resources for the Duchy rather than an equal partner. This approach fueled resentment among the local *szlachta*, who saw in it a familiar pattern of colonial subjugation. Increasingly, voices emerged questioning whether the Duchy genuinely sought to reunite with its „long-lost brothers“ on equal terms or simply to absorb Galicia as a conquered territory.⁷²⁵

To pacify local discontent, Poniatowski approved the creation of parallel civil administration bodies. On 26th May, he instructed Andrzej Horodyski, the future Civilian-Military Director at Headquarters, to prioritize cooperation with the Galician population as a means of demonstrating trust and openness to dialogue. His directive included the establishment of a Central Council, modeled after the Duchy's own

⁷²² Czuby, Zasada „dwóch sumień“, 372.

⁷²³ Krzos, Z księciem Józefem w Galicji, 81–84.

⁷²⁴ Grochulska, Księstwo Warszawskie, 152.

⁷²⁵ Krzos, Z księciem Józefem w Galicji, 85–87.

Governorship, with one representative from each liberated district, subject to approval by the Commander-in-Chief. Local administrative bodies were also to replace Habsburg district commissioners. Yet, despite these gestures, ultimate authority remained in the hands of the General Commissariat, ensuring that throughout the entire interim period of 1809, it remained one of the most resented institutions of Duchy rule in Galicia.⁷²⁶

The reorganization of the Duchy's administration reached its peak after the capture of Lviv, with the creation of the Preliminary Central Military Government of both Galicias on 2nd June. Led by Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski, a representative of one of the prominent local magnate families, the government was tasked with overseeing the civic administration of the former Kingdom's territories. Rembieliński, however, retained his independent position, unaccountable to the new government or its members. Both the Central Government and the General Commissariat were fully subordinate to Poniatowski, with no independent decisions allowed without his approval. The decree specifically stated that the government was created „under protection of the Serene Emperor and His Majesty the King Napoleon the Great“.⁷²⁷ On 10th June, Marshal Bernadotte made known Napoleon's instructions regarding the future of Galicia. The territories were to be taken in the name of the French emperor: Habsburg symbols were to be replaced by French ones, justice would be administered in Napoleon's name, and officials would swear an oath of loyalty to Poniatowski while ruling in the name of Napoleon. Military units recruited in Galicia were to adopt French organization and insignia and soon be unified „to fight the common enemy“.⁷²⁸

For Poniatowski, this shift to French control was inevitable, as it imbued the takeover of Galician lands with a significance that the Duchy alone could not provide. The strategic importance of this alignment was underscored by the belief that the Russian czar would be deterred from entering territories directly under Napoleon's control.⁷²⁹ Yet, the local nobility did not universally share this view. The shift from Duchy governance, which symbolized a potential return to a Polish sovereign state, to direct French rule, was seen by many as the imposition of yet another foreign regime, which

⁷²⁶ Ibid, 90f.

⁷²⁷ Kunasiewicz, *Lwów w roku 1809*, 130–32.

⁷²⁸ Vadym Adadurov, *Napoleon i Halychyna: Vstanovlennia frantsuz'koho tymchasovoho protektoratu v 1809 rotsi* (Napoleon and Galicia: The establishment of the French temporary protectorate in 1809). In: *Visnyk L'vivs'koho universytetu. Seriiia istorychna*, No. 34 (1999) 449–466, here 464.

⁷²⁹ Kukiel, *Historia Polski*, p. 65.

would have little regard for local circumstances or the *szlachta*'s interests. It was perceived by many noblemen as a further erasure of Galician agency, reinforcing the colonial experience of external powers imposing their will without understanding or integration of local realities. Even members of the Central Government viewed the French control over Galicia – and, ultimately, the Duchy itself – as a serious concern. The tension between local autonomy and external control would go on to shape the difficulties faced in integrating the West Galician territories into the Duchy's broader administration.⁷³⁰

It was generally understood, however, that the direct French protectorate would remain in place only until the signing of the peace treaty and establishment of a stable regime unthreatened by any outer forces.⁷³¹ Before that, the matter of utmost importance for both Poniatowski and the local *szlachta* was the strengthening of the Duchy army by local Galician volunteers, and creation of separate Galician units. By the end of the 1809 campaign, Poniatowski succeeded in organizing three infantry and seven cavalry regiments;⁷³² aside from that, each district had to create a special guard unit of 100 mounted and 200 foot soldiers to ensure inner security of the Galician territories.⁷³³ For the local *szlachta*, participation in voluntary corps formations presented one of the few chances of truly being proactive in the period of interim administration. Young noblemen went to join the armed forces themselves, whereas the older generation generously sponsored creation of new units, with some notable examples being Stanisław Zamoyski, Konstanty Czartoryski, Stanisław Małachowski and Adam Potocki. Beyond a sense of duty to the Polish cause, this involvement gave the aristocrats a pretext to seek higher positions and military prestige, which could later enhance their political influence. It also allowed them to position themselves as key figures in the new regime, asserting their status in a system where external powers – whether French or previously Habsburg – had attempted to marginalize their influence.⁷³⁴

All these efforts were insufficient to secure the achievements of the first stage of the campaign. On 1st June, Austrian troops retreated towards Galicia, quickly reclaiming

⁷³⁰ Kazimierz Karolczak, *Entuzjazm czy wyrachowanie? Kariery arystokratów galicyjskich w Księstwie Warszawskim* (Enthusiasm or calculation? The careers of Galician aristocrats in the Duchy of Warsaw). In: Hubert Chudzio, Henryk Żaliński (eds.), *Galicja w Księstwie Warszawskim: 200 rocznica* (Galicia in the Duchy of Warsaw: The 200th anniversary) (Kraków 2009) 160–172, here 164f.

⁷³¹ Krzos, *Z księciem Józefem w Galicji*, 146.

⁷³² Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 70.

⁷³³ Krzos, *Z księciem Józefem w Galicji*, 79f.

⁷³⁴ Karolczak, *Entuzjazm czy wyrachowanie?*, 165.

vast territories of the Kingdom. Simultaneously, Russian troops, in line with a secret agreement with the Habsburgs, bypassed the Austrian army, providing no assistance to the Duchy. As a result, Poniatowski's forces had to retreat, abandoning Lviv. The Central Government reassured citizens that Russian troops would soon restore the Duchy's presence.⁷³⁵ When Austrian forces re-entered Lviv on 21st June, they were welcomed by Habsburg officials and German-speaking citizens, while the rest of the population stayed home, fearing repercussions that ultimately never came.⁷³⁶ The Russian troops soon took over, marking a shift in power. They, in turn, stayed up until December, even after the Schönbrunn Treaty was signed and the Habsburg administration was reestablished permanently. For Russia, presence in Galicia enabled influence on international relations in the region and prevented French Empire from even further empowerment – just like in Tilsit in 1807, the matter of the former Polish-Lithuanian territories remained secondary to balance between two major European empires. The Duchy presence in Galicia, however, was far from being over. In July, Poniatowski's army managed to concentrate most of its forces on the left bank of Vistula and march towards Kraków through almost bare territories of Puławy, Radom and Kielce. At the same time, Austrian army suffered a major defeat from Napoleon at Wagram, and a real threat to Habsburgs emerged of Duchy units uniting with French ones advancing from Moravia. This led to a quick retreat of Archduke Ferdinand's troops from West Galicia, and on 15th July, Prince Poniatowski led his troops into the ancient capital of the former *Rzeczpospolita*, meeting very little resistance from both Austrians and Russians.⁷³⁷

The military campaign of 1809 ended in a major victory for the Duchy of Warsaw. Although it failed to capture the entire Kingdom territory and take its capital city, it still gained the entire former West Galicia, as well as parts of the East one, namely entire Zamość and Żółkiew districts, 2/3 of Zaleszczyki district and parts of Złoczów, Brzeżany and Stanisławów districts.⁷³⁸ This way, Galicia was split again only after five years of being united, and its eastern territories, which remained within the Austrian realm, would continue being subject to Habsburg imperial politics. In both the Kingdom and the Duchy a hope persisted for years that the achievements of 1809 were yet another stage in

⁷³⁵ Kunasiewicz, *Lwów w roku 1809*, 177–79.

⁷³⁶ Ibid, pp. 180–182.

⁷³⁷ Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, 73.

⁷³⁸ Daszyk, *Odzyskujemy ojczyznę...*, 29f.

reuniting the *Rzeczpospolita* territories, and that the inclusion of East Galician territories was merely a matter of time.⁷³⁹ It is quite notable, however, that without the direct support of Duchy troops, the *szlachta* of the East Galicia did not attempt to organize a revolt against Habsburgs by themselves. As the Habsburg Court Commissioner in Galicia Franz Joseph von Dietrichstein noted in his report to the emperor, the general mood in the crownland was quite cautious, and not all the *szlachta* was explicit in showing their support for the „rebels“.⁷⁴⁰ The witness of 1809 events in Lviv Aleksander Fredro, who would later become one of the most prominent Polish poets and playwrights of his time, claimed that his noble compatriots did „so much and so little“ then, openly expressing their support for Poniatowski’s troops once they entered the city, but doing little to nothing to assist their achievements and ensure long-term presence of Polish administration. Once again, the theme of *szlachta*’s self-seekingness is present in Fredro’s memoirs, as he blamed Galician nobility for caring much more for their personal positions under a new regime than for the greater good of the people and the cause of restoring the Polish state.⁷⁴¹ The passivity of the *szlachta* reflected their focus on maintaining their own status within the existing colonial order, rather than challenging it. Their reluctance to fully support the Polish cause highlighted the tension between personal gain and the broader struggle for national unity.

The aftermath of the 1809 war left the parts of Galicia remaining under Habsburg scepter in a state of uncertainty. The Habsburg government was aware of the tensions within the crownland, especially the growing pro-Russian sentiments among the *szlachta*, the part of which, after being disappointed in Napoleon for failing to connect the entire Galicia to the Duchy, now placed their hopes on resurrecting the Polish state on Alexander I. Those sharing this sentiment regarded the peace treaty as a mere interim measure, and hoped that the next campaign in Europe would surely crown the reestablishment of the Polish state.⁷⁴² However, rather than preparing to initiate an anti-Habsburg uprising, these passionaries waited for an external catalyst to shape the course of events.⁷⁴³ The majority

⁷³⁹ Ibid, 32.

⁷⁴⁰ Bericht von Hofkommissar von Dietrichstein, 11.06.1809. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatenabteilungen, Polen III 38, Galizien, Korrespondenz Dietrichstein, 24f.

⁷⁴¹ Tyrowicz, *Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru*, 145f.

⁷⁴² Präsidial des Polizeihofstellen Vizepräsidenten „Über die Stimmung in Galizien“, 22.05.1810. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 1 Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium, 1781–1812, 151f.

⁷⁴³ *Reznik*, *Staat und Aristokratie*, 210.

of the Galician *szlachta* returned under Habsburg rule without resistance, demonstrating a lack of viable alternatives rather than genuine loyalty. The brief shift in control left little lasting impact on the territory Austria had governed since 1772. When Habsburg troops reentered in December 1809, they faced no significant obstacles in reasserting imperial authority.⁷⁴⁴

The Habsburg Monarchy chose a rather mild governance approach to its Galician noble subjects after signing the peace treaty. None of those who welcomed the Duchy troops and assisted in establishing the new administration were punished for betrayal; moreover, some of them could swiftly occupy honorable positions in the crownland administration in less than a decade.⁷⁴⁵ The government also made sure to distinguish and reward those *szlachta* members who remained faithful to the Habsburgs during the war.⁷⁴⁶ Despite their antagonism toward the *szlachta*, the Habsburgs could not underestimate its pivotal role in Galicia, making it a central focus of their policies in the crownland. However, their approach evolved significantly in the aftermath of 1809. A clear indication of this shift was the 1810 replacement of Governor Christian von Wurmser, who had advocated a strict stance against the *szlachta* and proposed prioritizing the Ruthenian peasant majority as a counterbalance to the *Natio Polonica*. His vision reflected an imperial strategy of pitting the noble „colonized colonizers“ in Galicia against the broader common population to consolidate control. Yet, this approach was ultimately not accepted by Vienna.⁷⁴⁷ The appointment of Peter von Goëss, who would soon initiate a major transformation in Habsburg policy toward the *szlachta*, marked a new phase in the Empire’s governance of Galicia.

In general, the year 1809 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Austrian Galicia, though not in the way many had hoped. The war failed to fully restore an independent Poland; instead, it left the Austrian Empire, already strained, even more vulnerable, particularly in Galicia. The once undisputed tactics of dominance and empty promises, previously used to control the region, were no longer effective. The weakened

⁷⁴⁴ Lane, *Szlachta outside the Commonwealth*, 540. See also: Markian Prokopovych, *Habsburg Lemberg: Architecture, Public Space, and Politics in the Galician Capital, 1772–1914* (West Lafayette 2009) 202f.

⁷⁴⁵ *Řezník*, *Staat und Aristokratie*, 207f.

⁷⁴⁶ *Elenchus eorum Magnatum et Nobilum, qui in Gallicia inter ceteros Probitate, Iudicio, Experientia, in Supremum Principem aut Patriam Zelo praecipue eminent, quorum etiam anteriores avito genere, Divitiis atque in publicam prosperitatem amore celebrantur*. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten 51, without pagination.

⁷⁴⁷ *Adadurov*, *Halyts’ki rusyny*, 58.

Empire, unable to impose its will through sheer force, was compelled to reassess its approach.⁷⁴⁸ This shift in strategy signaled a new phase of negotiation and concession, as the imperial government could no longer ignore the realities of its colonial hold. These evolving tactics, shaped by both external pressures and internal limitations, will be further examined in the following chapter. As for the parts of Galicia that the Duchy did manage to acquire, the peace treaty introduced new challenges for both sides. While it was initially believed that the reintegration of West Galician territories would be relatively smooth, given their incorporation into the Habsburg Monarchy just over a decade earlier, the following years would be marked by significant tensions. On one hand, the centralizing policies of the Duchy's government aimed at consolidating state power, while on the other, the former Galician *szlachta* remained persistent in their efforts to preserve their special status and privileges within the framework of the Polish state under French protectorate.

3. The Inclusion of the Galician *Szlachta* in the Duchy of Warsaw and Their Struggle for Autonomy.

The Duchy conquest in Galicia had to be recognized internationally through a peace treaty, once again highlighting the region's strategic role in European geopolitics. The Russian Empire, which, according to Napoleon, „contributed nothing“ to the conquest of Galicia, was still very much interested in its future, and did all it could to prevent the unification of former Habsburg territories with the Duchy. For Alexander I, the only suitable outcomes were either leaving Galicia to Austria, or, even more preferable, making it a Russian territory. The strengthening of a quasi-sovereign Polish state was seen by the czar as a direct threat to his own state, as it could potentially lead to Russia losing territories acquired after the three partitions in the near future. In this regard, Napoleon was not ready for an immediate compromise with the Russians, since he believed that „the honor of France would be tarnished“ if after all the sacrifices the Galicians made for the benefit of resurrecting the Polish state, they would be denied the possibility to become a part of one. However, not to antagonize Russia decisively, the French emperor was ready to suggest it some territorial concessions in exchange for

⁷⁴⁸ Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat*, 99.

recognizing the Duchy's expansion. Eventually, Russia agreed to take Lviv along with additional territories as compensation for not obstructing the peace negotiations.⁷⁴⁹

After its defeat in 1809 campaign, Habsburg Monarchy was in a very weak position during peace negotiations. Napoleon and his emissaries systematically declined suggestions aimed at weakening the Russian position and creating a system of relations between France and Austria that would be beneficial to the latter.⁷⁵⁰ The Habsburg government then decided to employ different tactics and establish direct contacts with the Duchy, namely with Poniatowski himself. The plan was to promise the Prince support in restoring the Polish state, which would encompass the Duchy territories as well as parts of Galicia, under Austrian patronage, thus tearing the Duchy away from France.⁷⁵¹ The delicate mission of investigating such a possibility was given to Franz Joseph, Prince of Dietrichstein, who in his youth shared a close acquaintance with Prince Poniatowski during the latter's military education in Vienna. After being appointed Austrian Court Commissioner in the occupied parts of Galicia, Dietrichstein sent Poniatowski a letter asking for an informal private meeting. It took place in the greatest secret on 3rd September on the side of Vistula in the Bielany district. In his later report to the emperor, Dietrichstein wrote that, although Poniatowski met him with affection, this feeling would not stretch onto the perspective of any close union between the Duchy and the Habsburg Monarchy. In Poniatowski's opinion, although such a union was once possible, the moment for it is already gone. He firmly believed that Napoleon's protectorate provided non-alternative security for the Polish state, and, although he feared that in case of Napoleon's demise, the whole empire would most likely crumble and its disintegration would pose an enormous threat to the whole continent, he still would not consider betraying Napoleon out of personal honor. Poniatowski would not be seduced by an offer of future Polish crown to him personally either – according to Dietrichstein, the Duchy Commander-in-Chief was already too tired of politics and wanted nothing but to return to his estate in Warsaw and live a private life once the situation stabilizes. Moreover, he did not believe in government capabilities of his compatriots too much and was sure that

⁷⁴⁹ Charles *Morley*, Alexander I and Czartoryski: The Polish Question from 1801 to 1813. In: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 25, No. 65 (1947) 405–426, here 413f.

⁷⁵⁰ *Kipa*, W przededniu wojny, 40.

⁷⁵¹ Czuby, *The Duchy of Warsaw*, p. 74.

the only ruler suitable for the Polish state in the near future would be a foreign one.⁷⁵² The second meeting between Poniatowski and Dietrichstein did not take place despite all the attempts of the latter to organize it, since, as Poniatowski claimed, he was „too much of a Pole“, and his counterpart – „too much of an Austrian“ to discuss certain matters, let alone to find common ground on them.⁷⁵³ This way, Dietrichstein’s mission failed, as well as the plans of Austria to attract Duchy to its side. The episode illustrated how the nobility of the former *Rzeczpospolita* had to navigate between foreign empires, often forced to choose between different external patrons rather than real independence. While many members of the *szlachta* treated the Duchy suspiciously as yet another foreign-imposed regime, they were aware that in late 1800s, true sovereignty was impossible without great power backing. In this sense, the *szlachta*’s struggle for self-determination remained locked within imperial structures, where alliances were dictated less by ideals and more by survival in a world shaped by stronger forces.

There was another party interested in the outcome of negotiations and persistently attempting to influence it to their benefit. On 5th August, Napoleon received in Vienna a delegation of magnates from the Galician territories taken over by the Duchy, who presented a memorial containing their aspirations and recommendations concerning the future peace treaty. Determined to secure the conquests of Poniatowski’s troops (especially the city of Kraków) and the entire Duchy of Warsaw from future Austrian attacks, the Galicians proposed adding territories on both sides of the Vistula River, along with the Wieliczka salt mine. The document also advised establishing the new border up to the territories of the former *Rzeczpospolita* seized by Russia, as this would complicate Habsburg logistics in any future conflict. In exchange for Russian approval of such territorial shifts, the *szlachta* willingly offered East Galician lands inhabited mostly by Orthodox Ruthenians, arguing that Russia could claim these territories „according to the rights of ancient heritage of Rus’ princes“. Even in the wake of partition and occupation, the *szlachta* continued to see themselves as active agents in shaping the political landscape, assuming the prerogative to determine the fate of lands and populations as if still operating within the old structures of domination. Their perception of the Ruthenian

⁷⁵² Bericht von Fürst von Dietrichstein über sein Treffen mit Fürst Poniatowski am 3. September 1809, 06.09.1809. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Staatenabteilungen, Polen III 38, Galizien, Korrespondenz Dietrichstein, 52–59.

⁷⁵³ *Kukiel*, *Historia Polski*, p. 67.

commoners as subjects to be bartered, rather than as political actors in their own right, mirrored colonial logic, in which elites negotiated territorial arrangements while disregarding the agency of those who lived there. As always, the authors of the memorial reassured Napoleon of the unwavering loyalty and trust of Galician inhabitants, while simultaneously appealing for the protection of their rights and privileges. Gone were the direct references to the old „golden freedoms“ as the *szlachta* understood Napoleon's disdain for the Polish-Lithuanian *ancien régime*, yet their demands for freedom of movement and property rights (particularly for *sujets mixtes*) along with exemptions from taxes on funds transferred abroad, reflected their ongoing efforts to maintain influence under yet another foreign protector.⁷⁵⁴ The Galician nobility thus once again sought to be an active subject in shaping political realities, rather than a passive object of imperial negotiations, yet their proposals ultimately reinforced familiar patterns of elite self-preservation within shifting colonial frameworks. Even as they resented their own subjugation, they continued to treat the „Others“ of their own – the Ruthenian Orthodox commoners, in particular – as a currency to be exchanged in pursuit for power.

The peace negotiations in Vienna lasted for several months and resulted in the signing of the Schönbrunn Treaty on 14th October 1809. According to it, the Duchy of Warsaw received Galician territories of 51 thousand sq. km and 1.7 mln inhabitants. The scope of these territories was different from the one initially conquered by Poniatowski – West Galicia was united with the Duchy, but Austria managed to keep the territories it took during the 1772 Partition, except for the Zamość district, which was also given to the Duchy. The Habsburgs kept the Kingdom's capital, Lviv, as well, but lost the Tarnopol district to Russia, which, for the latter, was a much more modest consolation for agreeing to Duchy's enlargement compared to the initial claims.⁷⁵⁵ In general, the treaty was extremely beneficial for France and its allies, but, as the later events would show, it could not establish a long-standing peace in Central Europe and would eventually be broken in just a few years. Notably, the voices of the Galician *szlachta*, who had persistently sought to influence the negotiations in their favor, were barely heard in the final settlement. Despite their efforts to actively shape the outcome, their proposals,

⁷⁵⁴ The full text in: Marcei *Handelsman*, Rola Polaków w Wiedniu w r. 1809 podczas pertraktacji narodowych (The role of Poles in Vienna in 1809 during national negotiations). In: *Przegląd Historyczny: dwumiesięcznik naukowy* 11, No. 3 (1910) 327–350, here 339–343.

⁷⁵⁵ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 75; *Grochulska*, Księstwo Warszawskie, 160.

which centered on territorial adjustments and the future governance of Galicia, had little impact on the broader context of imperial and strategic interests that dominated the negotiations.

The Treaty of Schönbrunn ensured international recognition of the Duchy taking over Galician territories, but the matter of the status of the new lands and their inhabitants within the Duchy turned to be none the less complicated. After absorbing West Galicia, the Duchy had to deal with its nobility, which, after one and a half decade of Habsburg rule and isolation from other former Polish-Lithuanian lands, formed a very distinct group with certain political aspirations. The Galician *szlachta* considerably strengthened the Duchy conservatives in their constant struggles with the so-called Jacobins – antifeudal and antimagnate politicians and public figures, who, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution, longed for progressive transformation of Polish society in the spirit of equality and humanism.⁷⁵⁶ For them, incorporation of Galician lands and their nobility had to take place as quickly as possible, equalizing them with the existing territories in every regard. Simultaneously, the Jacobins regarded the moment of enlarging the Duchy as a chance to reform its fundamental structure, as the existing system was, in their opinion, still too oriented towards aristocratic interests and too dependent on the will of the Duke and his closest advisors.⁷⁵⁷

In their turn, the *szlachta* of West Galicia wanted a slower and more gradual inclusion process, during which they would be given the possibility to negotiate their future status with the Duchy government on equal terms. In a certain way, they feared the repetition of the 1772 and 1795 events, when the foreign government attempted to disenfranchise indigenous elites of Galicia and impose its government model there without any discussion. For that reason, from the very beginning of inclusion negotiations, Galician nobles demanded to be given a decisive vote on who would take the key official positions on the Duchy territories. Moreover, Galician *szlachta* had their vision of fundamental reforms in the Duchy. The local magnates, as well as other major landlords, who got their possessions after the Habsburg government began selling former *Rzeczpospolita*'s royal goods, did not fully accept the Duchy Constitution, which would deprive them of serf labor and impose other radical societal transformations. In addition,

⁷⁵⁶ Czuby, *The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite*, 177.

⁷⁵⁷ Grochulska, *Księstwo Warszawskie*, 158.

the ever-growing burden of taxation for the military cause and participation in the Continental Blockade were indeed a source of great unrest among Galician nobility, as the Habsburg government had predicted before the 1809 campaign.⁷⁵⁸ At times, some Galician nobles even voiced a preference for the Habsburg legislation concerning peasantry, trade, and the justice system, as it was more favorable to local feudal lords than the one of the French protectorate.⁷⁵⁹

The Central Government of both Galicias, which now was the main representative of noble Galicians' aspirations, received a rather unexpected ally in Hugo Kołłątaj. Despite his clear former affiliations with Jacobins and sympathy towards their ideology, he issued a rather controversial book under the title „Observation over the Constitutional Act of the Duchy of Warsaw“ in late 1809. Written in a form of direct address to the Duke of Warsaw Frederick August, this text called for equality of Galicians in all decision-making processes concerning the Duchy's future. In Kołłątaj's opinion, people that sacrificed so much during the recent military campaign and risked their lives and fortunes to join the resurrected Polish state deserved to have their voice heard. For that reason, the inclusion of Galicia had to be accompanied by major transformations within the Duchy itself, to accommodate the newcomers in the best way possible. The matter of trust of Galicians towards the Duchy government was crucial, which is why they should have been treated as equal partners, and not as population of annexed lands.⁷⁶⁰ Such a sudden change of Kołłątaj's beliefs, which could be interpreted as indirect support for Galician separatism, could have a multi-level strategy behind it. By getting Galicians as his allies, Kołłątaj could have used them to endorse the general idea of reforms in the Duchy, which would ultimately suit the aspirations of Jacobins as well.⁷⁶¹

With all that said, this manifesto had a more direct goal: to lay the ideological foundation for the Galician *szlachta* delegates when they met Friedrich August in Dresden. In preparation for this visit, the Galicians were meticulous in their approach, seeking to enlist the support of their new monarch. On 30th November, the Central Government issued a detailed instruction for its representatives, largely authored by Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski himself. This document, undoubtedly inspired by Kołłątaj's

⁷⁵⁸ Wacław Tokarz, *Ostatnie lata Hugona Kołłątaja: 1794–1812 (The last years of Hugo Kołłątaj)* Vol. 2 (Kraków 1905) 75–77.

⁷⁵⁹ Krzos, *Z księciem Józefem w Galicji*, 254, 289.

⁷⁶⁰ Tokarz, *Ostatnie lata Hugona Kołłątaja*, 82–84.

⁷⁶¹ Grochulska, *Księstwo Warszawskie*, 159.

earlier text, not only fulfilled the immediate purpose of the visit, that is, paying homage to the Saxon king, but also laid out primary tasks for the delegates. The first task was to remind Friedrich August of the sacrifices the Galician nobility had made during the 1809 campaign in the name of the Motherland, and of the harsh oppression they had endured under the military administration. The Saxon king was to be asked to shield Galicia from further suffering and, to that end, to grant the Central Government additional powers to act on his behalf, at least until the process of unification was completed. This would have effectively positioned both the Duchy of Warsaw government and the Central Government of both Galicias as equals in the eyes of the king, directly subordinated to him. Another task was to request that the king ensure the complete elimination of the distinctions between the original 1807 Duchy and the territories it had absorbed in 1809. The delegates argued that these differences rooted in legislation, rights, and administrative structures were the result of violent annexations and usurpations. The „border“ that separated the old and new territories needed to be erased, but the equalization process could not proceed hastily. The delegates insisted that it must be carried out carefully and only after consulting all interested parties, as the complexity of these differences required thoughtful consideration. The delegates also sought to ensure that the Polish officials in Galicia who had served the Motherland diligently during the uncertain times of the recent military campaign would be rewarded by allowing them to retain their positions after the regime change. The instruction emphasized that only locals, whose „eligibility and citizenship“ provided the necessary experience, should be entrusted with roles in the Galician administration once the unification process was complete. This demand for local governance mirrored the Galician *szlachta*'s broader desire for autonomy and recognition within the Duchy. Finally, the instruction included a formal request for Frederick August to send a „tribute of gratitude“ to Napoleon for his efforts to rebuild the Polish state and reunite the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian state under one government. While this request might have seemed superficial, it carried significant weight in the broader context of the *szlachta*'s aspirations. The government of Zamoyski was fully aware that although the Saxon king held the title of Duke of Warsaw, he could not make any substantial decisions without the approval of the French emperor. Through this final point, the Central Government sought to align itself with Napoleon

directly, appealing to the true power behind the Duchy and securing an ally in Friedrich August to advance their cause.⁷⁶²

In essence, the manifesto not only served as a statement of intent for the Galician *szlachta* but also as a strategic move in their struggle for autonomy within the newly structured Duchy of Warsaw. The Galician nobility, who had long been marginalized and subjected to the policies of foreign powers, were now using their position to assert their influence and secure a place in the evolving political landscape. By positioning themselves as equal partners in the future of the Duchy, they were challenging the existing power structures and demanding recognition on their own terms, no longer as mere subjects of imperial designs, but as legitimate participants in the reconstruction of the Polish state.

This instruction and the presence of the Galician delegation in Dresden between December 1809 and January 1810 ultimately did little to secure a privileged position for the former Galician *szlachta* within the Duchy. The fate of Galicia had already been decided. By mid-November 1809, Friedrich August had arrived in Paris, where Napoleon presented him with a convention adjusting the financial and military obligations of the newly expanded Duchy.⁷⁶³ On 7th December, the Saxon king issued a decree finalizing the full incorporation of Galician territories into the Duchy. The Central Government was dissolved, and all its judicial and administrative bodies were placed under the authority of Duchy ministries. Galician officials and army officers were required to swear allegiance to the new government, while the State Council was tasked with extending the Duchy's Constitution to Galicia.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶² Instrukcja dla Ichmość Stanów Deputowanych od Rządu Centralnego Galicyjskiego do Najjaśniejszego Fryderyka Augusta, Króla Saskiego, Xięcia Warszawskiego (Instruction for Their Excellencies the Deputies of the Galician Central Government to His Serene Highness Frederick Augustus, King of Saxony, Duke of Warsaw), 30.11.1809. In: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich, Księstwo Warszawskie, T. I. Akta związane z działalnością St. Zamoyskiego jako prezesa Rządu Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obydwóch Galicji (The Zamoyski Archive, Duchy of Warsaw, Vol. I. Records related to the activities of Stanisław Zamoyski as President of the Provisional Military Government of Both Galicias), 622–24.

⁷⁶³ Krzos, Z księciem Józefem w Galicji, 271.

⁷⁶⁴ Wypis z Protokołu Sekretariatu Stanu w Paryżu dnia 7 miesiąca grudnia roku 1809 (Extract from the Protocol of the State Secretariat in Paris, dated 7th December 1809), 07.12.1809. In: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich, Księstwo Warszawskie, T. I. Akta związane z działalnością St. Zamoyskiego jako prezesa Rządu Wojskowego Tymczasowego Obydwóch Galicji (The Zamoyski Archive, Duchy of Warsaw, Vol. I. Records related to the activities of Stanisław Zamoyski as President of the Provisional Military Government of Both Galicias), 628.

This decree did not establish a union of equals, as the Galician nobility had hoped, but rather an outright absorption of West Galicia into the Duchy, stripping it of any distinct autonomy. Nevertheless, Stanisław Zamoyski, who personally led the delegation in Dresden, continued his efforts to secure at least minimal concessions for the Galician elite. He sought to draw Frederick August's attention to Galicia's poor economic state, as well as the broader financial struggles of the Duchy itself. To alleviate the strain on the state budget and its taxpayers, he proposed reducing the cost of military uniforms. Under the guise of fiscal prudence, Zamoyski also advocated for a reduction in bureaucratic expenses, arguing that public service should be driven by honor and a commitment to the greater good rather than personal enrichment. If implemented, this would have drastically curtailed the access of lower social strata to administrative roles, reinforcing the privileged status of the Galician landowning nobility even under the new regime. Zamoyski also raised concerns about the legal system of the Duchy, particularly the imposition of the Napoleonic Code, the judicial framework it introduced, and the constitutional abolition of serfdom. He openly argued that the existing Habsburg model was far better suited to „Galician circumstances“ and urged the king to consider maintaining the preexisting legislation, at least temporarily. Echoing the demands of the November instruction, he also called for greater representation of the Galician szlachta within the Duchy's governing institutions and insisted that administrative positions in the former West Galicia be reserved primarily for locals.⁷⁶⁵

Friedrich August, however, largely disregarded Zamoyski's appeals. The only visible outcome of his efforts was the expansion of the State Council to include three Galician representatives, which was a symbolic gesture rather than a meaningful concession.⁷⁶⁶ Despite the Galician nobility's persistent attempts to delay or mitigate the full incorporation process, by 1810, the last vestiges of distinction between the „old“ and „new“ territories of the Duchy had been erased. The Galician nobility, who had once enjoyed the structured, paternalistic rule of the Habsburgs, now found themselves fully absorbed into a political framework that left very little room for their former privileges.

⁷⁶⁵ Mémoire Sur Le Duché de Warsovie a L'occasion de L'incorporation de La Nouvelle Province, 20.01.1810. In: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Zamoyskich, Księstwo Warszawskie, T. II. Akta związane z poselstwem St. Zamoyskiego do Paryża (The Zamoyski Archive, Duchy of Warsaw, Vol. II. Records related to St. Zamoyski's diplomatic mission to Paris), 46–56.

⁷⁶⁶ Krzos, Z księciem Józefem w Galicji, 283.

By entering the Duchy of Warsaw, West Galicia became part of a highly centralized state with restricted sovereignty, where the scope of political discussion and influence over governance processes of various social groups was rather limited. The region's nobility found themselves increasingly marginalized in the decision-making processes of a state that was, at best, ambivalent to their specific needs. The fundamental reforms that had long been overdue before the 1809 campaign stagnated, lingering in the shadows of foreign control and bureaucratic inertia. The first major attempt to widen the competencies of the Sejm, and through it – the *szlachta* came in 1811, when the deputies issued an address to the king making him aware of the crucial needs for reforms. In response, Friedrich August appointed a deputation of State Council members to investigate the state of affairs in the Duchy. The report of the deputation pointed out numerous weak points in the governance, such as the vagueness of many legislative formulations leading to chaos in decision making and their implementation, as well as the inflated state apparatus. The conclusions of the deputation in many ways coincided with the demands of the conservative *szlachta* – they suggested cutting the personnel of the regular army and administration, defining the competencies of different ministries more precisely and adjust the Napoleonic Code to local circumstances. To soften the criticism, the authors of the document claimed that the legal norms introduced by Napoleon were „perfect“, but the population of Duchy was not „perfect“ enough to accept them right away.⁷⁶⁷ This statement may have been a subtle form of „self-orientalizing“ – a way of presenting the Duchy's nobility as still inferior to the more „civilized“ French, while distancing them from the perceived chaos of their new political reality. It could also have been a strategic move to avoid antagonizing Napoleon, whose protection was vital for the survival of the Polish state. The report could have potentially led to a new round of debate concerning reforms in the Duchy, and maybe even to some groundbreaking transformations, ultimately accommodating the interests of the Galician *szlachta*. However, its emergence was extremely ill-timed. The Duchy, as well as the major powers in Central Europe, was already feeling the approach of another big war, and all the inner debates were eventually postponed until its outcome became known.

In the meantime, the economy of the French protectorate continued deteriorating. The officials were systematically underpaid or not paid for months, the army regiments

⁷⁶⁷ Czuby, The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite, 180f.

experienced mass desertion, as they were catastrophically underfinanced. The irregular subsidies from Napoleon did not improve the situation. To make matters worse, the crop failure of 1811 made the threat of massive hunger quite real.⁷⁶⁸ The *szlachta*'s wealth was rapidly declining as well, since the old issues of restricted international market access, reduction of productive labor due to conscription for army service and fortification building, and the ever-growing fiscal load were not resolved.⁷⁶⁹ Eventually, acceptance of Napoleon and his protectorate over Duchy started to fade, both among Jacobins and conservatives. There is evidence suggesting that an anti-Napoleonic uprising was being prepared within the nobility of the Duchy for the spring of 1811. However, the plans were never realized, largely due to the sudden death of one of the key leaders, Feliks Potocki.⁷⁷⁰

The international surroundings of the Duchy posed a threat to its existence as well. Despite agreeing to West Galicia's inclusion in 1809, the Russian Empire never stopped fearing the resurrected Polish state and its potential further enlargements, which could take place at the expense of the Russian domain. To secure the status quo, Alexander I sent to Paris a draft of the so-called Treaty of Guarantee immediately after the Schönbrunn Treaty was signed, asking Napoleon to forever renounce plans of reestablishing the Kingdom of Poland, and to never use terms „Poland“ or „Polish“ in official rhetoric. Moreover, Russia demanded the treaty be made public, so that the Duchy patriots, as well as the Poles on the territories remaining under foreign rule would be deprived of any illusions concerning their future. This ultimatum irritated Napoleon – not only did he not wish to take a promise of „never“ rebuilding Polish statehood, but he understood, that making the text of such a treaty public would deprive him of many of his Polish allies.⁷⁷¹ The failure of Treaty of Guarantee proved, that the two major European land powers would not ever be able to reach a long-term balance of interests, and that the next armed conflict was just a matter of time.

In preparation for the upcoming war, Napoleon signed a treaty with the Habsburgs on 14th March 1812, making them provide auxiliary corps of 30 thousand people in exchange for guarantees of Austrian rule in the remaining part of Galicia. Curiously enough, the treaty suggested an opportunity for Habsburgs to exchange East Galicia for

⁷⁶⁸ Adam Zamoyski, 1812: Napoleon's fatal march on Moscow (London 2004) 136f. See also: *Kukiel*, *Historia Polski*, 73f.

⁷⁶⁹ *Blackburn*, Napoleon and the Szlachta, 76f.

⁷⁷⁰ *Grochulska*, Księstwo Warszawskie, 185f.

⁷⁷¹ *Morley*, Alexander I and Czartoryski, 414f; *Lieven*, Russland gegen Napoleon, 98.

Illyria in the future in case they wanted to do that.⁷⁷² This was not the first case when the Kingdom territories were treated as an exchange token during Napoleonic wars – even before the 1809 campaign, Napoleon suggested that Austria gave up Galicia and let it join the Duchy, getting the long-awaited Silesia instead.⁷⁷³ The Habsburgs had, predictably, rejected this offer, fearing the further strengthening of the Polish satellite state.⁷⁷⁴ However, the very possibility of these exchange proposals underlined a key point: nearly four decades after the First Partition, the Habsburg Monarchy remained deeply ambivalent about Galicia, treating it as little more than a strategic pawn – focused more on securing the broader stability of their empire than on the territorial integrity of Galicia itself.

For the Duchy of Warsaw and its noble elites, both from „old“ and „new“ parts, the upcoming war suggested a way out of stagnation. Not only could it stabilize international environment, finally unblock trade connections, and provide a better situation for inner reforms, which would accommodate interests of the upper class, but it would potentially reunite the former *Rzeczpospolita* lands under Russian control with the Duchy. On 28th June 1812 during a festive meeting of the Sejm the General Confederation of the Kingdom of Poland was proclaimed as a new form of government for the resurrected Polish state. The idea of the Confederation belonged to the French emperor himself. No longer bound by any promises to Alexander I, Napoleon's vision was marked by the re-emergence of „Poland“ in its name, while the coat of arms reintroduced both the Polish white eagle and the Lithuanian *Pogoń Litewska* – symbols that suggested an agenda tied to the reclamation of past glory. Yet, this act of reassertion of the *Rzeczpospolita* symbols and identities, in reality, reflected the continued manipulation of these symbols by an external power, rather than a true national restoration. The Saxon king gave up most of his competencies in state governance, transferring them to the Ministerial Council. It is worth noting that Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, the Field Marshal of the Austrian army in 1809, became the Marszałek of the Confederacy. The creation of the Confederacy was met with enormous approval by

⁷⁷² *Maner*, Galizien: eine Grenzregion, 60. See also: *Zamoyski*, 1812, 104.

⁷⁷³ Vadym *Adadurov*, Napoleon i Halychyna: frantsuz'ki plany obminu pol's'kykh provintsiy Avstrii na Sileziiu v 1806–1807 rr. (Napoleon and Galicia: French plans to exchange Polish provinces of Austria for Silesia in 1806–1807). In: *Problemy slov'ianoznavstva* 51 (2000) 69–75, here 71.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 73.

all the layers of Duchy society, who once again felt themselves participating in a historical mission of bringing their Motherland back to life.⁷⁷⁵

The meeting of Sejm took place four days after Napoleon's troops crossed the Neman river. The following events made such an impact on Polish history, that up to this day they bear the name of the „Second Polish War“ in Polish historiography. They would also cause eventual demise of Napoleon, dismemberment of his empire, and the creation of international order which would directly determine the fate of Galicia and its nobility for decades to come.

⁷⁷⁵ *Grochulska*, Księstwo Warszawskie, 190f.

Chapter 6. Redefinition of Relationship between Habsburg Government and Galician *Szlachta* after the Demise of Napoleon.

1. Loyalty, Fear, and Opportunity: The Galician *Szlachta* in the Wars of 1812–1814.

The creation of the General Confederacy in Warsaw was met with considerable concern by the Habsburg government. The text of the proclamation contained unequivocal hints at the further enlargement of the Duchy's territory at the expense of the Polish-Lithuanian lands still ruled by the foreign governments: „it is the only desire in our hearts to join the parts of the homeland torn by the most unjust violence back into one body and bring it back to its former existence and happiness“. Moreover, the text encouraged Poles abroad „to join forces to save our common Motherland“.⁷⁷⁶ The earnestness of this threat specifically towards the Habsburg realm could be a subject of speculation. After reading the Act of the General Confederacy brought to him by the delegates from Warsaw on 11th July 1812, Napoleon praised the courage and determination of the Poles, at the same time pointing out that he „pledged to the Austrian emperor the entirety of his realm and cannot authorize any actions or movements that would be aimed at disturbing the peace in the Polish provinces remaining in his possession“.⁷⁷⁷ An alliance with Austria was understandably valuable to the French emperor considering his plans for war with Russia, which put any prospects of acquiring Galicia outside of his immediate strategy. The Habsburg administration of Galicia made sure to let the inhabitants of the crownland know about Napoleon's reply, and about the alliance between him and Franz I. To demonstrate to Galicians that Austria did not feel threatened by the Act of the General Confederacy, as it regarded the Paris Treaty as the ultimate security guarantee, the text of the Act was published in *Gazeta Lwowska*, the official government newspaper.⁷⁷⁸ This, however, had an opposite effect – the calmness

⁷⁷⁶ Akt der General-Konfederation, 28.06.1812. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 1 Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium, 1781–1812, 213–217.

⁷⁷⁷ *Zamorski*, Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku, 107.

⁷⁷⁸ *Gazeta Lwowska*, Nr. 56 (14.07.1812) 466f.

of the Habsburgs concerning the creation of the Confederacy and its address to all Poles living abroad was interpreted as the willingness of Austria to give up Galicia voluntarily, without shedding a drop of blood. Even publishing the text of the Paris Treaty in the next issue of *Gazeta Lwowska* could not convince the general public, and the pro-Duchy *szlachta* in particular – rumors persisted of the secret arrangements between the two emperors, which would eventually lead to the transfer of Galicia to a reborn Poland.⁷⁷⁹

The spring and summer of 1812 in Galicia were marked by a feeling of general unrest and even the threat of uprising. Amidst the chaos of war, the state sought to protect itself from both external and internal dangers, with the Galician nobility's strong ties to the Duchy seen as a significant internal threat. Martial law was introduced in Galicia, and the movement of subjects not only outside the crownland but within its borders was heavily limited. Additionally, any potentially dangerous printed texts were prohibited from being taken across the border. The noblemen who managed to leave for the Duchy were immediately considered deserters; their goods were confiscated and they themselves were proclaimed wanted (except for *sujets mixtes*). Those coming to Galicia from the Duchy's territory underwent strict police control, their place of residence within the Habsburg realm was assigned by the government, and contacts with family members living in Galicia were limited.⁷⁸⁰ All this served as the evidence that, despite an alliance with Napoleon, the Habsburgs still regarded the existence of the Duchy as a much bigger threat to their security than Russia, an enemy against whom they agreed to fight alongside France.

The strict police measures within the Habsburg realm proved to be futile in every sense. On the one hand, they failed to bring the local *szlachta* to loyalty towards Austria or to scare them away from wishing to join the Duchy's forces. According to letters from the Governor Peter von Goëss written in the spring of 1812, rumors of Galicia being soon liberated from Austrian rule and joining a resurrected Poland constantly circulated among the highest ranks of Galician society, as representatives of the noblest families abandoned their immediate duties in anticipation of the upcoming changes. The Habsburg German-speaking bureaucracy was mortified by these rumors, suspecting that their fate would

⁷⁷⁹ Waław *Mejbaum*, *Galicja podczas wojny 1812 r.* (Galicia during the 1812 War). In: *Biblioteka Warszawska* 4 (1911) 417–439, here 424f.

⁷⁸⁰ Waław *Mejbaum*, *Galicja wiosną roku 1812* (Galicia in the spring of 1812). In: *Biblioteka Warszawska* 2 (1911) 569–580, here 571–573.

hardly be enviable if Poland once again reclaimed Galician territories.⁷⁸¹ The government could not stop the *szlachta* from sending weapons, supplies and horses to the Duchy's army, and, despite all the repressions, it could not stop young noblemen from leaving Galicia and joining the Duchy's forces themselves.⁷⁸² On the other hand, the Galician nobility mostly preferred to wait for the triumphant French army, together with the Duchy troops, to come and „liberate“ their land from the Habsburgs after a victory in Russia, thus completing the process started in 1809, rather than actively revolting against the Viennese government. The initial successes of Napoleon in the 1812 campaign fulfilled the hopes of nobility, and no repressions would assist the crownland administration in gaining their loyalty.⁷⁸³

The Governor von Goëss, who had gained some trust among the local *szlachta* and had reciprocated their goodwill,⁷⁸⁴ recognized the futility of harsher measures. Instead, he opted to employ the „carrot“ rather than the „stick“, proposing a shift in the Austrian approach to Galicia and its nobility. In his report to Franz I, he suggested creating an „economic partnership“ between the crownland and the Empire on more equal terms through regularly making known to the population the economic projects of the government, in particular, the building of a canal between the rivers San and Dniester and the draining of the swamps and marshes along the Dniester. This way, von Goëss was clearly attempting to create an image of equal participation by locals in decision-making processes without actually granting them any influence on these decisions – it was not clear how the „widening and facilitating of the trace communication“ would contribute to the aforementioned „partnership“. In addition, von Goëss once again recommended convening the Galician noble Estates, claiming they could become a „very useful tool“ for gaining the *szlachta*'s support for Austrian interests. The Governor believed that even the promise of advisory roles and new titles and privileges would appeal to the *szlachta*'s vanity, drawing them closer to the state and diverting their attention from seeking power and recognition abroad. This assumption once again revealed a deeply colonial mindset within Habsburg officialdom in Galician matters. The imperial government still believed the local nobility's desires for prestige and influence could be easily manipulated. Minor

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, 577.

⁷⁸² Ibid, 575.

⁷⁸³ *Mejbaum*, *Galicia podczas wojny 1812 r.*, 439.

⁷⁸⁴ *Vushko*, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat*, 100.

privileges, even in the form of advisory positions, were perceived as sufficient to keep the *szlachta* subdued and loyal. Yet, given the war and the harsher policies adopted by the Empire at the time, any such concessions would have been revolutionary in comparison to the strict control previously exerted. Finally, von Goëss invited the emperor to visit Galicia that very same year or the next, so that the locals could once again be persuaded of His Majesty's constant care for the well-being of Galicia and its people.⁷⁸⁵

The suggestions of the Galician Governor did not receive immediate attention from Vienna, however, as the situation was developing quite rapidly, the central government had to adapt its strategy to its urgent priorities. After the retreat from Russia and the consequent failures of the *Grande Armée* in 1813, Austria hesitated to send its troops or even ammunition to assist its presumed allies, France and the Duchy of Warsaw, caring less and less about concealing what its real intentions were.⁷⁸⁶ Finally, in August 1813, the Habsburg Monarchy joined the anti-Napoleonic coalition.⁷⁸⁷ For the second time since the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, the loyalty of the Galician nobility became the matter of utmost importance for the security and integrity of the Habsburg Empire. In the case that the *szlachta* continued supporting their compatriots in the hopes of eventually reuniting with them under one scepter, Vienna would have to face an acute threat to its territorial integrity. The *szlachta*'s influence in Galicia was undeniable, as they remained a powerful class whose loyalty could tilt the balance in the region. Thus, the stakes were high for Vienna – losing the support of the nobility could mean losing Galicia itself. Considering this, the imperial government was burdened with the task of quickly securing the loyalty of the Galician *szlachta* without investing significant resources or time, or, at the very least, ensuring a surface demonstration of this loyalty.

To inspire the *szlachta* to align with the Habsburg cause in the impending war, von Goëss commissioned Antoni Rozbierski, a Court Counselor and prominent attorney, to draft a propaganda brochure targeting the Galician nobility. The text made an appeal to their sense of duty, claiming that Galicia's population had once pledged loyalty to the

⁷⁸⁵ *Mejbaum*, Galicia wiosną roku 1812, 579f.

⁷⁸⁶ Hubert *Chudzio*, Rozterki władzy. Rząd Księstwa Warszawskiego w Galicji (Confusions of power. The government of the Duchy of Warsaw in Galicia). In: Hubert Chudzio, Henryk Żaliński (eds.), *Galicja w Księstwie Warszawskim: 200 rocznica* (Galicia in the Duchy of Warsaw: The 200th anniversary) (Kraków 2009) 34–73, here 38, 46.

⁷⁸⁷ *Czubaty*, The Duchy of Warsaw, 187.

Habsburgs and must now fulfill this pledge, „not to commit perjury, not to incur Divine punishment upon ourselves“. This appeal was built on a romanticized history, harking back to the time when the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, under the leadership of the revered Jan III Sobieski, had saved Vienna from the Turkish siege, positioning them as historically loyal supporters of the Habsburgs. The brochure then urged the *szlachta* to demonstrate this loyalty again by siding with the Habsburgs in the upcoming conflict. Thus, this invocation of past heroism served an insidious purpose to force the *szlachta* to relinquish their „Polish“ identity and adopt a new, subordinated „Galician“ one. The Habsburgs, under this colonial framework, sought to erase the *szlachta*’s ties to the *Rzeczpospolita* and compel them to accept their new role within the Empire, culminating in the ultimate goal of becoming „true Austrians“, whose loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty was unquestioned and absolute. This erasure of identity was central to the imperial strategy, as it sought not just political allegiance but a deeper cultural transformation, one that would completely assimilate the *szlachta* into the fabric of the Habsburg state, and make their Polish-Lithuanian heritage irrelevant.⁷⁸⁸

Rozbierski also sought to undermine any potential alignment with Napoleon and the Duchy of Warsaw by framing such a course of action as dishonorable and unworthy. He condemned Napoleon’s wars as examples of imperialism and exploitation, referring to them as involving „spilling blood for foreign lands, such as St. Domingo,⁷⁸⁹ or for oppressing noble nations, as it was the case in Spain,⁷⁹⁰ or for enslaving peaceful merchant nations, like the Netherlands“. ⁷⁹¹ Through this narrative, Rozbierski aimed to discredit the French cause by casting it as imperialist, while positioning the Habsburgs as the defenders of Galician nobility’s rights, property, and honor. The brochure’s call for the *szlachta* to fight for „our property and good name, our wives and children, and, in some respect, our religion“ was a calculated appeal to their self-interest. It emphasized

⁷⁸⁸ See: Heidemarie Uhl, Zwischen „Habsburgischem Mythos“ und (Post-)Kolonialismus. Zentraleuropa als Paradigma für Identitätskonstruktionen in der (Post-)Moderne. In: Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (eds.), Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis (Innsbruck/Wien 2003) 45–54, here 47.

⁷⁸⁹ A possible reference to Napoleon’s failed attempts to reclaim the French colony of Saint-Domingue after the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), particularly following the 1806 campaign.

⁷⁹⁰ A reference to Napoleon’s military campaigns during the Peninsular War (1808–1814), where French forces sought to conquer Spain and Portugal, leading to widespread resistance and occupation, and ultimately the destabilization of the Spanish monarchy.

⁷⁹¹ A reference to Napoleon’s conquest and subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of Holland (1806–1810), which he ruled through his brother, Louis Bonaparte, before annexing it directly into the French Empire.

the defense of material and social standing, thus appealing to the nobility's fear of losing their position within the local power structure. The explicit mention of religion also sought to contrast the Habsburgs' Christian authority against the allegedly godless nature of the Duchy of Warsaw, which had a secular government.⁷⁹² This was a veiled attempt to paint the Polish cause under Napoleon as dangerous to both the spiritual and material well-being of the nobility. This way, the brochure's argument reflected a classic colonial dichotomy: the colonizers (the Habsburgs) as the defenders of civilization, religion, and the status quo, and the colonized (the Galician nobility) as subjects who needed to be reminded of their loyalty and subjugated to the dominant imperial order. This colonial logic denied the *szlachta* any agency in deciding their own political and national future, instead relegating them to the role of passive recipients of imperial benevolence. By presenting the Habsburgs as the natural protectors of the nobility's interests, Rozbierski's text sought to solidify their power and prevent any potential rebellion or alignment with the Duchy of Warsaw, which was seen as a threat to the imperial order.

There is no proof of how much the text managed to convince the Galician nobility; however, it did give von Goëss a necessary starting point to proceed with practical measures. The 1813 fundraiser campaign for the benefit of the Habsburg army was initially met by the Galician nobility with significant reluctance. The lists of donors published regularly in *Gazeta Lwowska* mostly contained the names of German-speaking officials, merchants, and members of the Jewish community in the town of Brody.⁷⁹³ The sums collected were smaller than those gathered in other parts of the Empire, and the richest noble landowners mostly boycotted the occasion. The donations of those aristocrats who did participate were virtually symbolic and consisted of clothes and bandages for the soldiers.⁷⁹⁴ The situation changed after Napoleon's defeat in the Battle of Leipzig. Once it became obvious that the French Empire would be defeated by the coalition sooner or later, and any possibility of unification with the Duchy vanished, the amount of donations given by the Galician *szlachta* for the benefit of the Austrian military increased enormously. For the nobility, donating to the Habsburg army became a chance to demonstrate their adherence to the throne, and to get certain privileges and positions

⁷⁹² *Mejbaum*, *Galicja po klęsce Napoleona*, 116.

⁷⁹³ Michał *Baczkowski*, *Die Unterstützung der galizischen Polen für die österreichische Armee in den Feldzügen 1813 bis 1815*. In: Claudia *Reichl-Ham* (ed.), *Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig: Symposium 8. November 2013 (Wien 2014)* 163–177, here 168.

⁷⁹⁴ *Baczkowski*, *W służbie Habsburgów*, 101.

in return. The lists of fundraiser contributors published in *Gazeta Lwowska* in 1814–1816 contained representatives of such prominent noble families as Łańckoroński, Potocki, Mniszek, Czartoryski, Jabłonowski and Krasicki, to name a few.⁷⁹⁵ The decline of Napoleon's empire meant that the relationship between the central government and the local elites needed to be re-established. Even though recouping all „freedoms“ and privileges the *szlachta* possessed before the partitions was clearly impossible, some noblemen still hoped that the open demonstration of loyalty towards the emperor would make him grant the entire crownland with a certain degree of self-administration, in which the nobility would play a key role. The matter of the *szlachta* loyalty, while motivated by the promise of power and privileges, underscored the complexities of power negotiations within a colonial context, where both resistance and collaboration coexisted as a means of securing self-interest, in particular, for the disenfranchised local elites.

The governor soon gave the *szlachta* yet another opportunity for loyalty demonstration. In November 1813, von Goëss addressed Metternich with a suggestion to create a fourth Polish Uhlan regiment in Galicia. The Governor believed that becoming a part of this unit would provide Galician noblemen, especially younger ones, with an opportunity to serve the Monarchy and the emperor without giving up their national pride.⁷⁹⁶ Clearly the ideological meaning of this new formation superseded its military significance – no one expected the Polish Uhlans to change the course of the war or hasten Napoleon's demise, but their unblemished service in the imperial army would be further evidence of the successes of Habsburg inclusion policies in Galicia over the past decades. The emperor approved the regiment's establishment on 10th December of the same year. According to the patent, Galicia was to set up a Fourth Uhlan Regiment, which would partly consist of volunteers and be supported by donations of the local population. The regiment was to have 1,747 soldiers for members, of which two-thirds had to have no previous military history, so that previously unengaged noblemen would be given a chance to prove themselves in imperial service. It was specifically stated that the officers of the new regiment were to be recruited from members of the local *szlachta*, and the Pole, Major Maurycy Wojna, was named acting commander (eventually replace by

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 102–105.

⁷⁹⁶ Peter von Goëss an Metternich, 22.11.1813. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 2 Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium, 1813–1863, 192f.

another Pole, Group Captain Stanisław Poradowski).⁷⁹⁷ On 19th December, the Governor issued an address to the Galician *szlachta*, encouraging them to participate in the regiment's organization. The unit was to bear the name of Franz I, thus underlining the „paternal care“ of the emperor towards his Galician noble subjects. Aside from the usual appeal to the patriotic feelings of the *szlachta*, allegedly aimed exclusively at Austria and the emperor, von Goëss promised every young nobleman that „his rapid effort to advancement to the officer position shall be my primary care“ and that „the Galician youth will get a possibility to achieve total happiness, so let it engage itself in occupation full of honor and glory“. ⁷⁹⁸ This way, von Goëss showed his understanding of the *szlachta*'s aspirations at the final stage of the war – disillusioned with Napoleon and deprived of the hope of the Polish independence, impoverished after years of devastating conflict, they could be attracted by a chance of personal gains, either in terms of material wealth or of societal position by gaining the favor of the Habsburg government. The younger generation of nobility would be especially receptive to such an opportunity, as they had not yet secured their position in society and were less influenced by the memories of the „noble republic“ glory to fully reject the idea of serving under the foreign regime. As a result, this offer of advancement and social mobility appealed to a population that, having been subjected to both Polish and foreign domination, was now caught between conflicting national loyalties and the pragmatics of survival within an empire. The promise of service to the imperial cause, while framed as a form of „honor“, effectively cemented the *szlachta*'s role within a colonial structure that used both ideological and material incentives to secure compliance.

As with the fundraiser, the Galician *szlachta*'s involvement in the Uhlan regiment mirrored the anti-Napoleonic coalition's successes on the battlefield. Initially, even the lower *szlachta* hesitated to join the new unit, and instead of the planned two-thirds, only 20% of the soldiers were newly recruited volunteers. The remainder of the regiment was made up of soldiers relocated from other units, as well as enserfed peasants sent by wealthy landowners. Consequently, the first months of the regiment's existence were marked by frequent desertions, and by June 1814, the number of regiment members had dropped from 1,747 to 1,493. The donations from the *szlachta* to support the Galician

⁷⁹⁷ Baczkowski, Die Unterstützung der galizischen Polen, 169–171.

⁷⁹⁸ Cited after: Mejbaum, Galicja po klęsce Napoleona, 118.

Uhlans remained modest. However, following Napoleon's abdication in 1814, the *szlachta* began to show more interest in the regiment, with donations peaking in 1815, just before the war's conclusion. In general, Michał Baczkowski characterized the creation of the Galician Uhlan Regiment as an „organizational success, but at the same time a political defeat for the Austrian officials and for Governor von Goëss“.⁷⁹⁹ Those noblemen who chose to support the Austrian cause in the war did so with motives largely unrelated to Austria itself. They were driven either by the prospect of personal gain or by the hope that their loyalty would secure future concessions for the crownland once the war ended.⁸⁰⁰ The Galician *szlachta*'s support for the Habsburg Monarchy was thus less a sign of genuine allegiance and more a pragmatic attempt to secure social and material advantages within the shifting political landscape. By aligning with the Habsburgs, the local elites sought to safeguard their own interests rather than embrace any larger ideological commitment to the Empire.

In another attempt to demonstrate the successes of his „inclusion“ strategies in Galicia, von Goëss organized a delegation of Galician nobility to Vienna in July 1814. The members of the delegation, chosen by the Governorate and thus lacking a mandate from their compatriots, had no task other than to assure Franz I of Galician loyalty and their joy in remaining Habsburg subjects. However, since the delegates did not command significant respect among the Galician population, their mission mirrored von Goëss's approach in the final stages of the war, that is offering superficial and quick solutions to deeper societal issues in an effort to create an image of peace and subordination under his rule.⁸⁰¹ The success of these tactics could be disproved by a single document. In 1814, Austrian officer Major de Baret was given a task to study the attitudes of the Galician *szlachta* towards the Habsburg government. On 6th February 1815, he summed up his observations in an official report. De Baret claimed that it would be hard to find „5 noblemen out of 100 who would be favorable towards Austria“.⁸⁰² Many local noblemen were still eagerly awaiting the rebirth of the Polish state, and not ready to settle down

⁷⁹⁹ Baczkowski, *Die Unterstützung der galizischen Polen*, 171–174.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸⁰¹ Jarosław Czuby, *Die Situation der polnischen Gebiete während des Wiener Kongresses*. In: Bogusław Dybaś (ed.), *Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815* (Wien 2021) 15–24, here 18f.

⁸⁰² Cited after: Józef Białynia-Chołodecki, *Patryjotyzm dziadów naszych z przed stu laty w oświetleniu aktów austriackich* (Patriotism of our grandfathers from a century ago in the light of Austrian acts) (Lwów 1923) 7.

under Habsburg rule. Once their hope in Napoleon became futile, they turned their attention towards Russian czar Alexander I, whose troops had already occupied the entire territory of the Duchy of Warsaw. However, allegiance to Alexander did not mean a desire to become Russian subjects. In de Baret's opinion, the Galician *szlachta* would support anyone, regardless of nationality, who promised the restoration of Polish sovereignty. This posed a serious threat to the Austrian government in Galicia, as Alexander I had made more successful inroads in winning the admiration of the Polish nobility than the Habsburg Monarchy. De Baret mentioned Russian czar treating Polish troops which remained in France after Napoleon's demise „in a humane way“, allowing them to come back home, rebuilding Polish army units and addressing the Duchy's population with promises to resurrect their statehood. The Habsburg Monarchy, on the other hand, could not respond to these measures effectively, desperately attempting to maintain an illusion of loyalty and stability within its realm. De Baret also highlighted the vulnerability of the Galician border to ideological influences from the north, as the flow of correspondence between Galician and Duchy inhabitants was virtually uncontrolled by the Austrian government. At the same time, de Baret believed that the hopes of the Galician *szlachta* might not be fulfilled by Russia either, as the Russian government had a long history of oppression towards its Polish subjects. If Russia failed to restore Poland in accordance with the *szlachta's* aspirations, „the old hatred shall explode, and no Galician shall put Russia above Austria“. ⁸⁰³ It became clear during the peace negotiations following the Napoleonic wars that the Austrian government took de Baret's observations seriously, aiming to prevent Russia from fully fulfilling its promises to Polish nobility. The report concluded with a detailed account of the Galician noblemen and noblewomen whom de Baret believed posed the greatest internal threat to the Habsburg Monarchy, listing members of the most prominent Galician families. ⁸⁰⁴

This report further underscored the self-seeking nature of the Galician *szlachta's* relationship with the Habsburg Monarchy. The motivations of the former were largely driven by a desire to restore the power and privileges they had enjoyed during the times of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In this context, their actions reflected a desire to secure a regime under which they could be the most free, with as much autonomy

⁸⁰³ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid, 9–15.

as possible, while being closest to the status they once held in the former „noble republic“. Whether aligning with Austria or Russia, the nobility's support was contingent on which power could best offer them the political influence, privileges, and societal position they craved. The failure of von Goëss's efforts, as well as de Baret's observations, revealed that the *szlachta* was more focused on their personal gain than on any deep allegiance to the Habsburgs. Their engagement with the imperial powers can thus be seen as a negotiation for power in a colonial context – an attempt of the former elites to regain their former status and privileges, while adapting to the realities of a new imperial order.

While the Habsburg government struggled to reclaim the loyalty of the Eastern Galician *szlachta*, the nobility of West Galicia had to share the suffering and despair of their new state, the Duchy of Warsaw. The subsequent failures of Napoleon's army deepened political crisis within his satellite state immensely. Before the war, the prospect of victory and reclamation of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories served as a binding agent for even the most antagonistic *szlachta* groups. After the 1812 defeat and retreat from Russia, they found it much harder to find common ground both between themselves and with the French Empire. By the end of the year, a number of the Duchy's ministers made contacts with the Russian government with the aim of ensuring a favorable Russian protectorate over the Duchy once Napoleon is defeated. The end of the war, however, was far from in sight – many Duchy inhabitants still believed in the French emperor, who unexpectedly came to their capital and encouraged them to get ready for a new, victorious campaign next year.⁸⁰⁵

These hopes were never fulfilled. In early 1813, during the retreat of the Duchy army and its government from Warsaw, West Galicia and Kraków became a center of Polish political and social life for a few months. The city accepted numerous Duchy aristocrats, who left Warsaw and spent months in a new capital attending countless balls and festivities. According to the French emissary Bignon, who spent those months in Kraków as well, the atmosphere in the city was quite constrained, and these never-ending celebrations helped the citizens to „shorten the long days of waiting and uncertainty; everyone wanted to silence memories of bad things that happened, and the threatening

⁸⁰⁵ Kukiel, Historia Polski, 84.

uncertainty of the future“.⁸⁰⁶ At the same time, more and more noblemen were voicing their disillusionment with Napoleon, and trying to convince the entire Ministerial Council to betray the French emperor and support Alexander I. Their reasoning was not grounded in ideological preference but in pragmatic self-preservation, aligning with the most likely victor to secure their position in whatever order emerged after the war. This shift mirrored the attitude of the East Galician *szlachta* under Habsburg rule. Just as Galician noblemen did at the later stages of war, many Duchy aristocrats sought Russian protection not out of genuine loyalty but because they saw it as the best way to preserve their influence. These shifting loyalties reveal a pragmatic approach to foreign domination – one in which they sought to negotiate power within imperial structures rather than resist them outright. It should be noted, however, that at that point in time, the *szlachta*’s attempts at contact with the Russian czar and his government were mostly one-sided – Alexander valued his potential alliance with Prussia and Austria too much to risk it by conducting unconcealed negotiations with the Duchy’s nobility.⁸⁰⁷ During 1813, it was quite enough for Russia that the *szlachta* would stop supporting Napoleon and leave it to diplomatic efforts of great powers to decide their fate.

Meanwhile, the pro-Russian faction among the *szlachta* sought to persuade the Duchy’s military commander, Józef Poniatowski, to abandon Napoleon. In Kraków, they urged him to either declare Polish neutrality or engage in a battle with Russian troops and capitulate honorably, thus avoiding further bloodshed. Since Poniatowski never informed Napoleon of this conspiracy, he must have at least considered the possibility. He weighed his options carefully. On the one hand, he understood that the fall of the French Empire was likely and that its defeat could mean another partition of Poland. However limited the Duchy’s sovereignty had been before the war, it would almost certainly be erased afterward. On the other hand, aligning with Russia offered no guarantees of Polish statehood. As a Duchy statesman first and foremost, Poniatowski bided his time until May

⁸⁰⁶ Louis Pierre Édouard *Bignon*, Lucjan *Siemieński* (ed.), *Polska w 1811 i 1813 roku. Pamiętniki francuskiego dyplomaty* (Poland in 1811 and 1813. Memoirs of a French diplomat) (Kraków 1862) 297f. For a detailed account of emissary Bignon on his stay in Kraków, see *ibid*, 293–298.

⁸⁰⁷ *Chudzio*, *Rozterki władzy*, , 51.

1813, when he ordered his troops to leave Kraków and march toward Saxony to join Napoleon.⁸⁰⁸

Although the pro-Russian faction failed to win over Poniatowski, this setback ultimately had little consequence. The commander met his demise on 19th October 1813, at the Battle of Leipzig, shortly after being named a Marshal of the Empire. His death triggered widespread mourning, both in the Duchy and among Poles living outside its borders. On 26th December 1813, the prefect of the now-occupied Kraków department, Stanisław Wodzicki, issued an address praising Poniatowski as a great Polish hero, vowing to continue his mission of defending and liberating the Motherland, and calling on citizens to support the Duchy's remaining troops.⁸⁰⁹

Yet, rather than galvanizing further resistance, Poniatowski's death accelerated disillusionment with Napoleon as Poland's supposed liberator. The Prince's immense popularity had made him the last unifying figure of the Duchy, and with this loss, trust in the government collapsed.⁸¹⁰ While Napoleon still commanded loyalty among some officers, many of the *szlachta* questioned the point of continued fighting. Desertions from Polish regiments began almost immediately, with soldiers preferring to return home rather than die for a lost cause.⁸¹¹ Even those who initially remained grew resentful of Napoleon's demands to retreat further into France. They did not want to become mere mercenaries in his doomed empire, leaving Polish lands defenseless. The emperor attempted to stop the tide of desertions by appealing to Polish national honor, promising to restore the Duchy when circumstances allowed, and even falsely claiming that

⁸⁰⁸ Jarosław *Czubaty*, Ein Kampf um soldatische Ehre oder eine politische Chance? Die Polen in der Völkerschlacht von 16. bis 19. Oktober 1813. In: Claudia *Reichl-Ham* (ed.), Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig: Symposium 8. November 2013 (Wien 2014) 125–144, here 128f.

⁸⁰⁹ Prefekt Departamentu Krakowskiego do Szanownych Obywateli i Obywatelek Departamentu Krakowskiego (Prefect of the Kraków Department to the Honorable Citizens of the Kraków Department), 26.12.1813. In: Ossolineum, Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Pamiętniki Stanisława Wodzickiego. Tom V. „Do moich dzieci powierzając im rękopism o urzędowaniu mojem w Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej“. Cz. 1: Wspomnienia oraz pisma i korespondencja S. Wodzickiego z lat 1805–1831. Cz. 2: Akta, dokumenty i listy dotyczące urzędowania S. Wodzickiego jako prezesa Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej oraz dotyczące Księstwa Warszawskiego z lat 1805–1830 (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Memoirs of Stanisław Wodzicki. Volume V. „To my children, entrusting them with the manuscript about my service in the Republic of Kraków“. Part 1: Memoirs as well as writings and correspondence of S. Wodzicki from the years 1805–1831. Part 2: Records, documents, and letters concerning S. Wodzicki's service as President of the Senate of the Republic of Kraków, as well as relating to the Duchy of Warsaw from the years 1805–1830), 405f.

⁸¹⁰ *Syta*, W blasku napoleońskich orłów, 116.

⁸¹¹ John D. *Stanley*, Napoleon's Last Allies: The Poles in 1814. In: *The Polish Review* 61, No. 3 (2016) 3–31, here 6.

Poniatowski had not died but had been taken prisoner.⁸¹² While these desperate pleas convinced some officers, the broader *szlachta* saw no future in Napoleon's cause. By late 1813, many Poles abandoned him entirely, unwilling to follow him into certain ruin.⁸¹³ Still, a core of devoted *szlachta* remained by his side, accompanying him into exile on Elba. Even after his abdication, 120 Polish Uhlans followed him during the Hundred Days, ultimately perishing at Waterloo.⁸¹⁴

The majority of the *szlachta*, recognizing Napoleon's downfall as irreversible, preferred to return home and secure a place for themselves and their homeland in the emerging post-Napoleonic order. Even among those who had remained loyal to the French emperor, doubts about switching allegiances were dispelled by Napoleon himself. In his farewell address following his abdication at Fontainebleau, he explicitly urged the Poles to seek the protection of „the magnificent Alexander“, acknowledging his own failure to restore Poland's former borders and implicitly passing the mantle of patron to the Russian emperor.⁸¹⁵ This message provided the *szlachta* with a political justification for aligning with Russia while preserving their self-image as Polish patriots. In their eyes, if even Napoleon conceded that Poland's fate now rested with Alexander, there was no dishonor in turning to him as the new guarantor of Polish interests.

At the same time, the *szlachta* – particularly in West Galicia – did not see Russia as their only option. Reports from Habsburg officials stationed in Kraków in 1814 indicate that many members of the nobility, particularly the wealthiest magnates, voiced a preference for returning under Austrian rule. The economic instability and political uncertainty of the former Duchy made the prospect of Habsburg governance appealing, as it promised order, predictability, and financial stability. In July 1814, Court Advisor Anton Baum reported that the richest *szlachta* saw Austria as the best guarantee of

⁸¹² Ibid, 11f.

⁸¹³ Ibid, 8.

⁸¹⁴ *Zamorski*, Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku, 162.

⁸¹⁵ Pożegnanie Cesarza Francuzów Napoleona W. do Polaków w Fontainebleau roku 1814 (The Farewell of the Emperor of the French, Napoleon the Great, to the Poles in Fontainebleau in the Year 1814). In: Ossolineum, *Miscellanea*, zawierające odpisy i oryginały listów, mów, pism publicystycznych, utworów literackich i innych materiałów z lat 1702-1814, odnoszące się przeważnie do spraw politycznych Polski ostatnich lat panowania Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego (*Miscellanea*, containing copies and originals of letters, speeches, journalistic writings, literary works, and other materials from the years 1702–1814, mostly related to the political affairs of Poland during the final years of the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski), 163.

restoring prosperity.⁸¹⁶ Similarly, in March 1814, Habsburg agent Lichtenburg observed that West Galicians awaited „nothing good from Russia“.⁸¹⁷ However, these reports may have been influenced by wishful thinking among Austrian officials eager to reassert control over Galicia. In reality, pro-Russian sentiment remained strong, and many Polish nobles did not hesitate to demonstrate their support for Alexander I. What was evident, however, was the *szlachta*’s underlying concern: they wanted a Polish state with autonomous privileges, not simple annexation into the Russian Empire. Their suspicion of Russian intentions grew as reports surfaced of Polish soldiers being forcibly incorporated into the Russian army without maintaining their ranks or national identity. On the 21st November 1814, report from Lviv’s police director, Brezany, detailed local outrage over this, culminating in his conclusion that „a Russian is not a friend to a Pole“.⁸¹⁸ Fear intensified when rumors spread that East Galicia might be ceded to Russia in the ongoing Vienna Congress negotiations. Ultimately, the *szlachta*’s political maneuvers were guided not by ideological allegiance but by a pragmatic search for the regime that would offer them the most privileges and autonomy. Alexander I understood this and sought to win their loyalty by promising a Polish national entity with clear autonomous features. By presenting himself as Poland’s new benefactor, he gained the allegiance of many prominent noble families of the former *Rzeczpospolita*, demonstrating how the *szlachta* consistently positioned themselves within imperial structures rather than resisting them outright.

To sum up, as peace negotiations began in 1814, the Habsburg Monarchy faced a dual challenge in Galicia: maintaining control over East Galicia, still part of its hereditary lands, and reintegrating West Galicia, should Austria attempt to reclaim it. For the *szlachta*, allegiance to the Russian throne emerged as a compelling alternative to Habsburg rule, offering the prospect of reunification with their compatriots within a reborn Polish state, albeit under Russian dominion. As pragmatic actors primarily concerned with securing their privileges, the *szlachta* weighed their options between two imperial powers, seeking whichever would grant them the greatest autonomy and status.

⁸¹⁶ Peter von Goëss an Franz Hager von Allentsteig, 03.07.1814. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Polizeihofstelle G 9/z/5.1814, Stimmung in Galizien, 649.

⁸¹⁷ Correspondent Lichtenburg an Franz Hager von Allentsteig, 03.03.1814. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Polizeihofstelle H 9/b.1814, Stimmung in Galizien, 69f.

⁸¹⁸ Franz Anton von Brezany an Franz Hager von Allentsteig, 21.11.1814. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Allgemeine Verwaltungsarchiv, Polizeihofstelle H 9/n/12.1814. Stimmung in Galizien, without pagination.

This placed Austria in a precarious position, as it was not merely contending with an internal struggle for loyalty but with an external imperial rival actively reshaping regional allegiances. Before it could formulate a new strategy to secure the loyalty of the Galician noble elites, Austria first had to counter Russian influence there – an objective that became central to its diplomacy at the Vienna Congress.

2. The Polish Question and Galicia's Fate in the Post-War Settlement.

By the final stages of the 1812–1814 campaign, it was clear that the fate of the Duchy of Warsaw and other former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lands would be a major point of contention in the post-war settlement. The partitioning powers – Russia, Prussia, and Austria – had already signed several wartime treaties addressing their claims. The Treaty of Kalisz (28 February 1813) established a Russian-Prussian military alliance, granting Russia jurisdiction over the Duchy while promising Prussia compensation in Northern Germany and strategic territories connecting East Prussia and Silesia.⁸¹⁹ The Reichenbach Convention (27 June 1813) further confirmed that the Duchy's fate would be decided by the Allies, implying its dismemberment.⁸²⁰ Austria, under Metternich's influence, sought to reclaim Western Galicia,⁸²¹ a goal reaffirmed in the Cieplice Treaty (9 September 1813), where the three powers pledged to divide the Duchy „in an amiable manner“.⁸²² However, these agreements lacked clear borders and governance structures, making the Polish question a central issue at the Vienna Congress.

Already before the congress began its work, it became obvious that Alexander I and his government would be the main force in negotiations concerning former Polish-Lithuanian territories. Behind them was the support of numerous Polish noble families, who expected the „solidarity of Slavic nations“ to become the main component in future relationship between Russia and Poland, and saw the Russian protectorate as the defense

⁸¹⁹ Michał Rostworowski, *Prawna geneza Księstwa Warszawskiego i Królestwa Polskiego* (The legal genesis of the Duchy of Warsaw and the Kingdom of Poland) (Kraków 1915) 26.

⁸²⁰ Władysław Zajewski, *Sprawa Polska na Kongresie Wiedeńskim* (The Polish Question at the Vienna Congress). In: *Czasy Nowożytne* 21 (2008) 33–45, here 40.

⁸²¹ *Kukiel*, *Historia Polski*, 87.

⁸²² Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, *Utworzenie Królestwa Kongresowego* (Creation of the Congress Kingdom) (Kraków 1916) 45.

against the „German threat“. In 1813, the pro-Russian statesmen of the Duchy gave their vision on the future Polish-Russian coexistence, directly stating that

„it is difficult to understand how any nation can consider itself secure forever in its existence, when it sees that next to it, other peoples of the same root have already fallen prey to a foreign tribe that is constantly moving its borders towards it [...] It is to be expected that the German tribe will naturally turn all its efforts towards the domains of Slavs, over which it has long prevailed by the superiority of intellectual means and the slow but constant influence of social cultivation which the Slavs receive from it“.⁸²³

Given that the Habsburgs were frequently labeled as „Germans“ in political discourse, this rhetoric implied that Austrian rule was undesirable and incompatible with Polish interests. Even in Vienna, the heart of the Monarchy, Poles residing there openly expressed convictions that Alexander would defend their Motherland on the future congress, and even that he would be ready to fight Austria if it tried to resist Polish aspirations.⁸²⁴ Many members of the *szlachta* also believed that the Russian czar had no other choice but to support Poland – in any other case, he would have to deal with the „unconquerable hatred“ of Poles towards Russians.⁸²⁵

To understand the feelings of West Galicians towards Alexander, one must consider the accounts of witnesses of his arrival to Kraków in September 1814. Once it became known that czar would visit the city on his way to Vienna, triumphal arches were erected in his honor, and lights were lit on every entrance to the city. All the major streets were decorated with flowers, and, once Alexander entered the city, thousands of its inhabitants went outside to welcome their „liberator“. The bells of Kraków churches were ringing in honor of the event, and a festive mass took place in the Mariacki Cathedral. After the service, Alexander received a delegation of Kraków Department council, which expressed the gratitude of „all the Poles“ and their hopes for future. In response, Alexander gave a speech himself, which he finished with the following words: „I want Poland to exist. In case others refuse, my sword shall convince them!“.⁸²⁶ For Austria, the

⁸²³ Cited after: Jerzy Skowronek, *Sprawa Polska* (The Polish Question). In: Monika Senkowska-Gluck (ed.), *Europa i Świat w Epoce Napoleońskiej* (Europe and the World in the Napoleonic Era) (Warszawa 1977) 385–454, here 432.

⁸²⁴ *Zajewski*, *Sprawa Polska*, 36.

⁸²⁵ August Fournier, *Zur Geschichte der polnischen Frage 1814 u. 1815*. In: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 20 (1899) 444–475, here 473.

⁸²⁶ Cited after: *Schnür-Pełowski*, *Z przeszłości Galicji*, 219.

reception of Alexander underscored the challenges it would face in asserting control over West Galicia. Since it had governed the region for a shorter time than East Galicia, the overwhelming pro-Polish sentiment in the area, fueled by a desire for autonomy, revealed the difficulty of reasserting Habsburg authority.

The initial goals of Alexander during peace negotiations were indeed ambitious. He wanted to annex the entire territory of the Duchy of Warsaw (except for small pieces of land along its western border, which were to be given back to Prussia), unite it with the Polish-Lithuanian territories taken by Russia as a result of three partitions, and transform it into a constitutional Kingdom of Poland with himself as the future king. Since the rest of the Russian Empire would remain an autocratic monarchy, the new Kingdom of Poland would be tied with it by a personal union, which would give the latter a quasi-sovereign status.⁸²⁷ By granting limited freedoms to Poland while keeping the rest of the empire under autocratic rule, Alexander aimed to position himself as a liberator rather than a colonizer. This promise of constitutional governance appealed to the Polish noble elites, who, despite their nationalistic rhetoric, remained pragmatic and sought to secure their privileges under the most favorable imperial patron. To push this vision further, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, who at the time had undisputed influence over the czar, suggested an even bolder plan, according to which the future Kingdom should have encompassed as many former *Rzeczpospolita* territories as possible, and they should have been guaranteed political and personal freedoms in the texts of future peace treaties. This suggestion sounded attractive to the Poles in the delegations of other partitioning powers, and some of them, such as Prince Antoni Radziwiłł, started cooperating with Czartoryski.⁸²⁸

Neither Czartoryski's, nor Alexander's plan was acceptable to Austria. The biggest threat to the Habsburg Monarchy was seen not in the reinstallation of Polish sovereignty, but in its personal union with Russia. This union would undoubtedly strengthen Alexander's domain beyond any limit and dramatically shift the balance of powers in Europe. Since Austria was desperately trying to recover from losses and humiliation it went through during the Napoleonic wars, such a scenario was very much

⁸²⁷ Hans Henning *Hahn*, *Die Polenbestimmungen der Wiener Schlussakte. Eine politische und völkerrechtshistorische Analyse*. In: Bogusław *Dybaś* (ed.), *Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815* (Wien 2021) 73–105, here 77.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

undesired. But beyond the broader geopolitical stakes, the future of Galicia posed an even more immediate challenge. In September 1814, Metternich had received a report from Galicia confirming that the majority of the local *szlachta* remained politically unreliable. Their loyalty to the Habsburgs was conditional at best; they saw any imperial protectorate – whether Austrian or Russian – as a temporary stage on the path to full Polish independence.⁸²⁹ This instability exposed the limits of Austria's integrationist efforts in the crownland. Despite decades of Habsburg rule, Galicia had not been successfully absorbed into the imperial structure in the way that other hereditary lands had. Instead, it remained a contested space where the *szlachta*'s autonomist aspirations endured, resistant to Habsburg attempts at imperial reconfiguration. Alexander's promises of autonomy and noble privileges risked setting a dangerous precedent: if the Galician *szlachta* saw their counterparts in Russian-controlled lands enjoying greater political agency, they could become even more difficult to pacify. Habsburg officials were thus confronted with a troubling reality: their authority in Galicia rested not on genuine loyalty but on the absence of a more attractive alternative. Now, with Alexander's promises of Polish restoration, that alternative was dangerously close to materializing.

The Habsburg Monarchy's position on Poland and Galicia during the peace negotiations became evident in several key documents. On 31st October 1814, an Austrian committee met to discuss the fate of the Galician territories annexed by the Duchy of Warsaw in 1809. While the official focus was on securing repayment of the Duchy's debts to Austria, the protocol of the meeting revealed a pragmatic approach: Austria was not necessarily intent on reclaiming all of West Galicia and even considered dividing it among multiple states. However, the Monarchy firmly maintained that the Duchy itself had no independent claims.⁸³⁰ Just days later, on 2nd November, Metternich sent a note to Prussian Chancellor Hardenberg, presenting Austria's position as one of moderation and concern for European stability. He framed Austria as a reluctant participant in the Partitions, claiming it had resisted them „until the last moment“ and had

⁸²⁹ Bericht an Außenminister Metternich, 20.09.1814. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 2 Galizien: Korrespondenz der Staatskanzlei mit dem galizischen Landesgubernium, 1813–1863, 215–218.

⁸³⁰ Protokoll der am 31ten Oktober 1814 abgehaltenen Kommission in Betreff der Österreichischen Forderungen an Westgalizien und den abgetretenen Theile von Ostgalizien, 31.10.1814. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Provinzen, Galizien 5 Galizien Varia (dabei: Korrespondenz mit polnischen Magnaten 1806–1829), 1754–1829, 17–25.

no fundamental objection to Poland's reappearance on the map, as long as it was truly independent and free from foreign influence. This statement was clearly little more than a diplomatic fiction. Metternich knew that a genuinely independent Poland was unrealistic under the existing power dynamics, particularly given Russian ambitions. His alternative proposals were carefully calculated: he suggested restoring Poland within the borders existing before the Second Partition of the *Rzeczpospolita*, a move that would not significantly impact Austria since West Galicia was already lost. If that proved unrealistic, he proposed partitioning the Duchy of Warsaw along the Vistula River, with Warsaw falling under Russian control and Toruń going to Prussia. Thus, while willing to concede some territories, the Habsburg Empire aimed to control historical narratives and prevent the emergence of a strong Polish state. This was evident in its insistence that, even if Russia created a „Kingdom of Poland“, Austria would retain the right to call its own former Polish-Lithuanian territories the „Southern Kingdom of Poland“.⁸³¹ By fragmenting Polish identity and undermining Russia's exclusive claim to Poland's historical legacy, Austria sought to ensure that no single power could monopolize Polish political aspirations.

Alexander remained stubborn in his initial strategy, and the negotiations reached a dead end many times. A complex system of backroom coalitions between various participants in the negotiations, the composition of which was constantly changing as no party wanted to give the others too much power, did not contribute to finding a compromise. At some point in December 1814 Alexander decided to demonstrate the seriousness of his intentions and resort to the threat of force. Beginning from April 1814, czar coordinated the creation of the army units on the former territory of the Duchy of Warsaw, which engaged Polish soldiers and officers of the Napoleonic army coming back from the European battlefields, under the command of his younger brother, Grand Duke Constantin. On 11th December, an order signed by Constantin was issued, in which the yet unnamed units were commanded to

„gather around your banners, arm yourself to defend your motherland and maintain your political existence. While this great monarch is preparing a happy future for your country, be ready to support his

⁸³¹ Bartoszewicz, *Utworzenie Królestwa Kongresowego*, 112f.

noble intentions at the cost of your blood. The same commanders who have guided you here on the road to glory for 20 years are able to turn you back to it“.⁸³²

Constantin promised the Poles, that their courage would not be unrewarded, and, through fighting for the Russian emperor and granting him their unreserved obedience, they would finally achieve freedom and glory for Poland. Once again, the Poles were asked to shed their blood for a foreign empire, with promises of national glory serving as little more than a rhetorical tool to secure their loyalty while keeping true sovereignty out of reach.

The order of 11th December 1814 could have ignited a new large-scale conflict in Europe, with Poland once again reduced to a battleground for imperial ambitions. However, after two decades of devastating wars, none of the great powers were willing to launch another campaign over Polish lands. For Alexander, the order was primarily a propaganda tool – an opportunity to posture as Poland’s patron, rally the *szlachta*’s support, and escalate pressure in Vienna. The decision to issue it under Constantin’s name was a calculated move: if the proclamation alarmed other delegations, the czar could feign distance, blame his brother for overreach, and reassert his vision for Poland, hoping that this veiled threat would force more favorable concessions.⁸³³ Alexander’s bold maneuver had the intended effect, accelerating diplomatic efforts to resolve the Polish question. The first move came from British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh, who, on 13th January 1815, issued a circular note outlining Britain’s stance. While Britain had initially supported the idea of an independent Poland under a separate dynasty as a buffer state between the three empires, it now accepted that such a solution was unrealistic. Instead, Castlereagh advocated for a „congenial and conciliatory system of administration“ across all former Polish territories, signaling a reluctant endorsement of Alexander’s project, that is, a Kingdom of Poland in personal union with Russia. At the same time, Britain insisted that Poles in all three partitioning states retain rights and freedoms that would allow them to sustain their national identity. This reflected an emerging recognition among Western powers that attempts to erase Polish culture had repeatedly failed.⁸³⁴ Yet,

⁸³² Cited after: *Zamorski*, Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku, 189.

⁸³³ *Ibid*, 190.

⁸³⁴ Charles K *Webster*, *British Diplomacy: 1813–1815; Select Documents Dealing with the Reconstruction of Europe* (London 1921) 287f.

such gestures toward Polish autonomy were ultimately superficial; Poland's fate remained a matter of imperial negotiation, its people caught in the familiar colonial dynamic of being ruled, restructured, and bargained over without genuine self-determination.

The answers of both Russian and Prussian delegations to the note of Lord Castlereagh came into existence already by the end of January. The Russians had predictably agreed with the text of the document, claiming that the British Foreign Secretary had voiced the long-time intentions of Russian policymakers. Since it was clearly impossible to rebuild a fully independent Polish state, Alexander was ready to suggest his Polish subjects the next best thing, namely the relationship of mutual trust based on the completely peaceful intentions of the czar. The Prussians agreed with the general content of the document as well, however, von Hardenberg insisted that the „legitimate wishes of the Polish nation should be fulfilled, as long as they do not contradict the intentions of every state to fully integrate its different parts“, thus creating a loophole for every policy concerning Polish territories in partitioning powers.⁸³⁵

The Habsburg government delayed its response to the note, seeking to maintain its diplomatic standing and prevent Russia from emerging as the undisputed victor. Only on 21st February, after most delegations had reached a principal agreement and some had already left Vienna, did Prince Metternich finally present Austria's official stance on the „Polish question“. He declared that emperor Franz I not only supported the reestablishment of an independent Kingdom of Poland but was even willing to make sacrifices to achieve it. Austria, he claimed, had never viewed an independent Poland as a threat – on the contrary, its policies toward the *Rzeczpospolita* before 1772 demonstrated nothing but goodwill. The Empire's participation in the partitions, according to Metternich, had been nothing more than an unfortunate coincidence, entirely beyond the dynasty's control. This strategic reframing of history allowed Austria to present itself as a benevolent and principled ruler rather than a participant in imperial plunder, once again justifying colonial rule and all the Habsburg policies applied to Galicia and its *szlachta* since the First Partition. Metternich aligned Austria with the liberal rhetoric of Castlereagh and Alexander, signaling a reluctant acceptance of the emerging peace terms while ensuring Austria's interests remained intact. Crucially, the

⁸³⁵ Hahn, Die Polenbestimmungen der Wiener Schlussakte, 88.

note also addressed the fate of Poles under Habsburg rule, emphasizing the emperor's „fatherly intentions“ toward his Galician subjects and his commitment to their welfare. This paternalistic discourse not only legitimized Austrian rule but also reinforced the idea that Galicia had no viable alternative to Habsburg sovereignty. By promising „institutions consistent with their national spirit“, Austria sought to placate the local *szlachta* while subtly co-opting their identity into the imperial framework. The message was clear: Galicia's future lay not in Polish sovereignty but in the enlightened guidance of Vienna, where even the nobility's privileges and cultural heritage could partially be preserved, as long as they remained within the boundaries of Austrian centralized rule.⁸³⁶

This way, by the end of February the general conditions of the peace treaties were already confirmed, but their signing was postponed by the Napoleon's escape from Elba on 1st March 1815 and beginning of the Hundred Days campaign. On 3rd May 1815, exactly 24 years after the adoption of the Polish-Lithuanian „enlightened“ constitution (a date that may not have been chosen by chance), two treaties were signed between the three partitioning powers, establishing the status of the Polish lands for the coming decades. First and foremost, they concerned territorial changes. The Duchy of Warsaw had definitely ceased to be, its territories were divided between the three states. The Kingdom of Prussia received the western parts of the Duchy, which it incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Posen, as well as the lands of Chełmno, Michałow and Toruń. Austria got back the Tarnopol district, while the former West Galicia were left out of its jurisdiction. A separate article confirmed the right of the Habsburg Monarchy to the Wieliczka salt mine and the profits it brought. Russia kept the Białystok region it received after Tilsit peace treaty in 1807. A significant portion of the treaty texts focused on the future coexistence of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories across different state borders, particularly addressing the organization of trade and transport between them, ensuring free communication between Polish subjects under different monarchies, and the unresolved issue of *sujets mixtes*.⁸³⁷ In accordance with the correspondence exchange in January-February, the Poles in all three partitioning states were promised representation bodies and institutions to fulfill their national aspirations. However, the direct wording of this formulation was vague and rather unbinding, leaving to the individual governments

⁸³⁶ Bartoszewicz, *Utworzenie Królestwa Kongresowego*, 127.

⁸³⁷ See: *Resultate des Wiener Congresses in Bezug auf Polen* (Neu-Ruppin 1831) 10–21.

to decide which exact institutions they were to establish and which competences they were to be given.⁸³⁸

The status of Kraków became a separate matter in the peace settlement. As a former capital of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its strategic importance made it too valuable to simply hand over to one of the partitioning powers. Initially, czar Alexander sought to incorporate Kraków into the future Kingdom of Poland, but this met strong resistance.⁸³⁹ Given that Russia already controlled Warsaw and Wilno, allowing it to gain a third capital city would have been excessive.⁸⁴⁰ A compromise created the Republic of Kraków, a neutral zone of about 1200 sq km and 95,000 residents. Austria, Prussia, and Russia agreed to this formation under a treaty that prohibited any of them from stationing military forces in Kraków. The three powers were designated as „guardian states“, with the right to appoint representatives to governmental positions regardless of property or education qualifications.⁸⁴¹ A committee composed of representatives from the three states oversaw the formation of the city’s government, where Kraków citizens only had advisory votes.⁸⁴² The Constitution, progressive for its time, guaranteed legal equality, personal freedom for peasants, an elected parliament, and freedom of the press. While Catholicism was the state religion, all Christian denominations were granted equal rights.

Despite the official equality among the partitioning powers, Austria had the most direct influence. As the closest power to Kraków, it was granted the right to establish a free trade zone in the town of Podgorze,⁸⁴³ facilitating trade between Kraków and Galicia, thereby integrating Kraków into the Habsburg economic system. The treaty also reflected a colonial view of the Poles’ „civilizational development“. Notably, Article XV stipulated that Polish students from other territories could only study at the Kraków Academy (later

⁸³⁸ *Hahn*, Die Polenbestimmungen der Wiener Schlussakte, 93.

⁸³⁹ *Fournier*, Zur Geschichte der polnischen Frage, 461.

⁸⁴⁰ Leszek *Kuk*, Die Bestimmungen des Wiener Kongresses hinsichtlich Polens vor dem Hintergrund der polnischen Frage im 19. Jahrhundert (1795–1918). In: Bogusław *Dybaś* (ed.), Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815 (Wien 2021) 133–158, here 143f.

⁸⁴¹ Tadeusz *Kołodziejczyk*, Małgorzata *Pomianowska* (eds.), *Konstytucje w Polsce: 1791–1990* (Constitutions in Poland: 1791–1990) (Warszawa 1990) 63–68.

⁸⁴² Traktat dodatkowy dotyczący się Miasta Krakowa, jego okręgu i Konstytucji, między dworami Rosyjskim, Austriackim i Pruskim, 03.05.1815. In: Ossolineum, *Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Druki galicyjskie z lat 1792–1884* (uchwały i sprawozdania sejmowe, statuty, obwieszczenia, listy otwarte, gazety i in.) (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Galician printed materials from the years 1792–1884 (sejm resolutions and reports, statutes, proclamations, open letters, newspapers, etc.).

⁸⁴³ *Ibid*, Artykuł III.

renamed the Jagiellonian University in 1817) once it had reached a level of development deemed appropriate by the ruling powers.⁸⁴⁴ This condescending stipulation reinforced the partitioning powers' control over the region, portraying their rule as both benevolent and necessary for the „advancement“ of the Polish people.

From the outset, the „Free and Independent Republic of Kraków“ was never truly free nor independent, but a fragile construct shaped by the colonial ambitions of the partitioning powers. Despite its declared „strict neutrality“, this status proved hollow when Russian troops occupied the city during the November Uprising of 1831, staying for two months and disregarding the supposed sovereignty of this newly formed entity. The constitutional rights of Kraków's inhabitants were continuously at the mercy of the „guardian states“, and the city's legislation was repeatedly modified to tighten the reins of control, further limiting the already constrained freedoms. The Republic of Kraków was conceived not as a sovereign entity, but as a buffer zone – a colonial compromise born from the interests of the partitioning powers, a space where the will of the local population had little effect. Because of that, there should be no wonder that its lifespan amounted to only three decades, and in 1846 after the unsuccessful Kraków Uprising it was reincorporated into the Habsburg Monarchy.⁸⁴⁵

The resolution of the „Polish question“ following the Napoleonic wars culminated in the creation of the Kingdom of Poland, which incorporated two-thirds of the territories of the Duchy of Warsaw. This new kingdom, forged through a compromise with Austria and Prussia, excluded the territories already controlled by Russia as a result of the partitions, which was an effort to maintain a semblance of „balance of power“ between the states, as stipulated in the 3rd of May treaties. However, the Kingdom was bound to Russia in a personal union, allowing the czar to add „King of Poland“ to his already extensive list of titles.⁸⁴⁶

Shortly after the Congress, Alexander I granted the Kingdom a liberal Constitution, designed to mirror the 3rd of May Constitution and framed as „the main and holiest tie that will completely and for all eternity connect this Kingdom with the Russian

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, Artykuł XV.

⁸⁴⁵ Łukasz Tomasz *Sroka*, *Wolne czy zależne Miasto Kraków?* (Free or dependent City of Kraków?) In: Piotr *Hapanowicz*, Mariusz *Jabłoński* (eds.) *Wolne Miasto Kraków 1815–1846* (The Free City of Kraków 1815–1846) (Kraków 2015) 17–24, here 20.

⁸⁴⁶ *Zamorski*, *Polska od 1807 do 1815 roku*, 192f.

state“.⁸⁴⁷ While it promised significant rights and privileges to the Polish population (not extended to the Russian subjects for decades), the Constitution was a concession to the Russian imperial power, not an affirmation of Polish autonomy. Among its promises were religious tolerance, freedom of speech, and the use of the Polish language in all public administration, as well as the establishment of an autonomous legislative body (the Sejm), an independent army, currency, budget, penal code, and a customs boundary. The creation of the Sejm was a nod to the republican traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, an intentional move to win the support of the local *szlachta*, who were deeply invested in their historical rights to self-governance.

However, despite this symbolic gesture, the Sejm had limited power. While it was ostensibly independent, its authority was almost entirely contingent on the czar's approval. The monarch retained control over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and no act of the Sejm had force of law without his signature. To manage the Kingdom directly, in Article 5 the czar appointed a Viceroy (*Namiestnik*), who resided in Warsaw and controlled every major aspect of the Kingdom's internal politics through his positions in the Council of State and the Administration Council. Foreign policy was entirely subordinated to the czar's will: as per Article 8 of the Constitution, the Kingdom's external relations were to align with those of the Russian Empire, and it was forbidden from participating in wars, negotiations, or treaties without St. Petersburg's approval.⁸⁴⁸ In practice, the Kingdom of Poland functioned largely as a puppet state under Russian supervision, especially in foreign policy, with its legal norms carrying weight only insofar as they conformed to the czar's will. The Kingdom's supposed autonomy thus was yet another colonial construct, designed to appease the international community while ensuring the continuation of imperial control.

The results of the Congress caused mixed feelings among the inhabitants of the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories. Initially, the creation of the Kingdom of Poland was met with joy and enthusiasm, as it was believed to be the beginning of rebuilding the „truly“ sovereign Polish state.⁸⁴⁹ However, many were disappointed with the limited

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, 208.

⁸⁴⁸ *Kołodziejczyk, Pomianowska*, Konstytucje w Polsce, 48-56.

⁸⁴⁹ Jarosław Czuby, Der Wiener Kongress: Die Neuauftellung Polens unter den drei Großmächten. In: Michael G. Müller (ed.), Polen in der europäischen Geschichte: ein Handbuch in vier Bänden. Band 3, Die polnisch-litauischen Länder unter der Herrschaft der Teilungsmächte (1772/1795–1914) (Stuttgart 2018) 129–141, here 140.

territorial scope of the new state formation. There existed apprehensions that the Poles would revolt against giving Greater Poland territories back to Prussia.⁸⁵⁰ Although it did not happen eventually, many inhabitants of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, among them the representatives of nobility, could not accept that the Kingdom of Poland did not include Kraków and its surroundings, or that the Russian czar did not include the Polish lands his empire possessed after the three Partitions into the Kingdom. Throughout the next few years, they would gradually become even more disappointed in the personal union with the Russian Empire and Alexander's ruling, once it became clear that all the constitutional rights and freedoms guaranteed to the Kingdom were but a thin screen designed to disguise Russian autocracy and legitimize Russian rule on Polish lands after the Napoleonic wars.⁸⁵¹ Eventually, the events of Vienna Congress received an unofficial title of the „Fourth Partition of Poland“ in Polish nationalistic narratives, and partially even in historiography of subsequent centuries.⁸⁵² The assertion of foreign rule on the former *Rzeczpospolita* territories had a much greater impact on the next century of both Polish history and the system of international relations in Europe than the creation of quasi-sovereign states which virtually ceased to exist in the next few decades. The Congress had not only reshaped territorial borders but also reinforced a system in which former Polish-Lithuanian lands remained subordinate to imperial interests, their governance dictated by external powers rather than local will.

For the Habsburg Monarchy, the results of the Vienna Congress were rather satisfying. It cemented Austria's role as one of the major European powers through creation of the Holy Alliance, it reaffirmed Habsburg control over Hereditary Lands, temporarily disrupted during the wars, and established a balance of powers on the continent without empowering any of the states to an unlimited extent. Regarding Galicia, the Habsburg Monarchy could consider its main objectives at the Congress achieved. Although it did not recover all the territories lost in 1809, it secured the establishment of an international framework that prevented any of the partitioning powers from encroaching on each other's holdings. After reaching the compromise with Russia, Austria could be sure that the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria would be secure from

⁸⁵⁰ Michał *Baczkowski*, *Sprawa Polska na Kongresie Wiedeńskim (1814–1815)* (The Polish Question at the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815)). In: Piotr *Hapanowicz*, Mariusz *Jabłoński* (eds.) *Wolne Miasto Kraków 1815–1846* (The Free City of Kraków 1815–1846) (Kraków 2015) 8–16, here 16.

⁸⁵¹ *Zajewski*, *Sprawa Polska*, 42. See also: *Gill*, *Freiheitskämpfe der Polen*, 66–68.

⁸⁵² Robert *Bideleux*, Ian *Jeffries*, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London 1998) 168.

the hostile direct influences from outside. The events of 1815 guaranteed outer peace for the crownland, which lasted for nearly a century and was disrupted only on the eve of World War I.⁸⁵³ Now, once the war was over, and its results were fixed in mutually recognized treaties, the Habsburg Empire could safely return to its „pacifying“ inner politics and once again attempt to bring the Galician *szlachta* to loyalty.

3. A Delicate Balance: Habsburg Concessions to the Galician *Szlachta* (1815–1817).

The 1815 peace treaties might have secured the Habsburg Empire from external threats to stability in Galicia, but not the internal ones. While Vienna managed to curb Russian ambitions of „gathering Polish lands“, and the Kingdom of Poland turned out to be far less attractive to the *szlachta* than it initially seemed, the Monarchy could not be entirely certain of the loyalty of the Galician nobility. Decades of groundbreaking reforms and strict police measures had not turned the *szlachta* into „model subjects“ of the Empire, nor had they made Galicia a perfect example of Habsburg governance. It was clear that the Galician nobility would be very unlikely to rise up against the Empire on their own – historically, they had always needed an impulse from outside to take action against the Habsburgs. However, for the long-term stability of the Monarchy, it was essential to ensure that, the next time such an impulse emerged, the *szlachta* would not be as willing to follow it as they had been during the Napoleonic wars. Even in 1816, Provincial President von Hauer described Galicia as „hard to manage“,⁸⁵⁴ acknowledging that the crownland still carried a potential for unrest. To address this, the Habsburg Monarchy needed a different strategy – one that no longer sought to reshape the identity of the Galician nobility entirely, but rather to reach a compromise with it, granting room for at least some of its ambitions in exchange for principal loyalty to the throne.

The principles of this new strategy were first suggested by the Governor von Goëss shortly before his resignation in April 1815. In the past, he had already criticized oppressive wartime policies of Habsburgs towards Galician nobility – since they did not bring the awaited results, it was time to demonstrate the *szlachta* some mildness instead.

⁸⁵³ Kuk, Die Bestimmungen des Wiener Kongresses, 147.

⁸⁵⁴ Franz Freiherr von Hauer an Kaiser Franz I, 08.02.1816. In: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Kabinettsarchiv, Kaiser-Franz-Akten, Ktn. 88, No.6, 125–129, here 125.

The goal of the Empire should be not to turn the Galician nobility into „Germans“, as it would only cause further hostilities between the *szlachta* and the Monarchy, but rather „to make them into real Galicians“. ⁸⁵⁵ Once again, the Empire in person of the Galician Governor suggested the creation of an artificial identity which would be useful for its colonization purposes. Being „Galician“ meant „to stop regard themselves as Poles“, that is, to disregard the national or ethnic identity already existing for centuries and to replace it with the allegiance to the territory of residence, and through it – towards the entire Monarchy that now ruled the Kingdom. ⁸⁵⁶ Rather than attempting outright assimilation, the Empire thus sought to fragment existing national identities, introducing an alternative that would be more politically convenient. By fostering a sense of belonging that was detached from the *Rzeczpospolita* historical and political traditions, Vienna aimed to weaken any potential for broader resistance and ensure that the Galician *szlachta* remained a loyal and stable group. ⁸⁵⁷ Von Goëss and Metternich, who made the Governor’s plan known to the emperor, saw this as a prerequisite for the central government to gradually achieve its end goal and bring the *szlachta* to loyalty. The *szlachta*, stripped of its traditional political and cultural reference points, would become dependent on the Habsburg system for status and privileges. In this sense, the construction of a „Galician“ identity was an essential tool of colonial governance, designed to transform the local elite into willing participants in the imperial project.

According to von Goëss, the most crucial step in this strategy was to guarantee the Galician *szlachta* political representation. Even the preliminary approval of the Estate Constitution – which was to serve as the foundation for the new relationship between Vienna and Lviv – would help solidify the authority of the central government in the crownland. Adam Jerzy Czartoryski later testified that Metternich had already spoken of granting a Constitution to the Galician *szlachta* during the final stage of the Vienna Congress and that the emperor had, in principle, approved the idea. ⁸⁵⁸ The Austrian Chancellor proposed that the announcement of the Constitution’s adoption in Galicia should closely follow the publication of the treaties among the three partitioning powers concerning the dissolution of the Duchy of Warsaw and the establishment of new state

⁸⁵⁵ Arthur G. Haas, *Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 1813–1818: A Story of Foresight and Frustration in the Rebuilding of the Austrian Empire* (Wiesbaden 1963) 167.

⁸⁵⁶ *Vushko*, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat*, 101. See also: *Maner*, *Zwischen „Kompensationsobjekt“*, 113f.

⁸⁵⁷ See: *Lane*, *The Galician Nobility*, 160.

⁸⁵⁸ *Hahn*, *Die Polenbestimmungen der Wiener Schlussakte*, 89.

borders.⁸⁵⁹ Since the peace treaties were expected to include provisions guaranteeing Poles certain rights of national representation, the timely proclamation of plans to restore the Galician Noble Estates was meant to preemptively secure the crownland from potential discontent among the *szlachta*. Beyond political concessions, von Goëss also recommended providing the local nobility with greater access to high-ranking positions in the local administration. To promote the prosperity of the land and its inhabitants, he advised expanding Galicia's trade relations, facilitating the sale of goods produced by local manufacturers, and alleviating economic burdens on the crownland's poorest residents. Those who had left the country without permission in 1805–1807 (presumably to join enemy forces during the war) should, he suggested, be pardoned. Finally, von Goëss proposed that the emperor himself should „honor the land with His Highest Presence“ once time and circumstances allowed. If these measures were successfully implemented, he argued, the Galicians would „have no reason to regard themselves as neglected“ and would be reassured of the emperor's „paternal care, kindness, and gentleness“ in return for their „devotion and loyalty“.⁸⁶⁰ The rhetoric of benevolent imperial rule, steeped in paternalism, framed these concessions not as acknowledgments of the *szlachta*'s rights but as gestures of imperial grace, rewards for obedience rather than guarantees of autonomy. In reality, the strategy aimed to neutralize nationalist sentiment by providing just enough political inclusion to prevent unrest while ensuring that ultimate power remained firmly in the hands of the Habsburg administration.

The appeals of von Goëss and Metternich were favorably received by the emperor and his government. However, nearly two years of preparation and official correspondence were required before, on 13th April 1817, Franz I issued a patent granting the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria a new Estate Constitution. The final result of the government's efforts deviated significantly from von Goëss's original proposals – rather than adapting the Constitution to the specific circumstances of Galicia and the aspirations of its *szlachta*, the emperor instead chose to bring Galicia into alignment with the rest of the Empire. This move placed the Galician elites in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they were granted the same privileges as the nobility in other Habsburg lands, reinforcing their integration into the Monarchy. On the other, they received no special

⁸⁵⁹ Haas, Metternich, Reorganization and Nationality, 168.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid, 169.

status that would distinguish them from the aristocracy of the Hereditary Lands. The 1817 patent thus not only bound Galicia more tightly to the Empire but also extinguished any remaining hope of its political separation – an assertion of imperial dominance that even Joseph II had hesitated to make in his time.⁸⁶¹

At its core, the new Estate Constitution did not differ substantially from the similar document issued in 1782. Its most notable change was the introduction of a fourth estate, the clergy, which – together with the magnates, the knights, and the citizens of the royal cities (at first, only Lviv) – was now granted the right to send representatives to the Estates. The qualifications for the *szlachta* members to participate in the assembly remained unchanged, including the requirement of an annual tax payment of 75 Gulden. Still, meeting the financial criteria did not guarantee membership – each candidate had to undergo a formal vetting process, allowing authorities to check his background thoroughly.⁸⁶² In terms of function, the Estates were permitted to discuss „all matters which concern the well-being of these kingdoms, the estates themselves, or an individual estate“. ⁸⁶³ Yet, as before, it remained devoid of independent legislative power, serving only as an advisory body to the Governorate. Nonetheless, some modifications were introduced compared to the 1782 framework. The Galician Estates gained the right to submit proposals and legislative initiatives of their own to the Governorate and the highest Habsburg officials in the crownland, rather than merely responding to government proposals on behalf of their social class. The patent also outlined specific areas in which the Estates held particular authority, including

„the evidence management and reparation of the taxes laid on the ground and the related services according to the principles which were set by Us and are to be set in the future, the administration of the military quarters contribution and the state dominical fund, the granting of the *indygenat*, the employment of the estate officials, the proposals for the foundations reserved for the Kingdom and designated by special ordinances, and the keeping of records of the nobility“.⁸⁶⁴

⁸⁶¹ Stanisław *Starzyński*, Kilka słów o Stanach Galicyjskich (A few words about the Galician Estates). In: *Kwartalnik Historyczny*: Organ Towarzystwa Historycznego 20, No. 1–2 (1906) 166–224, here 173.

⁸⁶² Miloš *Řezník*, Der Wiener Kongress und seine Folgen für die habsburgische Politik in Galizien: Ständische Verfassung und Elitenpolitik. In: Bogusław *Dybaś* (ed.), *Die polnische Frage und der Wiener Kongress 1814–1815* (Wien 2021) 107–132, here 114.

⁸⁶³ Patent von 13. April, die Ständische Verfassung der Königreiche Galizien und Lodomerien betreffend. In: Karl Heinrich Ludwig *Pölitz* (ed.) *Die Europäischen Verfassungen seit dem Jahre 1789 bis auf die neueste Zeit* (Leipzig ²1833) 55–58, here 56.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

At the same time, restrictions were placed on direct communication between the Estates and Viennese authorities. Members were only permitted to address the emperor through the mediation of the Governor and could not send deputations to Vienna without formal permission.⁸⁶⁵ This ensured that, while the Estates had a structured voice within Galicia, their ability to influence imperial policy remained tightly controlled. Perhaps the most symbolic element of Galicia's deeper incorporation into the Monarchy was introduced through the patent's regulation of the *Estates* members' uniform. Deputies were required to wear a uniform in the colors of the Kingdom's coat of arms (black, red, and blue), which was a striking departure from the traditional *Rzeczpospolita's* red and white heraldic. The uniform visually distanced Galician nobility from their heritage and granted them a mark of status within the imperial hierarchy. While it did not confer additional power or material benefits, it nonetheless reinforced the perception of those wearing it as a privileged, imperial-loyal class. Indeed, in the early years of the Estates, its members – already among the most Habsburg-aligned segments of Galician society – wore the uniform with pride, embracing this carefully constructed identity even as their political influence remained limited.⁸⁶⁶ In effect, the Estate Constitution functioned as yet another instrument of colonial governance, carefully balancing the illusion of inclusion with strict imperial oversight. The Habsburgs did not seek to eradicate the Galician nobility but to reconfigure its identity, that is, to cultivate a local elite whose privileges and status were directly tied to loyalty to the Empire rather than to any lingering attachment to the Polish-Lithuanian past.

The reintroduction of the Galician Noble Estates did not bring significant changes to the political structure of the crownland. The *szlachta* retained largely symbolic authority, with little influence over decision-making processes, and could not regain the dominant role they had prior to 1772. The primary purpose of the Estates was to signal the Monarchy's trust in the *szlachta* in exchange for their loyalty.⁸⁶⁷ The emperor and his officials never considered the *szlachta's* opinions before introducing the new constitution.⁸⁶⁸ However, the 1817 patent did improve the competencies of the Estates

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid, 57.

⁸⁶⁶ *Řezník*, Der Wiener Kongress und seine Folgen, 116f.

⁸⁶⁷ *Malecki*, Wydział Krajowy, 36.

⁸⁶⁸ Bronisław *Łoziński*, *Galicyjski Sejm Stanowy, 1817–1845* (The Galician Noble Estates, 1817–1845) (Lwów 1905) 18.

compared to the Josephinian regulation. For the younger generation, it provided their first experience with estate representation, and many hoped it would lead to increased privileges over time. The 13th April patent thus provided the *szlachta* with a legitimate „voice“ in governance, met with cautious optimism.⁸⁶⁹ It overlooked, however, a significant issue, that is the language of the proceedings. On 9th March 1817, Governor Joseph von Hauer suggested that the *szlachta* use Polish for debates and internal communication, while German would be reserved for correspondence with the central government. Von Ugarte rejected this idea, insisting on the use of Latin or German for internal matters. Von Hauer argued that ignoring the local *szlachta*'s preference would undermine the Estates' legitimacy and alienate them from the government, recalling the Italian provinces, where Italian was used in administration despite their subordinate status. He proposed a temporary elevation of Polish to secure loyalty, hoping that over time, the policy would become entrenched. While there was no official response, the development of events aligned with von Hauer's suggestion. Up until the 1840s, Polish remained the internal language of the Estates, while German was used for external communication.⁸⁷⁰ This concession by the imperial government, though symbolic, highlighted the Habsburgs' strategy of maintaining hierarchical structures and controlling local elites through the integration of national symbols, like language, as a colonial tool to reinforce loyalty and suppress rebellion. This approach allowed the Galician *szlachta* to achieve minimal, yet meaningful, progress in their national aspirations, demonstrating the Habsburgs' attempt to balance colonial hierarchy with local accommodation.

As was customary in the Habsburg Empire, the inauguration of the Galician Noble Estates in June 1817 was marked by festive ceremonies and acts of propaganda. On 16th June 1816, after a solemn mass in the Lviv Cathedral, the first session of the Estates commenced with the emperor's address. Franz I welcomed the estate parliament members, praising their „nobleness“ and „loyalty to Us“, and emphasized that the return of estate representation was made possible by the end of the Napoleonic wars and the establishment of lasting peace and stability. The emperor also outlined the specific procedures for the Estates, notably emphasizing that the central part of the session hall would be occupied by the throne, „under baldachin“, with his portrait displayed,

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁸⁷⁰ *Řezník*, Der Wiener Kongress und seine Folgen, 117.

reinforcing the idea that monarchical power would always take precedence over parliamentary decisions. This ceremonial symbolism underlined the hierarchical relationship between the emperor and the *szlachta*, and the broader theme of imperial authority over local governance. Furthermore, the Governor's address confirmed that members needed the „approval of the President“⁸⁷¹ – the governor himself – before presenting any proposals or initiatives, further cementing the centralization of power. The inauguration ceremony also featured speeches from key officials. Notably, Primate Andrzej Alojzy Ankiewicz and Estates' Commissioner Count Kazimierz Rzewuski made remarks that reflect the views of local loyal elites towards the Habsburg reforms. Ankiewicz described the reintroduction of estate representation and the „great privileges“ granted to the body as „invaluable establishment of the highest grace“,⁸⁷² a sentiment reflecting the *szlachta's* acceptance of the changes, albeit with a recognition of the limits of their newfound power. In contrast, Rzewuski, while praising the emperor, referred to the Estates as a „national assembly“ and subtly expressed hopes that further actions would follow to improve the condition of the *Natio Polonica* within the Monarchy.⁸⁷³ His words reminded both the Habsburg officials and the *szlachta* that, although the reestablishment of the Estates was a welcome step, it was not enough to meet the *szlachta's* broader political and social aspirations. Thus, the ceremony served not only as a display of imperial authority but also as a reminder of the *szlachta's* expectations for further concessions.

However, the reestablishment of the Galician estate representation was the only significant reform to the crownland administration introduced by the Habsburgs following the Vienna Congress. While there was a general shift in metropolitan politics toward less centralization and more attention to local needs in the crownlands, Galicia's situation highlighted the limitations of such symbolic concessions. Initially, Vienna considered establishing a separate position of Galician Chancellor within the Viennese Court, a suggestion put forward by Prince Dietrichstein, the Court Commissioner for Galicia until 1815. However, this idea was soon abandoned, and Galicia's affairs were instead overseen by the United Court Chancellery, along with those of Bohemia, Moravia,

⁸⁷¹ Łoziński, *Galicyjski Sejm Stanowy*, 26f.

⁸⁷² *Ibid*, 4.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid*, 28.

and Silesia. By maintaining this arrangement, the central government chose not to elevate Galicia's status, instead keeping it within the broader context of the other crownlands.⁸⁷⁴

In matters of cultural politics, however, the strategies of the Habsburg government in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria were more lenient. The years following the Vienna Congress witnessed „something of a Polish renaissance in the province“.⁸⁷⁵ While the measures introduced could not satisfy all the needs of the active members of the *szlachta*, they provided an outlet for at least some of the aspirations and expressions of Polish culture. This leniency can be understood as a strategic move by the Habsburg authorities – by allowing a controlled revival of Polish identity in cultural matters, they aimed to maintain stability and appease local elites without compromising their political dominance over the crownland. In this way, Galicia remained firmly under imperial rule, yet culturally, it experienced a degree of revival within limits set by Vienna.

It could be argued that the post-Napoleonic period in Galicia saw the emergence of „land patriotism“ among the Galician *szlachta*. Devoid of radical political ambitions, this type of patriotism was first and foremost aimed at preserving and nourishing the cultural component of national identity in individual Habsburg crownlands.⁸⁷⁶ In 1816, the first literary periodical in Polish language, *Pamiętnik Lwowski*, was issued by Karol Łopuszański and Adam Chłędowski. Despite its short lifetime (till 1819), it left a notable trace in the history of Galician culture and contributed to preservation of Polish language in the Kingdom, as well as to the integration of Galicia into the all-European literary processes. In 1817, the University in Lviv was reopened after 12 years of being demoted to the status of a Lyceum. Since the university in Kraków was out of reach for the Habsburgs now, the Monarchy needed a major establishment in the crownland to continue spreading its influence through higher education. To underline the special adherence of the Empire, the university now bore the name of the emperor Franz. Officially, reopening of the university was proclaimed to be „the act of mercy“ from Vienna, in practice, however, its main task was to counterbalance possible hostile cultural influences from Russian side. For the next decades, the university focused on educating future local

⁸⁷⁴ *Řezník*, Der Wiener Kongress und seine Folgen, 126f. See also: *Maner*, Galizien: eine Grenzregion, 63.

⁸⁷⁵ *Vushko*, The Politics of Cultural Retreat, 101.

⁸⁷⁶ *Fillafer*, Aufklärung Habsburgisch, 30f.

officials. At first, German was the sole language of instruction, in 1826, the chair of Polish language and literature was established at the university.⁸⁷⁷

Another area of concession to the Galician *szlachta* in cultural matters was the introduction of Polish as the primary language of instruction in rural schools instead of the Ruthenian/Ukrainian language in 1816. Even though the Ruthenians constituted the majority of the peasant population of the crownland, the Habsburg government stated the following:

„There can be no political reasons for an enlightened, liberal, and just government such as Austria’s to advise against instruction in Polish reading and writing in Galicia. It neither wishes nor intends to promote factionalism, and even if political considerations were to be taken into account, it would certainly be less advisable to spread the Ruthenian language instead of Polish, as Ruthenian is merely a variation of Russian.“⁸⁷⁸

The decision to promote Polish was thus framed as a choice aligned with the values of Enlightenment and rational governance. However, it also explicitly dismissed Ruthenian as unworthy of state support, not because of its lack of literary development or administrative use (as might be claimed elsewhere), but because it was seen as a mere „variation“ of Russian. This classification positioned Ruthenian as politically suspect – an echo of the Empire’s broader fear of Russian influence in the crownland. Crucially, this shift also marked a departure from the „colonized colonizers“ strategy the Habsburgs had previously employed toward the *szlachta*. In choosing to recognize *Natio Polonica* as Galicia’s primary cultural force, the Habsburgs largely abandoned efforts to weaken the *szlachta*’s cultural dominance there. This decision reinforced the Polish-Ruthenian hierarchy inherited from the *Rzeczpospolita*. By denying Ruthenian language state support, the Austrian authorities ensured that Galicia’s social and linguistic order remained largely unchanged: German functioned as the language of power and governance, Polish as the primary medium of local administration and cultural production, while Ruthenian was structurally marginalized. Positioning the *Natio Polonica* as the intermediary between German imperial rule and the Ruthenian population

⁸⁷⁷ Andrzej Chwalba, *Historia Polski: 1795–1918* (History of Poland: 1795–1918) (Kraków 2000) 197.

⁸⁷⁸ Bericht der galizischen Landesstelle an die höchste Hofkanzlei, 13.12.1816. Cited after: Jan Lewicki, *Ruch Rusinów w Galicji w pierwszej połowie wieku panowania Austrii 1772–1820* (The Ruthenian Movement in Galicia in the First Half of Austrian Rule, 1772–1820) (Lwów 1879) 24.

majority helped the Habsburgs to reinforce existing social structures while maintaining firm control over the crownland. According to Metternich, the recognition of the Galician *szlachta* as counterbalance to the potentially traitorous Ruthenian commoners would ensure the stability of the Habsburg government in the post-war Europe.⁸⁷⁹

The most notable symbol of the cautious cultural Renaissance in Galicia in the first postwar years was and remains without a doubt the Ossoliński National Institute (*Ossolineum*). Already in early 1790s, Count Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński established himself as a loyal Habsburg subject and an advocate of mutually beneficial compromise between Habsburgs and the Galician *szlachta*, first and foremost through his participation in creation and presentation of the *Charta Leopoldina* project. After spending the subsequent decades in Vienna serving the imperial government as a consultant on matters of education and knowledge preservation, at the end of his life he decided to serve his native crownland directly once more. Already in 1800, he expressed the idea of bequeathing his fortune to the future foundation of the Ossoliński family. This foundation was to be united with a library opened for every inhabitant of the crownland: „I would like to create a foundation for the land with the permission from the Court, to let the collection of works written by our ancestors reach their descendants“.⁸⁸⁰ At first, such a library was founded in Zamość under patronage of Stanisław Kostka Zamoyski in 1804 and received the approval of the emperor himself:

„Beloved Count Ossolinski! I confirmed with genuine satisfaction. given to me by my national authorities, the act of settlement, the subject of which is the establishment of a national library for Galicia, for such a glorious enterprise of yours, your noble way of thinking that shows and deserves the gratitude of the homeland, for your charitable efforts, I hereby give you my special satisfaction, wishing to expressly give to know how highly I value such activities“.⁸⁸¹

One might believe that these words were not merely the Habsburg praising one of the most loyal Galicians, but also a part of the 1809 desperate campaign to withhold Galicians from supporting the enemy during the war, which was discussed in detail in the

⁸⁷⁹ *Adadurov*, Halyts'ki rusyny, 59.

⁸⁸⁰ Cited after: Władysława *Jabłońska*, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński: Szkic biograficzny (Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński: A biographical sketch) (Wrocław 1967) 98.

⁸⁸¹ Obwieszczenie ze strony C.K. Galicyjskiego krajowego Gubernium (Announcement from the Imperial-Royal Galician Governorate). In: *Gazeta Krakowska*, Nr. 51 (25.06.1809) 655f.

previous chapter. While the library's establishment allowed for the preservation of Polish cultural heritage, it was shaped by imperial goals, serving both the intellectual needs of the Polish-speaking population and the Habsburgs' objectives of consolidation and loyalty. Its role as a cultural center simultaneously co-opted the Galician *szlachta*, preserving their identity in a way which would not threaten their subordinate position within the Empire. The library in Zamość failed, however, to fulfill those goals, as after the Schönbrunn peace negotiations the city was transferred to the Duchy of Warsaw.

Ossoliński's intention to create a public library in Galicia remained a priority after Napoleon's defeat and the stabilization of the region. In a letter dated 19th November 1815, he expressed his desire to „leave his legacy to his people“, hastened by his deteriorating health.⁸⁸² He sought the approval of emperor Franz I in an address from 18th October 1816, asking the emperor to show „how much Your Majesty, striving like a good father to improve its prosperity, favors foundations that could contribute to it“. This language of paternalism echoed the imperial framework within which the library would be established, with the Galician Estates given oversight, establishing a system of mutual responsibility between the local *szlachta* and the Viennese government. The library's profits were to be directed to the city treasury, while its privileged status exempted it from taxes.⁸⁸³ For the Habsburgs, the creation of the *Ossolineum* served as a symbolic gesture of care for the cultural needs of the *szlachta*, without offering a platform for potentially destabilizing movements. The library would be tool of imperial control, allowing the emperor to present himself as a benevolent ruler while consolidating his paternalistic authority. By approving the project, Franz I extended his „protectorate and protection“ over the library,⁸⁸⁴ reinforcing his role as a fatherly figure who shaped the development of the region, ensuring it aligned with the broader imperial goals and reinforcing the colonial hierarchy.

Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński could not see his creation come into life, as he died one year prior to its official opening, in 1826. Up to the very end of his life, he remained a loyal Habsburg subject and a firm believer in the possibility of mutually beneficial compromise between the Galician *szlachta* and the Viennese government. The

⁸⁸² *Jabłońska*, Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego, 220f.

⁸⁸³ Wilhelm *Bruchnalski* (ed.), *Zakładu Narodowego imienia Ossolińskich ustawy, przywileje i rzeczy dziejów jego dotyczące* (The Ossoliński National Institute's charters, privileges, and matters concerning its history) (Lwów 1928). 68.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 116–118.

Ossolineum, his main legacy, was supposed to be an important link in this connection. On 30th August 1817, the Count addressed a letter to Primas Ankwicz, thanking him for his support in establishing the library. In it, he expressed his gratitude that „our good monarch saw with his own eyes that our nation needed nothing but to see proofs of its good intentions and paternal tenderness, so that it would be inflamed with the liveliest attachment to him“. In Ossoliński's opinion, the establishment of the *Ossolineum* could serve as a good example for the future Habsburg actions in Galicia – „not violating nationality, but directing it to the side of the ruling house would be both a knot for Galicia and a lure for borderland inhabitants“. ⁸⁸⁵ Through the creation of the *Ossolineum*, Ossoliński sought to create a space where the cultural and intellectual life of the region could flourish under imperial supervision, while still maintaining elements of local identity and pride. His approach reflected the complex negotiation of colonial power, where subjugated former elites were offered a degree of cultural autonomy within the confines of imperial rule, leading to a sense of ownership and attachment to the ruling regime, even as their cultural practices were reshaped by it. In this sense, the *Ossolineum* was not just a cultural institution, but a symbol of the entangled relationship between imperial authority and local identity. For sure, the creation of the *Ossolineum* alone could not reframe the political structure of the crownland, but it provided Galician noble elites with an opportunity to freely preserve Polish national heritage and transfer it to new generations, while also holding back the Germanization activities of Vienna. ⁸⁸⁶ In subsequent decades, it even posed some threat to the stability of the Empire, as it sometimes attracted the radical elements of Galician society – in 1830s, the institution was closed for printing out and spreading the anti-governmental propaganda, and opened again fully only in 1848. ⁸⁸⁷ However, the primary mission of knowledge preservation and spreading remained at its core even at times of the strictest police measures. The brainchild of Ossoliński thus retained its significance until the very end of Habsburg administration in Galicia and remains one of the most important academic and cultural

⁸⁸⁵ *Jabłońska*, Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego, 253.

⁸⁸⁶ *Jabłońska*, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, 118.

⁸⁸⁷ *Kalendarium ossolińskie. Lata 1817–1853* (The Ossoliński Calendar. Years 1817–1853) In: *O Ossolineum. Ustawa, Statut, Historia ZniO* (About the Ossolineum. Charter, Statute, History of the ZniO), online under: <https://ossolineum.pl/index.php/aktualnosci/historia-znio/kalendarium-ossolinskie-okres-1951-1995-r/lata-1817-1953/> (retrieved 06.04.2023). See also: *Prokopowych*, Habsburg Lemberg, 135.

institutions in modern Poland, continuing its activities in Wrocław after the Soviet annexation of Eastern Galicia in 1945.

The new era in postwar Habsburg activities in Galicia was crowned by the emperor's visit in July 1817. It was anticipated that during his stay in Lviv Franz I would guarantee even more privileges to the Kingdom and its Estates, as well as to the nobility. However, no significant changes were introduced, aside from the incorporation of two „honorable and reputable“ Galicians into the Council of local government with the right to vote and advisory functions, and the awarding of a number of the Estates' members with imperial titles and orders.⁸⁸⁸ The visit was of great significance nonetheless, as it was the first time Franz I came to Galicia after his ascension to the throne. The first time he did that was while accompanying his uncle, Joseph II, in 1788, when the „civilizing“ discourse and the „necessity“ of groundbreaking transformations defined the entire agenda of Habsburg politics there. Now, after the disillusionment in Enlightened Absolutism practices, after years of war that devastated both the crownland and the entire Monarchy, after the reconfiguration of power centers on European continent, the visit of Franz I marked the beginning of new era. It was now clear that the primary concern of the Habsburg Empire was to keep itself secure from both the inner and outer threats. The strict police measures introduced in Galicia during the war led to a radicalization of anti-Austrian sentiment instead of pacifying the population, so their continuation did not seem to be a suitable solution. They did not seem necessary, too, as with the dissolution of the Duchy of Warsaw even the most potentially insurgent Galician *szlachta* lost the motivation to set their loyalty elsewhere in search of fulfilling their ambitions. The Viennese system of international relations eliminated the largest threats to Austrian dominion over its hereditary lands, which meant that the Russian influence over Galicia would not pose an issue, at least in foreseeable future. From now on, the Empire could afford to give Galicia and its nobility more space to fulfill their power and cultural ambitions, as long as their actions did not challenge the fundamental architecture of the Habsburg dominance. The suggestions of Metternich and von Goëss were followed – after the Napoleonic wars, the Monarchy finally and completely abandoned the idea of transforming the *szlachta* residing in Galicia into a mirror image of the Habsburgs' core subjects. While their status remained subordinate and the return of their „golden

⁸⁸⁸ Bartoszewicz, Dzieje Galicyi, 29f.

freedoms“ was no longer an option, their identity no longer posed a challenge to the Empire. With the dissolution of the Duchy of Warsaw, the *szlachta* lost their external support, diminishing their potential to disrupt imperial control. This way, the end of Napoleonic wars marked Galicia and its nobility finally becoming the part of the „mental map“ of the allegedly „civilized“ Austrian Empire, not because it met all previous expectations, but because those expectations had been significantly adjusted.

The visit of Emperor Franz I to Galicia in 1817 was both a symbolic assertion of Habsburg legitimacy and an opportunity to shape public perception of Austrian rule in the region. A key tool in this effort was a letter published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and later reprinted in *Hesperus*. Supposedly written by a Galician nobleman to a friend in Vienna, the letter, titled *Franz I. als Vater und Beglückter seiner lieben Polen*, praised the emperor as a benevolent ruler who had won the loyalty of his Galician subjects – an image that conveniently aligned with Vienna’s interests. For the Galician *szlachta*, this narrative was not entirely unfounded. After four decades under Habsburg rule, they had learned that resisting the Empire on their own was futile. Every significant attempt to challenge Vienna, from the Kościuszko Uprising to Napoleon’s Duchy of Warsaw, had relied on external forces. Left to themselves, the local nobility was too preoccupied with personal ambitions and social status to mount any serious opposition to the post-Partition order. Given this reality, the modest cultural and political concessions offered by the Austrian government, alongside guarantees of personal wealth and symbolic recognition of Polish cultural identity, were the most they could realistically hope for. Many accepted this arrangement, particularly since they believed further concessions might come in time. The Kingdom of Poland had proven a disappointing reincarnation of Polish statehood, and the post-1815 European landscape offered little room for alternative nationalist projects. In this context, Habsburg rule seemed not only tolerable but, in some ways, advantageous.

Yet while the *szlachta* appeared content with their status as Habsburg subjects, they were not entirely submissive. The letter, though undoubtedly serving an imperial propaganda purpose, also reflected genuine concerns among Galician nobles. It addressed grievances such as the failures of Joseph II’s reforms and the need to protect Polish language, traditions, and noble privileges. The letter stated: „The Poles demand only two things, their language, the ancient property of their nation, and the employment of their

own people in public administration“.⁸⁸⁹ While it expressed the loyalty of the *Natio Polonica* to the emperor, it also subtly implied that this loyalty was conditional. By emphasizing Galicia's distinct character and the nobility's willingness to support the Monarchy, the letter suggested that continued allegiance depended on Vienna's willingness to grant further autonomy and rights. Rather than an expression of blind devotion, the letter represented a careful balancing act. It acknowledged the reality of Habsburg rule while keeping alive hopes for a more favorable political future. For the Galician *szlachta*, this was a pragmatic stance that allowed them to secure their interests within the Empire while quietly signaling that their aspirations had not been entirely extinguished. As the letter concluded, „The emperor has recognized the fairness of these wishes“,⁸⁹⁰ suggesting that further concessions, though not yet realized, were hoped for in the future.

By the end of the Napoleonic wars, it could be argued that the two parties examined in this study had reached a fragile compromise, with neither fully satisfying their ambitions. The Habsburg administration was forced to abandon its plans for grand reforms that would transform Galicia into a model of „enlightened“ governance, particularly giving up on the idea of a comprehensive „civilizing mission“ that would radically reshape the Galician nobility. However, they succeeded in establishing a lasting absolutist administration in Galicia, preventing the local aristocracy from re-establishing the „noble republic“ model. On the other hand, the Galician *szlachta* did not achieve their goal of creating a hybrid political system envisioned in the petitions of the early 1790s. Yet, the central government also abandoned its attempts to fully „subalternize“ the *szlachta*, allowing noble families to retain their wealth and way of life. Rather than being erased, the nobility persisted, indirectly influencing the system by absorbing and Polonizing new Habsburg officials, sometimes within a single generation.⁸⁹¹ This ongoing presence would eventually allow the Galician aristocracy to regain institutional power in the local administration, culminating in the appointment of Wacław Zaleski as the first Polish governor of Galicia in 1848.

⁸⁸⁹ Franz I. als Vater und Beglückter seiner lieben Polen. (Schreiben eines adelichen Güterbesitzers an einen Freund in Wien). In: Hesperus. Encyclopädische Zeitschrift für gebildete Leser (1817) 566–577. Cited after: *Řezník*, Staat und Aristokratie, 237.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁹¹ See: *Röskau-Rydel*, Zwischen Akkulturation und Assimilation.

Conclusion.

The relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician nobility (known as the *szlachta*) during the late 18th and early 19th centuries reveals a complex and multifaceted process of integration, negotiation, and adaptation. The *szlachta*'s political influence, economic privileges, and social status placed them at the heart of the colonial interaction with Vienna, making their responses particularly significant for understanding the dynamics of imperial power in the region. Through a detailed analysis of this relationship, this dissertation has explored how the Habsburg imperial governance strategies targeted specifically the local nobility, and how the *szlachta*, in turn, responded to imperial efforts at asserting control.

In approaching and constructing Galicia as a colonial space, this study does not interpret colonization merely as a unilateral imposition of power from an imperial center. Instead, it emphasizes the intricate and continuous negotiations that occurred between the Habsburg authorities and the Galician nobility. The Monarchy's integration of Galicia after 1772 involved not only administrative reorganization and military consolidation but also targeted attempts at transforming the *szlachta*'s traditional autonomy. Cultural, political, and economic reforms were specifically designed to reshape the nobility's role, aiming to reduce their local influence and subordinate them to central imperial institutions.

The use of postcolonial theories in this dissertation further clarifies the complexities surrounding these interactions. Through this lens, the dissertation demonstrates how colonial power was exercised, contested, and adapted specifically through the interactions between imperial policymakers and the Galician *szlachta*, thus contributing to a nuanced understanding of colonial governance and local elite agency. Initially, Enlightened Absolutism provided the ideological underpinning for the Habsburgs' approach to Galicia following its annexation in 1772. Rooted in Enlightenment ideals of rationality, efficiency, and centralized state control, Enlightened Absolutism justified extensive administrative, legal, and social reforms aimed at transforming Galicia from a perceived „backward“ territory into a productive and modern imperial province. However, by the late 1790s, this ideological framework gradually lost its centrality. In the face of disruptions caused by the French Revolution, the subsequent

partitions of Poland, and the geopolitical instability of the Napoleonic era, Enlightened Absolutism gave way to more pragmatic, defensive strategies aimed primarily at imperial self-preservation. As demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the Habsburg approach thus shifted from ambitious reforms toward cautious consolidation, carefully balancing integration with containment. This evolution amplified the inherent ambivalence of Habsburg policies, reinforcing pragmatic control over transformative ambitions. Defensive strategies became particularly evident in the Monarchy's cautious stance toward the Galician nobility during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, underscoring imperial apprehensions about the risks of empowering local elites.

The „civilizing mission“ – a hallmark of colonial discourse wherein imperial powers rationalize their dominion by portraying colonized regions as requiring guidance toward a civilized norm – was prominently articulated in the Habsburg reforms. By framing the local nobility as culturally, socially, and politically deficient, Habsburg authorities justified interventions aimed at reshaping noble institutions, practices, and behaviors, identifying the historically powerful *szlachta* as primary obstacles to imperial centralization. Integral to this civilizing narrative was the practice of „Othering“, whereby the Galician nobility, previously autonomous and influential, was systematically constructed by the imperial center as inherently backward and inadequate. This portrayal legitimized policies that subordinated noble customs, privileges, and power structures. Consequently, the Galician *szlachta* were repositioned within the imperial hierarchy as a group requiring direct imperial guidance and intervention, thus validating Vienna's efforts to reform and integrate them into the centralized Habsburg administration.

Complementing these strategies were deliberate attempts at „subalternization“, referring to the systematic efforts to limit the Galician nobility's political autonomy and influence. Through administrative centralization, constraints on local political and economic privileges, and the establishment of imperial bureaucracy, the Habsburg authorities aimed to transform the *szlachta* from autonomous local rulers into compliant subjects within a centrally governed territory. Nonetheless, these attempts met persistent resistance from the nobility, whose entrenched social status enabled them to strategically maneuver within the newly imposed imperial structures, thus undermining complete subordination.

„Ambivalence“, as defined in this study, characterizes the Habsburg Monarchy’s cautious approach toward integrating the Galician nobility into its structures. Imperial policymakers deliberately restrained full incorporation of the *szlachta* into the imperial apparatus, wary that granting excessive political influence or autonomy might enable them to challenge or even rebel against imperial control. This cautious ambivalence was clearly demonstrated by the Monarchy’s hesitant approach toward forming separate Polish military units composed of Galician nobles. Although noble military service was recognized as a valuable mechanism of integration and loyalty-building, Vienna feared that distinct Polish units could become focal points for noble dissent, nationalist sentiment, or organized rebellion against imperial authority. Because of that, imperial administration remained vigilant in limiting opportunities for Galician nobles to acquire the cohesion, organizational strength, or ideological unity necessary to constitute meaningful opposition. Ambivalence was thus calculated and instrumental, designed to balance the need for cooperation from the local elite against inherent risks associated with their empowerment.

Building upon this ambivalence, Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of „hybridity“ further elucidates the adaptive strategies employed by the Galician nobility. Hybridity describes new identities and practices emerging from colonial encounters, emphasizing how colonized subjects selectively adopt elements of the colonizers’ culture and governance methods. Rather than simply resisting or passively accepting colonial reforms, the *szlachta* integrated certain imperial structures with traditional privileges, creating hybrid forms of identity and authority – for instance, by actively engaging in imperial military service, selectively participating in the newly established Galician Noble Estates, and strategically utilizing imperial judicial institutions to defend their traditional socio-economic interests. Significantly, the *szlachta* consciously avoided direct confrontation with the imperial center, resorting to open resistance only when driven by external impulses, such as foreign invasions or shifts in geopolitical context. Their preferred mode of interaction was continuous negotiation with the central government, seeking to establish a political regime that allowed them to share authority with the imperial authorities rather than being entirely subordinated. This hybrid identity facilitated strategic adaptability, allowing the *szlachta* to maintain significant influence within colonial realities while avoiding complete cultural and political assimilation.

Finally, the distinctive colonial position of the Galician nobility as „colonized colonizers“ provides additional insight into their hybrid status. This concept captures the layered reality faced by co-opted local elites in colonial contexts, who, while themselves subjected to imperial domination, simultaneously exerted substantial authority over subordinate populations. In Galicia, the *szlachta*, as co-opted elites within the Habsburg system, maintained significant control over the predominantly Ruthenian peasantry, who represented the genuine subaltern population, experiencing direct exploitation from the nobility. The Habsburg authorities deliberately employed a „divide and rule“ strategy by reinforcing ethnic and socio-economic tension between noble landowners and the peasant majority. By exacerbating these internal divisions, the Monarchy prevented unified resistance and solidified its overarching authority. Thus, the Galician *szlachta* occupied an ambiguous dual role: subordinated to colonial power while actively facilitating the imperial project by dominating subordinate populations.

Complementing the postcolonial theoretical framework, discourse analysis has played a fundamental role in interpreting the sources examined in this research, significantly enriching its findings. Rather than merely reconstructing historical events, discourse analysis enabled the exploration of deeper ideological layers embedded within the imperial and noble narratives. Imperial documents, correspondence, administrative decrees, and noble petitions were scrutinized to reveal the underlying rhetorical and symbolic mechanisms through which both Habsburg policymakers and the Galician *szlachta* articulated their respective positions. This methodological approach exposed how notions such as „civilization“, „progress“, and „barbarianism“, deployed by the imperial administration, functioned strategically to legitimize colonial rule and justify the dismantling of traditional noble privileges. Simultaneously, discourse analysis illustrated how the Galician nobility constructed a counter-discourse centered around the ideas of „freedom“, „autonomy“, and „tradition“, using petitions to the Habsburg government not merely as instruments of pragmatic negotiation, but as deliberate attempts to assert their identity, legitimacy, and agency within a contested colonial space. Thus, discourse analysis underscored that the struggle between imperial authorities and local elites was not only political and institutional but also fundamentally discursive, articulated and contested through carefully constructed narratives and symbolic language.

To fully grasp the complexities of the *szlachta*'s position within the Habsburg Empire, it is essential to first understand the profound differences between the political and social orders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg Monarchy before 1772. Their fundamentally different political philosophies and structures laid the groundwork for tensions and justifications that would define Habsburg governance in Galicia. In the *Rzeczpospolita*, noble privilege and local autonomy were sacrosanct, legally protected, and culturally revered under the political ideal of „Golden Liberty“. Governance was fragmented, resting upon assemblies dominated by the nobility, whose economic power was sustained by the exploitation of the non-noble population. Noble rights included exemption from taxation, judicial authority over serfs, and significant political independence, reinforcing the decentralized and often chaotic political landscape. The *szlachta*'s identity thus revolved around preserving their extensive autonomy against any form of centralized royal authority, resulting in a society marked by economic stagnation, pronounced social inequalities, and political inefficiency. In stark contrast, by the mid-18th century, the Habsburg Monarchy had embarked on a determined path of Enlightened Absolutism, aiming at administrative centralization, rationalized governance, and economic modernization. The Empire's ruling elite increasingly viewed decentralized political systems like that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as inherently backward, inefficient, and in dire need of reform. Driven by Enlightenment principles of reason, efficiency, and progress, Habsburg policymakers regarded the existing *szlachta*-dominated structures in Galicia as particularly representative of such backwardness, serving as justification for extensive interventions under the guise of a „civilizing mission“.

This sharp ideological and structural contrast thus provided the pretext for subsequent Habsburg reforms following Galicia's annexation in 1772. By framing the *Rzeczpospolita*'s political traditions and noble privileges as impediments to progress, the Habsburg authorities legitimized a comprehensive program of reform intended not only to integrate the newly acquired territory but also to transform its social and political fabric according to Enlightened standards. The perceived deficiencies of noble governance in Galicia were invoked consistently as justification for the reduction of noble autonomy. These measures included establishing centralized administrative structures, reducing noble judicial authority, and imposing new forms of taxation previously unknown to the

nobility. Framed as a civilizing mission aimed at modernizing a supposedly backward region, the reforms sought to reshape Galicia's socio-political structures in line with Habsburg ideals of rational governance. In response, the Galician *szlachta* resorted to strategic negotiation rather than outright confrontation. They sought to preserve their threatened privileges through formal petitions and addresses, most notably *Charta Leopoldina*, articulating their willingness to cooperate while asserting the necessity of retaining their traditional autonomy and privileges. This way, the nobility sought to moderate the impact of imperial reforms and establish conditions under which they could maintain a meaningful share of political power. However, these attempts to establish a mutually beneficial governance structure ultimately proved unsuccessful, primarily due to fundamental contradictions between the Habsburg Monarchy's centralizing ambitions and the *szlachta*'s persistent desire to maintain local autonomy and traditional privileges.

The dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 1790s, culminating in the Third Partition in 1795, significantly altered the geopolitical landscape, compelling the Habsburg authorities to adopt more cautious and defensive strategies towards Galicia. Confronted by the uncertain international situation, including the growing influence of revolutionary France, the Habsburg Monarchy tempered its earlier Enlightened Absolutist ambitions, shifting towards pragmatic measures intended primarily to secure internal stability. Imperial policymakers recognized the need for increased cooperation from the Galician *szlachta* yet remained deeply wary of empowering the nobility to the extent that it might pose a risk to central authority. In this shifting context, the Galician nobility intensified their efforts at negotiation, hoping to capitalize on imperial caution. They sought to redefine their relationship with Vienna through carefully crafted addresses, appeals, and diplomatic petitions, explicitly articulating their readiness for cooperation in exchange for the recognition and partial restoration of their privileges. Rather than openly challenging imperial authority, the *szlachta* continued to use official channels to express loyalty and compliance, seeking pragmatic adjustments within the existing administrative framework. By positioning themselves as reliable intermediaries between the imperial government and local society, they attempted to secure their privileged status, exploiting the Monarchy's defensive posture to preserve their local autonomy. However, the Monarchy's persistent ambivalence prevented these efforts from yielding substantial concessions. While Vienna

recognized the practical necessity of noble cooperation, it remained cautious and selective, unwilling to restore privileges to levels that might undermine centralized control. This delicate balance ultimately frustrated the nobility's attempts at meaningful negotiation, perpetuating an unstable equilibrium where neither side fully achieved its objectives. Consequently, imperial governance in Galicia remained characterized by unresolved tensions between cautious integration and ongoing resistance, with the *szlachta* continuing to navigate a limited space between subordination and autonomy.

Throughout the entire period following Galicia's incorporation into the Habsburg Monarchy in 1772, military service constituted a critical channel through which the empire sought to integrate the Galician *szlachta* into its governance structures. Initially guided by Enlightened Absolutist ideals and subsequently by more pragmatic considerations, the Habsburg authorities consistently employed military service as a mechanism to foster loyalty, assert imperial control, and integrate local elites into a centralized hierarchy. Particularly notable was the establishment of the Noble Guard, explicitly designed as an institution aimed at „civilizing“ the Galician noble youth. Through rigorous training, cultural education, and inculcation of imperial values, the Galician Noble Guard sought to transform young nobles into loyal imperial subjects, aligned culturally and politically with Habsburg governance. For the broader Galician nobility, participation in military service represented a valuable means of preserving their social prestige and political relevance within the imperial system. As their traditional autonomy diminished under the pressure of imperial reforms, the *szlachta* strategically embraced military careers, viewing rank, distinction, and honors as opportunities to demonstrate loyalty and affirm their status. Yet, despite encouraging noble participation, the Habsburg Monarchy exhibited significant hesitation toward creating separate Galician military units composed predominantly of local nobles. Imperial policymakers feared that distinctly Polish units could become focal points for noble dissent or even facilitate collective rebellion against Vienna's authority.

The establishment of the Duchy of Warsaw by Napoleon in 1807 further complicated Galicia's political landscape, intensifying the dilemmas faced by both the Habsburg authorities and the Galician *szlachta*. The Duchy, nominally an autonomous Polish state under French protectorate, represented another imperial and colonial project, shaped according to Napoleonic interests and administered largely through centralized

French oversight. Despite its ostensibly national character, the Duchy's socio-political structure remained strictly controlled by its foreign patron, echoing familiar patterns of colonial domination and external subordination. For the Galician *szlachta*, the existence of the Duchy posed both a temptation and a significant risk. On one hand, the promise of a restored Polish state, even under French dominance, appealed to their political imagination and offered the prospect of reclaiming lost privileges and political autonomy. On the other hand, practical considerations and self-interest discouraged many nobles from openly aligning with Napoleon. Aware of the uncertainties surrounding French dominance, the majority of the Galician nobility pragmatically opted for cautious loyalty to the Habsburgs, considering the stability and familiarity of Austrian rule preferable to the unpredictability of Napoleonic patronage. This delicate balance was disrupted in 1809 when, after Austria's defeat, parts of West Galicia were incorporated directly into the Duchy of Warsaw. The local *szlachta* swiftly attempted to negotiate a special status with their new authorities, hoping to secure distinct privileges, political autonomy, and guarantees of noble rights. The Galician *szlachta*'s pragmatic response to the Duchy thus underscored their instrumental approach to imperial politics. Rather than committing to ideological or nationalist principles, the nobility prioritized the protection of their social privileges and political influence, cautiously navigating between competing imperial powers to safeguard their own interests. Yet these attempts ultimately failed due to the Duchy's centralized administrative structure and Napoleon's unwillingness to grant meaningful local autonomy. For the Duchy's authorities, any substantial concession to Galician nobility risked undermining their tightly controlled administrative regime, designed explicitly to serve Napoleonic strategic objectives rather than local noble interests. As a result, the *szlachta*'s aspirations for a privileged political status within the Duchy remained unfulfilled, highlighting once again the limits of their capacity to negotiate favorable terms within competing colonial frameworks.

Following the defeat of Napoleon and the Vienna Congress in 1815, the Habsburg Monarchy sought to consolidate its rule in Galicia through a series of carefully calculated institutional and cultural measures. Central to this effort was Vienna's unilateral initiative in 1817 to convene the Galician Noble Estates, an assembly designed to symbolically incorporate the Galician *szlachta* into the imperial governance structure while deliberately withholding substantial political influence. Alongside these institutional

adjustments, imperial authorities introduced targeted cultural concessions, such as the toleration of Polish language usage in local administration and selective support for elements of noble cultural identity. These measures served primarily as instruments of imperial control, strategically devised to placate noble sentiment without risking genuine political empowerment. The Galician *szlachta* responded pragmatically to these symbolic gestures, actively engaging in the limited negotiation space provided by Vienna to incrementally improve their position. Recognizing the limits of their influence within the imperial framework, the nobility adapted their ambitions accordingly, accepting restricted autonomy in exchange for the relative stability offered by the Habsburg governance. Ultimately, both the Galician nobility and the Habsburg authorities reached a pragmatic balance, characterized by Vienna's abandonment of radical ambitions to transform Galicia in favor of controlled cultural and political accommodations. For their part, the *szlachta* consented to continued Habsburg domination, recognizing the imperial presence as preferable to the looming alternative of Russian rule from St. Petersburg. Despite this mutual accommodation, underlying tensions and the fundamental ambiguity of the nobility's colonial status remained unresolved, reflecting the persistent complexity of Galicia's integration into the Habsburg imperial system.

Thus, the initial research questions regarding the nature of Habsburg rule in Galicia, the strategies employed by imperial authorities to control the region, and the responses of local elites have been addressed comprehensively. The analysis has revealed that Habsburg governance in Galicia operated primarily through strategic ambivalence, calculated integration, and symbolic concessions. The nobility's reactions consistently shifted between resistance and collaboration, defined by pragmatism, negotiation, and hybrid adaptation to imperial constraints. The Galician *szlachta*'s ambiguous position as „colonized colonizers“ has proven central to understanding the complexity of colonial governance in this peripheral Habsburg territory, highlighting the fluid boundaries between domination, resistance, and accommodation.

While this dissertation has offered a detailed analysis of the colonial dynamics between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *szlachta*, several possibilities for future research remain open. Further exploration could significantly deepen understanding of Galicia's position within the broader Habsburg imperial context, particularly through comparative studies of other peripheral regions under similar administrative and colonial

regimes. Additionally, examining the evolution of Galicia's socio-political landscape throughout the nineteenth century could provide valuable insights into how the legacies of Habsburg colonial governance influenced subsequent nationalist movements, socio-economic developments, and cultural identity construction in the region. In particular, the period before 1848, characterized by growing nationalist sentiments, economic transformations, and significant social tensions, represents a compelling subject for detailed inquiry, offering opportunities to better understand how earlier colonial dynamics influenced subsequent political developments.

A primary limitation of this study was the restricted archival access caused by the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, specifically the inability to fully examine materials held in the Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv. These archival collections contain essential documents, such as administrative records, correspondence, petitions, and internal reports, which could considerably enrich the existing source base. Access to these materials would likely enhance the analysis of local responses, provide additional evidence of subtle negotiations between the *szlachta* and the imperial authorities, and clarify aspects of the imperial decision-making process not fully addressed in this study. Once conditions permit, systematic archival research in Lviv could thus offer new dimensions to the understanding of Habsburg-Galician relations, potentially refining or expanding the conclusions drawn in this dissertation.

Beyond archival considerations, future scholarship might also investigate the broader socio-cultural impacts of Habsburg colonial policies on Galicia's non-noble populations, particularly the Ruthenian peasantry. Understanding their responses to the colonial encounter and interactions with the local nobility could provide a more comprehensive picture of Galicia's colonial reality, highlighting voices and experiences often marginalized in elite-focused historical narratives. Ultimately, continued research in these directions promises to reveal new layers of complexity in the historical experience of Galicia, contributing significantly to the broader historiographical discussion on colonialism, nationalism, and identity formation in Central and Eastern Europe.

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Inneres Polizeihofstelle H 9/n/12.1814. Galizien, Stimmung in Galizien, angebliche Abtretung an Russland (1814).

c) Kriegsarchiv.

Feldakten Armeeakten Akten 2540 Akten des Generalkommando Lemberg (1778–1815).

Feldakten Armeeakten Akten 1018 Militärische Besetzung Polens (1794–1796).

Leibgarden Galizische LG 1. Akten in genere (zugelegt: Material aus dem Hausarchiv, fol. 1-6, zur Errichtung der Leibgarde) (1784–1808).

Leibgarden Galizische LG 2. Akten in genere und in specie A, B, A-C (1794–1817).

Zentralstellen Hofkriegsrat Hauptreihe Akten 901 (1772).

Zentralstellen Hofkriegsrat Hauptreihe Akten 933 (1772).

Zentralstellen Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 1 (1774–1775).
Zentralstellen Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 24 (1784).
Zentralstellen Kriegsminister-Lacy-Akten 68 (1796).
Zentralstellen Kriegsministerium Erzherzog Karl (Kriegsministerialakten)
Akten 4 (1801).

B. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich (Ossolineum).

Akta dotyczące Stanów Galicyjskich z lat 1774–1836 (The acts concerning the Galician Estates from the years 1774–1836).

Akta z czasów Księstwa Warszawskiego, zawierające głównie pisma i zarządzenia różnych ministerstw (Records from the time of the Duchy of Warsaw, primarily containing documents and decrees from various ministries).

Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Akta różne odnoszące się do spraw politycznych i administracyjnych ziem polskich zaborów pruskiego, austriackiego i rosyjskiego z lat 1787–1834. (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Various records relating to political and administrative matters of the Polish territories under Prussian, Austrian, and Russian partitions from the years 1787–1834).

Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Druki galicyjskie z lat 1792–1884 (uchwały i sprawozdania sejmowe, statuty, obwieszczenia, listy otwarte, gazety i in.) (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Galician printed materials from the years 1792–1884 (sejm resolutions and reports, statutes, proclamations, open letters, newspapers, etc.).

Archiwum Wodzickich z Kościelnik. Pamiętniki Stanisława Wodzickiego. Tom V. „Do moich dzieci powierzając im rękopism o urzędowaniu mojem w Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej“. Cz. 1: Wspomnienia oraz pisma i korespondencja S. Wodzickiego z lat 1805–1831. Cz. 2: Akta, dokumenty i listy dotyczące urzędowania S. Wodzickiego jako prezesa Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej oraz dotyczące Księstwa Warszawskiego z lat 1805–1830 (The Wodzicki Family Archive from Kościelniki. Memoirs of Stanisław Wodzicki. Volume V. „To my children, entrusting them with the manuscript about my service in the Republic of Kraków“. Part 1: Memoirs as well as writings and correspondence of S. Wodzicki from the years 1805–1831. Part 2: Records, documents,

and letters concerning S. Wodzicki's service as President of the Senate of the Republic of Kraków, as well as relating to the Duchy of Warsaw from the years 1805–1830).

Miscellanea, zawierające odpisy i oryginały listów, mów, pism publicystycznych, utworów literackich i innych materiałów z lat 1702-1814, odnoszące się przeważnie do spraw politycznych Polski ostatnich lat panowania Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego (Miscellanea, containing copies and originals of letters, speeches, journalistic writings, literary works, and other materials from the years 1702–1814, mostly related to the political affairs of Poland during the final years of the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski).

Niektóre fragmenta mające stosunek z wydarzeniami po ostatnim rozbiórce Polski y odrodzenia się iej w części przez utworzenie Xięstwa Warszawskiego, za wsparciem potężnego ramienia wielkiego y niezwycięzonego Napoleona (Some fragments related to events after the last partition of Poland and its rebirth in part through the creation of the Duchy of Warsaw, with the support of the mighty and undefeated arm of Napoleon) 1807.

C. Arciwum Narodowe w Krakowie.

[Akta różne Galicji Zachodniej - fasc. I]. Varia Krakowa i Okręgu Krakowskiego (akta różne urzędów Galicji Zachodniej) 29/71/0/-/7 ([Various Records of West Galicia] – fascicle I, Varia of Kraków and the Kraków District (miscellaneous records of the offices of West Galicia).

Rozporządzenia C. K. Gubernium Krajowego Galicji Zachodniej, władz centralnych (m.in. cesarza), Senatu Rządzącego Wolnego Miasta Krakowa 29/67/0/4/16 (Ordinances of the Imperial-Royal Land Gubernium of West Galicia, central authorities (including the emperor), and the Governing Senate of the Free City of Kraków).

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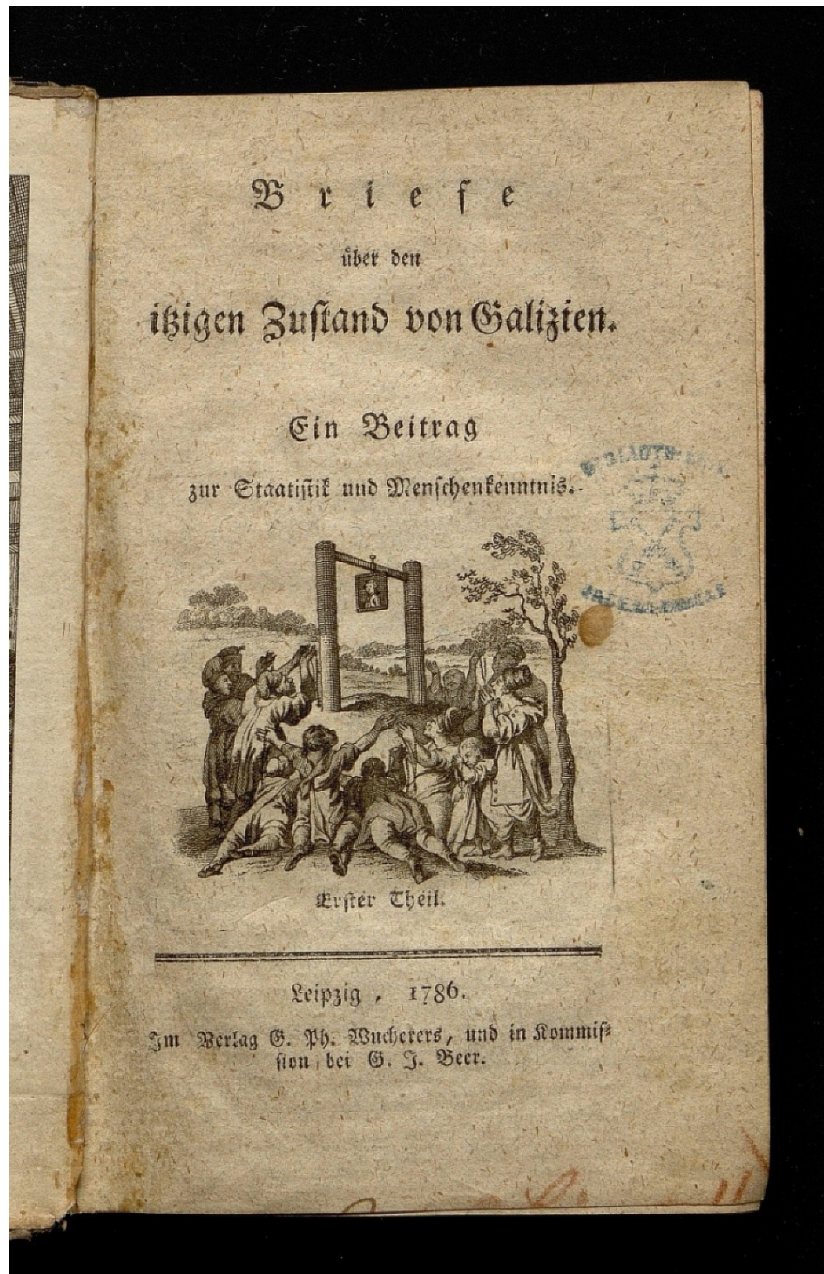
Illustrations

Reisser Map of East and West Galicia 1805



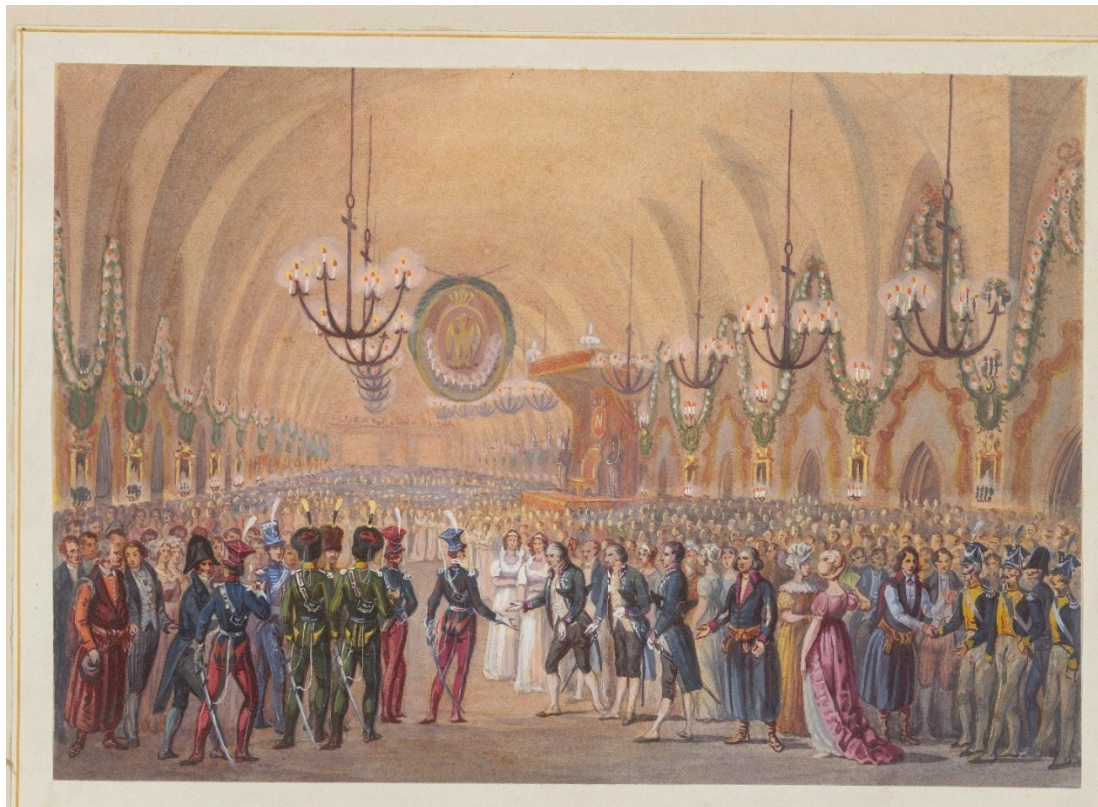
Source: Franz Reisser, *Ost und West Galizien nach den neusten Beobachtungen*, Vienna: T. Mollo, 1805, map. RCIN – Digital Repository of Scientific Institutes, accessed 15.05.2025, <https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/7479/edition/481/content>.

Briefe über den itzigen Zustand von Galizien : Ein Beitrag zur Staatistik und Menschenkenntnis by Franz Kratter (frontpage)



Source: Franz *Kratter*, Briefe über den itzigen Zustand von Galizien: Ein Beitrag zur Staatistik und Menschenkenntnis (Leipzig 1786). Biblioteka Jagiellońska, accessed 15.05.2025,
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Ball at the Cloth Hall (Sukiennice), Held to Celebrate the Entry of Polish Troops Led by Prince Józef Poniatowski into Kraków, July 1809



Source: Jan Nepomucen *Lewicki*, Album Lewickiego, after Michał *Stachowicz* and Sebastian *Langer*, Paris, ca. 1838–1853. Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Polona – Polish National Digital Library, accessed 15.05.2025, <https://polona.pl/item/a609f4a6-f6bb-4356-8086-8cc53ebfc2df>.

Abstract (German)

Diese Dissertation untersucht das Verhältnis zwischen der Habsburgermonarchie und der galizischen *Szlachta* in den Jahrzehnten nach der ersten Teilung Polens und interpretiert es im Rahmen postkolonialer Theorie. Sie argumentiert, dass Galizien als kolonialer Raum verstanden werden kann, in dem die Habsburger nicht nur eine administrative Eingliederung, sondern auch eine kulturelle und politische Transformation eines historisch mächtigen Adelsstandes anstrebten. Die Arbeit zeigt, wie imperiale Strategien der „Zivilisierungsmission“, des „Othering“ und der „Subalternisierung“ darauf zielten, die Autonomie der *Szlachta* einzuschränken, während sie zugleich als unverzichtbare Mittler der Herrschaft gebraucht wurden. Zugleich hebt sie die Ambivalenz der habsburgischen Politik hervor, die zwischen Kooptation und Marginalisierung schwankte – ein Ausdruck sowohl der Notwendigkeit adliger Kooperation als auch der Furcht vor ihrem möglichen Widerstand.

Der galizische Adel erscheint hier nicht als passive Untertan, sondern als aktive Akteur, der imperiale Strategien anpasste, herausforderte und umgestaltete. Auf Grundlage von Petitionen, Korrespondenzen, politischen Projekten und Verwaltungsakten zeigt die Dissertation, wie die *Szlachta* imperiale Rhetorik strategisch einsetzte, um Elemente ihres privilegierten Status zu bewahren, während sie zugleich mit „hybriden“ Regierungsformen experimentierte, die Loyalität zu Wien mit der Verteidigung lokaler Autonomie verbanden. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt den Verschiebungen in den kaiserlichen und adligen Diskursen – von der Epoche des aufgeklärten Absolutismus über die konservative Wende der 1790er Jahre, die Herausforderungen der napoleonischen Kriege und des Herzogtums Warschau bis hin zur Stabilisierung der Nachkriegsordnung von 1815.

Durch die Verbindung von Diskursanalyse und postkolonialer Perspektive geht diese Studie über das binäre Schema von Herrschaft und Widerstand hinaus und zeigt stattdessen einen dynamischen Aushandlungsprozess. Sie leistet damit einen Beitrag sowohl zur Habsburgforschung als auch zur Kolonialgeschichte, indem sie eine differenzierte Analyse des Ineinandergreifens von imperialer Autorität und adliger Agency in Galizien bietet.

Abstract (English)

This dissertation explores the relationship between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Galician *szlachta* in the decades following the First Partition of Poland, framing it through the lens of postcolonial theory. It argues that Galicia can be understood as a colonial space, where the Habsburgs sought not only administrative integration but also the cultural and political transformation of a historically powerful noble estate. The study examines how imperial strategies of „civilizing mission“, „othering“, and „subalternization“ sought to limit the *szlachta*’s autonomy, while simultaneously relying on them as intermediaries of governance. At the same time, it highlights the ambivalence of Habsburg policies, which oscillated between co-optation and marginalization, reflecting both the necessity of noble cooperation and the fear of their potential resistance.

Rather than passive subjects, the Galician aristocrats emerge here as active agents who adapted, contested, and reshaped imperial strategies. Drawing on petitions, correspondence, political projects, and administrative records, this dissertation demonstrates how the *szlachta* strategically deployed imperial rhetoric to preserve elements of their privileged status, while experimenting with „hybrid“ forms of governance that blended loyalty to Vienna with the defense of local autonomy. Particular attention is given to the shifts in imperial and noble discourses from the era of Enlightened Absolutism to the conservative turn of the 1790s, to the challenges posed by the Napoleonic wars and the Duchy of Warsaw, and finally to the stabilization of the post-1815 settlement.

By combining discourse analysis with a postcolonial perspective, this study moves beyond the binary of domination and resistance, showing instead a dynamic process of negotiation. It contributes to both Habsburg studies and colonial history by offering a nuanced account of how imperial authority and elite agency intertwined in shaping Galicia’s political landscape.