

# Szlachta Outside the Commonwealth. The Case of Polish Nobles in Galicia

by  
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One of the central themes of Polish historiography of the partitions has been the persistence of the Polish nobility's commitment to the legitimacy and desirability of a Polish state even as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was dismembered by the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanovs. Central to this story is the national revival that occurred in the rump Commonwealth, as the Polish nobility, or *szlachta*, finally faced the reality that their independence could not be taken for granted. Thus, even if their efforts failed to save Poland, acts like the foundation of the National Education Commission, the drafting of the 1791 Constitution by the Four-Year *Sejm*, and the Kościuszko Rebellion of 1794 provided the foundation for a struggle for independence that would take more than a century to realize.

It is a compelling story, and one that has played an important role in shaping modern Polish identity. Yet, the focus on the resilience of the Polish "noble nation" and the reform efforts of the rump Commonwealth neatly avoids considering the weaknesses that allowed the first partition to take place, as well as the rather different experience of Poles who found themselves living outside the Commonwealth as a result of the first partition in 1772. Indeed, treatments of this unhappy period of Polish history readily ignore the fate of Poles living outside the Commonwealth's 1773 boundaries, a tendency most recently illustrated by Jerzy Lukowski's "The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795."<sup>1</sup>

The impression made by this omission has been that like their brethren in the rump Commonwealth, Poles suddenly living under Austrian, Prussian, or Russian rule, resented foreign occupation of Commonwealth territory, and accepted it only because they had not the means to resist the annexations. This perspective long meshed well with more specific literature that emphasized Polish antagonism towards each of the partitioning powers. For example, the works on the early history of Galicia by Marian Tyrowicz and Antoni Knot, both emphasized Polish resistance and resentment towards Austrian rule, thereby influencing many other scholars as well.<sup>2</sup> While this

<sup>1</sup> JERZY LUKOWSKI: *The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795*, London, New York 1999.

<sup>2</sup> MARIAN TYROWICZ: *Galicja od pierwszego rozbioru do wiosny ludów 1772-1849. Wybór tekstów źródłowych* [Galicia from the First Partition to the Springtime of Nations, 1772-1849. A Selection of Primary Source Texts], Kraków 1956. ANTONI KNOT: *Dążenia oświatowe młodzieży galicyjskiej w latach 1815-1830* [Educational Aspirations of Galician Youth in the Years 1815-1830], Wrocław 1959 (Prace Wro-

view has not died out entirely, as evidenced by the work of Waldemar Łazuga,<sup>3</sup> others like Jacek Staszewski now readily admit that at least in the Austrian and Prussian partitions, Poles were quite willing to work with their new sovereign, and did not necessarily regard either the Habsburgs or even Frederick the Great as an enemy.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that Polish nobles were ready and willing to work with the partitioning powers poses a severe challenge to the standard view that Polish nobles' commitment to the Commonwealth's political traditions was central to Polish *szlachta* identity. In fact, it raises the question if such a unified Polish noble identity existed in the second third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So far, this thought has been one few scholars of Polish history have been ready to consider. Jacek Staszewski, for example, maintains that the pro-Austrian faction that had developed during the anti-Russian Confederacy of Bar and developed into the Galicia Party became disenchanted with the Habsburgs as soon as it became apparent that the Habsburgs were not going to allow Poles to run Galician affairs.<sup>5</sup> But what then are we to make of the failure of Polish nobles to organize resistance to Habsburg rule, particularly when of the three partitioning powers the Habsburgs took the most active steps to reshape the Polish society they had taken over in 1772? Indeed, even in 1809, when Polish troops invaded the Duchy of Warsaw, the most striking fact is that Galicians did not rise *en masse* to win independence for the whole province,

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ciałowskiego Towarzystwo Naukowe, Seria A, 64). An example of the huge influence these works had is the bleak tone adopted by Piotr S. Wandycz regarding Polish cultural life in Galicia before 1848 in his excellent survey of partitioned Poland. PIOTR S. WANDYCZ: *The Lands of Partitioned Poland 1795-1918*, Seattle 1974 (*A History of East Central Europe*, 7), pp. 71-72, 94, although his treatment of Galician theater is somewhat more upbeat thanks to his brief comments on Aleksander Fredro. Ibidem, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup> WALDEMAR ŁAZUGA: *The Formation of Polish Political Elites in Austria*, in: *Polish Western Affairs* 34 (1993), pp. 41-60.

<sup>4</sup> JACEK STASZEWSKI: *Voraussetzungen für die Herausbildung der modernen polnischen Nation im 18. Jahrhundert*, in: *Changes in Two Baltic Countries. Poland and Sweden in the XVIII<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by EDMUND CIEŚLAK and HENRYK OLSZEWSKI, Poznań 1990 (*Seria Historia*, 164), pp. 53-61, see p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> See IDEM: *Die polnisch-österreichischen Beziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, in: *Österreichische Osthefte* 32 (1990), no. 2, pp. 229-239, see p. 239. Similarly, while HORST GLASSL is skeptical of Polish historiography's tendency to go from being quite critical of the Polish *szlachta* to suddenly treating them as well organized patriots following the partitions, he still seems to accept the notion that the Polish nobility was a coherent group in his study: *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772-1790)*, Wiesbaden 1975 (*Veröffentlichungen des Osteuropa-Instituts München, Reihe Geschichte*, 41). More recently, however, DAVID ALTHOEN's book: *That Noble Quest. From True Nobility to Enlightened Society in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1550-1830*, two vols., Ann Arbor 2001, has raised serious questions about the nature of Polish noble identity during the Commonwealth period. See particularly his article in this issue, pp. 475-508.

so that only the most westerly and northern parts of Galicia were ceded to the Duchy by the Treaty of Schönbrunn.

Seen in this light, the experience of Polish nobles who came under Austrian rule offers a chance to reexamine the state of Polish *szlachta* identity in the era of the partitions. Drawing on published and unpublished primary sources as well as secondary sources, this paper will suggest that beyond weakening the Commonwealth for partition, the Confederacy of Bar brought the decline of the *szlachta*'s common identity into the open. Those nobles who equated the rise of the Czartoryski family, the magnates who were the main backers of King Stanisław August, with increasing Russian influence in the Commonwealth, found Catholic Habsburg rule to be a reasonable alternative. The Polish nobles may not have gotten exactly what they expected, but Habsburg interventionist policies began reshaping Galician Polish nobles' sense of identity in a way that would link them, and their descendants, to the Habsburgs for more than a century.

### The Reform Crisis and the Crisis of Polish Identity

When Stanisław August Poniatowski was elected King in 1764, a native-born Pole had not served in that office for nearly seventy years (not counting the aborted election of Stanisław Leszczyński in 1733). While Stanisław August's election could not have occurred without Russian support, his Polish backers, most notably Poniatowski's powerful relatives the Czartoryskis, believed he was the best chance for revitalizing the Commonwealth through institutional reforms that would strengthen the King at the expense of the nobility. Others, however, had doggedly supported the election of the new Saxon King of the Wettin dynasty, despite his youth, until they were forced to back down under Russian pressure.

That intervention only heightened the suspicions of those who had opposed Stanisław August as a pawn of the Czartoryskis and the Russians. At the same time, the new king's opponents had no qualms about reaching out to Russian representatives to block his reform efforts, opening the door for Russians to encourage anti-Poniatowski forces to band together in the Confederacy of Radom in June of 1767. According to Jerzy Lukowski's study of that Confederacy, after its leaders realized that they themselves had become caught in a web of Russian manipulation "the Confederacy of Radom fades imperceptibly into [the Confederacy of] Bar, which now took aim at the Russians as well as Poniatowski, while seeking new allies."<sup>6</sup> As such, the Confederacy of Bar finally drew the link between Russian intervention in Polish affairs, particularly regarding demands to weaken restrictions on Orthodox and other dissenters, and the aspects of Poniatowski's reform

<sup>6</sup> JERZY LUKOWSKI: *The Szlachta and the Confederacy of Radom, 1764-1767/8. A Study of the Polish Nobility*, Rome 1977 (Antemurale, 21), p. 206.

agenda they despised, which led to four years of turmoil as the Confederates sought to drive Stanisław August from the throne.

On the face of it, both the Confederacy of Radom and the Confederacy of Bar offer strong evidence that the setbacks of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had not killed off the *szlachta*'s sense of patriotic duty or their desire to insure their control of the Commonwealth. The widespread support from quite different regions alone seems to suggest that among the *szlachta* there was a strong consensus that the King was harming their state, which was precisely the reason the institution of confederacies were permitted in the existing constitution.<sup>7</sup> Just as significantly, while both confederacies emphasized the need to protect the "Golden Freedoms," their leaders at least understood the need for change. The Bishop of Cracow Kajetan Sołtyk, who played a major role in the Confederacy of Radom and probably would likewise been a leader in the Confederacy of Bar had he not been held captive by the Russians, had proposed reforms intended to deal with the problem caused by the *liberum veto* in 1766.<sup>8</sup> Similarly one of the most influential founders of the Confederacy of Bar, Adam Krasiński, the Bishop of Kamieniec-Podolsk, hoped that with the Confederacy's victory royal elections would be limited to the Wettin Dynasty and the standing army would be increased, two very significant changes.<sup>9</sup>

Lukowski's careful analysis of the Confederacy of Radom, nonetheless, suggests how fragmented and weak the social fabric among the *szlachta* actually was. He notes that in 1765 Marian and Ignacy Potocki set up a Confederacy in Halych in which they recruited a significant number of lesser *szlachta* intended to protest the reforms passed by the convocation *Sejm* the year before.<sup>10</sup> For many who signed the articles of confederation, however, ideology played a minor role, and significant numbers of supporters apparently withdrew after receiving patronage from the King and his allies.<sup>11</sup> Patronage and intervention again played an important role in gathering supporters for the Confederacy of Radom. For example, the Russian agent Repnin became so concerned that support for opposition to Stanisław August would not lead to the spontaneous creation of confederacies that he ordered a Russian general in Małopolska to encourage confederacies.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile in preparation for the meeting in Radom where the Confederacy would be declared at the end of June 1766, leading malcontents agreed to organize

<sup>7</sup> The leading historian of the Confederacy, Władysław Konopczyński, has gone so far as to suggest that their act, doomed as it was, actually marked the beginning of the *szlachta*'s revived commitment to their state. WŁADYSŁAW KONOPCZYŃSKI: *Konfederacja barska* [The Confederacy of Bar], two vols., Warszawa 1991 (reprint of the Warszawa edition, 1936), p. 740.

<sup>8</sup> LUKOWSKI: *The Szlachta and the Confederacy of Radom* (cf. footnote 6), p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> IDEM: *The Partitions of Poland* (cf. footnote 1), p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> IDEM: *The Szlachta and the Confederacy of Radom* (cf. footnote 6), p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, pp. 141-142.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 89.

opposition in their home territories, so that the Potockis focused on the Southeast and Jerzy Mniszek, the former Crown Marshall of the Court under King August III, focused his attention on Wielkopolska.<sup>13</sup> Thus, even if one accepts that there was widespread anxiety about the relaxation on laws governing religious dissenters, the real basis for the Confederacy of Radom's strength lay in the power of various magnates to govern lesser nobles' allegiances.<sup>14</sup>

The Confederacy of Bar is generally seen as different because the anti-Russian focus clarified the divisions between the ostensibly patriotic protectors of Polish sovereignty grouped around the Confederacy and King Stanisław August and his Russian supporters. But it is hard to imagine that on some level the same patterns of patronage and bribery of earlier confederacies did not influence allegiances, particularly among the more petty members of the *szlachta*. Still, because the Confederacy largely fought Russian troops – the Commonwealth's standing army being too small to effectively challenge the Confederacy's insurgency – the conflict helped reinforce the divisions in ways that had been impossible as long as opponents of the King sought Russian patronage. Thus the Confederacy's successes in 1769, when its forces pushed Russian troops from Poznań and parts of Lithuania, and set up a provisional alternative government in Biała in Southern Poland gave the Confederates real hope that they could rescue Poland from Russia. By the same token, by accepting Russian military aid, Stanisław August and his supporters looked all the more like lackey to Catherine the Great. When the tide finally turned against the Confederacy in 1772, its supporters were forced to recognize that they were impotent against their sworn enemy, and only a few weeks later the partition added to their humiliation.

### Asserting Habsburg Authority in Galicia

As with the partitions more generally, treatment of the arrival of the Austrian forces in Galicia and Lemberg<sup>15</sup> is assumed in most histories to have been greeted with anguish, resentment and regret. Indeed, the story of the formal investiture of the new Austrian Governor, Baron Johann Anton Pergen, seems to support that view. On the eve of Pergen's formal installation as Habsburg governor on 4 October 1772, the town council sent a pained letter to King Stanisław August's crown chancellor proclaiming the city's undying loyalty to the Polish King.<sup>16</sup> Nor did any of the town's highest

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 105-106.

<sup>15</sup> Sadly in English, the choice of name for this city is problematic. Today, the Ukrainian name "Lviv" is preferred, but in as much as this article is about Galician's acceptance of Austrian rule, I have opted to use the German name throughout.

<sup>16</sup> BARBARA MĘKARSKA-KOZŁOWSKA: *Lwów. Twierdza Kultury i Niepodległości* [Lwów. Citadel of (Polish) Culture and Independence], London 1991, p. 39.



officers, including the *Starosta*, attend the occasion. These gestures, however, could not stop the town from becoming the capital of the restored Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria.<sup>17</sup> But these sentiments changed rapidly, or were perhaps overwhelmed by a rush among other less patriotically committed Poles who began seeking out Governor Pergen in the hopes of gaining some office in the service of their new rulers.<sup>18</sup>

The shift in sentiments has not gone unnoticed in Polish historiography.<sup>19</sup> Still, this tendency is so at odds with the widely accepted image of impotent, but still patriotic, Polish nobles that it is tempting to look for some way to explain it that does not demand a complete reevaluation of Polish *szlachta* identity. One must certainly acknowledge that the office-holders in Lemberg were put in a very difficult situation. Impotent as they were in the face of Austrian forces in the city, they were still legally representatives of the Commonwealth's administration. As such the letter and the boycott of Pergen's installation as governor provided a means of demonstrating their continued loyalty to the Polish state. Yet by the time the *Sejm* formally accepted the change in its borders in late 1773, Pergen had already brought a considerable number of Polish nobles into his administration, although whether these included Lemberg's *Starosta* or members of the town council has not made its way into the secondary literature.<sup>20</sup> Thus, at best one must conclude that a significant portion of nobles in Galicia did not show the kind of patriotic commitment to the Commonwealth that one would expect given the ostensible emphasis placed on nobles' role in running the state.<sup>21</sup>

This circumstance is all the more striking given the patriotic fervor directed at foreign intervention normally attributed to the supporters of the

<sup>17</sup> FRYDERYK PAPÉE: *Historia Miasta Lwowa w zarysie* [The History of Lwów in Outline], Lwów 1894, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1924, pp. 175-177.

<sup>18</sup> PAUL P. BERNARD: *From Enlightenment to the Police State*, Chicago, Urbana 1991, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> The dean of Polish historians in America, Piotr S. Wandycz, acknowledges the tendency to seek favor from the Austrian administration from the start. See, PIOTR S. WANDYCZ: *Poles in the Habsburg Monarchy*, in: *Nation-building and the Politics of Nationalism*, ed. by ANDREI MARKOVITS and FRANK E. SYSYN, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, pp. 68-93, see p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> BERNARD (cf. footnote 18), pp. 97-98. While Bernard discusses how displeased Joseph II was with Pergen's readiness to employ Poles, he did not see fit to note any particularly explicit examples, like the hiring of former Polish officials.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of that lack of commitment is Count Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, the founder of the Polish cultural institution, Ossolineum. At the time of the first partition he had been living in Warsaw, where he had close ties with important figures of the Polish Enlightenment. Nonetheless, in 1773 he left the Commonwealth and returned to his estate at Teczyn, which was now under Austrian rule. Perhaps this move reflected sympathies for the Confederacy of Bar, as some of his relatives had been active participants, but whether or not this played a role in his decision he became an ardent supporter of the Habsburgs with whom he cultivated close relations, and eventually led to his being named the Imperial librarian.

Confederacy of Bar. Yet, if we accept that the Confederacy's main concern was Russian domination (whether directly or indirectly by way of King Stanisław August), the establishment of Austrian rule had accomplished a major goal of the Confederacy by permanently ridding Southern Poland of Russian dominance. That the only token resistance offered up to the new administration came from noble office-holders in Lemberg, who had demonstrated their loyalty to King Stanisław August in previous years, seems to offer further reason to think that supporters of the Confederacy greeted Austrian rule with equanimity rather than resentment.

As a firmer context in which to understand the significance of these points, the situation in Lemberg is useful. In 1767, preparations for war with the Ottomans had led Russian forces to occupy this city.<sup>22</sup> The following year, as soon as the Confederacy had been formed, the Russian forces seized Lemberg's Roman Catholic Archbishop Sierakowski, who shared Bishop Sołtyk's anti-Russian and pro-Wettin sympathies, holding Sierakowski until they gave up control of Lemberg according to the partition agreement.<sup>23</sup> Naturally, this made the capture of the city a logical goal for the Confederacy and suggests that there would have been considerable support for the Confederacy had its troops succeeded.

They almost did. In June 1769, after the Russian General Krechetnikov shifted his troops to Podolia after the Russian-Ottoman War broke out, the Confederacy's forces moved on the city, and were repelled only after the commander of the city, Felicjan Korytowski, set fire to the settlements outside the city. Thereafter, a contingent of Russian troops remained garrisoned in Lemberg, where they fended off another concerted effort to seize the city in July of 1770.<sup>24</sup> As a result, Russian troops were still serving as the main garrison there until the 15 September 1772, when they were replaced by the Austrian forces, which had been waiting outside the city since the end of June.<sup>25</sup>

With that change of fortune, those who had supported the Confederacy in Galicia had one great consolation. The Austrian forces had removed Russian influence, and unlike the other partitioning powers, which were most definitely not Catholic, the Habsburg rule was bound to be more favorably received by Poles precisely because a Catholic sat on the throne of their new state. If the Polish nobles in Galicia, regardless of their attitude to the Confederacy, imagined that this important commonality would mean that under Austrian rule Galician affairs would still be left largely in their hands, they completely misjudged the centralizing impulse then dominating Habsburg imperial politics. As already noted Pergen happily brought Galician Poles into the Austrian administration, but he had already been replaced by Count

<sup>22</sup> PAPÉE (cf. footnote 17), p. 172.

<sup>23</sup> KONOPCZYŃSKI (cf. footnote 7), p. 744.

<sup>24</sup> PAPÉE (cf. footnote 17), p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 174.

Heinrich von Auersperg in early 1774. Once Auersperg took control, he began expanding the Galician administration, which led to an influx of officials from the Habsburg hereditary lands; Poles could only continue to serve in the administration if they gave up their traditional garb.<sup>26</sup>

Despite anxieties about allowing the Poles too much power, Auersperg attempted to reach an accommodation with the Polish nobility. His plan, worked out in 1775, however, could not be put in place because of insufficient interest among the Polish nobility even though it included the establishment of a *Landesvertretung* or diet and would have also provided an indemnity to Poles who had previously held office as well as allowed them to participate in the diet.<sup>27</sup> Any lingering hopes among Galician Poles that their privileges would be restored by being put under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian crown were finally dashed in 1779, when Maria Theresa rejected a Hungarian proposal to purchase Galicia.<sup>28</sup>

Even if Maria Theresa's decision left Galicia under centralized administration, she never developed an overarching vision of what the Galician nobility's relationship with the Crown should be. She was unafraid to impose reforms that would affect the nobility adversely, such as introducing taxation of the nobles and imposing a genealogical requirement of 150 years, which greatly reduced the official numbers of nobles in the province.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, she reached out to Galicians, including the nobility, by introducing educational reforms in Galicia consonant with those elsewhere in her domains. In 1776 she established a *Collegium Nobilium* in Lemberg, but participation of nobles was not required, and after four years in existence it had only 17 Polish students, including two members of the Piarist Order.<sup>30</sup>

Joseph II famously had a much clearer and broader vision for how to deal with Galicia and the Galician nobles, as well his other domains, which he became free to implement on the death of his mother in 1780. Almost from the start the Emperor appears to have regarded Galicia as a test case for how to enforce a centralized administration on a crownland where the locals had traditionally had a great deal of independence. He had played a large role in discrediting Pergen's governorship and used it to justify the introduction of centralized administration.<sup>31</sup> At issue, however, had not just been how best to

<sup>26</sup> GLASSL (cf. footnote 5), p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, pp. 104-106.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 104.

<sup>30</sup> 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 (Studien der Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa an der Universität Dortmund, 15), p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> DEREK BEALES: *Joseph II. Vol. 1: In the Shadow of Maria Theresia, 1741-1780*, Cambridge 1987, p. 216. Compare with FRANZ A. SZABO: *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism 1753-1789*, Cambridge 1994, p. 69.



deal with the Galician nobility and their hereditary rights, but more generally Joseph's desire to make sure that Galicia did not join Hungary and the United Provinces as a crownland where he could not easily impose his vision of a uniform administrative culture that would unite all elites.

As a result, some of the most visible changes wrought by Joseph II in Galicia were in the realm of culture, most notably the establishment of Lemberg University in 1784, as well as Greek and Roman Catholic seminaries.<sup>32</sup> As with the *Collegium Nobilium*, Joseph II did not require nobles to attend these institutions. But in as much as a doctorate in law was required for high ranks of public service, the university in particular must be seen as a carrot intended to attract the new generation of Galician nobles to state service and contribute to society in ways their parents could not. Similarly the establishment of the permanent German theater in Lemberg was aimed at insuring that the enlightened idea of culture he had championed also reached his Galician subjects.

These reforms did little for the older generation, who with few exceptions had been blocked from shaping Galicia's affairs since the removal of Pergen. They remained docile even as Joseph II continued to tax the nobility, refused to back down from the introduction of German as the language of administration, and continued the policy of scrutinizing noble claims, so that by 1787 only 750 out of an estimated 32,000 had retained their nobility.<sup>33</sup> The education requirement, of course, also limited their access to administrative jobs, but arguably more threatening to the nobility's traditional rights and Galician society more generally were Joseph II's social reforms.

For those used to the caricature of Joseph II as a man unable to recognize the importance of local traditions, his relative restraint in Galicia is striking. He did not reform serfdom in Galicia until 1786 (four years after he had

<sup>32</sup> The creation of the Greek Catholic seminary provides the best illustration of differences between Maria Theresa's views about the administration of Galicia and those of her son. Soon after taking over Galicia, Maria Theresa showed her benevolence towards the province's Uniate population by renaming them Greek Catholics and opening a seminary for them in Vienna, which only a handful of priests could actually attend. The Greek Catholic seminary established by her son in Lemberg insured that all novice priests acquired a higher education, which included exposure to the uniform culture Joseph II was seeking to promote.

<sup>33</sup> GLASSL (cf. footnote 5), p. 109. The failure of Galician nobles to resist the reduction of their noble status is particularly striking, and deserves more research. One likely explanation, given that those nobles that retained their status showed no signs of solidarity with their less fortunate brethren, is that the vast majority of families that lost noble status actually held it in name only, since they did not have sufficient property to qualify as true nobles even in Polish law. This seems all the more plausible because those nobles that did retain status appear not to have intervened on behalf of their lesser brethren. See ALTHOEN (cf. footnote 5), p. 276. Testing this hypothesis would require a thorough review of the Habsburg review of noble status, as well as court records and records of the Postulate Diet and any other documents in which interaction nobles and the Habsburg administration is documented.

introduced those reforms elsewhere), while the Toleration Patent for Galicia was not issued until 1789, eight years after the Toleration Patents for the hereditary lands. He also proved flexible enough to leave Galician nobles' monopoly on alcohol intact, a decision Carlile Aylmer Macartney attributes to stiff resistance on the part of Galician nobles without elaborating on the form this resistance took.<sup>34</sup>

Whether these concessions had any bearing on Polish noble opinion is unclear. It would certainly be wrong to suggest that Galician nobles were enthusiastic supporters of Josephine policies. In December 1789, an anonymous letter of grievance was sent to Joseph II that raised grievances about the state of the clergy, the arbitrary decisions of the Galician administration and was particularly critical of high taxes.<sup>35</sup> Still, when the elites in Hungary and the United Provinces moved towards outright rebellion as Joseph II lay on his deathbed in early 1790, Galicia remained quiet.<sup>36</sup> With Leopold II on the throne, however, the leaders of Galician nobility, including Princes Stanisław Jabłoński, Mikołaj Potocki, as well as Count Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, Jan Bąkowski and Jan Batowski drafted a petition of grievances, which they submitted to the Crown in the hope that a new constitutional arrangement could be reached.<sup>37</sup> This document was subsequently translated into German by an Austrian official identified as Franz Kratter by the Polish scholar Władysław Łoziński<sup>38</sup> and published in 1795 as "Magna Charta von Galicien oder Untersuchung der Beschwerde des Galizischen Adels. Polnische Nation über die österreichische Regierung."<sup>39</sup>

In their printed form the grievances cover forty-nine pages and stand in stark contrast to talk of the Galician Polish nobility's docility. As such, they provide ample fodder for those seeking evidence of the *szlachta's* commitment to preserving their traditional rights associated with the "Golden Freedoms," and by implication their broader connection to Polish identity. They sharply criticize the Habsburg administration's unwillingness to consult them on important issues, particularly taxation, but also the reform of serfdom, the

<sup>34</sup> CARLILE A. MACARTNEY: *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918*, New York 1969, p. 128, note 2.

<sup>35</sup> Presented in its entirety in WŁADYSŁAW ŁOZIŃSKI: *Galiciana. Kilka obrazków z pierwszych lat historii galicyjskiej* [Galiciana. A Few Scenes from the First Years of Galicia's History], Lemberg 1872, pp. 99-103, and *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Shortly before dying, Joseph II was urged by his police minister, the former Galician governor Pergen, to adopt a more conciliatory line towards the Polish nobility out of fear they might prove disloyal. The Emperor then made an inquiry directly to a trusted official in Galicia, who replied all was calm. GLASSL (cf. footnote 5), p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> ŁOZIŃSKI (cf. footnote 35), p. 61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 62.

<sup>39</sup> It was published in HEINRICH MORITZ GOTTLIEB GRELLMANN: *Statistische Aufklärung über wichtige Theile und Gegenstände der österreichischen Monarchie*, vol. 1, Göttingen 1795.

imposition of Austrian civil law, and the introduction of German as the language of administration in the province.

Rather than confirming the Galician nobility's strong sense of themselves and their place in the world, however, a close reading of this petition demonstrates a profound absence of self-awareness. The first ten pages amount to a complete vindication of life in the Commonwealth that betrays not a hint of self-reflection. Credit had been readily available based on the incomes from estates.<sup>40</sup> Serfdom worked well and claims that serfs were poorly treated did not take into account that serfs' numerical advantage over the nobles kept abuse in check through the threat of a peasant revolt.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the very weakness of the Polish standing army had insured that serfs were well taken care of, since there would not be sufficient manpower to put down a serious peasant revolt.<sup>42</sup> Other social relations, including those involving the family and religion, were likewise in no need of reform, and thus responsibility for the problems elaborated over the subsequent forty pages lay entirely with the Habsburg administration's ill-conceived policies.<sup>43</sup>

This description of the life in the Southern Commonwealth as something approximating the peaceable kingdom approaches a parody of self-satisfaction and delusion, so widely attributed to the *szlachta* by enlightenment critics and others since. The anonymous Habsburg official who submitted the document found the claims so preposterous and anachronistic that he wrote, "would only be excusable in the fourteenth century."<sup>44</sup> But it is not just that the delusions about the recent past upon which the grievances were premised made them surreal, it is also that the drafters did not recognize the absurdity of claiming to speak for all Galician nobles when they decried Habsburg oppression. After all, there had been little organized resistance to the administration. With no sense of irony, they went so far as to lecture the Habsburg administration on politics:

From the sudden transition from freedom to a monarchical government, and the forcible introduction of the same, one can readily see how greatly this weight has pressed the [noble] nation to the floor. This weight was made even greater through taxes and payments which this nation had not previously known, when one ought to have made the new government more acceptable and the loss of freedom less noticeable. Finally, a nation used to regarding their one-time kings as only the first citizen of the fatherland was forced to swear loyalty to their new state. Smart political thinking!<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 175.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, pp. 176-177.

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 184.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> "Aus den plötzlichen Übergängen von der Freyheit zur monarchistischen Regierung und aus der gewaltsamen Einführung der letzten kann man von selbst schliessen, wie sehr die Nation durch diese Last zu Boden gedrückt [wurde]. Sie wurde vergrößert,

The protests about various aspects of Habsburg policy carry on by seeking to relate every ill found in Galician society to the Habsburgs, which led to exaggerations and some gross misrepresentations of the facts. In criticizing the impact the introduction of the Austrian Civil Code has had on the province, the document describes the terrible disruptions that have been caused in familial and economic relations. Ostensibly, the weakening of husbands' control over their wives' possessions had made it more difficult for men to obtain credit, since according to law in the Commonwealth women had not been allowed to take part in business affairs – a strange claim given the extent of control women in the Commonwealth demonstrably had over their property.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Austrian law is blamed for creating conditions that allowed children to take their parents to court, thereby leading to familial discord and even led to broken marriages.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, though not related to legal changes, Austrian religious policy is also charged with causing the poor state of the clergy.<sup>48</sup>

Such claims go along with the defensive and romantic view of life in the Commonwealth discussed earlier. Yet remarkably grievances relating to cultural issues are not given the prominence which they would receive in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. True, officials are criticized for defaming the Polish nation as a "barbaric, a people knowing no social laws – a nation needing to be educated,"<sup>49</sup> but once the document turns to the issue of education and the introduction of language seventeen pages later, no defense of Polish as the cultural equal to German is made. Instead their main grievance about the compulsory introduction of German is that Poles will now find it difficult to hold office, as if Galicians would not have been well aware that learning German would be a useful skill from the moment Austria annexed Galicia. By the same token the claim that the administration's language policy amounted "to ordering [the Polish] nation to forget their mother-tongue in a few years" is another gross exaggeration unlikely to win friends in Vienna.<sup>50</sup> Use of Polish outside the narrow sphere of government and education was never proscribed, and as will be seen Polish cultural life profited from the Habsburg's cultural policies.

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*diese Last, durch Steuer und Abgaben, welche die Nation vorher gar nicht kannte, da man doch den Anfang der neuen Regierung angenehm, und den Verlust der Freyheit nicht so fühlbar machen sollen. Man forderte endlich Eid der Treue von einer Nation, die gewohnt war, ihre ehemaligen Könige nur für die ersten Bürger des Vaterlands zu halten. Eine kluge Politik!" Ibidem, pp. 185-186.*

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, pp. 199-201. See Lynn Lubamersky's article in this issue, pp. 509-525.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 201.

<sup>48</sup> Ibidem, pp. 202-203.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, p. 187.

<sup>50</sup> "Aber der Nation zu befehlen, in weniger Jahren ihre Muttersprache zu vergessen" reading further – "dieses Unternehmen war schwer und in der Ausübung unmöglich." Ibidem, p. 214.

All in all, the petition raises thirteen charges against the Habsburg administration: 1. The damage of property rights; 2. The destruction of Galicia's wealth; 3. The undercutting of farming; 4. The collapse of credit; 5. The mixing of the estates; 6. The breaking up of families; 7. The ruining of morals; 8. The desecration of religion; 9. Injury to honor and belief; 10. The increase in litigation; 11. The lack of money; 12. The limiting of Estate's authority; 13. Failure to accede to nobles' privileges.<sup>51</sup>

To remedy this situation, the petitioners predictably would return control of the province, including taxation, to the Galician structure, but the real surprise is how the rhetoric implicitly concedes that for all their pretensions, the authors accept that they are now subjects to the Emperor. For all their criticism, they make no mention of how the "monarchical rule" came to Galicia, implicitly accepting its legitimacy. Nor do they challenge the Monarch's right to levy taxes and instead say only that they wish taxes would be rolled back to the levels of the fair-minded Maria Theresa.<sup>52</sup> Also, their proposal includes a provision that as part of their resumption of control of the Galician administration they would swear allegiance to the Monarch, but it did not stipulate that the Monarch swear a similar oath to uphold the Galician nobles' rights, as would have been customary in the Commonwealth.<sup>53</sup> In closing the drafters of the document they seem even to have forgotten the haughty tone with which they began, and meekly note that the Monarch's acceptance of their recommendations would be a way of showing his good will but without any threat of what might be the consequences should he not adopt their proposal.<sup>54</sup>

What then is to be made of this contradictory document and what it says about the mindset of the Galician nobility circa 1790? The anonymous official to whom we owe its publication argued that the nobles who had drafted it did not expect their demands to be met.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, between the absurd claims at the beginning and the conciliatory ending, the authors gave the administration little reason to. By the same token the drafters' lack of any introspection evidenced by their portrayal of life in the Commonwealth, leaves little hope that further archival research would yield a definitive answer. Still, it seems reasonable to conclude that they honestly hoped their grievances would bring some concessions, and perhaps they would have had Leopold II not died so soon and had the French Revolution not come to preoccupy Francis II's court. So it may be that the document simply reflects a failure of rhetoric on the part of the nobility, eager to demonstrate their loyalty to the Habsburgs who had saved them from Russian influence, but still unable to grasp the *szlachta*'s own role in the Commonwealth's decline. In short, it was their attempt to

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 216.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 220.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 222.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 223.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.



reinvent themselves as a noble nation loyal to the Habsburgs, but like the Hungarians, a nation whose distinct history had, at the very least, to be acknowledged.

Thus long before the famous bargain proposed in 1868 by the Polish Diet, to support the Habsburgs if Vienna would acknowledge the primacy of Polish interests, the leading figures of the Galician Polish nobility had in reality already made their peace with the Habsburgs.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, as would be true later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sense that the Habsburgs and the Polish nobles in Galicia shared a common enemy in Russia was evident. Just prior to the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794, Francis II commissioned the Galician bibliophile and signatory of the "Magna Charta" Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński to serve as a liaison between the Austrian court and Kościuszko,<sup>57</sup> and notably the Habsburgs chose to remain neutral during the course of the rebellion. In response the first Galician patriotic organization adopted a pro-Austrian stance before some members decided to follow Joachim Denisko's lead and challenge Austrian rule militarily in 1797, a move that was not only ill-timed, but found very limited support among the Galician Polish nobility.<sup>58</sup>

But it was not just that Polish nobles acquiesced to Habsburg rule. The educational system introduced by Maria Theresa and Joseph II changed the universe for the younger generation. While only fifty-nine students had entered Lemberg University in 1785, one year after it was established, by 1795 there were 347 students attending classes in the philosophy faculty alone.<sup>59</sup> Other aspects of Austrian cultural policies helped refocus social life away from noble estates and towards Lemberg, the provincial capital.

Not surprisingly, the younger generation seems to have been most affected by these cultural changes. It was they who came to Lemberg to study at one of the new institutions, and while older nobles might enjoy associating with members of the administration at the ballroom, which had been built next to the newly established theater in the early 1790s, it was the youth who were most likely to appreciate the German theater performances. The three-year tenure of Wojciech Bogusławski's Polish company from 1796-1799, however, made the new currents of German theater accessible to them in their

<sup>56</sup> A comparison between the bargain proposed in the "Magna Charta" and that made in 1868 would be instructive, and on the face of it suggests that the Polish nobility had actually learned very little about dealing with the central administration over nearly 100 years. Ultimately the Austrian administration rebuffed the proposed bargain, even though it found it desirable to make concessions not unnecessary in the 1790s.

<sup>57</sup> WŁADYSŁAWA JABŁOŃSKA: Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński, Wrocław et al. 1967, pp. 62-63.

<sup>58</sup> WANDYCZ: *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* (cf. footnote 2), p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Student Catalogue of the Philosophy Faculty 1784-1795. Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Evivsko-ho Oblasti, Fond 26, Opys 15, Sprava 683, pp. 2-3 and pp. 124-129. Records for the law, theology, and medical faculties, which could be attended only after completing a doctorate in philosophy are unavailable, but could only further demonstrate the attraction of university study.

own language and thereby helped develop an aesthetic taste more in tune with Vienna and Prague.<sup>60</sup>

The full impact of Habsburg reforms, dating from the 1770s and 1780s, on the Polish nobility, became evident only during the 1809 war between Austria and Napoleon, when forces from the Duchy of Warsaw invaded Galicia. Poles in Cracow and other areas annexed in 1795, as a result of the final partition of the Commonwealth, greeted the Duchy's forces enthusiastically, and over 1,000 Galician volunteers in the Habsburg army deserted during the conflict.<sup>61</sup>

But the reaction in areas annexed in 1772 was more complicated. Poles in Lemberg welcomed the Duchy's forces that came to occupy the city at the end of May, and no less a figure than the young Aleksander Fredro, whose father had done quite well under Habsburg rule, joined the Polish legions. Nonetheless, the withdrawal of the Duchy's forces from the city in favor of Russian troops dashed any expectations that Galicians would be annexed to an independent Polish state.<sup>62</sup> The event had little lasting impact on the city or on the bulk of the territory Austria had been administering since 1772, as the Habsburgs had no trouble reasserting their authority when their troops reentered the city in December 1809.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, with the exception of the northern area of Zamojszczyzna, the territories ceded to the Duchy of Warsaw by the Treaty of Schönbrunn had only come under Austrian control in 1795.

### Conclusion

The division between the fate of the parts of Galicia annexed in 1772 and those absorbed in 1795 points to an important difference between the Poles who came under Habsburg rule in 1772 and those who remained Polish citizens until 1795. While the first had encountered the Enlightenment at the hand of the Austrians, the latter had experienced the political and cultural

<sup>60</sup> This effect of Austrian cultural institutions on the Polish nobility, including the petty *szlachta*, is exemplified by the case of Jan Nepomucen Kamiński, who was born to a petty Greek Catholic noble family in 1777, was sent to school in Lemberg and from there enrolled in the Greek Catholic Seminary. Apparently overcome by the joys of the theater, where the Polish company led by Wojciech Bogusławski performed in 1794, he transferred to the university and completed his studies there before dedicating his life to the theater, ultimately becoming the director of the Polish theater company in Lemberg in 1809 and serving until 1842. A more extended discussion of Kamiński's case will be found in my book in progress, *The Road from Lemberg to Lwów and Lviv*. See also Philipp Ther's article in this issue, pp. 543-571.

<sup>61</sup> 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 in the Years 1772-1815], Kraków 1998, p. 66.

<sup>62</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>63</sup> IGNACY CHODYNICKI: *Historia stołecznego królestwa Galicyi i Lodomieryi miasta Lwowa* [The History of the Capital of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Lwów], Lwów 1829, pp. 284-285.

renewal rooted in Enlightenment thinking that had flowered in the rump Commonwealth after 1772.<sup>64</sup> Thus, it appears that the Habsburg reforms preempted the revitalization of a unified Polish national political identity among the nobility in Galicia.

Seen in this light, Polish noble identity during this early phase of Habsburg rule was not a static and stubborn continuation of a belief in the primacy of Polish freedom and independence as has so often been assumed. Whether the bonds of *szlachta* identity ever ran as deep as has come to be accepted in Polish historiography deserves further study, but the Commonwealth's reform crisis, and ironically the patriotic Confederacy of Bar arguably weakened rather than strengthened the bonds between *szlachta* identity and the Polish state. As a result, those malcontents who in the process of the Confederacy's struggle had come to equate King Stanisław August with Russian intervention appear to have found it easy to accept Habsburg rule, even if it did not bring them what they expected.

Most remarkable, however, is the ease with which Galicia's Polish nobility, many of whom had joined the Confederacy of Bar to protect their "Golden Freedoms," adapted to subjectivity. While they would have liked more say in running Galicia, sovereignty was evidently not as important to them as the relinquished threat of Russian domination. This demonstrates just how unimportant the principles underlying the "Golden Freedoms" had become. Perhaps then, the "Magna Charta of the Galician Nobility" for all its emphasis on the nobles' grievances should be seen as a burial of those traditions.

That said, it would be unfair to characterize Polish noble reactions to Habsburg rule as purely symptomatic of the weaknesses of Polish *szlachta* identity. The Habsburg central administration's refusal to take Polish grievances too seriously began a process of taming the Galician Polish nobility, helping to create a new specifically Galician Polish identity. Apart from playing up the shared anti-Russian sentiments of the Austrian state and the Polish nobility, the new version of Polish noble identity that emerged continued to emphasize the nobles' place at the head of Galician society and the essential rectitude of a society divided by estates. At the same time, the Poles' history as an independent nobility was not cast entirely to the wind, even if they had chosen to become loyal subjects of the Habsburg Emperor; in particular they

<sup>64</sup> Why the nobles living around Zamość, who had experienced enlightened reforms at the hands of the Habsburgs proved more rebellious than the bulk of their fellow nobles who had lived under Austrian rule since 1772 has not been sufficiently explored, but two points seem worth noting: First, they were quite far removed from the administrative center in Lemberg, and lived close to the border with the rump Commonwealth. Second, Joseph II's cultural policies had directly harmed Zamość's status, because the academy of long-standing there was closed when Lemberg University was opened in 1784. See Directive to the Galician Governor's Office. Tsentralnyi Derzhavnyi Istorychnyi Arkhiv Lwowa, Fond 146, Opys 85, Sprawa 2773, p. 10. For more on the case of *Zamojszczyzna* see, CHRISTOPHER BLACKBURN: *Napoleon and the Szlachta*, Boulder, Col., 1998.

showed no desire to imitate the Czech nobility in adopting German culture. The great irony of this was that the Austrian central administration would not fully appreciate how closely Galician Poles had tied themselves to the Habsburgs until after Galician Poles won considerable control over Galicia at the end of the 1860s.

### Zusammenfassung

#### *Szlachta außerhalb der Adelsrepublik. Der Fall des polnischen Adels in Galizien*

Der anhaltende Widerstand des polnischen Adels gegen die Teilungsmächte ist ein zentraler Aspekt in den Forschungen zur Geschichte des geteilten Polens. Zudem besitzt er seit langem große Bedeutung für die polnische Identität, insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund der gescheiterten Reformversuche in Restpolen nach der ersten Teilung, welche die nationale Solidarität des Adels wieder stärkte. Allerdings wird die Tatsache, daß ein großer Teil der Adels nach dieser Teilung schon nicht mehr in der Adelsrepublik lebte, oft übersehen, was die Frage nach dem Wahrheitsgehalt dieses Bildes von der starken nationalen Solidarität des polnischen Adels aufwirft. In der vorliegenden Arbeit wird versucht, diese Frage durch eine Analyse der Haltung des polnischen Adels in Galizien gegenüber der österreichischen Herrschaft näher zu beleuchten.

Auf die relativ positive Einstellung des polnischen Adels in Galizien zur neuen österreichischen Regierung wurde bereits früher, etwa von Jacek Staszewski, hingewiesen. Diese Untersuchung geht jedoch weiter, indem sie die Gründe für dieses Verhalten und dessen allgemeinere Bedeutung für unser Verständnis der Mentalität des polnischen Adels untersucht. Im Einklang mit Staszewski wird argumentiert, daß die Sympathien der polnischen Adeligen in Galizien für die österreichische Herrschaft auf die Erfahrungen der Konföderationen von Radom und von Bar zurückzuführen sind; darüber hinaus wird hier aber auch gezeigt, wie nachrangig die politische Unabhängigkeit für den polnischen Adel eigentlich war. Wenngleich Angehörige der *Szlachta* in Galizien mehrfach versuchten, besondere Kontrollfunktionen und Einfluß zu erlangen, akzeptierten sie die österreichische Herrschaft doch fast von Beginn an, selbst bereits zu einem Zeitpunkt, als die österreichische Administration noch gar keine Anstalten machte, auf die Wünsche der polnischen Adeligen einzugehen. Zwar zeigte der galizische Adel wenig Interesse, die deutsche Kultur oder gar Identität anzunehmen, aber zu Beginn des 19. Jh.s schien sich ein großer Teil der polnischen *Szlachta* in Galizien mit ihrem Status als habsburgische Untertanen bereitwillig abgefunden zu haben.