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Strategies of the “civilizing mission” of the Habsburg government in Galicia after the First Partition of Poland

The article is devoted to analysis of the “civilising mission” element in plans and strategies of the Habsburg Monarchy in the “Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria” during the first years after the First Partition of Poland. The imperial administration created an ambitious plan of reforms and transformations in Galicia, aimed at bringing the population of the province to progress and prosperity in the “Habsburg” sense of these terms and making them model citizens of the empire. In order to examine these plans, the reasons for their creation, and their short-term implementation, the texts of the first patents and orders of the Habsburg government, as well as reports of Habsburg officials employed in Galicia, will be analyzed, with particular emphasis on the “civilizing mission” element of these documents. Since the annexation of Galicia coincided with the popularity of the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy and the implementation of reforms in its spirit throughout the entire monarchy, the influence of this philosophy on the planned transformations in Galicia will also be studied.

Keywords: Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Habsburg Monarchy, civilizing mission, Enlightened Absolutism

The concept of a “civilizing mission” is one of the key elements of postcolonial theories. The justification for the occupation of foreign lands and their subsequent colonising transformation through the necessity of ‘bringing to civility’ the inhabitants of these lands has been applied by the different states on different continents since the dawn of history. According to the definition of 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”.¹

¹ J. Osterhammel, *Europe, the „West” and the civilizing mission*, London 2006, p. 8.

The “civilizing mission” is inseparable from the “othering” process, another key element of postcolonialism;² it always requires the establishment of the clearly separated categories of “civilization” and “barbarians/savages”, with the indisputable dominance of the former over the latter. By deliberately degrading natives and placing them in an opposite – and incomparably inferior – position towards themselves, “settlers” not only aimed at strengthening their status on an occupied land, but also prepared the ground for bringing it to “civilization” in the course of future transformation policies.

The application of postcolonial instruments to the policies of the Habsburg imperial government towards its different crownlands has been the object of a vast number of studies, including the comprehensive and multidimensional research “Habsburg Postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis” edited by Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, and Moritz Csáky,³ or the multiple contributions to the interdisciplinary “Kakanien Revisited” platform.⁴ As a separate concept, the “civilizing missions” conducted by the Habsburg monarchy have been addressed, among others, in “Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg „Civilizing Mission” in Bosnia 1878–1914”⁵ by Robin Okey and “Colonialism without Colonies: The Civilizing Missions in the Habsburg Empire”⁶ by Werner Telesko. The postcolonial methodological instruments have also been applied on a local level to the history of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria (or simply Galicia), acquired by the monarchy in course of the Partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century. To name a few examples, an entire issue of “Historyka Studia metodologiczne” in 2012 was devoted to the postcolonial dimension in Galician Habsburg history, including the articles “Postcolonial or Post-colonial? Post(-) colonial Perspectives on Habsburg Galicia”⁷ by Klemens Kaps and Jan Surman, “The ‘Imperial Idea’ and Civilising Missions”⁸ by Franz Leander Fillafer and “The trap of colonialism... The Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia – colonised or

² E.W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. Reprinted with a new afterword, London 1995, p. 332.

³ M. Csáky, J. Feichtinger, U. Prutsch, *Habsburg postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Innsbruck : Wien 2003.

⁴ Kakanien Revisited, URL: <https://www.kakanien-revisited.at/>.

⁵ R. Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg „Civilizing Mission” in Bosnia 1878–1914*, Oxford 2007.

⁶ W. Telesko, *Colonialism without Colonies: The Civilizing Missions in the Habsburg Empire* [in:] *Cultural Heritage as Civilizing Mission: From Decay to Recovery*, ed. M. Falser, Cham 2015.

⁷ K. Kaps, J. Surman, *Postcolonial or Post-colonial? Post (-) colonial perspectives on Habsburg Galicia*, „Historyka Studia Metodologiczne; Polska Akademia Nauk Oddział PAN w Krakowie” 2012, vol. XLII.

⁸ F. L. Fillafer, *The “Imperial Idea” and Civilising Missions*, „Historyka Studia Metodologiczne; Polska Akademia Nauk Oddział PAN w Krakowie” 2012, vol. XLII.

colonisers?”⁹ by Wiktoria Kudela-Świątek and Adam Świątek. In “The Idea of Galicia. History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture”¹⁰ Larry Wolff examined 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, starting with the year 1772. Finally, the collection “Galizien: Peripherie der Moderne – Moderne der Peripherie?”¹¹ edited by Elisabeth Haid, Stephanie Weismann, and Burkhard Wöller, accumulated contributions of authors dealing with a reflection of different aspects of Galician history through postcolonial perspective within the context of “modernizing” processes beginning at the mid-19th century.

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyse the presence of the element of “civilising mission” in the strategies of the Habsburg monarchy developed in the course of the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1772) with respect to its newly acquired territories. To achieve that goal, the texts of the first patents and orders of the Habsburg government as well as of the reports of the highest Habsburg officials dealing with the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria will be studied. A special attention will be given to the influence of the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy over the monarchy rulers at the time, and the intended application of this theory in the new Habsburg province.

To begin researching the matter, one should look at the socio-political differences which existed between the Habsburg empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of the 18th century. In the decades prior to the First Partition, the Habsburg monarchy went through groundbreaking changes of political, economic and social structure of the country, largely inspired by the Enlightened Absolutism philosophy. In his book “Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism 1753–1780” Franz Szabo suggests that the specific Habsburg version of the Enlightened Absolutism was based on three pillars.¹² The first one was the ruler of the monarchy, whose personality played a key role in the state administration. The ruler was believed to be chosen by Providence to serve the state and the people for the greater good.¹³ At the same time, the rule of the Habsburg dynasty could not be limited by any counterweight power,

⁹ W. Kudela-Świątek, A. Świątek, *The trap of colonialism... The Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia – colonised or colonisers?*, „Historyka Studia Metodologiczne; Polska Akademia Nauk Oddział PAN w Krakowie” 2012, vol. XLII.

¹⁰ L. Wolff, *The idea of Galicia: history and fantasy in Habsburg political culture*, Stanford 2010.

¹¹ E. Haid, S. Weismann, B. Wöller, *Galizien: Peripherie der Moderne – Moderne der Peripherie?*, Marburg 2013.

¹² F.A. Szabo, *Kaunitz and enlightened absolutism 1753–1780*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 6-7.

¹³ D. Beales, *Was Joseph II an Enlightened Despot?* [in:] *The Austrian Enlightenment and its Aftermath*, eds. R. Robertson, E. Timms, Edinburgh 1991, p. 13.

and the judgement of the monarch would become the final definition of what constitutes the greater good for the population.¹⁴ The second pillar were the capable individuals holding highest ministerial positions, whose initiatives revolutionized the empire at different stages of the reform process, such as Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz or Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg. 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 court, but to the state itself.¹⁵ Such 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 open to the representatives of other social groups, as long as they obtained necessary education.¹⁶ The ideal of the bureaucrat of the Habsburg empire corresponded to a principle voiced 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ Through this approach to state administration, the Habsburg monarchy managed to achieve notable degree of power centralization, drastically diminish the role of nobility in individual provinces and improve the state economy and military organization.¹⁹ Meanwhile, a lot of attention was paid to the improvement of the imperial population – according to the Enlightened Absolutism ideal, the subjects of Habsburgs were to become dynamic autonomous citizens, free from prejudices and significant character flaws, as only this kind of people could fully benefit society and the state.²⁰ For this reason, the Habsburg government attached great importance to the education reforms. Through taking the matters of education away from the Jesuits, the role of the monarch was strengthened even more, as the clerical power was made fully subordinate to the will of the

¹⁴ P.M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, Cambridge 2016, p. 56.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 58.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

¹⁷ I. Vushko, *The politics of cultural retreat: imperial bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867*, New Haven 2015, pp. 27–28.

¹⁸ H.M. Scott, *Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–90* [in:] *Enlightened Absolutism. Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. H.M. Scott, Basingstoke, Hampshire 1990, p. 159; P.M. Judson, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

¹⁹ I. Plattner, *Josephinismus und Bürokratie* [in:] *Josephinismus und Bürokratie*, Verf. H. Reinalter, Wien 2008, pp. 63–64.

²⁰ P.M. Judson, *op. cit.*, p. 56; F.A. Szabo, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

secular government, once again for the benefit of the entire monarchy.²¹ By 1772, the reforms of Maria-Theresia and Joseph II had not reached their peak, but the impressive results achieved so far allowed the Habsburgs to consider the chosen path a very effective approach to state governance, and the monarchy itself – a nearly perfect example of practices which allowed their subordinates to realize their full potential and prosper while serving the state and society as a whole.

One could hardly imagine a state as different from the Enlightened Absolutist ideal as was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The term best used to describe its governance system would probably be the “mixed state” or the “free republic”.²² On paper, the three pillars of the Commonwealth were the king, the Senate and the *szlachta* (nobility); however, the last one controlled the other two and therefore was the most prominent element of the state, if not the embodiment of the state itself. Traditionally, only members of the *szlachta* were regarded as the “real” Polish nation, the bearers of true “Polishness” and the spirit of the state, the only ones capable of leading the country towards peace and prosperity.²³ For that reason, the nobility was bestowed with virtually unlimited privileges and power.²⁴ The king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had a rather limited amount of state administration under his direct control, and had to achieve the approval of the nobility-controlled parliament for all decisions in key administration areas.²⁵ The power of the king was further limited by the obligations he adhered to while ascending to the throne. Some restrictions concerned even the personal life of the king, as he could not choose his wife or travel abroad without approval of the Senate Council and the parliament, respectively.²⁶ Unlike in the Habsburg monarchy, the kings of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not manage to create a class of officials that would be their backing in a potential opposition with the *szlachta*.²⁷

The parliament of the Commonwealth, or the general Sejm, was supposed to unite all three pillars of the state, with the king representing the laws of the Crown, the Senate – the highest officials and Sejm – the noble estates.²⁸

²¹ R. Pranzl, *Das Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche/Religion im theresianisch-josephinischen Zeitalter* [in:] *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus*, Verf. H. Reinalter, Wien 2008, pp. 27–28.

²² U. Augustyniak, *History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: State-Society-Culture*, Frankfurt am Main 2015, p. 71-72.

²³ W. Kalinka, *Galicja i Kraków pod panowaniem austriackim*, Paryż 1853, pp. 53-54.

²⁴ A. Zajączkowski, *Szlachta polska: kultura i struktura*, Warszawa 1993, p. 30.

²⁵ U. Augustyniak, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 80.

²⁷ A. Mączak, *Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: władza i przestrzeń* [in:] *Rzeczpospolita–Europa XVI-XVII wiek. Próba konfrontacji*, ed. M. Koczyński, W. Tygielski, Warszawa 1999, p. 18.

²⁸ U. Augustyniak, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

The *szlachta* claimed such a system to be the ideal form of government, which combined the elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.²⁹ The last one was implemented in the *liberum veto* principle, according to which any discussion in Sejm could be stopped and any legislation nullified if just one representative was against it.³⁰ However, exactly this principle led to a steady loss of efficiency of the parliament, as its sessions were often paralyzed due to lack of unanimous consensus on a certain decision.³¹ As a result, long before the moment of the First Partition the general Sejm has turned into a place of remarkable corruption, since the rich noblemen massively bought the votes of their poorer compatriots, as well as numerous conflicts of local and personal interests.³² In the local administration, the importance of the *szlachta* was even more prominent. The land offices, such as those of voivodes or castellans, were fully under control of the different noble families, and, since those families were often in conflict with each other, the functioning of the state organs could not be organized properly.³³ The disintegration on every level of state administration led to the growing weakness of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its inability to defend itself from potential invaders.³⁴ It had no army capable of performing well on the battlefield – at the same time, the rich landowners had private armies to protect their interests. Moreover, it became a habit of both the king and the nobility to conspire with foreign states, hoping to get their support in the fight for power.³⁵

For obvious reasons, the Commonwealth nobility regarded its state system as the most efficient possible. They claimed that the absence of strong central government and the strict limitations of the royal power safeguarded their land from the establishment of a despotic regime.³⁶ The “freedoms” of the *szlachta* allowed each representative of the noble class, regardless of the size of his fortune and possessions, to enjoy equal rights with other members of his social group,

²⁹ S. Koyama, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a Political Space: Its Unity and Complexity* [in:] *Regions in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present*, eds. T. Hayashi, H. Fukuda, vol. 15, Sapporo 2007, p. 144.

³⁰ A. Wyczański, *Polska-Rzeczpospolita szlachecka, 1454–1764*, Warszawa 1965, p. 374.

³¹ U. Augustyniak, op. cit., p. 104.

³² A.J. Brawer, *Galizien, wie es an Österreich kam: eine historisch-statistische Studie über die inneren Verhältnisse des Landes im Jahre 1772*, Leipzig 1910, pp. 36–37

³³ A. Wyczański, op. cit., pp. 341–342.

³⁴ S. Pacholkiv, *Das Werden einer Grenze: Galizien 1772–1867* [in:] *Grenze und Staat. Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867*, Verf. W. Heindl-Langer, E. Saurer, H. Burger, Wien 2000, p. 530.

³⁵ A. Wyczański, op. cit., p. 370.

³⁶ J. Czuby, *The Attitudes of the Polish Political Elite towards the State in the Period of the Duchy of Warsaw, 1807–1815* [in:] *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe*, eds. M. Rowe, Basingstoke 2003, p. 174.

which corresponded to the true essence of “noble democracy”.³⁷ As for the rest of the population, the Commonwealth nobility asserted that they could not be trusted with taking responsibility for their own lives. According to the *szlachta*, the Commonwealth society ensured nearly-perfect relationship between the landlords and their enserfed peasantry (which constituted nearly 70% of the entire population), where “several thousands” of the noblemen provided for “about three million and hundreds of thousands” of peasants, and both groups enjoyed a peaceful and fruitful co-existence.³⁸ The landlord had an obligation to care for the well-being of his serfs, for the security of their property, as well as for their souls, which is why he paid the local priests and financed church services from his own pocket.³⁹ This, in the opinion of nobility, fully justified the absence of peasant’s political rights and the inability of serfs to defend themselves from the arbitrariness of their landlord.

Outside of the Commonwealth, however, its political and societal structure was often subject to harsh criticism. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the 18th century was sometimes directly described as finding itself “between the Eastern and the Western World”,⁴⁰ capable of civilizing, but remaining some way off the mark.⁴¹ Using the term popular among Polish noblemen, the inhabitants of the land were compared to “Sarmatians”, but in the words of the leading intellectuals of that time that meant alleged “wilderness” and “backwardness” of their character and not persistent adherence to freedom and advanced military skills that the *szlachta* boasted of.⁴² Even the members of the upper classes were described as very low educated, prone to heavy drinking and interested in their own power much more than in the well-being of the state.⁴³ That, in turn, led to persistent chaos in decision-making processes and suffering of common people, who could not rely on their government for protection. The Commonwealth institution that repelled its “enlightened” contemporaries the most was probably its serfdom practices, usually described in no milder terms than “slavery”. In the 18th century, the slave-like conditions of the peasantry in states such as the Russian Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or the Ottoman Empire were very much taken as a symptom of extreme backwardness.⁴⁴ The stark

³⁷ A. Zajączkowski, op. cit., p. 56.

³⁸ E.T. von Kortum, *Magna Charta von Galizien oder Untersuchung der Beschwerden des galizischen Adels pohlischer Nation über die österreichische Regierung*, Jassy 1790, pp. 290–291.

³⁹ Ibidem, pp. 84–285.

⁴⁰ L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994, p. 352.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 181.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 91.

⁴³ M. Řezník, *Neuorientierung einer Elite: Aristokratie, Ständewesen und Loyalität in Galizien (1772–1795)*, Frankfurt am Main 2016, p. 144.

⁴⁴ L. Wolff, op. cit., p. 52.

contrast between the “chaotic” and “backward” Commonwealth and its own centralized and “enlightened” government therefore gave, the Habsburg monarchy an ideal pretext to begin the “civilizing mission” on former Commonwealth lands once they became a part of the empire in 1772.

The necessity of such a mission found support in the reports of the first Habsburg governor of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, Count Anton von Pergen, who was sent to his new place of employment immediately after the First Partition was completed. On the 30th of August 1772, he addressed the central government with “Pro Nota”, which contained his vision of the new territory, as well as suggestions for its transformation. Von Pergen began by describing the situation in Galicia in the grimmest terms: “The current state of the land is very bad, and it 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”.⁴⁵ While formulating his philosophy for the future rule, von Pergen repeated the usual Enlightened Absolutism Postulate on the underlying necessity of striving for the prosperity of all people, and the direct connection between the well-being of sovereigns and their subordinates. He also claimed that the principles of Habsburg rule in Galicia should be as simple, systematic, and “natural” as possible, and that the new administration must work transparently, efficiently, and with a greater good in mind, purely in spirit of the Josephinian ideal of bureaucracy.⁴⁶

In about a year, von Pergen presented Joseph II with a more detailed description of the new Habsburg province. Already in the introduction, von Pergen justified the regime change in Galicia with a criticism of the Polish-Lithuanian government: “Under Polish rule, the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria suffered through many monstrous abuses of all kinds, the existing laws and regulations were in part very defective and, even when they were good, they were not followed any further than it was necessary as the minor despots divided the country among themselves... It would not be easy to find a country where disorder and political corruption had risen to a higher degree”.⁴⁷ In the next paragraph, the governor unreservedly supported the emperor and his mission “to make these obtained lands happy by removing abuses, establishing good order

⁴⁵ A. von Pergen, *Pro Nota*, 30.08.1772, AT-OeStA/AVA Inneres HK Allgemein, Neue Provinzen, Staatsverwaltung, Galizien, Ktn. 229, p. 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴⁷ A. 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, AT-OeStA/HHStA HausA Hofreisen, Reisen Kaiser Joseph II., Ktn 5, Einleitung.

and justice, and improving their nourishment and trade”.⁴⁸ In the following sections, the new governor dealt with the different classes of the Galician population. None of them received full appreciation from the Habsburg official. He pitied the numerous enserfed peasantry, who usually lacked elementary knowledge of Christian religion, social practices or agriculture; in his words, their living conditions were unbelievably bad and unsanitary, and the lack of interest in the results of their labor made them often succumb to alcoholism.⁴⁹ The responsibility for this is unequivocally placed on local noble landlords and their managing practices, as well as the Commonwealth state system – von Pergen compared Galicia to Silesia and asserted that in the latter, the strong government was able to protect peasantry from the local nobility and therefore improve the general socio-economic state of the land.⁵⁰ To further degrade the Commonwealth regime, von Pergen named the king “a slave” to the country’s nobility, with the sovereign usually being forced to succumb to petty intrigues of the poorly educated and selfish *szlachta*.⁵¹ As for the local clergy, the governor suggested that the priests of various denominations were not always diligent in fulfilling their spiritual responsibilities, as they were often much more interested in making direct profit. For that reason, they largely lost authority among common folk, and the new government should not rely on them too much in order to win the loyalty of the locals.⁵² Instead, von Pergen suggested improving the province by taking from the nobility the power to oppress the peasant majority. He did not, however, recommend providing the serfs with all the citizen rights and freedoms they lacked right away – before that “their character had to be improved” through education and introduction of better moral practices.⁵³ Only after that would the Galician peasantry be “civilized” enough to become worthy of the status of full citizens of the empire. As for the *szlachta*, von Pergen remained rather optimistic concerning their potential loyalty to the empire but argued that this must be preceded by fundamental social transformations.⁵⁴

The features of the “civilizing mission” discourse can be observed directly in the first instructions and decrees of the Habsburg government. Already during the march of Maria Theresa’s troops in Galicia, on the 29th of May 1772 she issued “Preliminary Instructions” for the interim military and civil officials in

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, Pnt. 194.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, Pnt. 193.

⁵¹ Ibidem, Pnt. 41.

⁵² Ibidem, Pnt. 120.

⁵³ Ibidem, Pnt. 204–205.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, Pnt. 46.

the new province,⁵⁵ where she defined the key principles of her reign in Galicia. The well-being of the monarch was put in direct dependence to the well-being of her subordinates, which is why the new civil administration had to make no difference between the interests of the sovereign and the interests of the people. To smooth the transition period, the new officials had “to win love and trust of the subjects” through “mildness and justice”, and for that, they were given the task of making the general public familiar with the principles and intentions of the new power. “Promotion of God’s glory and administration of justice... without which no state or individual land can persist, be calm and happy” was proclaimed to be the highest goal. The new government was to attempt to ameliorate the living conditions of the inhabitants of the new realm. In spirit of the cameralist theory, domestic production growth as well as the increase in health and a physically strong population were named the primary source of the land’s prosperity; therefore, they had to be encouraged at all costs. Although Maria-Theresia praised freedom of subjects as a necessary condition for the well-being of the land, she warned against permissiveness and chaos in state administration, which meant a significant reduction of rights and privileges of the *szlachta*. Finally, the largely aristocratic Commonwealth officialdom was put in yoke – the higher-ranking officials were dismissed at once, the lower-ranking ones were allowed to keep their positions temporarily to ensure the uninterrupted functioning of administration, but they were to work eagerly and diligently, as well as to obey the Habsburg military administration in every respect under threat of dismissal. To sum up, the new administration was to justify their presence in Galicia by assuming the moral high ground, and to completely change its organization according to the Habsburg standards under the pretext of “making the life of the subjects better” and “improving their living conditions”.

The same rhetoric was present in the following decrees. The acquisition patent from the 11th of September 1772 voiced contempt of the ruling dynasty for the state of affairs in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and called every citizen of the new province to obedience, threatening harsh punishment to those who will violate “Our innate kindness”.⁵⁶ Another document contained an order from the 13th of October 1772 to all province inhabitants stipulating to come back to their settlement areas. The order began with expressing persuasion that the preceding instructions “were comprehended by all citizens in the received and abovementioned land, whatever condition and state they belong to”, and

⁵⁵ *Vorläufige Anweisungs-Punkten, nach welcher sich von Seite des Civilis in Unserm neu occupirten Pohnlischen Antheil zubetragen ist*, 30.5.1772, AT-OeStA/Kriegsarchiv Zentralstellen Hofkriegsrat Hauptreihe Akten 901, 28/22 – 29/48, 1772-29-45.

⁵⁶ *Edicta et mandata universalia Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae. A die 11 Septembr. 1772 initae possessionis promulgata*, Leopoli 1773, p. 2–3.

that each of them “behaves calmly” because of it.⁵⁷ According to the text, “the Serene Imperial-Royal Majesty is very concerned that every landowner should return to their goods and stay in them”. In just one week, the new government began establishing its permanent administration bodies in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria with the judicial offices. The text began with the claim that the justice in state is crucial to the happiness of its people, and that “the Holy Imperial-Royal Majesty has no greater wish than to ensure happiness of each of her subjects in every matter”.⁵⁸ Once the state decided to regulate the matter of royal goods and issued a corresponding patent on the 28th of January 1773, it promised to demonstrate “the inborn benevolence” of Her Majesty to the “possessors” of the royal goods and allow them to keep their status and profits until “the reasons of great importance” would cause the new government to withdraw that right.⁵⁹ The list of these subtle remarks could go on, and all of them would demonstrate the priorities of the Habsburg administration quite clearly. From the very moment of annexation, the Habsburg government decided on a “milder” approach in its transformation policies, devoid of direct military or police oppression (in contrast to Prussian imperialism).⁶⁰ At the same time, this soft approach did not envisage treating Galician society, or even its upper class, as an equal partner in the system of governance. The imperial administration rather chose to present itself as a “parental figure” for the “childish” Galician subordinates, who were not capable of managing themselves because of the “chaotic” regime they lived under prior to the First Partition. Therefore, it became a mission of the Habsburgs and their administration to “elevate” their new subjects by completely transforming their way of life and character, and that could only be ensured through unconditional obedience. Those who dared to dispute the unlimited Habsburg authority, would be punished the same way a parent would punish a disobedient child – for its own good.

The first stage of Habsburg inclusion of Galicia culminated in a lavish tribute ceremony on the 29th of December 1773. Count von Pergen issued a manifest proclaiming the acquisition of the new province by the empire in German, Latin and Polish, which also included the quasi-historical justification for such an act. After the proclamation of the manifest “under the sound of trumpets and timpani” and the gun salutation the ceremony proceeded with the cheers to Maria Theresa and Joseph II and concluded with the “Te Deum Laudamus” chanted in the cathedral by the archbishop himself. The manifest was then to be hung on all the

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 8

⁵⁹ Ibidem, pp. 24–25.

⁶⁰ U. Prutsch, „Habsburg postcolonial“ [in:] *Habsburg postcolonial : Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Verf. M. Csáky, J. Feichtinger, U. Prutsch, Innsbruck: Wien 2003, p. 36.

gates of the capital city and read from the pulpits of the churches so that everyone became familiar with its text.⁶¹ A specific instruction was created to pay tribute by the Galician population. It claimed that, since the territory of the Kingdom was “transferred” to the Habsburg monarchy, and “no grievances concerning the rights relinquished according to this treaty shall be voiced”, there were no obstacles for a public tribute of the local population to the new monarch.⁶² This ceremony was described as an occasion “to solemnly obtain the rights of Our strong protection and Our maternal love and care”. The tribute was to be paid by three estates of the feudal state system separately, starting with the clergy. The archbishops and bishops of Galicia had to be present in capital on the 29th of December 1773 and to swear allegiance in their own names and in the names of 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 out that the oath of Galician nobility was incredibly important to Maria Theresa, but to “save Our beloved sons from unnecessary expenses, when possible”, she allowed them to choose representatives of district nobility who would then travel to the capital city and take an oath for their superiors. To ensure that each nobleman accepted the new government and voiced readiness to serve it, the document had an appendix with the text of the oath, which was to be signed personally by every Member of the Galician *szlachta*. 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, the 29th of December 1773. The course of the ceremony was described in great detail, including the status of the person reading the text of an oath to their subordinates (e.g. a magistrate, a possessor of royal goods or a kahal rabbi) and the gesture everyone present must show to accept it. It was noted that the text of the 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 instruction concluded with the expression of Maria Theresa’s trust towards her new subjects and the hope that they would follow the words of their oath, so that “Her highest will and endeavours are fulfilled”.⁶³

This great attention to detail once again demonstrated the willingness of the Habsburgs to completely transform the way of life of Galician inhabitants

⁶¹ H. Glassl, *Das österreichische Einrichtungswerk in Galizien (1772–1790)*, Wiesbaden 1975, pp. 38–39.

⁶² *Continuatio Edictorium et Mandatorum Universalium in Regnis Galicie et Lodomerie. A die 28. Mensis Junii Anno 1773. Emanatorum*, Leopoli 1774, p. 19.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, pp. 21–22.

without ever considering their opinion on the matter. Gone was the Commonwealth pluralism and “freedoms” – the Habsburg empire recognized only its own, centralized state system, and would not allow any compromises with the local population or even the elites. According to Miloš Řezník, “the inauguration functioned as a transition between rulers, states and political systems”; through it, the Habsburg government consciously rejected the existing traditions of the *szlachta* governance and the dependent status of the Commonwealth king, while also establishing a completely new, fully subordinate state of nobility.⁶⁴ The only thing the Galicians were allowed to do was to accept the text of the oath without attempting to change a single word of it. Moreover, the new government made sure that each of those swearing allegiance knew exactly what conditions they were accepting. Once again, the government adopted a role of “a wise parent”, who demanded not just surface obedience, but full submission from the new “children”, aiming to transform their character and morals for the good of everyone. Taking an oath of obedience for Galicians meant removing the “childish” ways of the “chaotic” Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to begin moving towards joining the circle of “developed” Habsburg hereditary lands – fully according to the general “civilizing mission” discourse.

In conclusion, one could say that the characteristics of the “civilizing mission” were among the key elements of the initial strategy of the Habsburg government in the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. Since the empire saw its state system as a “golden standard” for any society, there should be no wonder that it used differences between its own centralized government and the nobility-driven Commonwealth as a justification for completely transforming the former Polish-Lithuanian lands once they joined its realm. All the reforms that occurred in the subsequent years were aimed at “taming” the allegedly “barbaric” character of the new province and its inhabitants, as a result making it more safe, predictable, and profitable for the central government. To facilitate that, the Habsburg administration carried out homogenization politics, aimed at assimilation of Galicia within the empire.⁶⁵ In practical terms, one of the examples of the homogenization politics was an attempt to employ officials from Galicia in other parts of the empire, such as Bohemia (so that the Polish nobility would not have the slightest chance to preserve their influence on the state) and to entrust these officials with the task of spreading the German language and customs.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ M. Řezník, *Shaping a New Habsburg Territory* [in:] *More than Mere Spectacle: Coronations and Inaugurations in the Habsburg Monarchy during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. K. Van Gelder, vol. 31, New York 2021, p. 224.

⁶⁵ M. Csáky et. al., op. cit., PP. 18–19.

⁶⁶ S. Grodziski, *W Królestwie Galicji i Lodomerii*, Kraków 1976, p. 43.

It was believed that a “softer” colonial approach, devoid of direct military oppression, would be more effective in assimilating former Polish lands.⁶⁷

However, as became obvious very soon, the empire did not have enough trained professionals or a clear reform blueprint to make Galicia into a perfect example of “civilizing” transformations. In reality, Vienna had to constantly balance between the interests of different social groups of the province, as well as the availability of resources it could spare to be invested in a new province.⁶⁸ The discourse of “civilizing mission” was largely abandoned by the government after the death of Joseph II. His nephew, Franz II, would place much more value on safeguarding the province from any potential unrest at times of the French Revolution or the Kościuszko uprising, which is why his government chose conservative and less provocative approach to provincial administration.⁶⁹ As a result, the period during and immediately after the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth remained the time of greatest relevance of the “civilizing mission” narrative in Habsburg rhetoric concerning Galicia.

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⁶⁷ U. Prutsch, op. cit., P. 36.

⁶⁸ W. Tokarz, *Galicja w początkach ery Józefińskiej w świetle ankiety urzędowej z roku 1783*, Kraków 1909, pp. 56–59.

⁶⁹ P. Judson, op. cit., p. 89.

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Strategie „misji cywilizacyjnej” rządu Habsburgów w Galicji po I rozbiore Polski

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest poświęcony analizie elementu „misji cywilizacyjnej” w planach i strategiach monarchii habsburskiej w „Królestwie Galicji i Lodomerii” w pierwszych latach po I rozbiore Polski. Administracja cesarska stworzyła ambitny plan reform i przekształceń w Galicji, zmierzający do doprowadzenia ludności prowincji do postępu i dobrobytu w „habsburskim” rozumieniu tych pojęć oraz uczynienia z niej wzorowych obywateli cesarstwa. W celu zbadania tych planów, przyczyn ich powstania, a także ich realizacji w perspektywie krótkoterminowej, przeanalizowane zostaną teksty pierwszych patentów i zarządzeń rządu habsburskiego, a także raporty habsburskich urzędników zatrudnionych w Galicji, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem elementu „misji cywilizacyjnej” tych dokumentów. Ponieważ zajęcie Galicji zbiegło się w czasie z popularnością filozofii oświeconego absolutyzmu i przeprowadzeniem reform w jej duchu w całej monarchii, prześledzony zostanie także wpływ tej filozofii na planowane przemiany Galicji.

Słowa kluczowe: Królestwo Galicji i Lodomerii, monarchia Habsburgów, misja cywilizacyjna, absolutyzm oświecony