

= First Partition of Poland =

The First Partition of Poland or First Partition of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth took place in 1772 as the first of three partitions that ended the existence of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth by 1795 . Growth in the Russian Empire 's power , threatening the Kingdom of Prussia and the Habsburg Austrian Empire , was the primary motive behind this first partition . Frederick the Great engineered the partition to prevent Austria , jealous of Russian successes against the Ottoman Empire , from going to war . The weakened Commonwealth 's land , including that was already controlled by Russia , was apportioned among its more powerful neighbors ? Austria , Russia and Prussia ? so as to restore the regional balance of power in Central Europe among those three countries . With Poland unable to effectively defend itself , and with foreign troops already inside the country , the Polish parliament (Sejm) ratified the partition in 1773 during the Partition Sejm convened by the three powers .

= = Background = =

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries , the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth had been reduced from the status of a major European power to that of a Russian protectorate (or vassal or satellite state) , with the Russian tsar effectively choosing Polish @-@ Lithuanian monarchs during the free elections and deciding the outcome of much of Poland 's internal politics , for example during the Repnin Sejm , named after the Russian ambassador who unofficially presided over the proceedings .

The First Partition occurred after the balance of power in Europe shifted , with Russian victories against the Ottomans in the Russo @-@ Turkish War (1768 ? 1774) strengthening Russia and endangering Habsburg interests in that region (particularly in Moldavia and Wallachia) . At that point Habsburg Austria started considering waging war against Russia .

France , friendly towards both Russia and Austria , suggested a series of territorial adjustments , in which Austria would be compensated by parts of Prussian Silesia , and Prussia in turn would regain Prussian Ermland (Warmia) and parts of a Polish fief , the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia ? already under Baltic German hegemony . King Frederick II of Prussia had no intention of giving up Silesia gained recently in the Silesian Wars ; he was , however , also interested in finding a peaceful solution ? his alliance with Russia would draw him into a potential war with Austria , and the Seven Years ' War had left Prussia 's treasury and army weakened . He was also interested in protecting the weakening Ottoman Empire , which could be advantageously utilized in the event of a Prussian war either with Russia or Austria . Frederick 's brother , Prince Henry , spent the winter of 1770 ? 71 as a representative of the Prussian court at Saint Petersburg . As Austria had annexed 13 towns in the Hungarian Szepes region in 1769 (violating the Treaty of Lubowla) , Catherine II of Russia and her advisor General Ivan Chernyshyov suggested to Henry that Prussia claim some Polish land , such as Ermland . After Henry informed him of the proposal , Frederick suggested a partition of the Polish borderlands by Austria , Prussia , and Russia , with the largest share going to the party most weakened by the recent changes in balance of power , Austria . Thus Frederick attempted to encourage Russia to direct its expansion towards weak and non @-@ functional Poland instead of the Ottomans . Austrian statesman Wenzel Anton Graf Kaunitz counter @-@ proposed that Prussia take lands from Poland in return for relinquishing Silesia to Austria , but this plan was rejected by Frederick .

Although for a few decades (since the times of the Silent Sejm) Russia had seen weak Poland as its own protectorate , Poland had also been devastated by a civil war in which the forces of the Bar Confederation , formed in Bar , attempted to disrupt Russian control over Poland . The recent Koliyivschyna peasant and Cossack uprising in Ukraine also weakened the Polish position . Further , the Russian @-@ supported Polish king , Stanisław August Poniatowski , was seen as both weak and too independent @-@ minded ; eventually the Russian court decided that the usefulness of Poland as a protectorate had diminished . The three powers officially justified their actions as a compensation for dealing with troublesome neighbor and restoring order to Polish anarchy (the Bar

Confederation provided a convenient excuse) ; in fact all three were interested in territorial gains .

After Russia occupied the Danubian Principalities , Henry convinced Frederick and Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria that the balance of power would be maintained by a tripartite division of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth instead of Russia taking land from the Ottomans . Under pressure from Prussia , which for a long time wanted to annex the northern Polish province of Royal Prussia , the three powers agreed on the First Partition of Poland . This was in light of the possible Austrian @-@ Ottoman alliance with only token objections from Austria , which would have instead preferred to receive more Ottoman territories in the Balkans , a region which for a long time had been coveted by the Habsburgs . The Russians also withdrew from Moldavia away from the Austrian border . An attempt of Bar Confederates to kidnap king Poniatowski on 3 November 1771 gave the three courts another pretext to showcase the " Polish anarchy " and the need for its neighbors to step in and " save " the country and its citizens .

= = Partition begins = =

Already by 1769 ? 71 , both Austria and Prussia had taken over some border territories of the Commonwealth , with Austria taking Szepes County in 1769 ? 1770 and Prussia incorporating Lauenburg and Bütow . On February 19 , 1772 , the agreement of partition was signed in Vienna . A previous agreement between Prussia and Russia had been made in Saint Petersburg on February 6 , 1772 . Early in August , Russian , Prussian and Austrian troops simultaneously entered the Commonwealth and occupied the provinces agreed upon among themselves . On August 5 , the three parties signed the treaty on their respective territorial gains on the commonwealth 's expense .

The regiments of the Bar Confederation , whose executive board had been forced to leave Austria (which previously supported them) after that country joined the Prusso @-@ Russian alliance , did not lay down their arms . Many fortresses in their command held out as long as possible ; Wawel Castle in Kraków fell only at the end of April ; Tyniec fortress held until the end of July 1772 ; Cz?stochowa , commanded by Kazimierz Pu?aski , held until late August . In the end , the Bar Confederation was defeated , with its members either fleeing abroad or being deported to Siberia by the Russians .

= = Division of territories = =

The partition treaty was ratified by its signatories on September 22 , 1772 . It was a major success for Frederick II of Prussia : Prussia 's share might have been the smallest , but it was also significantly developed and strategically important . Prussia took most of Polish Royal Prussia , including Ermland , allowing Frederick to link East Prussia and Brandenburg . Prussia also annexed northern areas of Greater Poland along the Note? River (the Netze District) , and northern Kuyavia , but not the cities of Danzig (Gda?sk) and Thorn (Toru?) . The territories annexed by Prussia became a new province in 1773 called West Prussia . Overall , Prussia gained 36 @,@ 000 km² and about 600 @,@ 000 people . According to Jerzy Surdykowski Frederick the Great soon introduced German colonists on territories he conquered and engaged in Germanization of Polish territories . Frederick II settled 26 @,@ 000 Germans in Polish Pomerania which influenced the ethnic situation in the region that at the time had around 300 @,@ 000 inhabitants , and enforced Germanization . According to Christopher Clark in certain areas annexed by Prussia like Notec and Royal Prussia 54 percent of the population 75 percent of the urban populace were German @-@ speaking Protestants . In the next century this was used by nationalistic German historians to justify the partition , but it was irrelevant to contemporary calculations ; Frederick , dismissive of German culture , was instead pursuing an imperialist policy , acting on the security interests of his state . The new @-@ gained territories connected Prussia with Germany proper , and were of major economic importance . By seizing northwestern Poland , Prussia instantly cut off Poland from the sea , and gained control over 80 % of the Commonwealth 's total foreign trade . Through levying enormous custom duties , Prussia accelerated the inevitable collapse of the Polish @-@ Lithuanian state .

Despite token criticism of the partition from the Austrian archduchess , Empress Maria Theresa , Austrian statesman Wenzel Anton Graf Kaunitz considered the Austrian share an ample compensation ; despite Austria being the least interested in the partition , it received the largest share of formerly Polish population , and second largest land share (83 @,@ 000 km² and 2 @,@ 650 @,@ 000 people) . To Austria fell Zator and Auschwitz (O?wi?cim) , part of Little Poland embracing parts of the counties of Kraków and Sandomierz (with the rich salt mines of Bochnia and Wieliczka) , and the whole of Galicia , less the city of Kraków .

Russia received the largest , but least @-@ important area economically , in the northeast . By this " diplomatic document " Russia came into possession of the commonwealth territories east of the line formed roughly by the Dvina , Drut , and Dnieper Rivers ? that section of Livonia which had still remained in commonwealth control , and of Belarus embracing the counties of Vitebsk , Polotsk and Mstislavl . Russia gained 92 @,@ 000 square kilometers (36 @,@ 000 sq mi) and 1 @,@ 300 @,@ 000 people , and reorganized its newly acquired lands into Pskov Governorate (which also included two provinces of Novgorod Governorate) and Mogilev Governorate . Zakhar Chernyshyov was appointed the Governor General of the new territories on May 28 , 1772 .

By the first partition the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth lost about 211 @,@ 000 square kilometers (81 @,@ 000 sq mi) (30 % of its territory , amounting at that time to about 733 @,@ 000 square kilometers (283 @,@ 000 sq mi)) , with a population of over four to five million people (about a third of its population of fourteen million before the partitions) .

= = Aftermath = =

After having occupied their respective territories , the three partitioning powers demanded that King Stanisław August Poniatowski and the Sejm approve their action . The king appealed to the nations of Western Europe for help and tarried with the convocation of the Sejm . The European powers reacted to the partition with utmost indifference ; only a few voices ? like that of Edmund Burke ? were raised in objection .

When no help was forthcoming and the armies of the combined nations occupied Warsaw to compel by force of arms the calling of the assembly , no alternative could be chosen save passive submission to their will . Those of the senators who advised against this step were threatened by the Russians , represented by the ambassador , Otto von Stackelberg , who declared that in the face of refusal the whole capital of Warsaw would be destroyed by them . Other threats included execution , confiscation of estates , and further increases of partitioned territory ; according to Edward Henry Lewinski Corwin , some senators were even arrested by the Russians and exiled to Siberia .

The local land assemblies (Sejmiks) refused to elect deputies to the Sejm , and after great difficulties less than half of the regular number of representatives came to attend the session led by Marshals of the Sejm , Michał Hieronim Radziwiłł and Adam Poniński ; the latter in particular was one of many Polish nobles bribed by the Russians and following their orders . This sejm became known as the Partition Sejm . In order to prevent the disruption of the Sejm via liberum veto and the defeat of the purpose of the invaders , Poniński undertook to turn the regular Sejm into a confederated sejm , where majority rule prevailed . In spite of the efforts of individuals like Tadeusz Rejtan , Samuel Korsak , and Stanisław Bohuszewicz to prevent it , the deed was accomplished with the aid of Poniński , Radziwiłł , and the bishops Andrzej Młodziejowski , Ignacy Jakub Massalski , and Antoni Kazimierz Ostrowski (primate of Poland) , who occupied high positions in the Senate of Poland . The Sejm elected a committee of thirty to deal with the various matters presented . On September 18 , 1773 , the committee formally signed the treaty of cession , renouncing all claims of the Commonwealth to the lost territories .