

WOJCIECH SZCZYGIELSKI

Polish Sejm Priorities in the Reform of the State's Political System during the Enlightenment (1764–1792)

The fact that since the beginning of the 16th century the Sejm had been playing a dominant role in the political life of the Commonwealth caused that the reform of the State's political system had to be initiated by the Sejm thus making its leading position in the State even stronger. About the middle of the 18th century due to the limited sovereignty of the Commonwealth and the opposition of Russia it was not possible to carry out a global reform of the Sejm. In order to overcome *liberum veto* in 1764 the Family resorted to a substitute solution and applied the principle of general gentry confederation to the Sejm (confederated Sejm taking decisions by majority vote). On the other hand, due to Russia's consent it was possible to introduce fundamental reforms of the executive power in the form of “Sejm sections”, which reflected the structure of the Sejm. These “Sejm sections” were of two types: either they had the form of collegiate administration governing bodies or the Permanent Council. They consisted of senators, gentry who were not senators and representatives of the King (ministers) or even the King himself. These “Sejm sections” were, as the gentry saw it, executive organs replacing the Sejm. Collegiate administration governing bodies, promoted by Czartoryscy since 1764, functioned independently from each other and were subordinated only to the Sejm. These collegiate bodies broke the almost unlimited prerogatives of ministers (one-man offices), they enabled the enlightened landed gentry to really participate in the State's administration, they embodied the principles of democratic State in the awareness of the gentry. The Permanent Council (from 1775), whose supporter was the King, had a centralized character and realized the vision of a state with a strong governmental-administrative centre. The gentry decided that the collegiate administration governing bodies are better suited to the model of the gentry's Commonwealth than the Permanent Council.

Fundamental reforms of the State's political system were carried out by the Great Sejm (1788–1792), which made Poland independent of Russia's domination. It was a confederated Sejm, which elevated the enlightened middle gentry to the position of the real sovereign of the Commonwealth thus making them more inclined to reach reformist political compromise with the Puławy party (at the beginning of the Sejm) and with the King (in the second stage of the debates). At the beginning of the debates a compromise between the gentry parliamentary formation and the Puławy party was made. The essence of this compromise was that the Sejm which was currently in session -was to become the permanent governing Sejm (combining legislative and executive powers and permanently in session) just as the gentry wanted and according to the future constitution it was supposed to be the ready Sejm (always ready to be convened in definite circumstances and consisting of the same members elected every two years) as the Puławy party wanted. This compromise paved the way for Montesquieu's separation of powers in the future constitution. In the second stage of the debates the gentry parliamentary formation reached a reformist compromise with the King. The essence of this compromise was that the gentry accepted the decision making prerogatives of the Guardians of Law and their controlling function in reference to the whole administration (contrary to the Puławy party according to whom the Guardians were supposed to have only a supervisory role). The King, on the other hand, accepted the sovereignty of the Sejm and the autonomy of the collegiate administration governing bodies functioning independently from each other and not directly included in the structure of the government as the gentry and Puławy party wanted.

ANDRZEJ TOMASZEWICZ

The Charitable in Kalisz (1879–1914)

The first charitable society in Kalisz was founded in 1825. It's board included mostly civil servants of different provincial and later gubernatorial and municipal public bodies. When the Kalisz gubernatorial province ceased to exist and the civil servants left Kalisz the activity of the society froze.

Stanisław Chełmski – the chairman of the local Land Credit Society – was the main initiator of reviving the former charitable society. He convinced a group of the Town's intellectuals to cooperate with him and after the approval of the statutes by the tsar in 1879 the Society resumed it's activity the following year in January.

In the first few years of it's existence the Society mostly gave allowances to the poor. Gradually, however, it extended it's forms of charity. In 1884 a loan fund for tradesmen was opened. In 1890 it started a project called “Cheap Cooking”. TWO years later a common room for poor children was initiated. Later in 1902 the Society ran a nursery and in 1906 they started a primary school for needy children. There also existed free medical assistance and an employment agency.

The biggest achievement of the Society was the opening of it's head office in 1900 with an orphanage, old people's home, common room, eating-house and a primary school.

The income in the early years of the twentieth century was on average 11 000 rubles, but there were years in which it was higher than 15 000 rubles. The financial resources also grew steadily in time. In 1881 it was 5309 rubles, reaching the impressive amount of 64 620 rubles in 1913.

There were 362 members of the Society in 1880. The number dropped to 208 members at the end of the 19th century. In the next couple of years the number rose again but it never reached the level of 1880.

Kalisz Charitable Society played an important role in the town's public life. It helped to a considerable extent to reduce areas of poverty in the very difficult time of Poland's partition, deep economic and social changes, which led to an increase of the number of the poor. Huge credit for that should be given to the town's intellectuals who administered the Society's works. Due to their commitment and efforts almost 400 town dwellers took advantage of different forms of help during the 20th century.

ANDRZEJ M. BRZEZIŃSKI

From the Activity of Maria Skłodowska-Curie on the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations (1922–1934)

Activity of Maria Skłodowska-Curie on the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (CICI) of the League of Nations it was her only infidelity to scientific research. In 1922 Skłodowska-Curie agreed to work “temporarily” as a member of the CICI. As Professor of Physics at the University of Paris and Honorary Professor of the University of Warsaw she represented, after acceptance French authorities, Polish science in the CICI. From the beginning she appreciated the role of CICI on the international intellectual cooperation and attended almost all meetings as very active and diligent Committee member during her last twelve years of life. Skłodowska-Curie initiated creation the Sub-Committees CICI and direct contact with “national” committees on the intellectual cooperation. In September 1922 she presented to the League of Nations Council the report about the state of Polish science and her necessities. She tried to support the all initiatives towards the developing intellectual

life in Poland. As a member of CICI, M. Skłodowska-Curie was interested the question of protecting scientific property rights. She appealed and made some projects for international funding of post-university research and also for international aid for universities, libraries, scholarships and laboratories. She joined the Sub-Committee on Bibliography in order to produce an international bibliographical index of the sciences. In 1931, after organizational reform international intellectual cooperation of the League of Nations, M. Skłodowska-Curie was elected Vice-president Intellectual Cooperation Organization, the member of the Executive Committee and Committee of Experts on Bibliography of the Sciences. In May 1933 Skłodowska-Curie presided over a public forum on the international conference in Madrid entitled “future of Culture” sponsored by the League of Nations.