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The Concept "Reason of State" and the Polish Enlightenment

Idea racji stanu a polskie Oświecenie

Идея интересов государства в эпоху польского Просвещения

The concept "reason of state" understood as the highest value in a system of accepted values means — in other words — the supremacy of the interests of state over social or religious interests or over the principles of law and morality. Like many other concepts, the idea "reason of state" has had its bright as well as its shady side. It can be regarded as a force integrating the state and making it one unified organism; in this case its value must be acknowledged. But it may also be understood as a directive of foreign policy and then it is generally an expression of expansionist tendencies; it leads to a situation in which international relations are determined by force; it justifies the meddling of more powerful states in the affairs of their weaker neighbours, in short — it may create tensions and even wars in international affairs.

Having made a distinction between the internal and the external function of the concept "reason of state" I now want to show in an outline what the idea meant for some of the leading thinkers of the Polish Enlightenment, and so I will concern myself with the second half of the eighteenth century.

My relative approach to the evaluation of the concept "reason of state" here requires a broad and synthetic view, and this in turn must lead to a number of generalizations which may arouse objections and expose me to a charge of simplification.

Political doctrines do not drop down from the sky. They generally express better or worse the objective tendencies and changes in social relations. The appearance and circulation of the concept "reason of state" at the end of the fifteenth century should be considered in such context. It was a period when the rapidly developing economy of cities and an increasing number of commercial transactions required a stable market; when a uniform legal order became urgently needed, and with it — regular communication and a strong power of state that would guarantee security to those transactions. It was natural that enterprising rulers, supported by the bourgeoisie, made use of the concept "reason of state" to integrate their states politically and economically. This is, of course, a highly schematic model, because in reality processes of integration differed from state to state, as they depended on the local political conditions and the personality of the sovereign. Nevertheless, the same tendency is observable. It can be seen in the rulers' use of the "reason of state" for:

1) opposing rights and privileges of individual estates on behalf of a uniform legal order;

2) opposing religion in order to maintain a single system of government whenever religion went counter to, or wanted to dominate over, the sovereign;

3) opposing any particularism that was the consequence of feudalism also on behalf of the unity of state.

It would be very interesting to see how the doctrine of Machiavelli, increasingly popular in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, was evaluated in different countries. It is my conviction that those who approved of Machiavelli offered their support to the new social order and opposed the feudal hierarchy trying to create a broad social foundation for the royal power. It is not surprising, then, that in England the writings of Machiavelli were well-known and highly thought of at the court of Queen Elizabeth. Beside the queen herself Francis Bacon and Walter Raleigh deserve mentioning.¹ In France Machiavelli's views were highly regarded by the father of modern philosophy, Descartes. But perhaps the highest praise of the Florentine came from Spinoza, who bestowed on him the epithet "the wisest" and "the most experienced" thinker. Spinoza agreed with Machiavelli that a lasting rule depends on the support of society. He held a similar view of human nature and, like the Florentine thinker, wished to make religion an instrument of state policy.²

The long list of Machiavelli's opponents is headed by a Huguenot, Innocent Gentillet, who published anonymously in 1576 a treatise *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et soutenir en bonne paix in royaume ou autre principauté! Divisez en trois parties: a savoir du Conseil, de la Religion et Police que doit tenir un Prince. Contre Nicolas Machiavel Florentin.*³ Gentillet dedicated this treatise to the youngest son of Henry II and Catherine de Medici, Duke François d'Alençon, with whom the Huguenots associated their hopes of putting an end to the absolute rule of the Catholics, of abolishing the Italian influence at the French court and of the restoration of the traditional order. After the death of Henry II (1559) Machiavelli's doctrine became widespread in France and among the people surrounding Catherine de Medici it was to acquire the respect accorded to the Bible. It is not surprising, that the enemies of the Queen Mother regarded her as a tool of the powers of satan released by Machiavelli. Hence Gentillet regarded the growing popularity of Machiavelli's teaching as a source of all misfortunes brought along by religious wars. Meinecke remarks rightly that the conflict between the views of Machiavelli and those of Gentillet reflects the struggle between two worlds: the world of tradition and that of modernity. Gentillet was not merely a pious Huguenot fighting against the Catholic fanaticism; he was above all a spokesman of the nobility who, in defence of its threatened position in society, fought a deadly battle against the new forces integrating the state.⁴

¹ J. Bronowski, B. Mazlish: *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, London 1960, pp. 132, 133.

² J. Malarczyk: Introduction to: N. Machiavelli: *Wybór pism*, Warszawa 1972, p. 74 and ff.

³ I. Gentillet: *Anti-Machiavel*, Edition de 1576 avec commentaires et notes par C. Edward Rathé, Genève 1968.

⁴ F. Meinecke: *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, 2. Auflage, München u. Berlin 1925, p. 68.

It would be a gross simplification to maintain that all those who wanted to strengthen the sovereignty of the state at the cost of the feudal order endorsed Machiavelli's teaching enthusiastically. This is contradicted by the views of Bodin, an advocate of the legal concept of the sovereign power of state who viewed the Florentine critically. (*Republique*, book VI, ch. 4)⁵ Still, it remains a fact that Machiavelli's concept of "reason of state" suited the growing tendency to strengthen the power of state by opposing forces of decentralization.

In its development the idea "reason of state" came to its turning point at the time of the enlightened absolutism; it was then that a kind of separation between the organization of state and that of society took place. "Reason of state" came to be regarded as a rational virtue, free both from religious and from moral implications. Social forces, separated from the state, were to develop from then onwards in a sense independently, not infrequently in opposition to the state organization. Hence the French Revolution was initially viewed as a moral protest against politics.⁶

The separation between state and society that took place during the era of enlightened absolutism resulted in a situation in which the state existed for its own sake. At the same time legal positivism inculcated this autonomy of state in the minds of jurists creating such concepts as: the will of state, the organs of state, the supremacy of state etc. This idea of the autonomy of an omnipotent state was given its literary expression by Thomas Mann who wrote that as a boy he had often imagined the state as a huge wooden figure, bearded and wearing a frock-coat and a star on its chest. This figure combined the military and the academic honours which symbolized its power and stability: it had the title of "General Doktor von Staat".⁷

When this autonomous sphere of the interests of state, which regulated its own conduct by the "reason of state", was confronted with the sphere of ethical values, it aroused objections of the thinkers of the Enlightenment, who were themselves motivated by the ideas of humanism. Voltaire's negative opinion about the doctrine of Machiavelli played a decisive role in shaping the attitude of the Enlightenment towards the concept "reason of state". In Voltaire's view the ideal prince was to possess neither the features of a fox, nor those of a lion; he was rather to embody Plato's ideal of a philosopher and king. It was Voltaire who prompted Frederic II the writing of his treatise, the *Anti-Machiavell*, to which he himself wrote an introduction.

During the Enlightenment the concept "reason of state" understood as an instrument for integrating the state internally ceased to be the subject of political treatises, not because it clashed with ethical principles of the epoch, but because the problem of the integration of state was so obvious and so universal that writing about it was no longer necessary. At that time "reason of state" became — above all — a concept useful in foreign policy. The priority of foreign policy over domestic policy became apparent. Hence relations between states came to be regulated by force, treachery, violation of treaties, the best example of which is provided by the conduct of the author

⁵ R. Schnur: *Neue Forschungen über Jean Bodin*, „Der Staat“ 1974, 13. Band, Heft 1, p. 113.

⁶ M. Greiffenhagen: Introduction to: *Demokratisierung in Staat und Gesellschaft*, München 1973, pp. 12, 13.

⁷ T. Mann: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, Berlin 1918, p. 230.

of Anti-Machiavell. For Frederic the Great was not only active in the partitions of Poland, but also issued for circulation in Poland counterfeit money that had little value and was meant to bring the country to economic ruin.

While in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the concept "reason of state" served, above all, the integration of state and the creation of a uniform system of government, in the eighteenth century it became a means of the policy of expansion for the more powerful states which brought the weaker states under their control. This is, in a sense, understandable, because in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries interstate relations were to a large extent regulated by religious factors. Various kinds of leagues and associations of Protestant or Catholic states were formed then, and in any case, if religious sentiments were not a decisive factor, they at least influenced considerably the actual foreign policy of the different states. On the other hand, the eighteenth century, which professed a belief in the superiority of reason, rejected religious principles. Hence rulers officially embracing the lofty tenets of the Enlightenment were capable of open brutality in international relations.

My thesis is most strongly supported by the works of Giovanni Botero (1540—1617) and especially by his treatise *Della ragion di Stato* (1589). This work, generally underestimated, presents "reason of state" as an art of government whose aim is the common good — *comune felicità*.⁸ While Machiavelli justified his concept of power by the human mind and a rational evaluation of the social reality, Botero largely took economic factors into consideration. Moreover, his treatise confirms the view that in those times "reason of state" was regarded, above all, as a doctrine of domestic policy. Botero wrote:

Firstly, a ruler should promote the economic development of his whole state. His principal task is the development of crafts, of towns and of agriculture. By means of intensified economy he can achieve an even distribution of income in society and correct the traditionally established inequality of wealth between a handful of people living in luxury and the masses living in penury.

Secondly, according to Botero, "reason of state" in foreign policy includes only the protection of the territory of state, which means its defence from armed foreign invasion.⁹

After the coming out of Botero's work which was published and translated again and again, there appeared many other writings concerning the technique of government — *arcana dominationis* that invoked the "reason of state".¹⁰

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From the fifteenth century onward Poland was under the influence of the processes which led to the consolidation of state and which were also in operation in the West. These integrating processes were favoured by the exceptional economic prosperity which occurred in Poland in the sixteenth

⁸ F. Meinecke speaks about the views of Botero guardedly, writing: "An Machiavelli gemessen, war er [Botero] ein mittelmasziger Kopf." Meinecke: *op. cit.*, p. 83

⁹ C. Giorda: *La vita e le opere di Giovanni Botero*, vol. 1, Milano 1894, pp. 213—305.

¹⁰ Meinecke: *op. cit.*, pp. 88—182.

century owing to the country's being the chief granary of Western Europe.¹¹ The lively economic relations involved stronger cultural ties with the West, especially with Italy. Young Polish noblemen were educated at Italian universities and a fair number of Italian humanists came to Poland.¹²

In the closing years of the fifteenth century an Italian humanist, Filippo Buonaccorsi, called Callimach, who had stayed in Poland for many years as a tutor of the king's sons, wrote, or at least inspired, the writing of, Callimach's Counsels. It contains simplified principles of government tactics aiming at strengthening the power of the king in Poland, the subordination of ecclesiastic hierarchy to him and suppressing the opposition of the aristocracy.¹³

In the first half of the sixteenth century Bona Sforza, duchess of Bari and wife of the Polish king Sigismundus I, together with her court led a campaign — not always successful — against the aristocracy. Her intention was also to strengthen the position of the king.¹⁴

At the end of the sixteenth century there appeared a number of Latin writings by Krzysztof Warszewicki who — notwithstanding an increasing opposition of the aristocracy — advocated the idea of a strong central power modelled on the Hapsburg monarchy.

Even in present-day works one often comes across the opinion that Warszewicki was the Polish Machiavelli.¹⁵ This hypothesis is based above all on the following passage from Warszewicki's treatise *De optimo statu libertatis* (1598): "[...] the king being aware and hopeful that his conduct is right and relying on his conscience, should yet remember that he has to resolve all manner of difficulties by any means whatsoever. For no one will ask of him, nor will judge him for, the way which he has trodden but only for how well and how soon he has reached his aim."¹⁶ It is my conviction that the interesting hypotheses concerning the ideological connections might be extended to include G. Botero's *Della ragion di stato*, as the views of both thinkers are amazingly similar. However, I am not concerned here merely with the analogies between the views of Warszewicki and those of other authors, but rather with the fact that his writings brought to a halt for a long time the movement aiming at an integration of the state and a strengthening of the royal power in Poland. For it was already the era during which the consciousness of the nobility had come to be wholly dominated by the myth of the old Polish virtues.

In the middle of the sixteenth century there was born the legend about the Polish nobles being descendants of the brave ancient Sarmatians, and towards the end of the century this legend concerning the origin of the nobility in Poland came to be the principal tool in the hands of the Polish

¹¹ M. Małowist: *Wschód a Zachód Europy w XIII—XVI wieku*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 275—280.

¹² W. Pocięcha: *Z dziejów stosunków kulturalnych polsko-włoskich*, [in:] *Studia z dziejów kultury*, Warszawa 1949, pp. 179—208.

¹³ S. Estreicher: *Rady Kallimacha* [in:] *Studia z dziejów...*, pp. 173—178.

¹⁴ H. Barycz: *Spojrzenia w przeszłość polsko-włoską*, Wrocław 1965, pp. 140—154.

¹⁵ A. Tamborra: *Krzysztof Warszewicki e la Diplomazia del Rinascimento in Polonia*, Roma 1965, pp. 16—30; and B. Leśnodorski: *Polski Machiawel*, [in:] *B. Leśnodorski: Ludzie i idee*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 38—61.

¹⁶ T. Wierzbowski: *Krzysztof Warszewicki (1543—1603) i jego dzieła*, Warszawa 1887, p. 220.

aristocrats and leaders of Counter-Reformation.¹⁷ When, at the end of the seventeenth century this belief came to dominate the minds and the emotions of the Polish nobles, they reached the height of megalomania and without any justification called Poland Sarmatia and themselves — Sarmatians. Being fully convinced about the perfection of the Polish political system, the nobles opposed all attempts to strengthen the royal power and treated with hostility foreign concepts of political organization believing in their social and ethical superiority. Regarding themselves as the defenders of the Catholic church, the nobility became advocates of intolerance serving the interests of Counter-Reformation. At the same time contempt in which they held the peasants and the townsmen prevented those estates from participation in the political and economic life and this, in turn, deepened the economic stagnation that became evident in Poland at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁸

The myth of the Sarmatian past was a kind of ideology that imposed upon Poland a political organization which was fully endorsed by the nobility. At the same time the growth of the Sarmatian myth shows several things:

First, when an idea has taken possession of human minds and emotions, it will determine the political practice of a society. This results in the formation of a new social reality which possesses a dialectic unity of a definite intellectual reflection and of corresponding models of human conduct.

Secondly, a deep-rooted idea affects all the spheres of social life. For whole decades the influence of the Sarmatian myth was shaping not only the political and legal organization, but also literature, arts, education, manners, fashions — in short, the way of thinking and the way of living.¹⁹

Thirdly, the "reason of state" ideology was revived in the Polish political thought when the Enlightenment brought along with it a decline of the Sarmatian myth caused by an intellectual crisis.²⁰

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While the seventeenth century absolute monarchs were consolidating their states in Europe quoting the concept "reason of state", in Poland reverse processes occurred in political organization as Polish kings were unable to stop the disintegration of the state.

Poland differed from other European states in her political organization which was grounded in a tradition reaching back to the end of the sixteenth century. From that time onward the basic principle of political organization was derived from the idea of the "liberty and equality of the nobility and the gentry". This idea was an instrument used effectively in opposing all attempts to strengthen the central power. In an obsessive fear of *absolutum dominum* the nobility allowed neither the strengthening of the royal nor of the parliamentary authority. The ever-praised liberty made it possible for the nobility to obtain exceptional privileges which resulted in a complete exclusion of townsmen from government and the plunging of the peasants

¹⁷ T. Mańkowski: *Genealogia sarmatyzmu*, Warszawa 1946, pp. 20—24, 62—65.

¹⁸ Małowist: *op. cit.*, p. 290.

¹⁹ Mańkowski: *op. cit.*, pp. 61—108.

²⁰ M. H. Serejski: *Naród a państwo w polskiej myśli historycznej*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 7 and 48.

into serfdom. Nowhere outside Poland was the influence of the nobility on the government of the country so powerful, and nowhere did this estate grow to be so numerous. In the eighteenth century its number reached the figure of 8—10 per cent, while in France it amounted merely to 1.5 per cent.²¹

Even the Jesuites, who elsewhere advocated different principles, succumbed to the political pressure in Poland and already at the beginning of the eighteenth century opposed the absolute monarchy, declaring that the Catholic church was the best protector of the Polish Commonwealth based on the idea of the liberty and equality of the nobility and the gentry. This "model" of political organization, maintained consistently, eventually led to chaos and oligarchy. Members elected to the National Diet were so restrained by directives of the provincial assemblies that the lower house became merely a gathering of representatives of different provinces. To make things worse, unanimity over bills was required and this gave every single representative the right to break the session and hold up any bill by a single dissenting vote (*liberum veto*). Current affairs were controlled by the king, but his prerogatives were limited to prevent him from becoming an absolute monarch. He was elected for a lifetime by all the nobility and gentry (*viritim*) and he had to court popularity if he wanted to pass the throne to his descendants. For there was a general belief that hereditary monarchy restricted the liberty of the nobility. When any decision was to be made, the king had to seek the advice of the council of senators and of higher government officers who held their offices for a lifetime. The two highest magistratures: the Sejm and the monarch blocked each other and the result was that the country was really deprived of an efficient government. The ideal of political organization which the Sarmatian Poland boasted of found its expression in the absurd saying that the strength of a state lies in the weakness of its government.

The middle of the seventeenth century witnessed the growth of the rule of magnates under the cover of the commonwealth of the nobility. Formally the political organization remained unchanged, the name of a republic was retained, but in fact Poland became a federation of aristocratic territories. Their rulers, "the princelings", controlled the provincial assemblies and had each his own army, as each also managed public affairs in his territory, administered justice and even pursued a different foreign policy.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the neighbours of Poland had each a good government, an efficient administration, an effective judiciary system and a modern army able to support their foreign policy, while, Poland, in the midst of those centralized powers, was torn by inner social and economic contradictions and plunged in anarchy that inevitably led to ruin. The position that Poland occupied among her neighbours is best indicated by the figures showing the size of the different armies. In the years 1717—1764 the Polish army had between 12 and 16 thousand of men, while Russia had at that time an army of about 300,000 men, Austria had one of comparable size and the Prussian troops came up to about 200,000.²²

²¹ W. Czaplinski: *O Polsce siedemnastowiecznej, Problemy i sprawy*, Warszawa 1966, p. 15.

²² E. Rostworowski: *Polska w układzie sił politycznych Europy*, [in:] *Polska w epoce Oświecenia*, Papers by Various Authors, ed. by B. Leśnodorski, Warszawa 1971, pp. 19—24; S. Herbst: *Zołnierze niepodległości*, [in:] *Polska w epoce Oświecenia...*, pp. 392—394.

A deep-rooted conviction about the perfection of the political organization of this commonwealth of the nobility was to impede any criticism of its political institutions for a long time. This is why in the seventeenth century Polish political doctrines were characterized by a moralizing tone. They rested on an assumption that the state really depended only on the moral stance of the nobility and that there was no need to change its political structure. It was only the eighteenth century that brought along with it a demand for a stronger government and a clearer realization that the established situation made easy the interfering of the neighbouring states into the domestic affairs of Poland. This new trend was initiated by two authors: Stanisław Karwicki and Stanisław Leszczyński. Though neither of them was free from moralizing grandiloquence, yet both shared the view that the principal weakness of Poland lay in her political organization.

Karwicki's views were presented in his work *De ordinanda republica* published in 1709. Leszczyński, after his ill-fated election to the Polish throne and his enforced abdication, wrote his remarks about the political organization of his country in a book which appeared anonymously in 1733 under the title *A Free Voice Safeguarding Liberty* and was published more than ten years later in a French translation as *La voix libre du citoyen*. Both authors pointed out that the main weakness of the Polish political organization had its source in the mutual opposition between the royal power and the liberty of the nobility, as the latter had a paralyzing effect on any activity of the government.

The thinker who best represented the trend that postulated the strengthening of the central power in the interest of the state was Stanisław Konarski. The works of this well-educated Piarist, who had completed his studies in Rome and in Paris, were written in the years preceding the first partition of Poland. In 1761 there appeared the first volume of his monumental work *Of the Effective Manner of Debate*, of which the remaining three volumes appeared in the next two years. His utilitarian and rationalistic cast of mind allowed him to see that the Polish anarchy was the result of a defective political structure, and that the wealth and power of other countries were likewise the effect of a well-organized government. Konarski argued that properly devised political and legal institutions develop social discipline, guarantee a rational order, stimulate economic and cultural development, and — above all — sort out the citizens attracting the best individuals to the service of the state. He attached such great importance to the political and legal institutions, because he was convinced that owing to these the evil and selfish tendencies of people could be kept under control and could even make men act in accordance with the interest of state.

In 1741 Konarski founded his school, the Collegium Nobilium, where sciences formed a substantial part of the curriculum and were taught freely, if they did not clash with the principles of faith. Lectures covered Grotius, Hobbes, Spinoza, Thomasius, Wolf, later also Montesquieu, though the free-thinking of these authors was criticized.²³ Still, the followers of Konarski came under the influence of these thinkers who professed the opinion that the interest of state was supreme and that the central power should be strong. The Collegium Nobilium taught without any ambiguity that the interest of

²³ K. Opalek: *Hugona Kollataja poglądy na państwo i prawo*, Warszawa 1952, p. 61.

state "rests upon good laws and upon obeying them; upon the right education of its youth; upon the right number of troops necessary for the defence; upon public and private economy, upon strict administration of justice; upon good and wise governors; upon the activity of the Seym and upon the preservation of religion."²⁴

It is a significant thing that starting with the middle of the eighteenth century the press in Warsaw and all journalistic writings came to use widely the word *stan* (state or estate) deriving from the Latin word *status* and used to designate a state. Often there occur French or Latin terms such as *raison d'Etat*, *coup d'Etat*, *homme d'Etat*, *secrétaires d'Etat*, *crimina status* and others. It is the more striking that in Poland this word was practically unknown in contrast to the countries of Western Europe, where the word "state" was borrowed from the Latin word *status*, and hence the Italian *stato*; the Spanish *estado*; the French *état*; the English "state"; the German *staat*; and the Dutch *staat*. In Poland, on the other hand, the word that was used for state was "the crown", that is an object symbolizing the power of the monarch, or else the Latin word *republic* or the Greek *politeia* changed into *policja* (polity). It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that the term *stan* (state) temporarily replaced the other words denoting the state.²⁵

At the time when utilitarian considerations gave currency to the idea "reason of state" as a means of integrating the state, i.e. about the middle of the eighteenth century, there appeared one treatise that deserves attention: *Compendium politicum, seu brevis dissertatio de variis Poloniae imperii vicibus...*, (Warsaw, 1760) whose second edition came out a year later. The treatise was written by Caesar Pyrrhus de Varille, a political journalist from France who had stayed in Poland for a long time as a tutor of the children of Prince Jan Sanguszko. He presented in his work the disastrous process of the continuous weakening of the monarchical power in the history of Poland, combined with the increasing importance of nobility and the provincial assemblies as well as with the introduction of the *liberum veto*. In his philosophical views de Varille came closest to Hobbes. He thought that the state was of the highest social value because only a strong government could guarantee order and security and could protect the property and the honour of the citizens. He argued that people had acted in their own interest when they had turned over the power over themselves to the ruler, giving up unlimited freedom, which — in a stateless condition — leads to *bellum omnium contra omnes*.²⁶

The Polish doctrines were radically changed after the first partition in 1772. The writings of the leading representatives of the Polish Enlightenment, Hugo Kołłątaj and Stanisław Staszic, caused a revolution in the political thought of their generation. They no longer sought utilitarian justification for political reforms but turned for support to the law of nature which they wanted to make the basis of the political organization of Poland. It was with this in mind that they wanted to: 1) integrate the nation which would include the nobility, the bourgeoisie and — in a sense — also the peasants; 2)

²⁴ Quoted after W. Smoleński: *Przewrót umysłowy w Polsce wieku XVIII, Studia historyczne*, Warszawa 1949, p. 34 and ff.

²⁵ J. Matuszewski: *O państwie i Państwie*, „Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne” 1958, vol. X, No 2, pp. 93—98.

²⁶ Smoleński: *op. cit.*, pp. 306—307.

strengthen the central power to oppose efficiently the disruptive tendencies of the aristocracy; 3) subordinate religion and ecclesiastic affairs to the interests of the state. In short, believing in reason and the natural order in the world and in society they asserted the primacy of the interests of state which was also postulated by advocates of the idea "reason of state" in the seventeenth century.

The Sarmatian myth was destroyed by those ideas of the Enlightenment and was replaced by a concept of state whose strength and resilience were to be guaranteed by the efficient power of the sovereign. This new model of political organization, which emphasized the significant role of the state in the national tradition, was presented in the writings of Adam Naruszewicz (1733—1796) whose name is associated with a new trend in Polish historiography.²⁷

The generation of Kołłątaj and Staszic in principle abandoned the word *stan* to denote the state. Hugo Kołłątaj stated expressly that "the king had a country, or the country had a king".²⁸ The expression "reason of state" was never used as it was the one that was being invoked when the three powers: Russia, Austria and Prussia were lawlessly annihilating the Polish state.²⁹

Those advocating reforms were convinced — in accordance with the philosophy of the Enlightenment — that reason, equipped with learning, should be able to lead the state out of darkness and on the road of natural order. Starting with this assumption they attempted to strengthen the state and to transform society. Their efforts gained importance when in 1788 the Sejm came to prepare the change of political organization of the country which resulted in the issuing of the Constitution of the 3rd of May in 1791. Hugo Kołłątaj was the principal ideologue of the reform party and the chief driving force in the group that had formulated the constitution. In the year when work on the constitution had begun he published a political treatise in epistolary form entitled *A Few Letters to Stanislaus Małachowski by an Anonymous Writer*. He expressed in it the fervent wishes of all those who had declared war on the old order which they wanted to replace by the rule of the nobility and the townspeople.

In contrast to Kołłątaj, Stanisław Staszic stood somewhat aloof from politics, but both his works and his personal authority exercised considerable influence on the public opinion and political practice. In 1787 he published a pamphlet *Remarks on the Life of Jan Zamoyski* where he argued that the only means of saving the Polish State from complete ruin was a thorough social and political reform which would make the throne hereditary, assure legal protection and parliamentary representation to the bourgeoisie, introduce the majority vote in the diet, and lighten the burdens of the peasants. Staszic's work greatly affected the opinions of the nobility, but above all it exercised considerable influence on the views held by the makers of the new constitution. In 1790 he published *A Warning for Poland* which is chiefly an attempt to extend the notion of "the Polish nation" to cover not only the nobility and the gentry, but also the townspeople and the peasants. Generally

²⁷ Serejski: *Naród a państwo...*, p. 66.

²⁸ Quoted after Opałek: *op. cit.*, p. 187.

²⁹ M. H. Serejski: *Europa a rozbiory Polski*, Warszawa 1970, pp. 26, 293—294, 325—326,

speaking both Kołłątaj and Staszic strove to integrate and strengthen the state in three ways:

Firstly, both desired the transformation of the "republic of the nobility" into a state that would embrace the whole Polish nation. Staszic's arguments contained a concept, gradually taking shape, of a modern nation and a new idea of "reason of state" which would be made possible by a "republic of order". Staszic was one of the first thinkers of the Polish Enlightenment to see clearly the difference between the interest of the whole nation and that of the nobility which considered itself identical with the state. This idea of Staszic was aptly expressed by Kołłątaj who wrote: "[...] a country cannot be free when its men are slaves. [...] If we do not start the rights of the government with the rights of man, if we do not say that the Polish soil belongs to free people [...] we shall only delude ourselves, we shall make ourselves the laughing stock of free nations, and our country will for ever remain a convenient forest in which now the domestic oligarch, now the foreign powers will bait us until even the name of Poland has perished [...]".³⁰

The principal task of the ideologues of the Polish Enlightenment was the making up of a modern nation which was to be the result of extending civil rights to the bourgeoisie with a simultaneous assuring of legal protection to the peasants. In France it took a revolution to make Napoleon the Emperor of the Frenchmen, and not the Monarch of France, as the Bourbons had called themselves; in Poland a new nation was coming into existence owing to "a mild revolution" as Kołłątaj termed it.³¹

Secondly, striving to put and end to the oligarchy of the magnates Staszic and Kołłątaj wanted to strengthen the central power. However, they opposed both absolutism, which, in their opinion, carried with it arbitrary decisions, disregard for the law and violation of civil liberties, and democracy, which, they thought, led to chaos and anarchy. They wanted for the Polish monarch mediating and protective power (*autorité tutélaire*), so that the king would act not as "[...] a father of small children, but a father of adults with whom he could share concern over their welfare."³²

Without going into details one can remark that the model of political organization which the thinkers of the Polish Enlightenment wanted to imitate was that of the English monarchy sanctioning the compromise between feudalism and bourgeoisie that was in itself the fruit of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688.

It is significant that the Polish Enlightenment received its philosophical inspiration from France but sought a model of political organization in England.

Thirdly, both leaders of the Polish Enlightenment put the interest of state above church and religion, which was of great importance for the Catholic Poland, bound to Rome by close ties. Their call for making the state independent of religion was put to practice sooner than any other. In 1773 Pope Clement XIV issued his breve *Dominus ac Redemptor noster* abolishing the Jesuit order. The property of the order was taken over by the state. In

³⁰ H. Kołłątaj: *Listy Anonima i prawo polityczne narodu polskiego*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1854, pp. 167, 205.

³¹ B. Leśnodorski: *Państwo polskie na przełomie dwu stuleci*, [in:] *Polska w epoce Oświecenia...*, p. 426.

³² Kołłątaj: *op. cit.*, p. 47.

Poland the Committee of National Education was formed and was given supervision over all schools, while the former Jesuit property was destined "to maintain and increase learning in the nation." The Committee of National Education created a uniform secular system of education embracing all the schools in the country, from elementary schools up to universities. Teachers were educated in a new way, new syllabuses and new textbooks were introduced. The new system allotted a good deal of time to the teaching of secular morality which would make the young people aware of their duties towards the state and society.³³

Koźłataj also declared that the church should be wholly subordinated to the government of the state and that relations between the Apostolic Seat and the Polish church should be established only with the approval of the government.³⁴

Many of the proposals of Koźłataj and Staszic found their way into the 3rd of May Constitution of 1791. However, they were never realized because in 1795 Poland was wiped off the map of Europe.

At the time when the thinkers of the Polish Enlightenment were trying to integrate and strengthen the state, three foreign powers partitioned Poland justifying the act by the "reason of state". They shared "the royal cake" as Voltaire called Poland in a letter to Frederic the Great dated October 18, 1772, and as — following the remark — Noel Lemire presented the first partition in his allegory.³⁵

STRESZCZENIE

Idea racji stanu rozumiana jako nadrzędność interesów państwa nad innymi wartościami pojawiła się w Europie Zachodniej z końcem XV stulecia, kiedy miał miejsce wewnętrzny proces integrowania państw. Idea ta przeciwstawiała się zarówno uniwersalistycznym tendencjom Kościoła i Cesarstwa, jak też partykularyzmowi feudalnemu.

Oświecony absolutyzm sprawił, że państwowa organizacja jakby oddzieliła się od społeczeństwa. Ideę racji stanu traktuje się jako racjonalną cnotę, wolną od wszelkiej treści tak religijnej jak i moralnej, która służy najczęściej jako usprawiedliwienie zaborczej polityki.

W oczach ideologów Oświecenia tak pojęta racja stanu nie mogła znaleźć uzasadnienia, dlatego ją odrzucono.

Kiedy w Europie konsolidowały się państwa — w Polsce procesy ustrojowe przebiegały odwrotnie, gdyż królowie związani ideą wolności szlacheckiej nie mogli powstrzymać dezintegracji organizmu państwowego. Od połowy XVIII wieku, kiedy poważnie zaczęto myśleć o wzmocnieniu władzy państwowej, pojawia się na pewien czas w polskim piśmiennictwie politycznym określenie „racja stanu” rozumiane utylitarnie.

Sytuacja w doktrynie polskiej ulega zasadniczej zmianie po pierwszym rozbiórce w 1772 roku. Czołowi przedstawiciele polskiego Oświecenia — Hugo Koźłataj i Sta-

³³ G. L. Seidler: *The Reform of the Polish School System in the Era of Enlightenment*, Ann. Univ. Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio G, vol. XX, Lublin 1973, pp. 7, 10—15.

³⁴ Koźłataj: *op. cit.*, p. 311.

³⁵ Serejski: *Europa a rozbiory...*, p. 425 and ff. The copperplate presenting Noel Lemire's allegory belongs to the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw.

niśław Staszic — dokonują swymi pismami przełomu w myśleniu politycznym. Programu reform ustrojowo-politycznych nie uzasadniają już względami użytecznymi, ale odwołują się do prawa natury i wartości etycznych. W imię idei oświeceniowych: 1) usiłują doprowadzić do integracji narodu, który obejmowałby szlachtę, mieszczan i częściowo chłopów; 2) postulują wzmocnienie władzy państwowej, przeciwstawiającej się tendencjom dezintegracyjnym; 3) żądają podporządkowania spraw religii i Kościoła — państwu. Słowem, wierząc w rozum, porządek naturalny i wartości etyczne ujmują ideę racji stanu w kategoriach moralnych, aby ocalić zagrożone państwo.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Идея интересов государства, понимаемая как приоритет интересов государства над другими ценностями, появилась в Западной Европе в конце XV столетия, в период внутреннего интегрирования государств. Эта идея противопоставлялась как универсалистическим тенденциям костела и Империи, так и феодальному партикуляризму.

Просвещенный абсолютизм привел к тому, что государственная организация как бы отделилась от общества. Идея интересов государства трактуется как рациональная добродетель, свободная от всякого как религиозного, так и морального содержания, и служащая чаще всего оправданию захватнической политики.

Так понимаемые интересы государства в глазах идеологов Просвещения не могли найти обоснования, поэтому они были отброшены.

В то время, когда в Европе происходила консолидация государств, в Польше процесс государственного устройства протекал обратно, т. к. связанные идеей шляхетских свобод короли не сумели задержать процесс дезинтеграции государственного организма.

В середине XVIII века, когда начали серьезно думать об укреплении государственной власти, на некоторое время в польской политической литературе появилось определение „интересы государства“, понимаемое утилитарно.

Принципиальные изменения в польской доктрине происходят после первого раздела в 1772 году. Ведущие представители польского Просвещения Гуго Коллонтай и Станислав Сташиц своими работами совершают переворот в политическом мышлении. Программу государственно-политических реформ они уже не обосновывают утилитарными взглядами, а ссылаются на права природы и этические ценности. Во имя просветительских идей эти философы: 1) пытаются осуществить интеграцию народа (шляхта, мещанство и частично крестьянство); 2) провозглашают укрепление государственной власти, противящейся дезинтеграционным тенденциям; 3) требуют подчинения государству религии и костела. Одним словом, для того, чтобы спасти государство, — веря в разум, естественный порядок и этические ценности — они определяют понятие „интересы государства“ моральными категориями.

