

The Situation of the Kingdom of Poland in the Year 1773 (1773)

Abstract

After Stanislaw II Augustus Poniatowski was elected Polish king in 1762, Poland became the plaything of the great powers Austria, Russia, and Prussia. Poniatowski's Enlightenment-inspired reform program, which initially enjoyed Russian backing, provoked conflict within Poland's powerful noble class. The result was a civil war, which, in combination with a Russo-Turkish war, led to a Prussian proposal to stabilize the Eastern European situation through the partitioning of Poland. This resulted in the partial dismemberment of the Polish Commonwealth in 1772.

Entitled "The Cake of Kings," the engraving below shows the protagonists haggling over a map of Central and Eastern Europe: (from left to right) Catherine II ("the Great") of Russia, Stanislaw II Augustus Poniatowski of Poland, from whose head the crown is slipping, Emperor Joseph II of Austria, and Frederick II ("the Great") of Prussia.

Source



Source: Engraving by Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune, 1773.

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