

The Maps and Mapmakers that Helped Define 20th-Century Lithuanian Boundaries - **Part 2**: The First Partition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 1772 – Its Description and Depiction in Maps

Andrew Kapochunas, Jersey City, New Jersey

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In the previous – and first – installment of this series, we established a geographical starting point for the dismemberment of the 11 provinces (*vaivadijų*) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (*Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė*) by the Empire of Russia. My intention was to then focus on the Russian administrative boundary changes of the lands they acquired. But, as I reviewed the literature and maps describing the First, 1772, Partition, I was struck by the disparate descriptions and cartographic depictions of that seemingly straight-forward event. I decided to present a summary of that event and its immediate aftermath in the annexed regions. The next two articles, then, will cover the Second (1793) and Third (1795) Partitions.

For hundreds of years before the First Partition of the Republic of Two Nations (*Abiejų Tautų Respublika*), which hereafter I will refer to as the GDL, “Lithuania” was often missing from maps of Europe and of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its lands labeled “Poland,” long before Russification, and later Polonization, accomplished the same result. This practice is akin to calling the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” (the UK’s formal name) just “England.” The practice continues to this day, as evidenced by the many historical maps in atlases and online depicting the boundaries of the pre-partitioned Commonwealth. You can see the evidence at my site: <http://www.lithuanianmaps.com/MapsHistoricalUpTo1795.html>

“Poland” disappeared from maps too – but for a much shorter time, and only from Russian-produced maps, despite a secret amendment to the agreement signed by Russia, Austria and Prussia following the Third (1795) – and last – Partition:

“In view of the necessity to abolish everything which could revive the memory of the existence of the Kingdom of Poland, now that the annulment of this body politic has been effected ... the high contracting parties are agreed and undertake never to include in their titles ... the name or designation of the Kingdom of Poland, which shall remain suppressed as from the present and forever ...”¹

Descriptions of the First Partition:

The reasons behind the First Partition, summarized in the first article, are many and complicated, but the

influence of Russia’s military on Empress Catherine II is primary:

“...the military party was openly in favor of direct annexations. They believed that Russia’s interests could best be served by seizing the territory of her neighbors on every possible occasion. Chernyshev, the Vice-President of the War College, expressed this view when, at the new [as of 1762] Empress Catherine’s council called to discuss the [1763] death of the King of Poland [Augustus III], he proposed an invasion of Polish Livonia and the palatinates of Polotsk, Witebsk, and Mscislaw.”²

Nine years later, those were the areas annexed – and a bit more, for good measure.

Here’s a selection of how that event has been described:

1. “The occupation of the Grand Duchy followed. Russia annexed the lands up to the Daugava and Dnieper rivers, including the cities of Polock and Vitebsk; it also annexed Latgalia, which had belonged to Lithuania since the sixteenth century.”³

2. “Catherine confined herself to Polish Livonia, and to the counties of Polotsk, Witebsk, Mscislaw, and Homel.”⁴

3. “...Russia obtained 92,000 sq km of the Republic’s territory (this was GDL territory: the palatinates of Polock, Mstislavl, Vitebsk, part of Minsk palatinate, Livonia).”⁵

4. “Russia came into possession of the commonwealth territories east of the line formed roughly by the Dvina [Daugava], 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.”⁶

5. “The Russian empire of Tsaritsa Catherine II progressively annexed almost all of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: the cities of Polotsk in 1772, Minsk in 1774, and finally Vil’no [his approximation of the Russian version of the name] in 1795. By incorporating Lithuania, Russia absorbed elites who spoke Polish, peasants who spoke (for the most part) what we would now call Belarusian, and towns inhabited in the main by Jews.”⁷

6. “As a result of the First Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the eastern part of Belarus was annexed by the Russian Empire and was incorporated into the newly formed Mogilev, Pskov and Polotsk guberniyas.”⁸

7. “In 1772 the western provinces of Belarus were annexed to the Russian Empire.”⁹

8. “Russia took the Palatinate of Mstislavl and part of the palatinates of Polotsk, Vitebsk and Minsk.”¹⁰

Only the last quote correctly describes what the maps – both from Western and Russian sources – show (apart from ignoring the GDL's claim to Polish-Lithuanian Livonia), and only that author quotes the translated words of Article Two of the treaty ratified by the Commonwealth's Sejm on September 18, 1773:

"His Majesty the King of Poland and all Estates of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania cede eternally and irrevocably, to the Empress of Russia, and her heirs of both sexes, part of Polish Livonia, as well as part of the Palatinate of Polotsk situated on this side of the Daugava, and part of the Palatinate of Vitebsk, in such a way that the River Daugava becomes a natural border between the two states to the point at which the boundary of the Palatinate of Vitebsk merges with that of Polotsk, then along this border to the place where the boundaries of three palatinates Polotsk, Vitebsk and Minsk, intersect, and from here this border continues in a straight line as far as the source of the Druya [Dru], at the settlement called Ordva, and from there along this river as far south as its mouth in the Dnieper, thus the entire Palatinate of Mstislavl, on both sides of the Dnieper and Minsk Palatinate, two areas above and below Mstislavl on this side of the new boundary and the Dnieper go to the Russian Empire; and from the mouth of the Druya, the Dnieper shall be the border between the two states, retaining for the city of Kiev and its district those boundaries that they have on the other side of the river."¹¹

But even this "definitive" definition is misquoted by the very author presenting it, a few paragraphs later:

"...part of the Palatinate of Vitebsk" in the treaty language becomes "...the treaty, according to which Russia was to take the whole palatinates of Mstislavl and Vitebsk..."¹²

To make sense of what was actually annexed, I have resorted to maps – maps created contemporaneous with the partitions, as well as maps created right up to the present day – which remove the elements of interpretive translation and summarization at the expense of accuracy. Based on my research, what follows is what I believe was actually annexed as a result of the First Partition, as well as what actually happened to those areas once they were annexed.

Lands the Grand Duchy of Lithuania actually lost:

Follow the green line I have added to the map in Fig. 1 to see the actual and specific lands lost in 1772:

1. All of [Polish-Lithuanian] Livonian Province (*Lith.: Livonijos vaivadija; Pol.: W. Inflantskie*) – also called **Polish-Lithuanian Livonia, Polish Livonia and Inflanty Province**. ("Inflanty" is said to be a Polonized version of Livland, the German name for Livonia.) There is no cartographic or written proof I have been able to find that supports the treaty's quoted wording that only "part" of Polish-Lithuanian Livonia

was annexed. There also is no mention of Polish-Lithuanian Livonia in the treaty wording of the Second (or Third) Partition. Part of the GDL since 1561, this area in 1569, under the terms of the Union of Lublin, became jointly administered with the Kingdom of Poland. The key city was known as "Dyneburg" in 18th century Polish, "Daugpilis" in Lithuanian, "Dünaburg" in German (its more or less "official" name from 1275-1893, because, even within the Russian Empire, Baltic Germans held sway in the region), "Двинск" (Dvinsk) in Russian (from 1893-1920), and, finally, "Daugavpils" in Latvian, from 1920 to the present. It is the second-largest city in Latvia after Riga, and is only 16 miles from today's Lithuanian border.

2. Most of Polotsk Province (*Lith.: Polocko vaivadija; Pol.: W. Polockie*) – everything north of the Daugava (Dvina) river, including its capital, Polotsk, on the northeast bank of the Daugava, a vassal of Lithuania since 1240. The area was briefly recaptured by Russians from 1563-78 and 1654-60. Polotsk was "Polacky" in 18th century Polish, "Полоцк" on Russian maps of the 18th to 20 centuries and "Пóлацк" in today's Belarus.

3. Nearly all of Vitebsk Province (*Lith.: Vitebsko vaivadija; Pol.: W. Witebskie*) – except for a sliver of land west of the Dnieper river. The province had been controlled by Lithuanians since the 13th century, and became a GDL province in 1503. Lost was the city of Vitebsk: "Witebsk" in 18th century Polish, "Вітебск" on 18th – 20th century Russian maps, and "Вицебск" in today's Belarus, where it is the fourth-largest city.

4. All of Mstislav (pr. MIS-tih-slahf) Province (*Lith.: Mstislavio vaivadija; Pol.: W. Mscislawskie*), named after the Duke of Smolensk, Mstislav Romanovich the Old, and conquered by a Lithuanian prince in 1358. The first Lithuanian duke of the province was Kari-gaila, brother of Jogaila.

5. Less than a quarter of Minsk Province (*Lith.: Minsko vaivadija*), the part east of the Dnieper river. This province had been a fief of Lithuanian tribes since the 12th century, and a formal part of the GDL since the 14th century.

In other words, what was annexed by the Empire of Russia in 1772 were historic Lithuanian lands. That's not to say these lands were populated with ethnic Lithuanians – far from it, as Timothy Snyder indicates. But neither were these areas "Polish." (A future installment in this series will explore ethnographic maps of the historic Lithuanian area.) An exception to the characterization: Polish-Lithuanian Livonia was populated primarily by Roman Catholic Latvians with their own dialect or language: Latgalian.

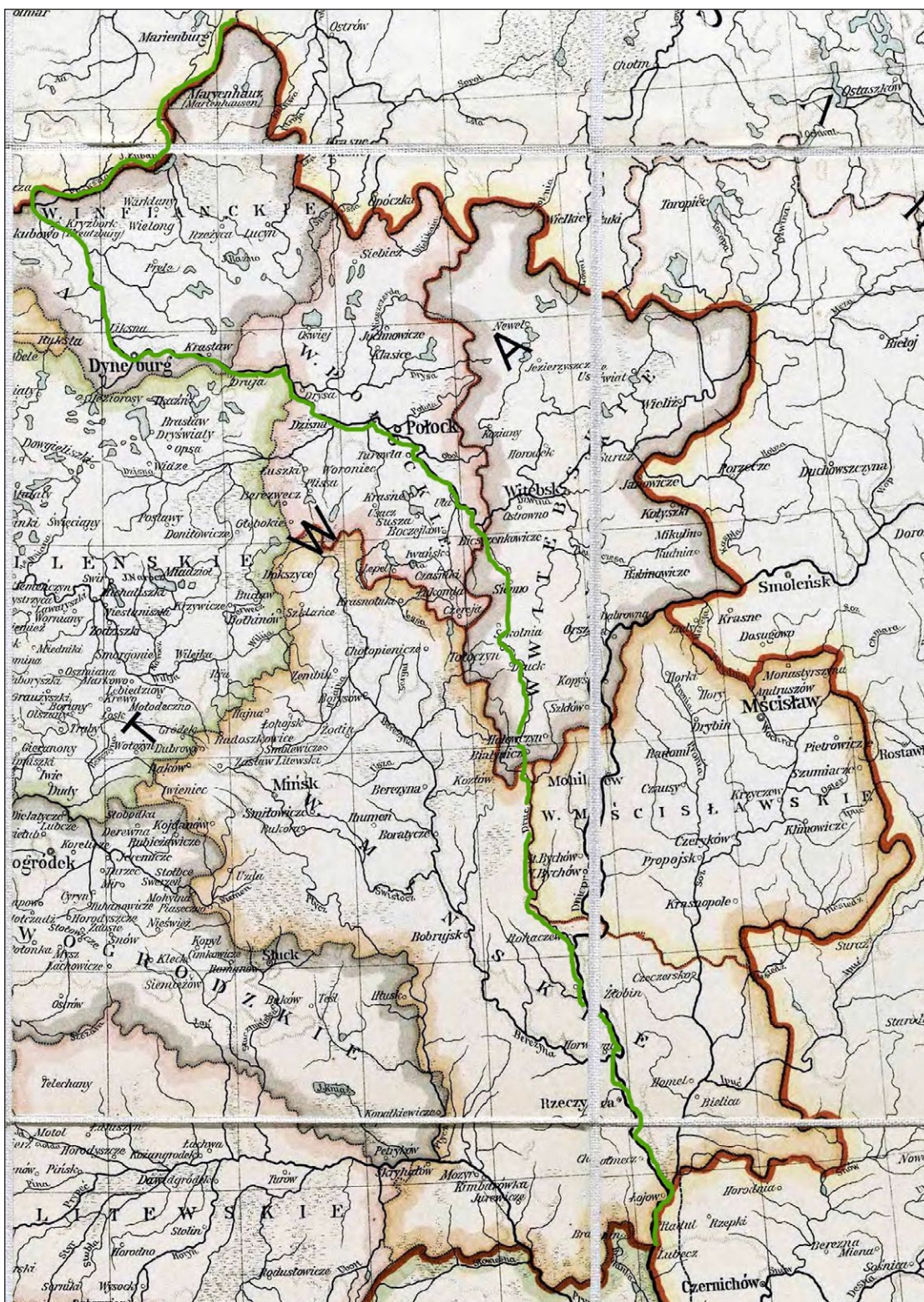


Fig. 1. 1895. Jan Babirecki: Detail from "Polska w Roku 1771," from his atlas "MAPA Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," published by Spółka Wydawnicza Polska w Krakowie. Areas north and east of the green line were annexed by the Empire of Russia in 1772. Image from RCIN Digital Repository of Scientific Institutes: <http://RCIN.org.pl>

Depictions of the First Partition – and how they changed over time to eliminate “Lithuania”:

Now let’s look at how lands lost in the First Partition have been depicted by mapmakers. First, maps published immediately after the Partition.

A Scots mapmaker who worked on commission for Empress Catherine, John Truscott gave her, sometime between 1772 and 1777, his backdated (to 1769,

inexplicably) version of post-First-Partition borders. Fig. 2a shows the top half of “Map of Poland and Moldavia with Neighboring Lands;” Fig. 2b is an enlargement of lands newly-annexed from the GDL.

What’s clear from the Truscott map is that there were just two new guberniyas: *Псковской губерния*, (*Pskovskoy guberniya*) and *Могилевской губерния* (*Mogilevskoy guberniya*), that accommodated the annexed lands. Bear this in mind as we see later images and descriptions.



Fig. 2a: c1772-77 Ivan [John] Truscott: top half of "Map of Poland and Moldavia...," St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, from the National Library of Russia, via the World Digital Library



Fig. 2b. Detail from c1772-77 Ivan [John] Truscott: top half of "Map of Poland and Moldavia...," St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, from the National Library of Russia, via the World Digital Library

Fig. 3 is a detail of a folding map glued to linen published by T.C. Lotter in Augsburg soon after the actual partition. The state of cartographic knowledge in this area being what it was, the inaccurate shapes – especially of “Livonia Polonica” – are to be expected, but “MAGNUS [D]UCATUS [LI]THUANIAE” is clearly



Fig. 3. 1773 Tobias Conrad Lotter: detail from "MAPPA GEOGRAPHICA ex novissimis observationibus repraesentans REGNUM POLONIAE ET MAGNUM DUCATUM LITHUANIAE," Augsburg. Image from <http://RCIN.org.pl>

identified as the former ruler of the annexed areas.

Also in 1773, in a detail from a map (Fig. 4) by Tobias Mayer - Homann Heirs, the positioning of “[MAGN] VS DVCATVS” and “[LIT]VANIAE” clearly identify First-Partition-annexed areas as belonging to the GDL.



Fig. 4: 1773 Tobias Mayer - Homann Heirs: "Mappa Geographica REGNI POLONIAE...", Nürnberg. Image from <http://alexandremaps.com>



Two years after the First Partition, a French map-maker (in Fig. 5) pushed “[D]UCHE DE [LI]THUANIAE” left and to the west, and had the “Palatinat de Mscislaw” mistakenly shown as having been bisected in the First Partition, while the western half remained in the GDL – whereas it had been entirely annexed.

In 1775, the Homann Heirs published a map (Fig. 6.) in Nürnberg which set the record straight, at least for a while. “Charte von Russisch Litauen...” by its very title made clear that the annexed lands of the First Partition were of Lithuanian origin, and that those lands were the provinces of “Livonia, Witepsk, and Mścislaw, as well as a part of the provinces of Polotsk and Minsk.”

T.C. Lotter, in 1778, six years after the First Partition, not only correctly identified the annexed lands as having belonged to “MAGNUS [D]UCATUS [LI]THUANIAE,” but does it on a map (Fig. 7.) boldly entitled – not “Poland,” as was typically the case – but “Magnus Ducatus LITHUANIA.”

Fig. 5. 1774 Jean Janvier - Jean Lattre: “Royaumes de Pologne et de Prusse, avec le Duché de Curlande...,” Paris. Image from Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps: <http://raremaps.com>



Fig. 6: 1775 Homann Heirs: "Charte von Russisch Litauen..." ("Map of Russian Lithuania, which assigned to Russia the Polish provinces Livonia, Witepsk, and Mscislaw, and a part of the provinces of Polotsk and Minsk"), Nürnberg. Image from Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps: <http://raremaps.com>

London mathematician Samuel Dunn was precise in the detail of his 1794 depiction (Fig. 8) and description of the First Partition, correctly showing both partial and complete annexations of provinces, and labeling them as “The Russian Province, dismembered from Lithuania.”

Now, let’s look at what happened to depictions of the First Partition during the 19th century, as failed uprisings by Poles against Russia in 1830-31, and again in 1863 led expatriate Polish activists to do everything possible to keep alive the memory of a Kingdom of Poland – but not of a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Even though ethnic Lithuanians participated in those actions along with ethnic Poles, the cartographic results of those patriotic efforts unfortunately often led to the disappearance of Lithuania and the GDL.

In 1831, Leonard Chodźko, a graduate of Vilnius university, aide to General Lafayette in the “November Uprising” of 1830, and now an émigré in Paris, published a map (Fig. 9) notable for leaving out the GDL from its table of territories within the Kingdom of Poland in 1772. He did include “[LITH]UANIE” on his map, but gave it no specific boundaries, and resurrected Janvier – Lattre’s 1774 tactic of not having the name “Lithuanie” overlap annexed areas. Instead, he now partly identified annexed areas as “RUSSIAE BLANCHE” (White Russia). Identifying lands lost by the GDL to Russia in both the First and Second Partitions as “White Russia” or as “Belarus” was becoming the norm.

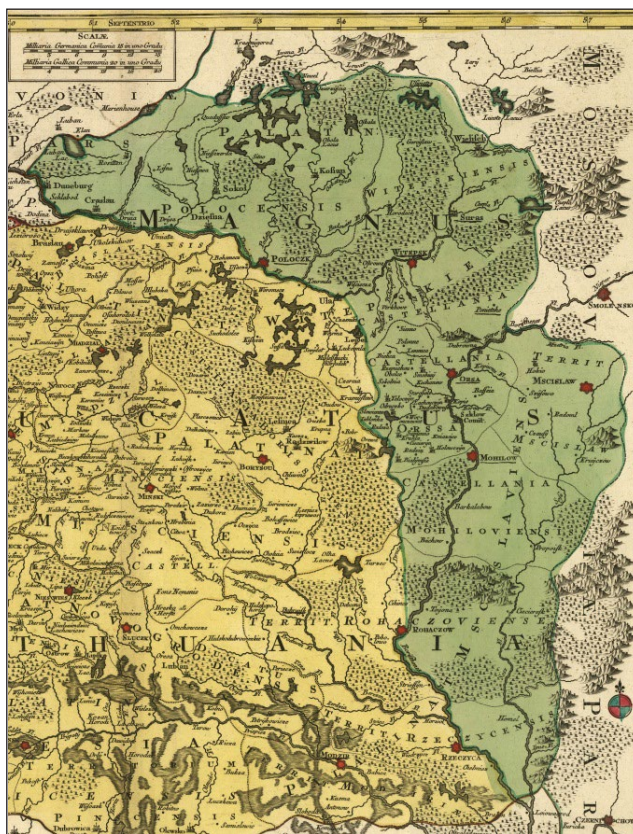


Fig. 7. 1778 Tobias Conrad Lotter: "Magnus ducatus Lithuania..." Augsburg, from his "Atlas Geographique." From the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Div.

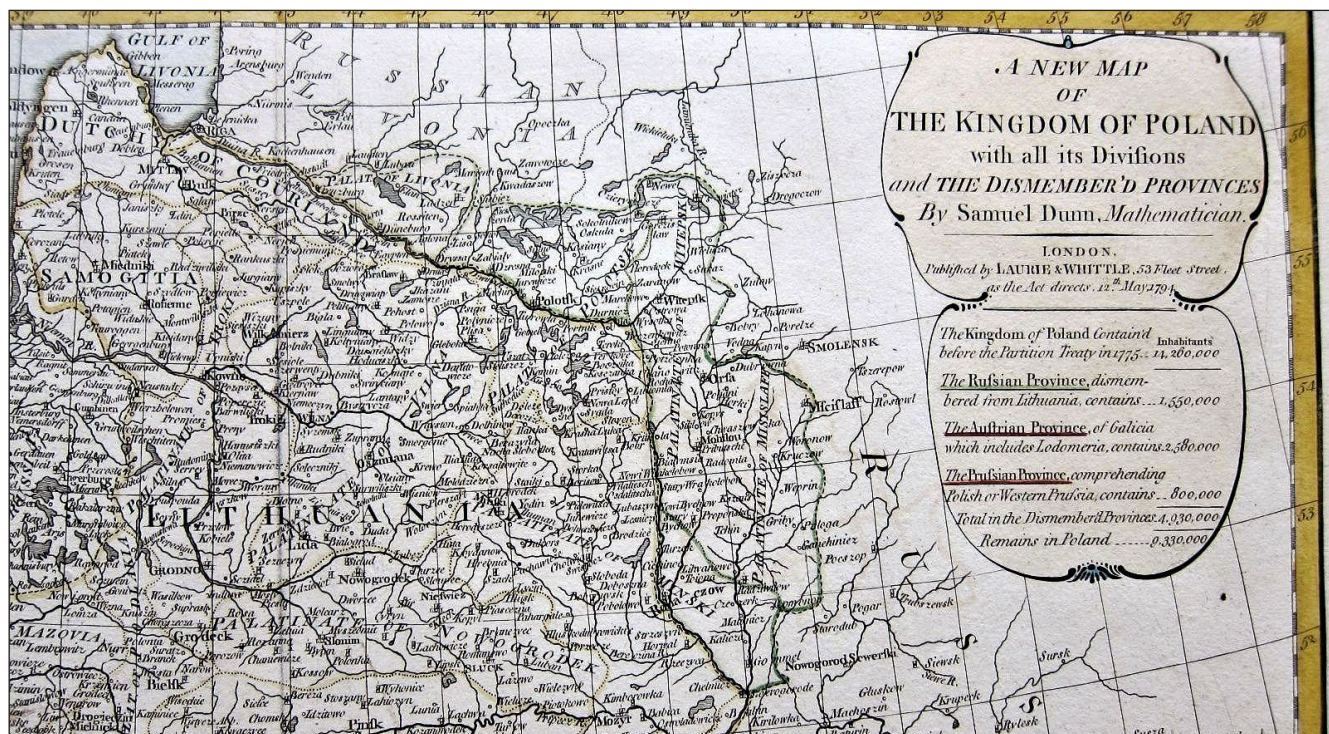


Fig. 8. 1794 Samuel Dunn: detail from “A New Map of the Kingdom of Poland.” Image from [jremington1 on eBay](#)



Fig. 9: 1831 Leonard Chodźko "Des Etats de l'Ancienne Pologne... avant son premier demembrement en 1772," Paris. Image from <http://RCIN.org.pl>



Fig. 10: 1837 Jan Marcin Bansemer and Piotr Falkenhagen Zaleski: "POLAND in 1772, after the first Partition," London Image from Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Cracow

Six years later, In 1837, Jan Marcin Bansemer and Piotr Falkenhagen Zaleski, in a map (Fig. 10) depicting the First Partition from their "Poland, an Atlas containing the Political Changes That Country has experienced during the last sixty Years from 1771 to the Present Time," published in London, followed Chodźko's pattern: "[LITHU]ANIA" with no specific boundaries, and not overlapping the annexed areas. Bansemer was a former military officer who fought in the "November Uprising," and later moved first to Germany, and then to London, where and he and economist/financier Falkenhagen Zaleskie became activist Polonophiles, using maps and atlases to make their points.

In 1872, German mapmaker Carl Wolff, in his "... KÖNIGREICH POLEN nach den grenzen von 1772..." (Fig.11), further minimized the reach of "LITHAUEN," making it seem as though the future eastern boundary of Vilno guberniya was as far as the GDL reached. The provenance of lands lost to Russia in the First Partition was being rewritten.

In the early 20th century, maps and atlases published in Poland by patriots first, cartographers second, continued to fan hopes for a return to the glories of a Kingdom of Poland within which the GDL never existed. The eastern lands they hoped would be part of a reestablished Polish kingdom were no more

ethnically Polish than they were ethnically Lithuanian (see a future article on ethnographic maps of the area), but to identify those regions as historically part of the GDL would dilute their message to a Europe and US deliberating postwar boundaries, and considering Lithuanian claims.

Depictions of the First Partition did not escape their historical rewrite. Eligiusz Niewiadomski's 1908 "Rozbiory Polski ("Partitions of Poland") r. 1772, 1793, 1795" (Fig. 12), from his "Atlas do Dziejów Polski," completely eliminates "Lithuania" or the GDL from the map. Niewiadomski, a Polish painter, art critic, and right-wing activist – all more appropriate than "cartographer" – had ties to Poland's National Democratic Party, founded in 1897 by avowed anti-Semite Roman Dmowski. In December 1922, after the National Democratic Party claimed the first President of the Polish Republic, Gabriel Narutowicz, had been elected by "... Reds, Jews and Germans" rather than by Poles, Niewiadomski assassinated him at an art gallery opening, just five days into his term. Tried, and then shot by a firing squad, Niewiadomski was, nevertheless, an influential mapmaker who influenced the postwar boundaries of Lithuania and Poland. His series of Polish historical atlases, beginning in 1899, with editions in 1908 and 1920, promoted the historical significance of Poland – at the expense of Lithuania.

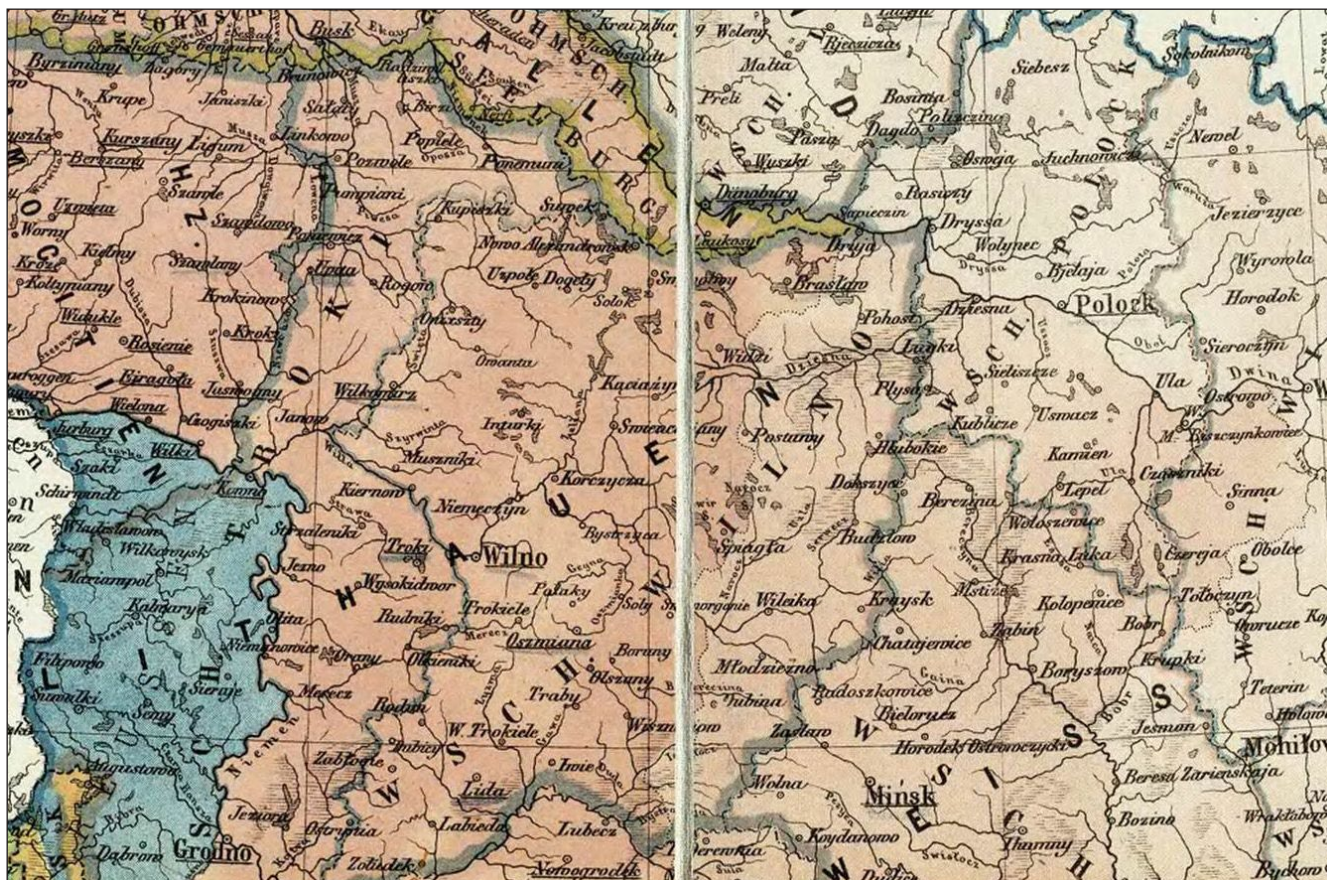
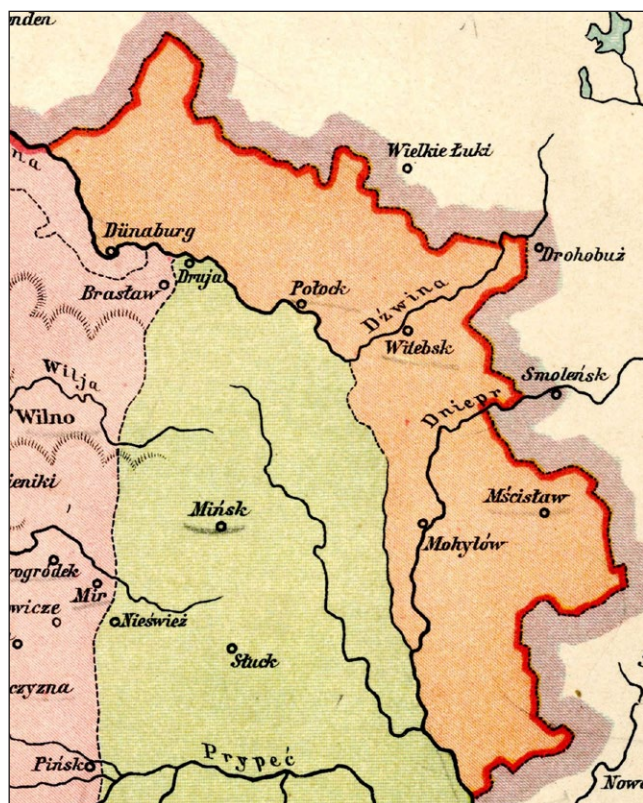


Fig. 11. 1872 Carl Wolff: Detail from "...KÖNIGREICH POLEN nach den grenzen von 1772..." From <http://RCIN.org.pl>



Józef Michał Bazewicz, in his 1918 "Polska w czasie 3 rozbiorów" ("Three partitions of Poland") (Fig. 13), from his "Atlas historyczny Polski," went beyond even Niewiadomski in not just erasing "Lithuania" from his maps, but even erasing Vilnius, historic capital of the GDL, from his depiction of the First Partition. But that omission may have been a simple error, not a conscious decision. Successful as a map and atlas publisher until the 1920's, Bazewicz and his maps were ridiculed by a new generation of patriot mapmakers with legitimate cartographic credentials, like Eugeniusz Romer, who said:

"We should be heartily sorry that Bazewicz has not fathomed mapping methods, because his energy and hard work could have achieved better results. His maps are sinful because of their blatant dilettantism; technically, they are almost naive."¹³

← Fig. 12. 1908 Eligiusz Niewiadomski: "Rozbiory Polski (Partitions of Poland) r. 1772, 1793, 1795." From <http://mapywig.org>

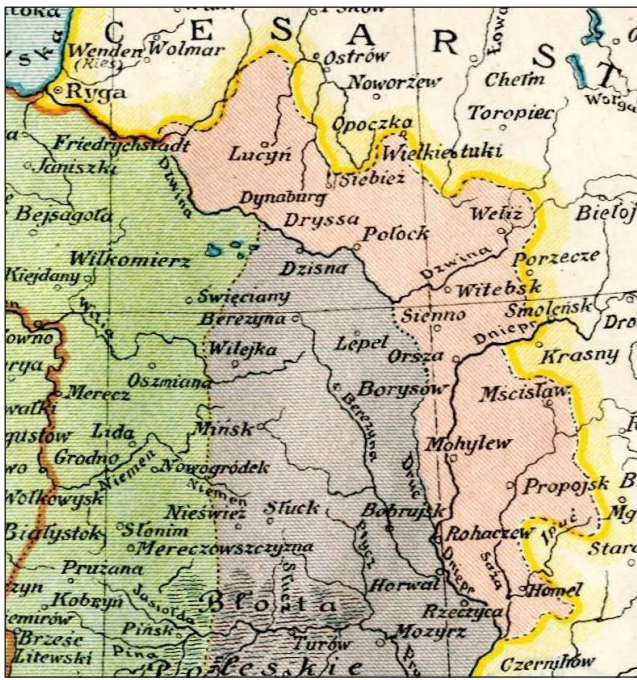


Fig. 13. 1918 Józef Michał Bazewicz: "Polska w czasie 3 rozbiorów" (Three partitions of Poland) Image from <http://mapywig.org>

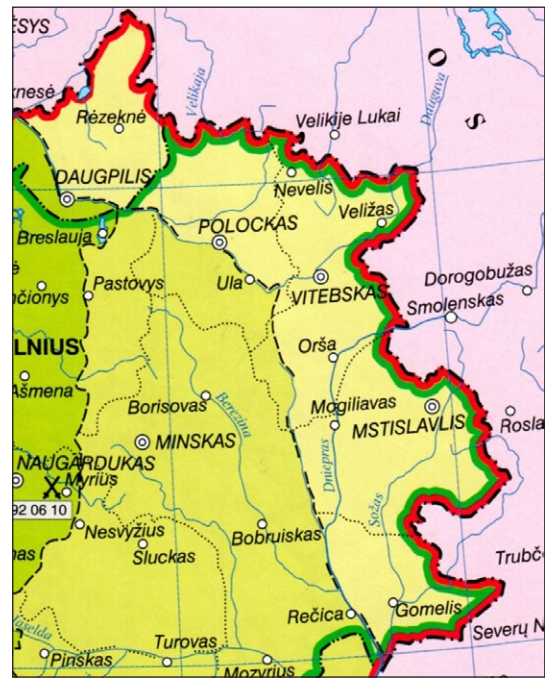


Fig. 14. "Respublikos Padalijimai XVIII a Pabaigoje," with boundaries in 1771, '72, '93, '95. From "Lietuvos Istorijos Atlasas," from AK's copy

20th century depictions of the First Partition range from Fig. 14, taken from a Lithuanian historical atlas, to online creations at genealogical sites like the one at "The Polish Connection at ancestry.com," Fig 15, which completely eliminates the GDL and Lithuania from history. But even supposedly objective sources, like the Encyclopedia Britannica, as shown in Fig. 16, have succumbed to the relentless erasure of Lithuania from the historical record. Yes, there are depictions on the Internet which actually show the GDL and/or Lithuania as having lost lands in the Partitions, but my impression – as someone who has been trolling the Internet since the Internet began for images of historical Lithuania – is that upwards of 75% of all online contemporary

depictions of the First and subsequent Partitions, completely eliminate "Lithuania" and/or the "GDL."

The aftermath of the First Partition in the annexed areas:

Now let's turn to what happened to lands annexed by Russia between 1772 and the next Partition, in 1793. The GDL's 11 provinces had been stable for hundreds of years – now everyone in two provinces: Polish-Lithuanian Livonian and Mstislav, most everyone in another two provinces: Vitebsk and Polotsk, and folks in the easternmost part of a fifth province: Minsk, had to deal with a new, Russian, administration.

Fig. 15: From "The Polish Connection at <http://ancestry.com>"



Fig. 16: From Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998



As we found in descriptions of the First Partition, the specifics of what happened to the annexed areas after the partition differ by source:

According to an official Lithuanian source online:

"Belarus was divided into the gubernii after it was connected to Russian Empire. In 1772 Vitebsk, Infljantsk, Mstislav, and Polotsk voevodstvos formed Mogilevskaya Gubernya and Piskovskaya gubernya. In 1776, Polotskaya Gubernya was formed out of Belorussian and Pskov povets."¹⁴ ("Povets" were districts, a term officially used until 1840.)

According to a Russian source online:

"In 1772, as a result of the First Partition of Poland, Inflanty Voivodeship and eastern Belarus were transferred to Russia. In order to accommodate these areas, Pskov Governorate was created... In addition, Vitebsk, Polotsk, and Dvina [Daugpilis], taken over from Poland, were included into the governorate... Pskov Governorate was proven to be too big to be administered properly, and in 1776, the decree of the empress, Catherine the Great, was issued. It divided the governorate into Pskov and Polotsk Governorates... In 1777, Pskov Governorate was transformed into Pskov Viceroyalty."¹⁵

No mention of the creation of Mogilev guberniya.

Belarusian sources typically either skip over details on what happened during and after the Partitions, or refer to them as the partitions of Belarus, as part of a unique view of history and geography:

"...the glorious historical Belarusian name Lithuania related only to a purely Baltic tribe, the Zhmudz, which had never been called Lithuanians; since then, they have kept this name as the name of their country... From this point, I will use the name Lithuania relative to the modern territory with this name, though it occupies only a small and not the original part of historical Lithuania."¹⁶

I would point out that the preponderance of evidence now points to the Rus – the tribe from which both Russia and Belarus derive their name – as being Swedish Vikings from the north and west of present-day Russia who, in the 9th century, ruled and gave order to disorganized Slavic tribes.¹⁷

The reality was that two new Russian guberniyas were created for the annexed lands of the GDL:

Polish-Lithuanian Livonia, and the annexed parts of Vitebsk and Polotsk provinces became part of a newly-created – and short-lived – Russian governorate, or guberniya: Pskov, which also included two districts removed from the existing Russian Novgorod guberniya. It soon became apparent that Pskov guberniya was too big to be effectively administered, so Empress Catherine the Great decreed, in 1776, that it be divided in two: a new, smaller, Pskov guberniya, and a new Polotsk guberniya.

Mogilev guberniya was also formed in 1772, from parts of the provinces of Vitebsk, Polotsk, Minsk and all of Mstislav – but not from Polish-Lithuanian Livonia, too, as Russian-sourced Wikipedia entries would have you believe.

What happened next was inevitable: the Second (1793) Partition.

(To be continued.)

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