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EXPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL BURDENS INTO THE CENTRAL-EUROPEAN PERIPHERY: CHRISTMAS TREE TRADE AND UNEQUAL ECOLOGICAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN GERMANY AND HABSBURG GALICIA AROUND 1900

Abstract

The article intends to bring new light on the German exploitation of Central European forests within the theoretical framework of the unequal ecological exchange. Focusing on one commodity in particular, the Christmas tree, it shows how foreign trade with Habsburg Galicia was used by Germany in order to get rid of the socio-environmental burdens of tree extraction. Ultimately, the article confirms the peripheral status of Habsburg Galicia within the world-system by stressing its negative environmental consequences.

Key words: timber frontier, world-system theory, ecological unequal exchange, Habsburg Galicia, forest degradation

Słowa kluczowe: granica lasów, teoria systemów-światów, nierówne relacje ekologiczne, Galicja, degradacja lasów

INTRODUCTION

Although Germany is one of the largest timber importers in the world, along with the United States, Japan, France and the United Kingdom¹, scholars have paid very little attention to the German role in the history of globalized timber

¹ E. Peepke, *Forest Products Annual Market Review 2009–2010*, New York, United Nations, 2010, p. 140.

markets during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the few studies dealing with this matter was written by Egon Glesinger, the son of a Jewish businessman who owned immense holdings of forests and related wood industries in the Cieszyn County. As former secretary to the *Comité International du Bois*, he described in 1942 Hitler's plottings to control Europe's timber supply². Glesinger focused on the interwar period, but German attempts to capitalize on vast stretches of timberland in foreign countries can be traced back earlier, to the second half of the nineteenth century, when rapid industrialization processes required huge quantities of wood for building construction, mine pillars, rail sleepers, electric poles and pulpwood³. During the first stages of industrial development, Germany was able to expand its home-grown timber without depleting the German forests thanks to the form of woodland management which had been introduced in the eighteenth century and aimed at maximizing the production of timber in a sustainable way⁴.

Despite these efforts, domestic production could no longer meet the demand for timber from the mid-1860s onward, when Germany became a net importer of this commodity. According to Max Endres (1860–1940), professor of forest policy in Munich, imported timber represented 14 million cubic metres at the beginning of the 1900s and covered about 41% of German consumption⁵. It was less than the British figure at the same time, around 85%⁶, but still substantial. In a context of increasing competition between states and companies for the control of forest resources⁷, securing stable supplies of wood had become crucial to the German economy.

By examining the impact of industrialization on forest management, Bernd Stefan Grewe showed in 2003 that German forests could be maintained in a sustainable manner only thanks to increasing pressure on foreign wood-

² E. Glesinger, *Nazis in the Woodpile: Hitler's Plot for Essential Raw Material*, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1942.

³ W.O. Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834–1914*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975, p. 24; J.K. Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity, and the Contestation of a National Symbol, 1871–1914*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2012, p. 55.

⁴ H.E. Lowood, *The Calculating Forester: Quantification, Cameral Science, and the Emergence of Scientific Forestry Management in Germany*, in: T. Frängsmyr, J.L. Heilbron, R.E. Rider (ed.), *The Quantifying Spirit in the 18th Century*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, pp. 315–342.

⁵ M. Endres, *Die Leistungsfähigkeit der Forstwirtschaft. Rede beim Antritt des Rektorats der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität gehalten am 23. November 1907*, Munich, Wolf & Sohn, 1907, p. 18.

⁶ I. Iriarte-Goñi, M.-I. Ayuda, *Not Only Subterranean Forests: Wood Consumption and Economic Development in Britain (1850–1938)*, "Ecological Economics" 77, 2012, pp. 176–184, table A4, p. 183.

⁷ S.C. Chew, *Logs for Capital: The Timber Industry and Capitalist Enterprise in the Nineteenth Century*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1992, p. 20.

lands⁸. According to Grewe, the use of external resources through wood import was a kind of ‘problem shifting’ (*Problemverlagerung*), which meant exporting the resource scarcity from one territory to another⁹. As Christian Lotz points out, statistical data from the nineteenth century prove that the growing demand for wood in Western Europe was not served by the overseas possessions of the colonial powers, but mainly by Northern and Eastern European woodlands¹⁰. In 1913, three European countries provided almost 85% of German timber and wood pulp imports: The Russian Empire (51.2%), Austria-Hungary (27%) and Sweden (6.3%)¹¹. By covering its needs with Baltic and East-Central European timber, Germany, like the other industrialized European countries, was using international trade as a form of ‘resource management’ which relied on a perception of these foreign areas as ‘inexhaustible woodlands’¹².

As Thaddeus Sunseri reminds us, German capitalists considered Central European ‘primeval’ forests as a wild and unproductive area in need of use¹³. They therefore unsparingly exploited their resources without consideration for the damaging impacts on the environment and local people. Focusing on Habsburg Galicia, this paper intends to bring new light to the German exploitation of Central European forests within the theoretical framework of the ‘unequal (or uneven) ecological exchange’. Drawing upon the world-systems analysis initiated by Immanuel Wallerstein in the 1970s¹⁴, this approach tries to understand how the most developed countries (the ‘centre’ or the ‘core’ of the world-system) externalize their environmental costs to the less-developed ones (the ‘periphery’). In this way, international trade allows industrialised countries to keep a high environmental quality within their own borders, while effectively exporting the negative environmental consequences of their production and consumption processes to poorer parts of the world¹⁵.

⁸ B.S. Grewe, *Das Ende der Nachhaltigkeit? Wald und Industrialisierung im 19. Jahrhundert*, „Archiv für Sozialgeschichte“ 43, 2003, pp. 61–79.

⁹ B.S. Grewe, *Der versperrte Wald. Ressourcenmangel in der bayerischen Pfalz (1814–1870)*, Cologne, 2004, pp. 56–57.

¹⁰ Ch. Lotz, *Expanding the Space for Future Resource Management: Explorations of the Timber Frontier in Northern Europe and the Rescaling of Sustainability During the Nineteenth Century*, “Environment and History” 21, 2015, pp. 257–279.

¹¹ Calculated according to figures from: M. Endres, *Handbuch der Forstpolitik, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Gesetzgebung und Statistik*, 2nd ed., Berlin, Springer, 1922, p. 591.

¹² Cf. Ch. Lotz, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

¹³ Th. Sunseri, *Exploiting the Urwald: German Post-Colonial Forestry in Poland and Central Africa, 1900–1960*, “Past & Present” 214/1, 2012, pp. 305–342.

¹⁴ I.M. Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York, Academic Press, 1974.

¹⁵ A. Hornborg, *Towards an Ecological Theory of Unequal Exchange: Articulating World System Theory and Ecological Economics*, “Ecological Economics” 25/1, 1998, pp. 127–136; W.L. Goldfrank, D. Goodman, A. Szasz, *Ecology and the World-System*, Westport,

Recently, the centre-periphery approach has been applied to the history of Galicia under Habsburg rule. According to scholars like Klemens Kaps, this territory can be regarded as a model case for a peripheral area in Europe¹⁶. By analyzing Galicia's trade structure, balance of payments and capital investment, Kaps demonstrated that this politically and economically dominated territory acted as an easily accessible supplier of raw materials. Yet, the ecological consequences of this peripheral status have not been much studied. Focusing on one commodity in particular, the Christmas tree, this paper shows how Galicia was involved in an ecological unequal exchange and had to support environmental burdens exported by Germany. Although this trade was rather small in terms of volumes, it drew the attention of the Galician society, which became at the end of the nineteenth century highly sensitive to the issues of wood shortage and deforestation.

INTERNATIONAL DEMAND AND THE RISE OF THE GALICIAN TIMBER TRADE

As one of the most backward and isolated parts of the Habsburg Empire, Galicia had been long kept away from the international timber markets because of the lack of communication networks and the distance to the main trading areas. In the plains of North Galicia, earlier timber trade to Western Europe via the Vistula River existed during the early modern period but was then interrupted after the First Partition of Poland (1772), when Prussia instantly cut off Poland

Greenwood Press, 1999; R. Timmons, P.E. Grimes, *World-System Theory and the Environment: Toward a New Synthesis*, in: R.E. Dunlap and al. (ed.), *Sociological Theory and the Environment: Classical Foundations, Contemporary Insights*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, pp. 167–196; J.W. Moore, *The Modern World-System as Environmental History? Ecology and the Rise of Capitalism*, "Theory and Society" 32/3, 2003, pp. 307–377; A.K. Jorgenson, *Consumption and Environmental Degradation: A Cross-National Analysis of the Ecological Footprint*, "Social Problems" 50/3, 2003, pp. 374–394; A.K. Jorgenson, *Unequal Ecological Exchange and Environmental Degradation: A Theoretical Proposition and Cross-National Study of Deforestation, 1990–2000*, "Rural Sociology" 71/4, 2006, pp. 685–712.

¹⁶ K. Kaps, *Gescheitertes Aufholen in Zentraleuropa. Der Abstieg der Habsburgermonarchie zu einem semiperipheren Wirtschaftsraum im Spiegel ihrer Außenhandelsstruktur 1791–1880*, „Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte“ 9/1, 2008, pp. 103–122; K. Kaps, *Von Galizischen „World Orders“ zur Weltsystemtheorie: Zum „mental mapping“ einer ostmitteleuropäischen Peripherie*, in: U. Engel, M. Middell (ed.), *World Orders Revisited*, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2010, p. 51–69; K. Kaps, *Galizisches Elend revisited. Wirtschaftsentwicklung und überregionale Arbeitsteilung in einer Grenzregion der Habsburgermonarchie (1772–1914)*, „Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte“ 14/2, 2013, pp. 53–80; *idem*, *Ungleiche Entwicklung in Zentraleuropa: Galizien zwischen überregionaler Verflechtung und imperialer Politik (1772–1914)*, Vienna, Böhlau, 2015.

from the sea and introduced enormous custom duties¹⁷. Due to high transport costs, the only commercially viable commodities in the Galician Carpathians were easily transportable products, mostly ashes and potash, or high-value ones, like for instance hardwoods for shipbuilding¹⁸. Large parts of the forests close to the mountains and far away from the main rivers had still not been used for intensive sustained yield wood production.

From the 1860s onward, when the volume of world trade in timber was rising at 5–6% annually¹⁹, Galician forests started again to be a major source in the European wood market. Prompted by the soaring prices, Galician owners of wooded estates which were suitably located near floatable rivers started to produce large yields out of trade with Prussian merchants based in Danzig. According to official data, the total area of woodland in Galicia amounted 2,021,828 ha in 1885. Historical developments had strongly influenced forest ownership distribution across the crownland. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, many forests which formerly belonged to the Crown were transferred from public to private ownership²⁰. Only 10% of the forests were state-owned and most of these were located in the eastern part of the province. The majority of the forest area (67%) belonged to great landowners (Fig. 1).

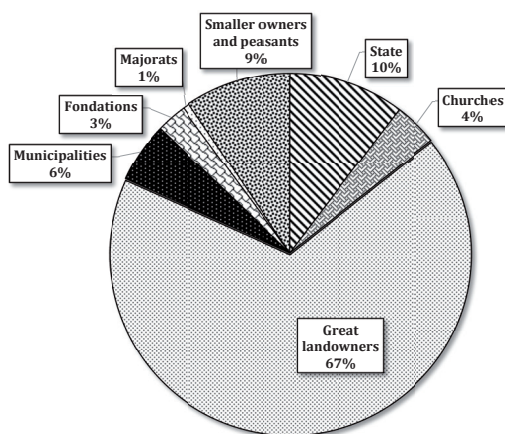


Fig. 1. Structure of forest ownership in Galicia (1885).

Source: T.K. Rutowski, *Rocznik Statystyki Galicji*, Lwów, Pierwsza Związkowa Drukarnia, 1889, vol. 2, p. 170.

¹⁷ E. Więcko, *Gdańsk, ośrodek morskich obrotów drewnem*, Gdańsk, Instytut Bałtycki, 1948, p. 31.

¹⁸ J. Lehr, *O stosunkach handlu drzewem z lasów Galicji*, „Rozprawy C. K. Galicyjskiego Towarzystwa Gospodarskiego” 17, 1855, pp. 169–179.

¹⁹ A.S. Milward, S.B. Saul, *The Economic Development of Continental Europe 1780–1870*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1973, p. 483.

²⁰ K. Orlecki, *O ustawodawstwie leśnym*, „Sylwan” 3/2, 1885, pp. 50–64.

Usually, forest workers were hired among the local peasantry during the winter, when there was no work on the fields. But sometimes companies also brought their own lumbermen from Germany or other provinces of Austria-Hungary²¹.

Driven by international demand, the ‘timber frontier’ — a front line associated with the progression of logging activities²² — shifted toward new, unexploited old-growth forests, first along the Vistula and its main tributaries like the Dunajec, the San, and the Bug, on which wood was transported by floating, then in the Carpathian Mountains. Between 1869 and 1883, the value of timber exports experienced an almost tenfold increase, from 200,000 to 2,000,000 zlotys; it was the highest figure among all commodities²³.

However, almost half of Galician forests were still unreachable and therefore not yet exploited at the beginning of the 1890s, especially in the high mountains and the Dniestr valley²⁴. In the Carpathians, some amounts of roundwood were exported by rafting on torrents²⁵, but it was only the promotion of the railways which gave rise to timber extraction exploitation on an unprecedented scale. Indeed, international trade from the 1880s was facilitated by the expanding main line railways and also by light, narrow-gauge forest railways, usually built by logging companies (Fig. 2).

The major axis leading into the Carpathian spruce-fir forests was the Galician Transversal Railway (*Transversalbahn*), which was opened in 1884 and ran along the northern side of the Mountains²⁶. It brought an end to the

²¹ S. Barański, J. Broda (ed.), *Dzieje lasów, leśnictwa i drzewnictwa w Polsce*, Warsaw, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Rolnicze i Leśne, 1965, pp. 174–175.

²² S. Gaunitz, *Local History as a Means of Understanding Economic Development: A Study of the Timber Frontier in Northern Sweden During the Industrialization Period*, “Economy and History” 22/1, 1979, pp. 38–62; S.E. Åström, *From Tar to Timber: Studies in North-east European Forest Exploitation and Foreign Trade, 1660–1860*, Helsinki, Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, 1988; L. Östlund, *Logging the Virgin Forest: Northern Sweden in the Early-Nineteenth Century*, “Forest & Conservation History” 39/4, 1995, pp. 160–171; J. Björklund, *Exploiting the Last Phase of the North European Timber Frontier for the International Market 1890–1914: An Economic-Historical Approach*, in: M. Agnoletti, S. Anderson (ed.), *Forest History: International Studies on Socio-economic and Forest Ecosystem Change: Report No 2 of the IUFRO Task Force on Environmental Change*, Wallingford, CABI, 2000, pp. 171–184.

²³ S. Szczepanowski, *Nędza Galicji w cyfrach*, Lwów 1888, pp. 45–46.

²⁴ L. [Władysław] Krzanowski, *Eine neue Waldbahn und die Frage des galizischen Holzhandels*, „Oesterreichische Eisenbahn-Zeitung“ 17/20, 1894, pp. 169–173, here, p. 169.

²⁵ H. Węgrzynowski, *Znaczenie dzikiego spławu dla lasów górskich*, „Sylwan” 10, 1892, pp. 377–383 and 420–428.

²⁶ L. Krzanowski, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

mono-directional timber traffic bound to the largely north/south orientation of the Galician rivers and enabled timber transport from the east to the west through Prussian Silesia.



Fig. 2. Clearcut along a narrow-gauge railway in the Carpathian Mountains (around 1900).

Source: Henryk Strzelecki, *Die Fortschritte der Forstwirtschaft Galiziens in den letzten fünfzig Jahren und die Ablösung der Servituten*, in: *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft und ihrer Industrien 1848–1898*, Wien, Perles, 1901, pp. 201–235, here, p. 219.

The increasing pressure by capitalist forces to intensify forest exploitation in Galicia was due to German and, to a smaller extent, Austrian and Hungarian logging companies. Even after the shift from wood to coal, Germany's forest areas did not recover to meet domestic demand and wood imports therefore continued to be crucial for domestic timber supply. As the forests of the Russian Partition were depleted, especially along the river banks, Prussian merchants moved toward Galicia during the 1880s and 1890s²⁷. The main foreign outlets of Galician wood in the German Empire were Prussia, Saxony, and Hamburg²⁸. In 1895, Germany reduced the tariffs on Austro-Hungarian raw wood²⁹.

²⁷ J. Marchet, *Der Holzhandel Norddeutschlands*, Leipzig/Vienna, Deuticke, 1908, p. 50f.

²⁸ S. Barański, J. Broda (ed.), *Dzieje lasów...*, *op. cit.*, p. 701.

²⁹ F. Bujak, *Galicya: Leśnictwo, górnictwo, przemysł*, Lwów–Warsaw, Altenberg, 1910, Vol. 2, p. 30.

This led to a quick increase in Galician timber exports, which more than doubled within five years, from 292,000 to 744,000 tons³⁰. Around 1900, Galician timber exports to Germany represented more than 30% of the whole Austria-Hungarian timber exports³¹.

From this point on, large Prussian logging companies, including joint-stock ones, bought ever-larger forest areas in Galicia. In the context of fierce competition between buyers, the conquest of these new supply markets required large amounts of capital³². In 1897, two leading companies from Berlin, the Berliner Holz-Comptoir AG and David Francke Söhne, purchased 8595 hectares of forests in the Mokrzychów estate, near Tarnobrzeg, for the astronomical sum of 5 million marks³³. Protected from foreign competition by high tariffs on lumber and other semi-finished or finished wood products, German lumber mills and processing industries developed along the Eastern border, mostly around Bromberg and in Upper Silesia. Just before the war, 54% of the roundwood, firewood and mine timber imported by this latter region came from Galicia³⁴. During the same time, German processed wood products like sawn timber, barrels, furnitures and paper gradually drove a major part of Galicia's crafts and domestic wood industry out of the market³⁵. In 1913, Galicia's trade balance for wood was dominated by roundwood exports and the imports of finished products (Fig. 3).

Whereas Galicia exported almost only raw timber and a small amount of firewood and other semi-finished products for 82.5 kronas per ton in average, it imported processed wood products for 711 kronas per ton. This trade structure was very characteristic of a core/periphery relationship. One of the commodities exported by Galician forests were Christmas trees: around 296 tons, according to official data. This figure was certainly underestimated because, as we will see, a lot of trees were exported illegally and therefore not counted in the statistics.

³⁰ K. Paygert, *Podstawy do określenia żądań Galicyi na polu polityki handlowej*, „Przegląd Polski” 146/436–437, 1902, pp. 8–49, 276–319, 466–497, here, p. 175; L.W. Biegeleisen, *Stan ekonomiczny Małopolski na podstawie bilansu handlowego*, Warsaw, Biuro prac kongresowych, 1921, pp. 390–391.

³¹ Calculated according to figures from: M. Endres, *op. cit.*, 1922, p. 591.

³² J. Marchet, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³³ Berliner Börse, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Börse. Ein Nachschlagebuch für Bankiers und Kapitalisten*, Berlin, Berliner Actionair, 1899, p. 533.

³⁴ *Upper Silesia in its Economic Relation to Poland and Germany*, New York, American-Polish Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1921, p. 18.

³⁵ R. Woyczyński, *Przemysł drzewny w Galicyi a gospodarstwa leśne*, „Sylwan” 29/8–9, 1911, pp. 388–391.

Products	Export		Import	
	Tons	Krones	Tons	Krones
Raw timber	369,577	30,330,812	1,899	162,072
Firewood	21,776	398,322	3,766	67,642
Fruit trees	–	–	19	11,592
Posts	4,680	150,639	–	–
Plants	44	32,800	82	48,818
Christmas trees	296	222,000	–	–
Planks	–	–	168	29,480
Furniture	184	330,841	1,869	4,132,655
Domestic tools	–	–	81	35,403
Wooden formworks	–	–	126	39,915
Carts	95	770,390	338	2,719,046
Brooms and brushes	–	–	112	114,511
Barrels	2,607	613,920	6,572	1,659,678
Other wooden products	105	136,656	3,248	3,983,843
Total	399,364	32,956,380	18,280	13,004,655

Fig. 3. Galician balance of trade for wood and wooden products (1913).
 Source: Leon Pączewski, *Lasy, przemysł i handel drzewny w Polsce*,
 Warsaw, Instytut Wydawniczy Biblioteka Polska, 1924, p. 163–164.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE CUSTOM IN GERMANY: GROWING DEMAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition. This custom can be traced to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. It acquired more popularity during the nineteenth century, becoming a sign of display in the salons of the German *Bildungsbürgertum*³⁶. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the custom was widespread in all classes of German society, as depicted in an American magazine in 1914:

Holy Eve would have no meaning for Germans, either old or young, without the presence of this simple symbol in the homes. Whole forests of young firs are cut down yearly in providing for the needs of nearly ten million households, for, large or small, a tree of some kind will be found in every dwelling. During the fortnight preceding Christmas, the squares and open places of large towns, where the trees are exposed for sale, look like miniature forests. Little short of a million trees are necessary to supply Berlin alone. Yet

³⁶ J. Perry, *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2010, p. 32.

however serious the forest devastation which is thus entailed, the lighting of the Christmas-tree is a very pretty custom and there is a touch of pathos in the devotion to it of both old and young.³⁷

Christmas trees were at this time already controversial with environmentalists, who charged that this tradition caused deforestation. In 1899, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the Christmas tree custom as an “arboreal infanticide”³⁸. Indeed, to be used for Christmas, trees have to be harvested at an age of 5 to 15 years old.

The species used as the main Christmas tree was the Norway Spruce (*Picea Abies*), native to Central and Eastern Europe³⁹. Its range in Germany was limited to small areas, mostly in the Black Forest, Bavaria, the Ore Mountains and Silesia⁴⁰. Assuming an annual demand of 1 million trees for the whole of Germany, forester Mencke estimated in 1896 that the country needed 2,250 hectares devoted to the cultivation of Christmas trees in order to ensure a sustainable production⁴¹. But since there were only a few Christmas tree farms at this time, most people still illegally obtained wild-grown trees from the neighboring forests⁴², as they started to do already during the first half of the nineteenth century (Fig. 4).

Still, some private forest owners and state forest officers managed to grow Christmas trees without harming their whole exploitation. This was the case, for instance, in the state forests near Darmstadt, where a special area was devoted to the production of such trees⁴³. However, demographic expansion combined with the spread of the custom to the middle and lower classes of German society made the demand outpace the production. Several alternatives were found to face the shortcomings of the supply. In Northern Germany, people used wretched Scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris*) as Christmas trees⁴⁴. The first artificial trees were also developed during the nineteenth century, though

³⁷ W.H. Dawson, *Christmas in Germany*, “The Bay View Magazine” 21/4, 1914, pp. 207–208.

³⁸ “Chicago Daily Tribune” 24/12, 1899.

³⁹ Today, a wider variety of pine and fir species are grown as Christmas trees, although a handful of varieties stand out in popularity: Norway spruce, Douglas-fir, Scots pine, Fraser fir, Nordmann fir.

⁴⁰ According to the map of natural distribution given in: G. Jansson and al., *Norway Spruce (Picea Abies (L.) H. Karst.)*, in: L.E. Pâques (ed.), *Forest Tree Breeding in Europe: Current State-of-the-Art and Perspectives*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2013, pp. 123–176, here, p. 124.

⁴¹ Mencke, *Christbaumfrage*, „Allgemeine Forst- und Jagd-Zeitung” 73/5, 1897, pp. 177–178.

⁴² Baltz, *Welche Erfahrungen liegen über Anlage sogenannter Christbaumkulturen vor?*, „Forst-Zeitung” 13/38, 1898, pp. 558–561, here, p. 558.

⁴³ Mencke, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁴⁴ A. Bütow, *Weihnachtliches*, „Deutsche Forst-Zeitung” 12/12, 1897, pp. 818–823, here, p. 823.

earlier examples exist; they were made from green-dyed goose feathers which were attached to a wooden pole to simulate a trunk⁴⁵. Another answer to the shortage was to cut and sell the spire of old-growth trees instead of young trees⁴⁶.



Fig. 4. Father and son collecting a Christmas tree in the forest. Painting by Franz Krüger (1797–1857), Oil on canvas, 41 × 35 cm.

However, all these methods did not solve the problem. At the turn of the century, foresters from all over the country reported an increase in theft and illegal tree felling in the woods during the weeks before Christmas. In 1905, the Prussian Minister of Agriculture Victor von Podbielski (1844–1916) complained that the public funding allocated to Chambers of Agriculture for afforestation in Westphalia had been used for growing Christmas trees and doing lucrative business by selling them⁴⁷. Concerned about extensive lumbering

⁴⁵ B.D. Forbes, *Christmas: A Candid History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007, pp. 121–122; J. Hewitt, *The Christmas Tree*, Gardners Books, 2007, p. 33.

⁴⁶ C. von Tubeuf, *Die Doppeltanne des Berliner Weihnachtsmarktes*, „Verhandlungen des Botanischen Vereins für die Provinz Brandenburg” 42, 1901, pp. 280–283; M e n c k e, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ *Die Jahresberichte der Landwirtschaftskammern für 1903. Forstwirtschaft*, „Landwirtschaftliche Jahrbücher” 24/1, 1905, pp. 337–369, here, p. 353.

and the health of their forests, German foresters feared that overexploitation of young spruce and fir stands would lead to further deforestation, especially in areas endowed with smaller private forests and in the surroundings of big cities⁴⁸. In Bavaria, the Home Office strengthened the measures against Christmas tree theft and set up a special reward for people denouncing them⁴⁹. Within this context, foreign trade seemed for Germany to be the best way to get rid of the socio-environmental burdens of Christmas tree extraction.

EXPORTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL BURDENS OF TREE EXTRACTION TO GALICIA

Around 1900, this trade expanded rapidly in order to fulfill consumer demand without undermining the sustainability of the German forest economy. Galicia was in this respect an attractive field for Prussian merchants. Since the mid-19th century, the growing value of timber had prompted forest owners to replace the natural deciduous beech and fir forests with spruce plantations in the lower subalpine zone⁵⁰. Large clear-cuts were generally restocked with spruce, while the average age of the woodlands decreased sharply. At the beginning of the 20th century, valuable Norway spruce stands existed in the Tatra and Beskid Mountains, only a few kilometres away from German Silesia and its urban centers like Katowice and Wrocław. Benefiting from the favourable terms of the Austro-German trade treaties, Prussian merchants started to purchase Galician Christmas trees by sending their salesmen door-to-door or engaging local Polish or Jewish middlemen. They usually managed to get the trees at very low prices, as pointed out by Andrzej Szponder (1856–1945), a Catholic priest from Cracow who was deputy of the Christian People's Party in the Galician Sejm:

Since about 1900 a widespread felling of young firs for Christmas trees for foreign enthusiasts began in our country. Prussians — Who else could it be? — come already mid-November, roam the villages where such forests are still growing, order to cut the firs [...], buy them for next to nothing and then send them in entire wagons to Berlin and other Prussian cities.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mencke, *op. cit.*; Baltz, *Der Einfluß des Handels mit Weihnachtsbäumen auf die kleinen Privat-Waldungen*, „Forst-Zeitung” 17/43, 1902, pp. 857–860.

⁴⁹ Staatsministerium des Innern, *Die Massnahmen auf dem Gebiete der landwirtschaftlichen Verwaltung in Bayern 1897–1903*, Munich, R. Oldenbourg, 1903, p. 98.

⁵⁰ J.H. Schirmer, *La forêt et l'exploitation du bois en Pologne*, „Annales de Géographie” 108/609, 1999, pp. 509–531, here, p. 514; J. Kozak and al. (ed.), *The Carpathians: Integrating Nature and Society Towards Sustainability*, Berlin/New York, Springer, 2013, p. 188, 400.

⁵¹ „Od r. mniej więcej 1900 rozpoczęło się u nas masowe wycinanie młodych jodlelek na „choinki” dla zagranicznych amatorów. Prusacy, bo któżby inny, przybywają już w połowie listopada, włączają się po wsiach, gdzie jeszcze jakie takie lasy się zielenią, namawiają do wycinania jodledek [...], skupują je za bezcen i całymi wagonami wysyłają do Berlina i innych miast pru-

The first region to be reached by Prussian tradesmen was the Western Carpathians, where private forest property dominated. As the years went by, the Christmas tree frontier moved to the East along the Carpathian Chain, but according to the available data, the Tatras and Beskids remained the main supply area. In December 1900, tree wagons full of Christmas trees were sent from the village of Maków to Prussia. The buyer, a Jewish tradesman from Oświęcim, paid 100 marks for all the freight⁵². That year, 9 wagons departed from Jeleśnia's train station to the Prussia markets; one year later, they were much more, 50 wagons⁵³. Given the fact that each wagon contained 800 to 1200 young spruces, tens of thousands of trees were in fact exported.

As there was at this time no organized official market for Christmas trees, this trade took place in an economic zone which Fernand Braudel describes as an "anti-market", meaning a space "where the great predators roam and the law of the jungle operates"⁵⁴. By exporting young trees to German purchasers, the Galician owner was often a substantial loser in having so much young growth destroyed after having been paid only a few kronas. Indeed, the mostly uneducated Galician peasants usually accepted the unfavourable terms set by tradesmen who possessed privileged access to capital and information, being the only ones to know about the real value of trees on the final markets. In November 1903, two Prussian merchants came to Sucha, a small city in the Beskids foothills, and bought thousands of trees at "fantastically low prices", only 20 heller for one piece, to supply Wrocław's consumers. The sellers were peasants from Jeleśnia, Wadowice and Kalwarya.

As an economically dominated periphery, Galicia did not only get "unfair" prices for the trees, but had also to deal with the environmental degradation of forest and water ecosystems. Excessive logging and careless harvesting practices caused forest degradation and severe erosion, especially along the rivers banks and in the Mountains. At the turn of the twentieth century, the increasing consumption of wood caused the perception of Galicia as possessing inexhaustible woodlands to come into question. In 1908, Ignacy Szerbowski (1872–1913), who was an active member of the Galician Forest Society, depicted Galicia's "forest wealth" as a myth which had nothing in common with reality⁵⁵. The following year, the vice-president of the Society, Cyryl Kochanowski (1860–1942),

skich". Cf. *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z Rozpraw Galicyjskiego Sejmu Krajowego*, 1904, Kadencja VIII, sesja II, pos. 5, p. 188.

⁵² „Nowa Reforma” 28/12, 1900.

⁵³ *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne, op. cit.*, p. 188.

⁵⁴ F. Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century: The Wheels of Commerce*, London, Collins, 1982, p. 230.

⁵⁵ I. Szerbowski, *Ukrajowienie lasów państwowych*, „Sylwan” 26/7, 1908, pp. 257–269, here, p. 257.

sent the Polish members of the Parliament (*Reichsrat*) a memorandum according to which official statistics had been overestimating the Galician forest cover by giving a figure of 25.6%. According to its own calculations, the real figure was somewhere around 20%, because a lot of “forests” were actually degraded areas which had suffered from intensive logging, as well as pastures, peatlands and other non-wooded areas improperly recorded in this category⁵⁶.

The changes in forest cover in Galicia and the Carpathians Mountains has been much discussed by scholars⁵⁷. Given the quality of historical data and various sources of error, it is quite difficult to distinguish between true and spurious changes, especially in the Carpathians, where deforestation processes, natural expansion of forests and afforestation occurred simultaneously. Nevertheless, it is very likely that the Galician standing stock of timber was quickly decreasing at the turn of the twentieth century, given the nature of forest exploitation. Since most of the old-growth forests along rivers and railways had already been felled, landowners had started during the 1890’s to cut down younger, not-mature stands (aged 40 to 60 years), in particular around villages and small cities⁵⁸. The massive felling of even younger trees (aged 10 to 15 years) after 1900 reveals the high pressure which was put on the Galician forest economy and its non-sustainable nature.

FOREIGN PRESSURE ON FORESTS AND THE DOMESTIC DEMAND FOR WOOD

Indeed, Galicia had to supply Christmas trees and other timber products for international markets, while not yet being freed from domestic pressure. While the population experienced an increase of 34.4 percent between 1869 and 1900, from 5,445,000 to 7,316,000 inhabitants⁵⁹, the per capita forest cover continu-

⁵⁶ C. Kochanowski, *Wykupno gruntów leśnych w Karpatach*, „Sylwan” 27/3, 1909, pp. 98–102, here, p. 99.

⁵⁷ J. Bartyś, *Zmiany w lesistości Galicji w XIX w. w świetle piśmiennictwa fachowego*, „Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki Polskiej — Seria B” 25, 1975, pp. 83–114; J. Kozak, *Forest Cover Change in the Western Carpathians in the Past 180 Years*, “Mountain Research and Development” 23/4, 2003, pp. 369–375; *idem*, *Forest Cover Changes and Their Drivers in the Polish Carpathian Mountains since 1800*, in: H. Nagendra, J. Southworth (ed.), *Reforesting Landscapes: Linking Pattern and Process*, Dordrecht/London/New York, Springer, 2009, pp. 253–274. D. Karkosz, A. Szymczyk, J. Banasek, *The Degradation of Forest Ecosystems in The Silesian Beskidy Mountains over the Last 170 Years*, “Advanced Research in Engineering Sciences” 2/2, 2014, pp. 12–17.

⁵⁸ R. Jaszczak, *Urządzenie lasu w Polsce do 1939 roku Część III — urządzenie lasu na ziemiach polskich w zaborze austriackim i pruskim*, „Sylwan” 152/9, 2008, pp. 3–10, here, p. 7.

⁵⁹ A. Wyczański, F. Kubiczek (ed.), *Historia Polski w liczbach. Ludność, terytorium*, Warsaw, GUS, 1993, p. 76.

ally decreased, from at 0.39 ha in 1872 to 0.28 ha in 1900⁶⁰. The amount of timber removed exceeded natural regrowth, which led to wood shortages and an exacerbation of socio-ecological struggles at the turn of the century. Peasants were the social class which had the most to deal with scarcity of firewood and timber. As a result of the 1848 emancipation and the suppression of so-called servitudes (traditional peasant rights to use forests and meadows), peasants had lost access to forest resources and had to pay for fuel and timber⁶¹. They also feared deforestation because they risked losing their jobs as forest workers.

At this time, peasants acquired a new role in the political sphere by participating in new mass political movements⁶². Thanks to the cooperation between peasant elites and upper-class reformers, the issue of deforestation and timber exports came into the public debate in the 1890's, especially when the agrarian Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, abbreviated to PSL) started to denounce the many clearcuttings in the forests and charged the local nobility and foreign traders for being responsible for it. In 1908, Count Roman Potocki (1851–1915) sold large parts of the Łańcut estate's forests to Jewish merchants. After having seen dozens of carts full of wood departing to Germany, a peasant named Jan Sobek (1880–1955), member of the PSL since 1903, expressed his anger in the newspaper *Przyjaciel Ludu*:

Brother peasants! What do you have to say about it? [...] On one hand, if you want to buy [timber] and really need it, you have to pay damned sky-high prices but if you wait one year or two, you won't be able to have it, because our eternal enemies, the Prussians, will have swallowed it!⁶³

The price boom denounced by Sobek stood out in this instance of the Mielec district, where lumber prices charged by the Tuszów forest administration for a cord (*sqg*) of wood raised from 3 to 11.2 gulden for an alder tree (+273%) and 2.3 to 9.2 for fir and spruce (+308%) between 1888 and 1903⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ J. Bartyś, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶¹ H. Strzelecki, *Die Fortschritte der Forstwirtschaft Galiziens in den letzten fünfzig Jahren und die Ablösung der Servituten*, in: *Geschichte der österreichischen Land- und Forstwirtschaft und ihrer Industrien 1848–1898*, Vienna, Perles, 1899, p. 201–235.

⁶² K. Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848–1914*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001; K. Struve, *Citizenship and National Identity: the Peasants of Galicia during the 19th Century*, in: P. Wawrzyniuk (ed.), *Societal Change and Ideological Formation Among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880–1939*, Huddinge, Södertörns högskola, 2008, p. 75–93.

⁶³ „Bracia Chłopi! cóż Wy na to powiecie? Mnie bo się to takie postępowanie widzi strasznie nas krzywdzącem, bo z jednej strony, gdy chcesz kupić i trza ci koniecznie, to musisz tak strasznie drogo przepłacić, a z drugiej strony za rok, dwa i tego nie dostaniesz, bo pochłoną o nasze odwieczne wrogi — Prusacy!” Cf. J. Sobek, *Z powiatu Łańcuckiego*, „Postęp” 06/07, 1908.

⁶⁴ *Rabunkowe trzebieenie lasów*, „Przyjaciel Ludu” 02/08, 1903.

This alarming situation was closely linked to the exponential increase in internal consumption and timber export. Whereas the volume of standing wood in Galicia increased each year by about 7.3 to 7.8 million cubic metres, the harvest provided only 4.5 million cubic metres⁶⁵, because many forests located in high mountains and the Eastern part Galicia were poorly exploited. On the other hand, the volume of the exports to Germany by train, mostly provided by the Western Galician forests, had exceeded 1.4 million cubic metres since 1898. At the beginning of the 1900s, they represented at least 18% of the annual wood biomass growth and more than 30% of the wood harvest⁶⁶. Besides, people started to realize that domestic deforestation was directly related to a strategy implemented by German capitalists to export the environmental burdens of timber extraction abroad. This idea was expressed by the *Gazeta Narodowa* in 1905:

In their own interest, Prussians respect their forests and coppices. [...] [They] are too smart to spoil their own forests and are therefore bringing the disaster of devastation into Galicia. I consider it unnecessary to say how pernicious this kind of destruction can be for our forests. I expect, however, that the competent authorities will prevent exports of trees from our country.⁶⁷

In addition to environmental and socio-economical concerns, predatory timber extraction led by Prussian merchants was also considered as a violation of the Carpathian landscape. During the late 19th century, Poles under Austro-Hungarian rule had managed to transform this mountainous borderland into an important national icon for the three partitions, one of the most recognizable parts of “Poland”⁶⁸. In fact, Galicia was shaped by three large ethnoconfessional groups: Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews. But since the partitions of the late eighteenth century, the province played a special role in maintaining and reconstructing Polish identity, especially after the province had become autonomous in 1873 and used the Polish language for administration and all public affairs. The

⁶⁵ A. Engel, *Österreichs Holz-Industrie und Holzhandel*, Vienna, Frick, 1907, Vol. 2, p. 391; I. Szczerbowski, *Brak opalu a leśnictwo krajowe*, „Słowo Polskie” 22/10, 1907.

⁶⁶ Calculated according to figures from: L.W. Biegeleisen, *op. cit.*, pp. 390–391; for the conversion from tons to cubic meters we used data given by M. Endres (*op. cit.*, 1922, p. 581) and supposed that most of the exported wood was softwood.

⁶⁷ „Prusacy szanują swoje lasy i zagajniki w własnym interesie. [...] [Oni] za sprytni, aby psuć własne lasy, kłeskę więc dewastacyi spychają na Galicyę. [...] Jak zgubnie oddziaływa tego rodzaju niszczenie lasów naszych, rozwodzić się uważem za zbyteczne. Spodziewam się jednak, że odnośne władze zapobiegną wywozowi drzewek z naszego kraju”. Cf. *Pruskie Christbaumy*, „Gazeta Narodowa” 12/01, 1905.

⁶⁸ P.M. Dąbrowski, *Constructing a Polish Landscape: The Example of the Carpathian Frontier*, “Austrian History Yearbook” 39, 2008, pp. 45–65.

same year, the Tatra Society was founded for promoting tourism in this region. It must be noticed that the will to protect this “national” landscape against domestic deforestation was from the very beginning connected with a struggle against German investors and logging companies. Indeed, the identification of the enemy of a national nature, described as a “vandal”⁶⁹ was essential for the construction of the national identity in Poland as was the case in other European countries.

The story of the Zakopane estate in the Tatra Mountains provides an example of this phenomenon. In 1870, this thickly-wooded area had been bought by a banker from Berlin, Ludwik Eichborn (1847–1908), who transferred it in 1881 to his son-in-law⁷⁰. Both ran a cardboard and wood pulp factory, which severely damaged the forest and water ecosystem. This gave rise to anger among the population of the Podhale, who were at this time experiencing a severe wood shortage. In the context of a Polish press campaign against the involvement of German businessmen in the Carpathian forest economy, a local forester described them as “bark beetles” (*Borkenkäfer*)⁷¹, referring to the harmful insect which had destroyed more than 30,000 hectares of Galician spruce forests between 1873 and 1875⁷² and was still causing further damage. As a result of this poor environmental management, the Zakopane estate was judicially auctioned off in 1888 and purchased one year later by Count Władysław Zamoyski (1853–1924), who was considered from this time on the “saviour” of the Tatra forests⁷³. By contrast, the mobilization of Galician society against the Christmas tree trade one generation later failed, despite the involvement of the press and some politicians.

THE FINAL FAILURE OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE AGAINST CHRISTMAS TREE TRADE

In 1904, the Christmas tree issue gave rise to a long debate in the Galician Diet (*Sejm Krajowy*). It was not the first time that the question of wood export raised discussion in the assembly, since there already had been several sessions on this

⁶⁹ A.-M. Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales: Europe, XVIII^e–XX^e siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, p. 252.

⁷⁰ L. Boroński, *Zakopane: sprawozdanie adwokata Lesława Borońskiego w sprawie kupna dóbr Zakopane*, Cracow, Nakład Sprawozdawcy, 1888.

⁷¹ *Sprawa zalesienia wypustoszonych i nieużytecznych gruntów kraju*, „Sylwan” 4/3, 1886, p. 93–97, here, p. 94.

⁷² E. Hołowkiewicz, *Flora leśna i przemysł drzewny w Galicyi: z powodu tegorocznej rolniczo-przemysłowej wystawy*, Lwów, Loziński, 1877, p. 80.

⁷³ Z. Nowak, *Władysław Zamoyski a spór o Morskie Oko w latach 1889–1909*, Cracow, Oficyna Podhalańska, 1992; W. Chałupka, *Władysława Zamoyskiego umiłowanie lasu*, „Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej” 27, 2005, pp. 81–90.

topic during the previous years⁷⁴. On 8th October Szponder proposed a motion to forbid the export of young trees in order to avoid further forest destruction.⁷⁵ During his speech, he bluntly accused the Prussians of being responsible for the deforestation of Galicia, using a comparison with pests:

For easy-to-understand reasons the Prussian government prohibited the cutting down of young trees at home. Since in Prussia even the poorest family wants [...] a so-called ‘Christbaum’ for Christmas, Prussian merchants, wanting to supply their ‘god-fearing’ compatriots with this commodity, rushed into Galicia with the hope of doing great business, in which they were not disappointed. [...] The Prussians do not just destroy the standing timber stock in the Polish forests, as they from now on threw themselves as real grasshoppers on the embryos of future forests.⁷⁶

Galician spruce monocultures were initially focused on sustained yield timber production, but selling trees from 10 to 15 years old spruce forest guaranteed quick and easy gains. Every morga (around 0.57 ha) of such a forest was covered by 4,000 to 5,000 young trees which could bring an income of 600 to 750 kronas⁷⁷. Szponder blamed the Diet’s Economic Commission (*Komisja gospodarstwa krajowego*) which considered the trade of Christmas trees as a profit-making activity:

If it were really ‘great business’, as claimed by the Commission, it is certain that the Prussians would have thought of it a long time ago and not waited for Poles to come up with it. After all, they have their own forests, but they respect these woods, look forward to the future and can see beyond the end of their nose. [...] There is only one word in the Polish language for such an economy: a ‘destructive economy’. [...] If we did what the Commission recommends, we would have turned our country into a wasteland, as did the Jews, who swapped the Palestine, one of the most fertile place on Earth.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Sprawozdania poselskie ludowców*, „Przyjaciół Ludu” 01/03, 1899; *Czy się poprawili?*, „Przyjaciół Ludu” 09/06, 1902; *Rabunkowe trzebieenie lasów*, „Przyjaciół Ludu” 02/08, 1903.

⁷⁵ *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne*, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–189.

⁷⁶ „Rząd pruski z łatwo zrozumiałych powodów zabronił u siebie wycinania takich jodołek. Ponieważ w Prusach nawet najbiedniejsza familia chce mieć na Boże Narodzenie [...] tak zwane „Cbristbaum”, więc handlarze pruscy, pragnąc swym „bogobojnym” rodakom dostarczyć tego artykułu, rzucili się na Galicyę w nadziei świetnych interesów, w czym się zupełnie nie zawiedli. [...] Otóż Prusakom nie wystarcza wygólenie wysokopiennych lasów polskich, bo teraz rzucili się jak istna szarańcza na wyniszczenie zarodków przyszłych lasów”. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 188.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 498–502.

⁷⁸ „Gdyby to był istotnie tak «światny interes», jak to przedstawia komisya, to napewne Prusacy byliby już dawno o tem pomyśleli i nie czekali aż to wymyślą Polacy. Wszak i oni mają lasy, tylko oni te lasy szanują, bo patrzą w dalszą przyszłość a nie na koniec swego nosa. Przoszę Panów! Na taką gospodarke jest tylko w języku polskim jedna nazwa : «gospodarka rabunkowa». Gdybyśmy się do tego zastawali, czego doradza (przypuszczam, że bezwiednie) komisya

This speech relied on an environmental idea which was common at this time, the desiccation theory, which posited that the removal of trees decreased rainfall and caused the progressive drying-out of the atmosphere and the land⁷⁹. As a speaker known for his anti-Semitic sermons⁸⁰, Szponder used a declinist narrative suggesting that Poles should not make the same mistakes as the Hebrews of Biblical times⁸¹.

Members of the Galician Sejm were divided on the Christmas tree issue. Unsurprisingly, Jan Stapiński (1867–1946), a peasant son who had founded the *Stronnictwo Ludowe* in 1895 and had run the paper *Przyjaciel Ludu* since 1902, supported Szponder's motion. At this time, the Christian People's Party and the PSL competed for the favour of the Roman Catholic peasantry⁸². They therefore both had to show their commitment in the fight against the influence of German and Jewish timber merchants. On the contrary, Stanisław Agopso-wicz (1850–1907), a landowner from Błozew Górna who represented the Stary Sambor district, took the defence of the Commission and tried to minimize the extent of deforestation due to the extraction of Christmas trees, arguing that Galician forest wealth was not threatened by such a trade.

During the following years, the felling and export of young trees did not cease, despite the commitment of the Galician press and the vigilance of members of the Polish Guard (*Straż polska*) who tried to control the wagons departing from train stations. Local authorities also attempted to stop the logging of young forests, mostly in vain. In the Krosno district, the municipality of Jastreza begged the Governor for help in order to keep a landowner from felling his forest. A commission was sent from Lwów to give a ruling on this matter. The experts came down against the cutting but once they left, the owner still felled his forest and sold the trees⁸³. In 1910, numerous forest owners and even some municipalities organized public sales of Christmas trees for Prussian tradesmen:

In this last few days, dozens of wagons loaded with Polish Christmas trees departed from around Sucha and Chabówka to Germany and Berlin, to be used as 'Christbaumy' by our eternal

[...]. Zamienilibyśmy nasz kraj w jakieś pustkowie, jak żydzi zamienili Palestynę, ten jeden z najurodzajniejszych zakątków ziemi". Cf. *ibidem*, p. 498.

⁷⁹ R.H. Grove, *A Historical Review of Early Institutional and Conservationist Responses to Fears of Artificially Induced Global Climate Change: The Deforestation-Desiccation Dis-course 1500–1860*, "Chemosphere" 29/5, 1994, pp. 1001-1013.

⁸⁰ R. Nemes, D.L. Unowsky, *Sites of European Antisemitism in the Age of Mass Politics, 1880–1918*, Waltham, Brandeis University Press, 2014, p. 22.

⁸¹ As a matter of fact, Hebrews used deforestation as a military tactic and for farming. Cf. A. Tal, *All the Trees of the Forest: Israel's Woodlands from the Bible to the Present*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013.

⁸² R. Nemes, D.L. Unowsky, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁸³ *Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne, op. cit.*, p. 500.

enemies. It is an indecent act which should be stigmatized in the most severe way, insofar as the motivation for the behaviour of these traders is only the greed of profit.⁸⁴

The Galician Sejm finally passed a motion in favour of forest conservation, while the Minister officially forbade the export of young trees abroad. However, all this remained empty rhetoric without any consequences and the Christmas-tree trade assumed ever growing proportions. In 1912, two traders from Dresden purchased 10 wagons of trees coming from the villages around Bielsko-Biała, Żywiec, Nowy Sącz and Tarnów⁸⁵. Before the war, merchants and forest owners even started to conclude contracts for several years in order ensure deliveries to the German market⁸⁶. The only effective measure — controlling every train departing to Germany — was never enforced.

CONCLUSION

In 1909, an American magazine underlined that Germany had the highest developed system of forest management of any country and at the same time the greatest per capita use of Christmas trees⁸⁷. According to the American consul in Cologne, 5.5 million of the 6 million families living in the German Empire purchased a tree, and only the “very poor” ones could not afford “a tree of some kind”⁸⁸. Trees not only came from Galicia, but also from other Austro-Hungarian provinces and Russia. Due to the lack of accurate data it is hard to say in which proportions the domestic German consumption was covered by foreign supply. However, it can be assumed that Galicia provided each year at least several tens of thousand, maybe a few hundred thousand Christmas trees for the German market. Furthermore, increasing forest degradation and the socio-political struggle over the issue of timber exports in Galicia shows that the environmental and social costs of this trade were much higher than the financial

⁸⁴ „W ostatnich dniach odeszło z okolic Suchy i Chabówki kilkanaście wagonów choinek polskich do Niemiec i Berlina, aby służyć za «Christbaummy» dla odwiecznych naszych wrogów. Jest to niewłaściwość, którą jak najostrzej napiętnować należy, tem bardziej, iż motywem postępowania tych handlarzy jest jedynie chciwość zysku”. Cf. *Pruskie Christbaummy*, „Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny” 18/12, 1910.

⁸⁵ *Pruskie Bożedrzewko*, „Gazeta Toruńska” 10/11, 1912.

⁸⁶ *Grasowanie Niemców w okresie przedświątecznym*, „Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny” 11/12, 1913.

⁸⁷ *The Christmas Tree*, “Forest Leaves” 12/6, 1909, p. 83–84, here, p. 84.

⁸⁸ *Christmas Trees*, “Monthly Consular and Trade Reports” 344, 1909, p. 161–163, here, p. 161.

benefits. Unlike other countries in Northern and Eastern Europe⁸⁹, Galicia did not succeed in regulating the export of Christmas trees, and more generally of timber. In March 1914, several members of the Galician Parliament proposed again a motion against wood exports, what shows that the problem had not been solved at all⁹⁰. Because of political divisions and economic weakness, this territory was finally unable to resist the pressure of Prussian tree merchants, who possessed sufficient support among the local and provincial authorities to act freely. Ultimately, Christmas tree export from Galicia to Germany confirms the peripheral status of Galicia within the world-system. It also provides an historical example of the “resource consumption/environmental degradation paradox”⁹¹, which refers to noticeable inverse relationships between the resource consumption levels of a given nation and particular forms of environmental degradation — in this case forest degradation — within their borders.

Summary

Although Germany is one of the largest timber importers in the world, scholars have paid little attention to the German role in the history of globalized timber markets. Focusing on one commodity in particular, the Christmas tree, the article intends to shed new light on the German exploitation of Central European forests within the theoretical framework of the unequal ecological exchange. It shows how foreign trade with Habsburg Galicia was used by Germany in order to get rid of the socio-environmental burdens of tree extraction. During the 1900's, Galicia provided each year at least several tens of thousand, maybe a few hundred thousand Christmas trees for the German market. Increasing forest degradation and the socio-political struggle over the issue of timber exports in Galicia shows that the environmental and social costs of this trade were much higher than the financial benefits. Unlike other countries in Northern and Eastern Europe, Galicia did not succeed in regulating its timber exports because of political divisions and economic weakness. Ultimately, Christmas tree export from Galicia to Germany confirms the peripheral status of this territory within the world-system and provides an historical example of the resource consumption/environmental degradation paradox.

⁸⁹ In 1892 for instance, the Norwegian government forbade by law the export of timber from Northern Norway in order to maintain timber supply for local consumption and block foreign merchants from clear-cutting the regional forests. Cf. Ch. Lotz, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁹⁰ *Co robią nasi posłowie*, „Piast” 08/03, 1914.

⁹¹ A.K. Jorgenson, *Consumption and Environmental Degradation: A Cross-National Analysis of the Ecological Footprint*, “Social Problems” 50/3, 2003, pp. 374–394; J. Rice, *Ecological Unequal Exchange: International Trade and Uneven Utilization of Environmental Space in the World System*, “Social Forces” 85/3, 2007, p. 1369–1392; K.F. Austin, *Ecologically Unequal Exchange and the Resource Consumption/Environmental Degradation Paradox: A Panel Study of Less-Developed Countries, 1970–2000*, “International Journal of Comparative Sociology” 50/3–4, 2009, p. 263–284.