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The History of the Jesuit Post in Opava in Cieszyn Silesia in the Years 1625–1773

Dzieje placówki jezuickiej w Opawie na Śląsku Cieszyńskim
w latach 1625–1773

ABSTRACT: Until the dissolution in 1773, the Jesuits in Silesia were involved in the intense re-Catholicised activity. Their institutions had the rank of colleges, residences and missions. The largest establishments – the Jesuit colleges – were founded in the following Silesian cities: Głogów, Legnica, Nysa, Opava, Opole, Świdnica, Wrocław, Żagań, and Kłodzko. Nevertheless, one of the most critical Jesuit institutions in this area – the college in Opava – has not been monographed. Therefore, the article aims to bring closer its fate, as well as to lead other researchers to Latin, Czech and German sources concerning the college. Its history is rich. The Jesuits were appointed to Opava by Prince Charles I Liechtenstein in 1625. Five years later, they established a college. In 1635, Charles Eusebius Liechtenstein, son and successor of Charles I, donated the Jemetic estate to the Jesuits in Opava. In 1642 the institution acquired the rank of a college. There was a boarding school of St Ignatius for students from the impoverished nobility and four Marian sodalities for townsmen, young craftsmen and Czechs. The Jesuits built a new church of St George and a college building in Opava. After the dissolution in 1773, their property was taken over by the state school fund.

KEYWORDS: Jesuits, Silesia, Opava, college, gymnasium, boarding school, Marian sodality

ABSTRAKT: Do kasaty w 1773 roku jezuici na Śląsku prowadzili ożywioną działalność rekatolizacyjną. Ich placówki miały rangę kolegiów, rezydencji oraz misji. Największe z nich – kolegia założyli w miastach śląskich: Głogowie, Legnicy, Nysie, Opawie, Opolu, Świdnicy, Wrocławiu i Żaganiu czy Kłodzku. Mimo to jedna z ważniejszych placówek jezuickich w tym rejonie – kolegium w Opawie – nie doczekała się monografii. Stąd celem niniejszego artykułu jest przybliżenie jej losów, a także naprowadzenie innych badaczy na łacińskie, czeskie i niemieckie źródła dotyczące kolegium. Jego dzieje są bowiem bogate. Do Opawy w 1625 roku jezuitów powołał książę Karol I Liechtenstein.

Pięć lat później utworzyli kolegium. W 1635 roku Karol Euzebiusz Liechtenstein, syn i następca Karola I, podarował opawskim jezuitom majątek ziemski Jemetice. W 1642 roku placówka osiągnęła rangę kolegium. Działał przy nim konwikt św. Ignacego przeznaczony dla uczniów z ubogiej szlachty oraz cztery sodalicje mariańskie dla mieszczan, młodych rzemieślników oraz Czechów. Jezuita wybudowali w Opawie nowy kościół św. Jerzego oraz gmach kolegium. Po kasacie w 1773 roku ich majątek przejął państwowy fundusz szkolny.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: jezuita, Śląsk, Opawa, kolegium, gimnazjum, konwikt, sodalicja mariańska

Introduction

The Jesuits' history and activities in Silesia and Kłodzko County until the dissolution have already been quite well recognized. Both German, Czech and Polish researchers wrote about them. Bernhard Duhr, Herman Hoffmann, Alois Kroess, Anna Fechtnerová, Joannes Schmidl, Józef Kiedos and Zdzisław Lec belong to the most deserving. However, one of the most significant Jesuit institutions in Silesia, namely the Jesuit College in Opava, has not yet received a relevant monograph. Therefore, this article sets itself the primary task of presenting the history of the Jesuits in Opava. The second goal is to encourage researchers with knowledge of Latin, German and Czech to address this interesting research problem thoroughly and comprehensively.

Colleges, residences and Jesuit missionary station in Silesia until the dissolution

Silesia was the European province where the Evangelical reform quickly found the right conditions for development. It took root in cities that not only supported the widespread Lutheranism there but also gave refuge to other evangelical, more or less radical, communities. Politically, in the years 1526–1741, Silesia was under the rule of the imperial Habsburg dynasty,¹ but it was only during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) that they began a decisive

¹ The list of rulers from the Habsburg dynasty (1526–1790) during the time of the Society of Jesus in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia is as follows: Ferdinand I (1526–1564); Maximilian II (1564–1576); Rudolph II (1576–1611); Matthew (1611–1619); Ferdinand II (1619–1637); Ferdinand III (1637–1657); Leopold I (1657–1705); Joseph I (1705–1711); Charles VI (1711–1740); Maria Theresa (1740–1780); Joseph II (1780–1790). See: Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Kłodzku (1597–1776): katalog osób i urzędów, materiały źródłowe, literatura*, Szczecin 2013, p. 35.

re-Catholicisation of Silesia, mainly using the Jesuits.² That is why the Jesuits conducted a lively activity in the whole Silesia until 1740. Then, until the dissolution in 1773, they had to reckon with a very repressive – especially for them, but also for all Catholics – religious policy of Frederick II of Prussia (ruling in the years 1740–1786).³

The Jesuit institutions had the rank of colleges, residences and missionary stations. The rectors directed the colleges, and they were under the supervision of the provincials. We are interested in the provincials of the Czech Province,⁴ to which the Jesuit post in Opava and the associated residence in Cieszyn belonged throughout its existence, and the Silesian Province,⁵ to which the other Silesian posts of the Order in question belonged since 1755.

The colleges that always had a salary, usually in the form of a foundation, usually ran a junior high school with a boarding school for young people studying. Other monks of the college were engaged in pastoral work, some of them carried out apostolic activities among prisoners, the sick and dissenters. Jesuits set up the most important institutions – colleges – in larger cities. They were established

² Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Legnicy (1689–1776)*, Wrocław 2001, p. 269.

³ J. Huber, *Der Jesuiten-Orden nach seiner Verfassung und Doctrin, Wirksamkeit und Geschichte*, Berlin 1873, pp. 53–55, 78–79; S. Załęski, *Jezuici w Polsce*, vol. 1, part 1, Lviv 1900, pp. 89–96; H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln*, Breslau 1934, pp. 15–16; J. Poplatek, *Studia z dziejów jezuickiego teatru szkolnego w Polsce*, Wrocław 1957, pp. 6–9; L. Grzebień, *Organizacja bibliotek jezuickich w Polsce od XVI do XVIII wieku*, „Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne” vol. 30 (1975), pp. 239–241; *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy 1564–1995*, developed by L. Grzebień et al., Krakow 2004, pp. 291, 427, 568–569.

⁴ The following fathers were provincials of the Czech province since 1623, i.e. from the beginning of its existence: Gregorius Rumer (1623–1627); Christophorus Gensing (1627–1633); Daniel Kirchner (1633–1638); Martinus Stredonius (1638–1641); Gregorius Schelizius (1641–1644); Joannes Dakazat (1644–1648); Martinus Stredinius (second time) (1648–1649); Blasius Slaninus (1649–1652); Andreas Schambogen (1652–1655); Henricus Lamparter (1655–1658); Joannes Possmurnius (1658–1661); Joannes Saxius (1661–1665); Daniel Krupsky (1665–1670); Simon Schürer (1670–1673); Georgius Hohenegger (1673–1676); Mathias Tanner (1676–1679); Wenceslaus Sattenwolff (1679–1682); Bartholomaeus Christelius (1682–1686); Mathias Tanner (second time) (1686–1689); Joannes Waldt (1689–1693); Jacobus Willi (1693–1697); Georgius Hiller (1697–1699); Ferdinandus Rudolphus Waldthausen (1699–1703); Joannes Miller (1703–1707); Jacobus Stessl (1707–1712); Franciscus Fragstein (1712–1715); Jacobus Stessl (second time) (1715–1718); Franciscus Retz (1718–1722); Jacobus Stessl (third time) (1722–1723); Franciscus Retz (second time) (1724–1725); Julius Zwicker (1725–1729); Joannes Seidel (1729–1732); Norbertus Streer (1732–1735); Franciscus Wentz (1736–1739); Joannes Roller (1739–1743); Leopoldus Grim (1743–1746); Franciscus Xaverius Heisler (1746–1749); Balthasar Lindner (1749–1755). See: Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Kłodzku...*, op. cit., pp. 37–38.

⁵ The following fathers were provincials of the Silesian Province: Matthäus Weinhacht (1755–1764); Karl Troilo (1764–1768); Joannes Gräbner (1768–1776).

in the following Silesian cities: Głogów,⁶ Legnica,⁷ Nysa, Opole,⁸ Świdnica,⁹ Wrocław¹⁰ and Zagań.¹¹ In the south, Kłodzko County was then connected with Silesia. Also, in its capital, Kłodzko, the Jesuits founded a significant college.¹²

Residences and missions led by superiors appointed by the provincial occupied a hierarchically lower place. They were intended for the missionary and pastoral friars and those living on alms as a rule. The residences, however, sometimes had their own foundations. At that time, they were considered a college during the process of organizing. Sufficiently equipped residences were usually raised to the rank of independent colleges. The residences, consisting of a small group of Jesuits working in the broadly understood apostolate, were usually subordinated to the rectors of the nearest colleges, and missionary houses to the nearest colleges or residences. In the period in question, the residences only exceptionally ran a school, usually limited to the initial classes. The Jesuits had then six residences in Silesia, namely: in Brzeg,¹³ Cieszyn,¹⁴ Jelenia Góra,¹⁵ Otyń,¹⁶ Piekary Śląskie¹⁷ and Tarnowskie Góry.¹⁸

A missionary station was made up of one or more Jesuits. Its purpose was to carry out activities either in the Jesuit church or, based on a foundation, in the diocesan church. It was usually of a pastoral character. The post in Twardocice had the status of the missionary station.¹⁹

All the afore-mentioned Silesian Jesuit posts belonged to the Czech Province, which also included Jesuit posts located in Bohemia and Moravia. From January 1, 1755, in addition to the college in Opava and the residence in Cieszyn,²⁰ the Silesian institutions were forced to establish a Jesuit Silesian province at the request of Frederick II of Prussia. It existed until 1776.²¹

⁶ See: H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Glogau*, Breslau 1926.

⁷ Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Legnicy (1689–1776)*, Wrocław 2001.

⁸ H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln*, Breslau 1934.

⁹ Idem, *Die Jesuiten in Schweidnitz*, Schweidnitz 1930.

¹⁰ Z. Lec, *Jezuici we Wrocławiu (1581–1776)*, Wrocław 1995.

¹¹ H. Hoffmann, *Die Saganer Jesuiten und ihr Gymnasium*, Sagan 1928.

¹² Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Kłodzku...*, op. cit.

¹³ H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Brieg*, Breslau 1931.

¹⁴ J. Kiedos, *Jezuici cieszyńscy i ich działalność do roku 1773*, Skoczów [n.d.].

¹⁵ H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Hirschberg*, Breslau 1934.

¹⁶ Idem, *Die Jesuiten in Deutschwarthenberg*, Schweidnitz 1931.

¹⁷ Idem, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln*, op. cit., pp. 213–275.

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 176–212.

¹⁹ Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Legnicy*, op. cit., pp. 101, 296–316.

²⁰ The towns of Opava and Cieszyn remained beyond the reach of Frederick II of Prussia during his struggle with the Austrians for Silesia in 1740–1763. Therefore, they did not enter the Silesian province, remaining in the Czech province in 1773. See: Z. Lec, *Jezuici w Legnicy*, op. cit., p. 74.

²¹ See: H. Hoffmann, *Friedrich II von Preussen und die Aufhebung der Gesellschaft Jesu*, Roma 1969.

Missionary activity of Jesuits in Opava. Establishment of the residence

In Opava (Czech Republic) in Cieszyn Silesia, on the border with Moravia, less than 46 miles²² from Olomouc, the Evangelical reform developed so rapidly that in 1580 there were only 18 Catholics. Due to their strong opposition to the clerical and secular Catholic imperial power of the Habsburgs, the inhabitants of Opava attracted more attention on 20 October 1603. It was only after several years, after a long siege lasting 43 days, that on 22 September 1607 the town was captured by the Catholic imperial army under the command of Colonel Friedrich von Gaisberg. The inhabitants were disarmed, and their church and school were closed. Then, on 1 February 1608, the Catholic parish priest, Father Nicholas Sarkander,²³ sent from Olomouc by the local bishop Franz Dietrichstein,²⁴ arrived. On 10 October 1608, two Jesuits, Marcin Ignacy Sarkander,²⁵ the parish priest's brother, and Hieronim Amberger²⁶ came to help. However, they could not function in the local public space as representatives of the Jesuit Order, but only as priests, collaborators of that parish priest. Soon Fr. Amberger was replaced by Fr. Balthazar Gulden from Silesia.²⁷

²² According to current maps, the distance from Opava to Olomouc is 74 km.

²³ In 1596, Father Nicholas Sarkander as a young priest introduced Catholicism in Moravia in Groß Meseritsch. He came from Skoczów in the then Duchy of Cieszyn in Silesia. Apart from Marcin Ignacy, his brother was Jan Sarkander, who was cruelly murdered by Protestants in a prison in Olomouc in 1620. See: A. Kroess, *Geschichte der Böhmisches Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu*, vol. 1, Wien 1910, p. 639. John Sarkander was canonized on 21 May 1995 in Olomouc by John Paul II.

²⁴ Francis Dietrichstein was born on 22 August 1570 in Madrid. His father Adam was a high-ranking official at the Imperial Court in Spain. Francis studied in Vienna, Prague, and Rome. He enjoyed the friendship of Pope Clement VIII. Ordained in 1597, he became a cardinal two years later. In May 1599, he was appointed Archbishop of Olomouc. He was governor of Moravia. He was responsible for the re-Catholicisation of Bohemia, which he supported on and carried out with the help of Jesuits. He also introduced the Jesuits to Ihlava, Opava, Znojmo, Kroměříč. In 1635 he lost the imperial grace for a short time, but returned to it the same year. He died in Brno in 1736. See: M. Pojzl, *Počátky církevní spravy na Moravě, biskupství a arcibiskupství v Olomouci*, Uherské Hradiště 2015, pp. 214–217.

²⁵ Fr. Marcin Ignacy Sarkander preached in Czech.

²⁶ Fr. Hieronim Amberger, of Austrian origin, was a very good preacher from the Church of St Maurice in Olomouc. In Opava, he quickly gained numerous listeners to the sermons he preached in German. See: A. Kroess, *Geschichte...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 795.

²⁷ Gulden Baltassar was born around 1574 in Świdnica. He joined the Society of Jesus on 26 November 1596 in Vienna. After studying philosophy and theology he was ordained a priest. He took the vows of a spiritual coadjutor on 21 June 1621 in Vienna, died on 2 August 1638 in Bohemia at the college in Znoymer. He was active in the Society of Jesus: 1610/11: Kłodzko

The results of their activity were insignificant, as only seven Protestants applied to learn religion and change their religion to Catholic. Since the reaction of the townsmen to the Jesuits was reluctant, the fathers left the town after half a year of activity on 8 May 1609 and returned to Olomouc. It took almost two decades for the Jesuits to return to Opava again. This return was made possible by Albrecht von Wallenstein²⁸ in 1625, after taking over the town.²⁹

In 1625, the Jesuits were appointed to Opava by the Prince of Opava and Karniów Karol I Liechtenstein.³⁰ However, the new Provincial of the Czech Province, Father Christopher Grenzing,³¹ decided to recall the Jesuits from Opava due to a problematic situation. The case with their dismissal and reappointment was still pending in the second half of 1629. The three fathers finally returned to Opava at the end of that year – on the last Sunday of Advent they started sermons and other works in the parish church which had been closed so far.

However, from 1630 the Teutonic Knights were claiming the rights to the parish church and the presbytery. The Jesuits tried to agree with the Teutonic Knights without a positive effect. The imperial commission took possession of the church on 22 July 1634. On 20 November 1635, Prince Cardinal Franz von

(without destiny), 1611/12: Kłodzko, preacher, 1612/13: Kłodzko, preacher in Parstorff (Starków), 1613/14: Kłodzko, mission in Racibórz, missionary, 1614/15–1615/16: Kłodzko, preacher, prefect of construction, 1616/17: Kłodzko, preacher, prefect in the monastic school for the poor and non-locals, 1623/24: Kłodzko, preacher, 1628/29–1631/32: Żagań, missionary, superior of the residence. See: Z. Lec, L. Grzebień, *Biogramy jezuitów działających na Śląsku i w hrabstwie kłodzkim w XVI–XVIII wieku*, vol. 1: A–L, Szczecin 2018, p. 118.

²⁸ Albrecht von Wallenstein, of Czech origin, was born on 24 September 1583 in Heřmanice. He came from a Protestant family. He was an outstanding military commander during the Thirty Years' War. He was on the side of the Catholic imperial dynasty. A well-known strategist and politician. He was murdered by imperial officers in Cheb on 25 February 1634.

²⁹ J. Schmidl, *Historiae Societatis Jesu provinciae Bohemiae*, vol. 2, Praegae 1750, pp. 520–524; A. Kroess, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 794–797; G. Biermann, *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreichisch-Schlesien*, Calve, Prag 1897, pp. 26–28; B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 2, part 1, München 1915, pp. 362–363.

³⁰ He was born in 1569. In 1599 he converted to Catholicism, in 1613 he became the ruler of the Duchy of Opava and in 1623 the Duchy of Karniów. He died in 1627.

³¹ Grenzing Christophorus (Christianus) belonged to the outstanding Jesuits. He was born in 1567 in Feldkirch. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1584. After studying philosophy and theology he was ordained a priest. He made his fourth vow on 6 December 1601, and died on 4 August 1639 in Warsaw. He conducted important and responsible activities in the Order. He was a German provincial from 1618–1624 and a visitor of the Lithuanian Jesuit Province. He held the office of the Jesuit Provincial of Bohemia from 1627 to 1633. Then, from 1638 to 1639, in the college in Nysa, he served as a clergyman. See: Z. Lec, L. Grzebień, *Biograms of Jesuits...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 113.

Dietrichstein wrote to the Jesuit, imperial confessor Fr. Henry Lamormaini,³² that the Teutonic Knights did not forgive and defended their rights in all ways. Eventually, the Jesuits were given the small church of St George and three houses near it. It was not until 30 April 1642 that the college foundation for 19 people was established. The same year, due to the arrival of the Swedes, the Jesuits had to flee from Opava; however, they returned a little later, namely in 1644.³³

The Jesuits are getting stronger in Opava. The establishment of a college

The existing residence in Opava gained the status of a college³⁴ thanks to the foundation of Prince Charles Eusebius von Liechtenstein,³⁵ who was the son and successor of Prince Charles I. In the foundation document of 1642

³² Lamormaini Henricus, Rev., born on 28 October 1575 in La Moire Mannie-Dochamps (Belgium), entered the Order on 26 January 1596 in Vienna, took his fourth vote on 20 May 1618 in Kłodzko, died on 26 November 1647 in Vienna. Activity: 1617/18: Kłodzko, prefect of schools and congregation, confessor. See: Z. Lec, L. Grzebień, *Biogramy jezuitów...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 209.

³³ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, op. cit., pp. 363–365; A. Fechtnerová, *Rektoři kolejí Tovaryšstva Ježíšova v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku do roku 1773*, part 2, Praha 1993, p. 461.

³⁴ The rectors of the college in Opava were the following Jesuit fathers: Adalbertus Martinides (1646–1649); Joannes Severini (1649–1652); Joannes Geller (1652–1655); Melchior Budaeus (1655–1658); Christophorus Winckler (1658–1660); Vitus Unger (1660–1663); Adalbertus Martinides (second time) (1663–1666); Michael Pertsch (1666–1667); Adamus Marstadt (1668–1671); Joannes Kastel (1671–1674); Tobias Gebler (1674–1677); Marcus Schwartz (1677–1680); Wenceslaus Scheligowsky (1680–1684); Samuel Höppel (1685–1688); Wenceslaus Schönfelder (1688–1691); Wenceslaus Milinsky (1691–1695); Leonardus Reil (1695–1698); DPhil, DTheol Joannes Capeta (1698–1701); Andreas Ridel (1701–1704); DrPhil. Carolus Pfefferkorn (1704–1707); Ernestus Schambogen (1707–1710); DPhil Fridericus Knittig (1710–1714); Dr. Godefridus Weidinger (1714–1719); DPhil Fridericus Knittig (second time) (1719–1722); Carolus Scholtz (1722–1727); Carolus Luticz (1727–1731); Franciscus Lechner (1731–1734); DPhil Henricus Gottwaldt (1734–1740); Josephus Biuk (1740–1743); DPhil Henricus Gottwaldt (second time) (1743–1745); DPhil DTheol Carolus Troilo (1746–1749); Josephus Biuk (second time) (1749–1752); DPhil Joannes Haan (1752–1756); DPhil, DTheol Petrus Janowka (1756–1758); Joannes Fleischer (1759–1760); Joannes Rirenschopf (1761–1764); Thadaeus Schluderbach (1764–1767); DrPhil Matthaues Chmel (1767–1769); Carolus Pischinger (1769–1772); DPhil Joannes Schram (1772–1773). See: A. Fechtnerová, *Rektoři...*, op. cit., part 2, pp. 462–472.

³⁵ He was born on 11 May 1611, died on 5 April 1684. It was not until 1632 that Charles Eusebius was declared to be of full age and in the same year he received a fiefdom from the Duchies of Opava and Karniów. Moreover, in the years 1639–1641, he served as the starost of Silesia.

the Duke of Opava (Troppau) and Karniów (Jägerndorf), Karol Eusebius gave testimony to the Jesuits. He claimed that the college would contribute to the strengthening of the Catholic faith and attract young people thirsty for knowledge. Let us also add here that the ordinance of the Duke of 16 May 1657 was crucial for the re-Catholicisation of the area of under discussion. However, the re-Catholicisation often encountered considerable difficulties, as shown by Jesuit Fr. George Prescher's³⁶ report from his four-year mission to the Gotschdorf estate owned by Baron Kryštof Bernard Skrbenský of Hříště around the year of 1664.³⁷

The Jesuits in Opava conducted, among other things, school activities in their own junior high school. The Rector's plenipotentiary in management was the school prefect. He was a Jesuit with extensive didactic and sometimes scientific experience. He controlled the observance of school regulations. Every month he inspected all the teachers in the school. He accepted new students, organized disputes and examinations, promoted students to higher grades. Teaching catechism occupied an important place. One of the main goals of the school was to master the Latin language in the best possible way. The Jesuit junior high school was divided into classes. These were, starting from the youngest: *principia*, *rudimenta*, grammar, syntax, poetry, and rhetoric.

In November 1630, the Jesuits in Opava opened a secondary school, and a year later they were already in charge of the third form of the junior high school. In 1632 a class of syntax, 1634 of poetry, and in 1635 of rhetoric were created. The number of students increased from 150 in 1634 to 300 in 1638. In 1639, two priests and four students taught in six junior high school classes. Between 1645 and 1650, there were usually five or six junior high school classes

³⁶ Prescher Georgius was born on 18 April 1628 in Kladrau, Bohemia. He joined the Society of Jesus on 4 October 1650 in Brno. After studying philosophy and theology he was ordained a priest. He took his fourth vow on 2 February 1672 at the college in Opava. He died on September 14th 1692 at the college in Kłodzko. He conducted his teaching activities in Jesuit secondary schools in the following colleges: 1656/57: Wrocław, a teacher of rudimentary class, 1660/61: Kłodzko, a teacher of grammar class, 1661/62: Nysa, a teacher of poetry class. In the years 1675/76–1676/77 he was the rector of the college in Kłodzko. Later, in the years 1679–1683, he held the office of a preacher in the college in Nysa. Then in 1684/85 in Jelenia Góra he was a superior; 1685/86 in Otyń he was a prosecutor and confessor; 1686/87–1687/88 in Kłodzko he was a regent of the boarding school; 1691/92 in Wrocław he was the second person after the college's rector, i.e. a minister. See: Z. Lec, L. Grzebień, *Biograms of Jesuits...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 85.

³⁷ He was born in 1615, died in 1686. See: B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 3, München 1920, pp. 225–228; G. Loesche, *Zur Gegenreformation in Schlesien Troppau Jägerndorf Leobschütz*, Leipzig 1915.

in Opava. In 1649, the college amounted to 19 people; among them, there were ten priests, three students and six friars.³⁸

The Jesuits in Opava attached great importance to the apostolate of the word of God. Believing that ignorance can be diminished by instructions tailored to the understanding of the unconscious, they tried to show the Christian truth in catechesis, sermons, clerical exercises, through distributing good prints and other forms of preaching the word of God. In 1635, the fathers catechised in three places. The afternoon catecheses were popular, because, among other things, religious performances were held there. Sermons were preached in German and Czech.

The number of conversions in the years 1631–1642 varied between 30 and 200. Their considerable number was a sign of acceptance of the Jesuits' lifestyle and their teaching. The number of the Holy Communion under one species increased from about 5000 in 1636 to about 14 000 in 1640; between 1647 and 1650 there were about 22 000–24 000 of them. These numbers are also a very positive testimony to the progress of Catholicism in the city.

In Opava, the Jesuits took care of four Marian congregations. The objective of the Marian congregation has always been the formation of lay people that are aware of their vocation in the Church. Mary served as an example for the members. These were the following congregations: the Latin Congregation for disciples (founded in 1637), which had 100 members in 1639, the German Congregation for townsmen (1635), and the Congregation for unmarried craftsmen (1637) (grouping working young people). The fourth congregation was for Moravians.³⁹ In 1642, this institution in Opava was home to famous Polish Jesuits: Father Mikołaj Łęczycycki⁴⁰ and Father Tomasz Elżanowski.⁴¹

³⁸ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 2, part 1, op. cit., p. 365.

³⁹ Archdiocesan Archive in Wrocław (hereinafter: AAW), *Tabulae exhibentes sedes antiqua Societatis Jesu, missionum stationes et collegia, 1556–1773*, sign. V B 13a, k. 8r; B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 2, part 1, op. cit., pp. 365–366.

⁴⁰ Mikołaj Łęczycycki (born 1574) came from the Calvinist family. In the years 1593–1601, he studied rhetoric, philosophy and theology in Rome. In 1601, he was ordained a priest. In later years he lectured in Vilnius and Lviv. He was a rector in Kalisz and Cracow. He was a Lithuanian provincial. He stayed in the Czech Province. He returned to Poland in the 1740s. He is the author of many ascetic and polemical works written in Latin. He died on 30 March 1653 in Kaunas. See: *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach...*, op. cit., p. 388.

⁴¹ He was born in 1592, died in 1656 and joined the Society of Jesus in 1606 in Vilnius. He studied theology in Rome from 1612 to 1616. He taught philosophy and theology in 1618–1631 in numerous colleges. He was associated with the Bohemian province from 1636 to 1645, serving, among others, as a court chaplain to Felicjana Studnicka. See: *Encyklopedia wiedzy o jezuitach...*, op. cit., p. 147.

The location of the college in Opava together with its junior high school was very beneficial for the faithful coming from the Duchy of Racibórz. It should be remembered that every Jesuit college, including the one in Opava, always had a boarding school which was closely connected with the junior high school. The boarding school provided the students with collective accommodation, subsistence, and educational activities. The school admitted poor students free of charge, and those who paid for their stay in part or total. The boarding school ran a regent that was responsible for economic affairs of this institution, and its alliance that supported the regent in the care and upbringing of the youth staying there.

The matter went so far that the boarding school of this college was founded by Matthias Sendecius, a Racibórz inhabitant, councillor and town writer.⁴² He allocated 6000 thalers in the form of a loan to the city of Gliwice for this foundation.⁴³ This sum supported nine young people: three from the founder's family, three from Racibórz, and three from Gliwice. On 1 June 1652, an agreement was concluded with the city of Gliwice, which undertook to pay regular percentages on this sum for the Opava boarding school. Moreover, brothers Andrzej and Jan Sendecius, both canons of the collegiate church in Racibórz and the founder's relatives, inherited 1000 thalers from him, which they also donated for the Opava boarding school.⁴⁴ Besides, one of them donated 300 florins to the boarding school in 1648. In 1649, also the custodian of the Chapter of Racibórz, Jerzy Matthäides, in his last will, inscribed several hundred florins to the Opava boarding school.⁴⁵

In the second half of the 17th century, the college in Opava had its previous six classes together with six teachers, as well as four Marian congregations. The number of students increased on average from 300 to 400. The most significant number of students, namely 442, was recorded in 1690; in 1699 there were 438 of them. In the boarding school of St Ignatius, which began its activity in 1653 at Pentecost, there were 43 students in 1681 and 21 in 1693. The number of pupils was gradually decreasing due to the lack of means of subsistence for them.⁴⁶

⁴² J. Schmidl, *Historia Societatis Jesu Provinciae Bohemiae*, vol. 4, part 2, Praga 1759, p. 857; H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln...*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴³ The Chancellor of the Cathedral Chapter in Wrocław, Jan Stephetius of Gliwice, did otherwise. This prelate, who died in 1647, allocated 2000 thalers that the city of Gliwice had at its disposal to support two students who were educated in a junior high school. Before the Jesuits established a college in Opole, these scholarship holders had studied at a junior high school in Wrocław or Nysa, or the Jesuit university in Prague. See: H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln...*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁴ J. Schmidl, *Historia Societatis Jesu Provinciae Bohemiae*, vol. 4, part 2, op. cit., pp. 872–873; H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln...*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵ H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln...*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁶ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 223.

The Jesuits managed to obtain ownership of St George's Church that had belonged to the Teutonic Knights, and the parish church. It happened so that on 16 January 1655 first the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, Archduke Leopold,⁴⁷ allowed the Jesuits to continue using it, and then, after his death, on 4 June 1672, in a document of the Order, it was stated that the church of St George was given to the Jesuits. Besides, Archduke Leopold confirmed that the Jesuits could continue using a preacher in the parish church until the Teutonic Order presented its suitable preacher.⁴⁸

Development of Christian ministry and construction activities

In the years 1675–1680, the Jesuits built a new church of St George in Opava. At that time, after the demolition of the old one (1676), they used the church of St John the Baptist that belonged to the Joannites. The order of the bilingual sermons encountered different opinions and actions. In 1658, sermons were preached by four preachers – two in German (that is, one in the parish church and the other at St John's), two in Czech (that is, before noon and in the afternoon in the church of St George). In addition, St George taught religion in Czech, while in German it was taught in the parish church and St John's church. This was also the case in the following years.

However, in 1683, there was a sermon in German after the first Holy Mass that was regularly celebrated at 5.30 a.m. in the church of St George; in St John's after the mass at 6.00 a.m. and at 8.00 a.m. in Czech, and in the parish church after the mass of German. In 1685, in the triduum before Shrove Tuesday in the church of St George, the sermons were preached in both languages, while in the octave of Corpus Christi in German. On 2 November 1686, the Czech Provincial, Fr. Matthew Tanner (1686–1689),⁴⁹ ordered that both Czech sermons and all Czech services should be transferred from the old church of St George to the new church of St George and the German morning sermon to the church of St John. Then the visitor Willi ordered the German sermon

⁴⁷ Archduke Leopold William Habsburg was the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in the years 1641–1662. Moreover, in the years 1655–1662 he was the Bishop of Wrocław. He had no higher orders. See: J. Mandziuk, *Historia Kościoła katolickiego na Śląsku. Czasy wczesnonowożytne*, vol. 2 (from 1520 to 1742), Warsaw 2011, pp. 226–227.

⁴⁸ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 223.

⁴⁹ H. Hoffmann, *Die Jesuiten in Oppeln...*, op. cit., p. 240.

to be preached again in the church of St George. Nonetheless, his order was not immediately implemented.⁵⁰

The staff of the college in Opava consisted of 28 people in 1701.⁵¹ The number almost did not change throughout its further existence – in 1772 it amounted to 26 persons.⁵² Five-six teachers, i.e. two priests and four masters, still worked in six junior high school classes in 1772. The number of students (in 1720 – 495, 1740 – 623) decreased in 1751 to 403 in the effect of a Prussian decree, which ordered all students to return to their own families in Silesia that had been conquered by Prussia. In 1735, St Ignatius's boarding school consisted of 26, 1748 – 28, 1769 – 27 pupils, who, together with students from outside, received due education, and at the end of the year performed a French comedy, to which the nobility from all over the region was invited.⁵³

The pastoral ministry was also maintained at its current level. Six fathers preached in the parish church, in St John's and St George's on Sundays and feast days. In three languages: Latin, German and Czech, they preached and taught religion.⁵⁴ The number of received Communion increased from about 73 500 in 1720 to about 86 300 in 1769. Four congregations, one for pupils, one for townsmen, one for young craftsmen, and one for Czechs, were active until the end, i.e. until the dissolution in 1773. It should be added that three fathers were responsible for those who were kept in prison and for the sick in the hospital.⁵⁵

The construction activity, which the Jesuits usually planned on a grand scale,⁵⁶ was also continued in Opava. Work on the foundations of the new college building began in the spring of 1711. In 1712, the roof was placed, and in 1713 the lowest floor accepted for use; a further wing was covered in the autumn of 1723. In 1736, the old school building threatening to collapse was. It was finally accepted by school children in autumn 1739. New churches were built in the following towns belonging to the estate of the Opava college: Schillersdorf (1713), Hatz (1729), and Markersdorf (1746).⁵⁷

⁵⁰ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 3, op. cit., pp. 223–224.

⁵¹ Archive of the Society of Jesus in Rome (hereinafter: ARSI), *Bohemia Catalogi Breves*, sign. Boh. 91/II, k. 267v–268.

⁵² *Ibidem*, sign. Boh. 92a, k. 114.

⁵³ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, op. cit., vol. 4, part 1, p. 457.

⁵⁴ Latin was the teaching language of the Jesuit secondary school. Hence sermons, ascetic conferences and catechesis for students were delivered in Latin.

⁵⁵ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 4, part 1, München 1928, p. 457.

⁵⁶ See: *Silesia Jesuitica. Kultura i sztuka zakonu jezuitów na Śląsku i w hrabstwie kłodzkim 1580–1776*, D. Galewski, A. Jezierska (eds.), Wrocław 2012.

⁵⁷ B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 4, part 1, op. cit., pp. 457–458.

Decadence. The Jesuits in Opava after 1741

After the death of Emperor Charles VI on 20 October 1740, various European rulers, including Frederick II of Prussia, laid claim to his succession. On 16 December 1740, Prussian troops entered Silesia, and, until 8 February 1741, given weak resistance on the part of Austrian troops and passive attitude of the Silesian population, they conquered almost the whole Silesia. The first Silesian war ended on 11 June 1742 with the signing of the peace agreement between Prussia and Austria in Wrocław. At that time, about 80% of Silesia and the Kłodzko County was taken over by Frederick II, and only the Duchy of Cieszyn, the southern parts of the Duchy of Nysa, and most of the Duchies of Opava and Karniów remained in the imperial hands of Maria Theresa. The borderline then established has survived to this day, although for almost 280 years it separated various countries from each other. In 1742, the part of Silesia that remained in the hands of the Habsburgs created a province under the name of Bohemian Silesia and from 1749 – Austrian Silesia. The Royal Office in Opava headed it. Let us add that the second war for Silesia, which ended with peace in Dresden, took place between Prussia and Austria from August 1744 to 25 December 1745, and the third and last one from 30 August 1756 to 15 February 1763. However, both the Second and Third Silesian Wars did not change the previously established borders between Prussia and Austria in Silesia.⁵⁸

These war unrests and the substantial financial burden transferred to the Prussian army had a significant negative impact on the Jesuits in Opava, thus leading in consequence to their decadence. In 1741, shortly before the Prussian soldiers left, the rector of the college in Opava, Father Józef Biuk (1740–1743)⁵⁹ was imprisoned by the Prussians, because it was believed that an escaped Catholic soldier was hiding with the Jesuits. He was released only after the payment of bail by an envoy of the national states. In 1742, the college had to pay the Prussians 12,000 florins of war contributions and deliver products in kind of the same

⁵⁸ A. Galas, A. Galas, *Dzieje Śląska w datach*, Wrocław 2001, pp. 142–145, 147–149, 151–156.

⁵⁹ Biuk Josephus, Rev., was born on 24 October 1688 in Nysa. He joined the Order on 22 October 1704 in Brno, he took his fourth vows on 2 February 1722 in Wrocław; he died on 5 June 1752 in Opava (Tropau). Activity: 1709/10: Wrocław, Prof. of rudiments, 1710/11: Wrocław, Prof. of principles, 1711/12: Wrocław, Prof. of grammar, 1712/13: Wrocław, Prof. of syntax, 1713/14: Nysa, Prof. of poetics, 1719/20: Brzeg, Prof. of school, 1720/21–1722/23: Wrocław, a preacher, an opera, 1730/31–1732/33: Kłodzko, a preacher, a labourer, 1736/37–1738/39: Legnica, Rector 16 May 1736, 30 October 1743–1745/46: Nysa, Rector, 10 October 1746–1748/49: Wrocław, Rector. See: Z. Lec, L. Grzebień, *Biogramy jezuitów...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 35.

amount. According to a moderate estimate, the losses suffered by the Jesuits in Opava in 1745 during the Second Silesian War due to the presence of Prussian troops amounted to over 5660 florins. Similar losses were recorded by the Jesuits in Opava during the Third Silesian War, especially in 1758 and 1762. Therefore, it is not surprising that the positive balance of 1761 to keep 26 people in college was only 658 florins. In 1773, when counting 200 florins per person, 4600 florins were necessary for 23 people, while only 3895 florins of income were available, with a debt burden of more than 120 000 florins. At the dissolution of the college in Opava in 1773, Frederick II of Prussia did not transfer the estate of the college called Schillersdorf that was situated on the other side of the border in the principality of Racibórz to the Silesian Jesuits but to his tax office (28 September 1773).⁶⁰

Conclusion

Finally, the Catholic imperial Habsburgs decided during the Thirty Years' War that Protestantism was to be expelled from the Empire. Therefore, the introduction of Catholicism was carried out with great determination in Bohemia, Silesia, and other provinces. The Jesuits were ideally suited to these activities as they were very well educated, organized, and obedient. For this purpose, they were introduced to the capital of the Opava Principality – Opava – by order of the Emperor.

The activity of the Jesuits in Opava brought the expected results until the end of 1740 when they enjoyed the administrative support of the imperial authority and the prevailing peace. Then, until 1763, war unrests and struggles between the imperial army and the troops of the liberal and pro-Prussian Protestant Frederick II of Prussia continued in Silesia, which also had a negative impact on the activities of the Jesuits in Opava. Eventually, after three Silesian wars, Opava remained in the hands of the imperial army; however, already ten years later, the Jesuits were removed, and with them, the college in Opava ceased to function.

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⁶⁰ M. Lehmann, *Preußen und die katholische Kirche seit 1640*, part 7, Leipzig 1900, p. 702; B. Duhr, *Geschichte der Jesuiten*, vol. 4, part. 1, op. cit., p. 458.

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