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## THE BISHOPS OF THE DIOCESE OF VILNIUS AND LITHUANIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS IN 1709–17: ATTITUDES, PROBLEMS, AND SOLUTIONS

### Abstract

The article looks into the participation of the bishop ordinary of the diocese of Vilnius, Kazimierz Konstanty Brzostowski, and his suffragan, Maciej Józef Ancuta, in Lithuanian politics of the period between 1709 and 1717. The study has been based on the letters written by the bishops to the Lithuanian chancellor. It examines the bishops' attitude towards Russian contributions, the taxation of Church estates, the arbitrary contributions raised by the Lithuanian army, the introduction of Saxon troops in 1713, the reaction to the king's policies, and the attitude towards the nationwide uprising against the Saxon troops known as the confederations of Tarnogród and Vilnius. Finally, the bishops' opinion on Russian mediation and the notorious Silent Sejm, where it was agreed that the *liberum veto* would be invalid. The bishops of the diocese of Vilnius were rather indifferent to the internal problems of Lithuania. They defended the immunity of the Church estates and disapproved of the introduction of Saxon troops. However, when the confederations were formed, they tried to manoeuvre between the noble and royal camps, not wanting to ruin their reputation on either side. The bishops often spoke on behalf of the diocesan clergy. Therefore, their adopted posture was often the expression of the opinion of the whole diocese's clergy.

**Keywords:** Augustus II, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Vilnius bishopric, Lithuanian Catholic Church, Kazimierz Konstanty Brzostowski, eighteenth century, Confederation of Tarnogród, Confederation of Vilnius

While historians tend to focus on the nobility and its activity when examining the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (also known as Poland-Lithuania or simply the Commonwealth), the attitudes of the clergy are no less important. Although the clergy had the right to participate in the Sejm (Parliament) or sejmiks (regional

assemblies), there is a shortage of research on its participation in the parliamentary life of Poland and especially Lithuania. Scholarly works in which the role of the Church in state affairs in the eighteenth century is brought to the fore are few and far between.<sup>1</sup> On other occasions, there are not enough sources to highlight the role of the clergy, especially in the event when the clergy responded differently to domestic issues in Poland or Lithuania. The biographies of both heroes of this article were published more than eighty years ago when it was acceptable to write biographies somewhat shorter than those published nowadays. Although the list of biographical sources of the biographies published in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary] includes letters by bishops used in this article, it is clear from the content of the biographies that their authors used these letters only occasionally.<sup>2</sup> Other authors have provided quite a lot of information about the life of Bishop of Vilnius Konstanty Kazimierz Brzostowski, but the period examined in this article is poorly covered by the historians.<sup>3</sup> The conflict between the ecclesiastical authorities of the Vilnius diocese and the grand hetman of Lithuania in the late seventeenth century has been extensively studied by historians. In a recent monograph, Vaida Kamuntavičienė examined the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state in the second half of seventeenth-century Lithuania. There is also substantial scholarship on the internal struggles of Lithuania in the late seventeenth century, especially the influence of Bishop Brzostowski on them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the few studies is Andrzej Rachuba's, 'Udział kapituły wileńskiej w życiu parlamentarnym Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVII wieku', in Urszula Augustyniak (ed.), *Środowiska kulturotwórcze i kontakty kulturalne Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego od XV do XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 2009), 153–63.

<sup>2</sup> Kazimierz Piwarski, 'Konstanty Kazimierz Brzostowski', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 3 (1937), 50–2; Czesław Falkowski, 'Maciej Józef Ancuta', in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 1 (1935), 90–1.

<sup>3</sup> Wincenty Przyałkowski, *Żywoty biskupów wileńskich*, 3 (Petersburg, 1860), 74–122; Jan Kurczewski (ed.), *Kościół zamkowy czyli katedra Wileńska*, iii (Wilno, 1916).

<sup>4</sup> Vaida Kamuntavičienė, *Katalikų bažnyčios ir valstybės santykiai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje XVII a. antroje pusėje* (Kaunas, 2008); Andrzej Rachuba, 'Litwa wobec projektu zwołania sejmu konnego w 1695 r. i walki Sapiehów z biskupem Brzostowskim', *Zapiski historyczne*, li, 1 (1986), 63–82; Gintautas Sliesoriūnas, *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė vidaus karo išvakarėse: didikų grupuočių kova: 1690–1697 m.* (Vilnius, 2000); Przemysław P. Romaniuk, 'Instytucjonalne podstawy hegemonii Sapiehów w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w drugiej połowie XVII w.',

Wojciech Kriegseisen's article explores the issue of taxing the estates owned by the Catholic Church for state needs.<sup>5</sup> The attitude of Brzostowski and Ancuta to this matter is presented in this article. Despite many years of research by Józef Andrzej Gierowski<sup>6</sup> and the newest research on Lithuania in the post-Poltava period,<sup>7</sup> there is a severe shortage of scholarship on the middle of the reign of Augustus II (1697–1733).

This article looks at the reaction of the Catholic Church in Lithuania to the Saxon politics of Polish King Augustus II and the internal problems of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the period between the battle of Poltava and the Silent Sejm [Sejm Niemy]. This study is mainly based on the under-researched letters written by Bishop Brzostowski and the suffragan of Vilnius and the right-hand of the bishop, Maciej Józef Ancuta. Now preserved at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, Poland, the letters were written to Lithuanian Chancellor Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł. They contain essential information on what was going on in Lithuania and the city of Vilnius, in particular, at the time of writing. In these letters, the attitude of the highest clergy of the diocese of Vilnius towards critical internal processes or problems can be distinguished. Brzostowski and Ancuta were the primary information source on Lithuanian affairs for Radziwiłł, who spent most of his time in Poland after 1709. There were a few reasons for this. Firstly, the king did not visit Lithuania between 1709 and 1717. He spent most of his time either in Saxony or Poland. Although Radziwiłł did not always follow the court, he tried to reside in a place where communication with the court was quicker. He spent

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in Urszula Kosińska, Dorota Dukwicz, and Adam Danilczyk (eds), *W cieniu wojen i rozbiorów: studia z dziejów Rzeczypospolitej XVIII i początków XIX wieku* (Warszawa, 2014), 29–37.

<sup>5</sup> Wojciech Kriegseisen, "Krzywdą nad wszystkie krzywdy – hiberna w Polsce". Problem świadczeń kleru katolickiego na wojsko Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVII i na początku XVIII wieku', *Barok. Historia – Literatura – Sztuka*, viii, 1 (15) (2001), 19–38.

<sup>6</sup> Józef Andrzej Gierowski, *Między saskim absolutyzmem a złotą wolnością. Z dziejów wewnętrznych Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1712–1715* (Wrocław, 1953); on many aspects of the reign of King Augustus II, see Andrzej Link Lenczowski (ed.), *Na szlakach Rzeczypospolitej w nowożytnej Europie* (Kraków, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Mindaugas Šapoka, *Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Great Northern War, 1709–17* (London–New York, 2018).

much time travelling. Although he often visited his estate, Biała, located in the Palatinate of Brest in the southwestern part of Lithuania, this place was also distant from the main events in Lithuania, which usually took place in Vilnius and its surroundings.

Bishop Brzostowski recognised the Swedish puppet king of Poland, Stanisław Leszczyński, in April 1707. This decision could have been influenced by the award of the castellany of Troki to his brother, Jan Władysław Brzostowski, in 1704. It is known that Maciej Józef Ancuta followed Bishop Brzostowski and swore allegiance to Leszczyński in November 1707.<sup>8</sup> When Augustus II – after he had abdicated the Polish throne in 1706 by signing the treaty of Altranstädt – returned to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in October 1709, after the Russians defeated Charles XII of Sweden at Poltava, Brzostowski and Ancuta looked for opportunities to switch sides. After several years of residing in Ducal Prussia, where they hid from the atrocities of war, Brzostowski and Ancuta were indeed back in Vilnius in October or late September of 1709.<sup>9</sup> The Vilnius Cathedral Chapter dispatched Prelate Karol Pancerzyński to greet the returning king in Toruń. More importantly, he was also “to implore the protection for the ecclesiastical lands” from Peter I of Russia, who was also expected in Toruń.<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt that the bishop made a significant contribution to the dispatch of the messenger. Brzostowski and Ancuta behaved like many other former adherents of Leszczyński. “The inevitableness to turn back has become a virtue”,<sup>11</sup> Brzostowski wrote to a fellow former Leszczyński adherent, Lithuanian Chancellor Radziwiłł. It seems, however, that the bishop was more afraid of how the Russians would regard his recognition of Leszczyński than the king. After Poltava, the Russian army entered Lithuania and remained there for almost two years. “Had I not arrived [in Vilnius], I would have failed to avoid austere judgement amid foreigners’ suspicion, the warning of which had already reached me”, Brzostowski wrote.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Andrzej Rachuba, ‘Polityka nominacyjna Stanisława Leszczyńskiego na Litwie w latach 1705–1709’, *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxxxiii, 4 (1992), 623–4.

<sup>9</sup> Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, Dz. V, 1513 (hereinafter: AGAD, AR, V, 1513), K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (6 Oct. 1709) (all letters from AGAD AR are arranged in chronological order).

<sup>10</sup> Kurczewski (ed.), *Kościół zamkowy*, 285.

<sup>11</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (6 Oct. 1709).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Brzostowski and Ancuta did not suffer personally from the Russians, the Polish-Lithuanian allies in the war against Sweden governed Lithuania with a firm hand. Together with the arbitrary sums raised by the Lithuanian army, the extensive contributions for the maintenance of the Russians were a disaster for a country ravaged by war and plague. Brzostowski gave a description of Lithuania, showing him to be a master of the quill: “Amidst sighs and groans we continue our miserable lives here without any defence because every general is a Fieldmarshal with full powers, every regiment is an army, every manor and village is a complete wasteland. I pray to God that we would overcome these calamities, but probably this will not happen until the end of my days”.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the clergy could do little to get rid of the Russians. Augustus II needed Peter I and his army to consolidate his kingship and wage war against the Swedish strongholds in Pomerania. The correspondence of Brzostowski and Ancuta reveals very little about their attitudes towards the king’s policies in the first years after Poltava. Brzostowski’s letter from 5 March 1711 is a rare exception. It shows that the clergy felt the king had done little to get rid of the Russians: “The sooner the king returns from Saxony, the sooner salvation will come to our country ... Consternation among the population, and what is worst among the nobility, is indescribable”.<sup>14</sup>

Because it was unclear how the Commonwealth should regard the king who had renounced the throne without the agreement of the Polish-Lithuanian parliament, immediately after his return to the Commonwealth, Augustus II called the confederate Council of Warsaw. The Council was to re-negotiate the conditions of his kingship with the senators and the nobility. It seems that ten years of turmoil was enough for the Poles and Lithuanians, and they did not consider arguments for and against the return of Augustus carefully. The Council of Warsaw confirmed the king’s return and consented to the king’s plans to continue the war by establishing a contingent of 20,000 men, including officers in the Lithuanian army and 36,000 men in the Polish army. The Council also voted for taxes for the maintenance of these troops.<sup>15</sup> According to the decisions adopted, Church

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (5 Nov. 1709).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (5 March 1711).

<sup>15</sup> Śapoka, *Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion*, 31–40.

manors were also required to pay the 16 zlotys hearth tax levied in Lithuania.<sup>16</sup>

The bishop of Vilnius and his suffragan did not object to paying taxes levied at the Council. They either unanimously supported the king's policy to continue the war or were too uncomfortable, on account of their recognition of Leszczyński and the widespread support for the king by the nobility, to voice their opposition to sharing the burdens equally with the noble lands. Moreover, the Lithuanian Catholic Church was unrepresented in the Council of Warsaw and the general sejmik of Lithuania in Brest before the Council, where it was agreed that taxes for the army would be voted on at the Council. Firstly, Bishop Brzostowski excused himself from participating because of poor health, which did not prevent him from travelling to Nesvizh for the election of a senior of the local convent, and when the election started, this became a reason not to appear in Warsaw.<sup>17</sup> Ancuta did attend the general sejmik of Lithuania in Brest, though. On 13 December, he wrote to Radziwiłł that he was ready to depart Vilnius immediately after gathering the local parliamentary sejmik. His participation at the general sejmik in Brest and the Council of Warsaw does not raise any doubts,<sup>18</sup> but there are no sources to show that his involvement was active. Since Ancuta was not a senator or delegate elected by a sejmik, it is not surprising. Thus, he was not a member of the Council with full rights. He was probably a typical envoy of the Vilnius cathedral chapter, who were often dispatched to attend sessions of the Sejm throughout the seventeenth century, tasked with looking after the interests of the clergy of the diocese.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Volumina legum: Przedruk zbioru praw staraniem XX. Pijarów w Warszawie, od roku 1732 do roku 1782 wydanego*, 6 (Petersburg, 1860), 101. The parliamentary sejmiks of Mińsk and Kowno supported the liberation of ecclesiastical estates from taxes, see Kowno's instruction (7 Jan. 1710), in Ryszard Mienicki (ed.) *Diarjusz Walnej Rady Warszawskiej z roku 1710* (Wilno, 1928), 251; Mińsk's instruction (7 Jan. 1710), in *ibid.*, 305.

<sup>17</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (26 Jan., 17 Feb., 9 March 1710).

<sup>18</sup> Mindaugas Šapoka, 'Sejmik generalny wielkiego księstwa litewskiego w Brześciu w 1710 r.', in Вадим Аніпяркоў, Дзмітрый Віцько, and Андрей Мацук (eds), *Актуальныя праблемы історыі і культуры: зборнік навуковых артыкулаў*. Вып. 2: *Парламентарызм у Вялікім Княстве Літоўскім у XVIII стагоддзі* (Мінск, 2020), 132; *Volumina legum*, 99.

<sup>19</sup> Rachuba, *Udział kapituły wileńskiej*, 154.

“We, clergymen, should not buck but follow the country’s needs”, Brzostowski allegedly said to the priests of the Vilnius diocese, who were unhappy about the taxes levied in Warsaw.<sup>20</sup> There is not enough evidence to confirm he said these words. Still, there are no indications of any resentment to pay the taxes in the letters of Ancuta or Brzostowski,<sup>21</sup> even though Lithuania – and the lands of the Catholic Church – were depredated in the war, ongoing since 1700. In one of his letters, Ancuta wrote that around fifty parishes in the diocese of Vilnius lacked priests – the parishes had been so plundered that priests could not exist there, or the churches were destroyed.<sup>22</sup> This demeanour of the Vilnius diocese clergy is significant, not least because of the opposite attitude of the Polish clergy. When the Council of Warsaw was in session, the Polish Catholic bishops signed a pledge to defend the immunity of Church lands by all means.<sup>23</sup> Such a right was guaranteed by law, which prohibited the taxation of Church estates without the consent of the Sejm. Kriegseisen’s research had demonstrated that

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted by Przyałowski, *Żywoty biskupów wileńskich*, 108. However, the Przyałowski does not present any footnote. In the same paragraph he also argues that Brzostowski attended the Council of Warsaw, which no sources confirm.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (9 July 1710).

<sup>22</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (14 Jan. 1714).

<sup>23</sup> Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie, 3200, The diary of Andrzej Chryzostom Załuski, note from 28 Feb. 1710. The diary does not provide the names of the bishops who signed the pledge. The note leaves no doubt that the action was coordinated by the primate Stanisław Szembek. The compendium of the Polish-Lithuanian Sejm’s decisions, called *Volumina Legum*, provides the information on the bishops present at the Council. Judging from this source, it can be assumed that the pledge was signed by the Bishop of Kujavia Konstanty Felicjan Szaniawski, Bishop of Płock Ludwik Bartłomiej Załuski, Bishop of Warmia and the Grand Chancellor of Poland, Andrzej Chryzostom Załuski, Bishop of Łuck Aleksander Benedykt Wyhowski, Bishop of Przemyśl Jan Kazimierz Bokum, Bishop of Chełm Teodor Andrzej Potocki, Bishop of Chełm and the nominee for the Bishopric of Cracow Kazimierz Łubieński, Bishop of Kyiv Jan Paweł Sariusz-Gomoliński, Bishop of Kamieniec Jan Chryzostom Gniński, and the Bishop of Smolensk and the nominee for the Bishopric of Samogitia Mikołaj Zgierski, *Volumina legum*, 98–9. The later was the only bishop representing Lithuania to be noted giving a speech and participating in other activities of the Council in the diary of the Council, *Diarjusz Walnej Rady Warszawskiej*, 18, 19, 23, 25, 51, 70, 203, 205. Yet, the diary remains silent on Zgierski’s position on the taxation in Lithuania. Usually a protesting party is noted in the diary. Thus, presumably, Zgierski supported taxation in Lithuania, including Church estates.

the Polish clergy protested against taxing their lands for army needs in general and against the billeting of soldiers in Church manors perpetually in the 1660s and 1670s, when unsuccessful wars, an economic downturn, and the rise of defence expenditure, made the problem of taxing ecclesiastical estates for army needs particularly acute.<sup>24</sup> The massive economic decline caused by the Great Northern War revived the crisis in 1710. After the Council ended, the primate of the Commonwealth, Stanisław Szembek, refused to pay the taxes imposed by the Council on the clergy and asked the pope to intervene in the matter. Pope Clement XI sent a brief forbidding the clergy to pay taxes. Even though Augustus II managed to obtain a revocation of the brief, the Polish clergy remained indignant at the taxes levied on Church lands. Heated debates in the Polish sejmiks over the position of the clergy and taxes on the ecclesiastical lands continued in 1710–12, while the primate went as far as wanting to sue the Polish Grand Hetman Adam Mikołaj Sieniawski in the Church court.<sup>25</sup>

Even though the Lithuanian sejmiks were silent on the issue, the taxation of Church property remained at the centre of a fierce controversy at the 1712 Sejm. The lay delegates demanded a legation be sent to the Pope with a declaration that, since the clergy enjoys the same liberties and freedoms as does the nobility [*szlachta*] and “the estate of clergy exploits the lands that originally had been noble, they cannot free the lands which they possess now from the burden putting it on the noble estate; it must be explained that if [the clergy] did not contribute to our army voluntarily, the auxiliaries or the Swedes would take everything”.<sup>26</sup> As he put it, Brzostowski – who did not appear at the Sejm due to dangerous roads – held the same opinion as the noble delegates expressed at the Sejm. Brzostowski thought that strong native troops were very much needed because otherwise, foreign armies would continue to plunder the Commonwealth: “I do not doubt that Your Ducal Highness will have more profound knowledge on the pretensions of the auxiliary forces from His Lordship the Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It is more a wish

<sup>24</sup> Kriegseisen, ‘Krzywda nad wszystkie krzywdy’, 22–7, 32–3.

<sup>25</sup> Gierowski, *Między saskim absolutyzmem a złotą wolnością*, 137–42; Kriegseisen, ‘Krzywda nad wszystkie krzywdy’, 33–5.

<sup>26</sup> Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie (hereinafter: BCzart.), 819, Sejm’s diary, session of 18 April 1712, 64.



than a belief that his resistance could protect us without proportional strength”, he wrote.<sup>27</sup> There is little doubt that Ancuta was present at the Sejm in Warsaw,<sup>28</sup> but sources provide little information on his activity. A thrilling climax to the Sejm approached on 19 April. In his speech, the primate complained about the wrongdoings on Church lands. Finally, he solemnly declared that he could not allow ecclesiastical estates to be taxed and refused to allow the Sejm to end until a stipulation on the immunities of Church estates was granted by the Sejm. The declaration caused a long debate, and only when the king reassured the primate that the stipulation would be given at the next Sejm that would be reconvened in several months did the primate allow the sitting to end.<sup>29</sup>

A new impetus for the Polish clergy to fight for the immunity of their estates from taxes was given by the arrival of the new papal nuncio, Benedetto Odescalchi. When he arrived in the Commonwealth, he energetically began to study Polish law. He clearly stood on the Polish clergy's side on the issue of taxation.<sup>30</sup> The brokerage of the Holy See in the internal affairs of the Commonwealth caused the dissatisfaction of the Polish ministers. “This is a thing of the worst consequences and a severe misunderstanding which harms our state, when our decisions are to be assessed by Rome as if the Commonwealth was not a sovereign but dependent on Rome in this matter, that it must first ask for the grace and consent of the Holy See before deciding on taxes at the Sejm or the General Council”, Polish Treasurer Jan Jerzy Przebendowski commented.<sup>31</sup>

The passivity of the Lithuanian clergy on the issue of taxation is somewhat surprising, but the situation was about to change in late 1712. The Lithuanian clergy supported or did not openly oppose the taxes imposed on Lithuania by the Council of Warsaw. However,

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<sup>27</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (3 April 1712).

<sup>28</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (23 Oct. 1712).

<sup>29</sup> BCzart., 819, Sejm's diary, session of 19 April 1712, 66–9.

<sup>30</sup> Józef Andrzej Gierowski, ‘Nuncjusz Benedykt Odescalchi o obciążeniu dóbr kościelnych hiberną i leżami zimowymi’, in Cezary Kukło (ed.), *Cała historia to dzieje ludzi... Studia z historii społecznej ofiarowane profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyczańskiemu* (Białystok, 2004), 283–4.

<sup>31</sup> J.J. Przebendowski to J. Szembek (28 Oct. 1711), in Adam Perlakowski (ed.), *Listy Jana Jerzego Przebendowskiego podskarbiego wielkiego koronnego do Jana Szembeka podkanclerzego i kanclerza wielkiego koronnego z lat 1711–1728* (Kraków, 2010), 23.

the taxes voted on in Warsaw were late to reach the army's hands. Even those land holdings that paid taxes did not contribute the total amount because they were too depredated. What is more, by late 1711, the proceeds of the taxes agreed to in Warsaw were almost exhausted. Even if the Lithuanian army had been reduced by one-third, it still had to be paid.<sup>32</sup> Ordinary tax revenues were inadequate, while the Sejm of 1712–13 voted on no taxes. Thus the army had to rely on arbitrary contributions, and voluntary subsidies voted in by Lithuanian sejmiks. The ecclesiastical lands and the lands belonging to the nobility were exempted from paying taxes unless agreed to by the Sejm. The law forbade any arbitrary contributions, and this inviolability was confirmed many times but was not thoroughly observed by the Polish nor the Lithuanian grand hetmans.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the lack of money obliged the military to raise arbitrary contributions from the ecclesiastical manors or use them as winter quarters. The extent of such contributions increased with the decline in the revenues from the 16 zloty tax and reached its peak in 1712. Just like in Poland, the clergy of the diocese of Vilnius felt their rights had been violated, and sparks flew. Few had forgotten that the allotment of billeting was one of the leading causes of the Lithuanian civil war in the mid-1690s when Jan Sobieski endeavoured to deprive the then grand hetman of Lithuania, Kazimierz Jan Sapieha, of this right, among other things, to encourage Vilnius Bishop Brzostowski to step into the conflict with Sapieha over the immunity of Church estates. In Poland, winter quarters were usually allocated by the Sejm or *hyberna* [a tribute to support the Polish army through the winter] commissions, while in Lithuania, the grand hetman decided how many units to send to each royal district [*starostwo*] for winter.<sup>34</sup> This was

<sup>32</sup> Šapoka, *Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion*, 68, 113–114.

<sup>33</sup> The inviolability was confirmed by the Sejm on a number of occasions. There were also declarations or orders by the Polish and Lithuanian grand hetmans which commanded the army to observe the rights of ecclesiastical lands. In reality, such decrees and orders meant little, and the army did not abide by them. See, for example, Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (hereinafter: LVIA), Senieji aktai, 4273, L.K. Pocij's order to observe the immunity of the church lands, 2 April 1711, 304. It is likely that such prescriptions were directed more at public opinion than at his own soldiers.

<sup>34</sup> See the Polish grand hetman's complaints in his letter: Biblioteka Ossolineum (hereinafter: BOss.), 2669, A.M. Sieniawski to J.W. Mniszech (9 Jan. 1715), 32–3.

a valuable lever for the government to harm political adversaries and influence sejmik's decision on account of the economic decline in the war-torn country.

Brzostowski endeavoured to get the word out about the behaviour of Grand Hetman of Lithuania Ludwik Konstanty Pociej. The bishop wrote to Radziwiłł: "No words can describe, no mind can perceive what is going on with us with the invention of His Grace the Hetman [...] I am not sure what this Fiscal Tribunal may be useful for except for the strengthening of the usurped right of a dictator".<sup>35</sup> So far, it was a war of words. However, according to Ancuta, all three Lithuanian bishops (Vilnius, Samogitia and Smolensk) were preparing "the admonition of His Grace the Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for the excommunication, in case the letter, a copy of which I had included, would not succeed and His Grace the Grand Hetman would not evacuate soldiers from the ecclesiastical lands".<sup>36</sup> This warning certainly did not affect the grand hetman whatsoever because three months later, Ancuta repeated that the bishop of Vilnius "will probably be forced to send the admonition of His Grace the Grand Hetman and use other means to defend the immunity of the Church when requests have no effect".<sup>37</sup>

Grand Hetman Pociej described the action of the Polish and Lithuanian clergy as "unnecessary persistence" and accused the clergy of wanting "to arrange their matters in a way that had never been seen before".<sup>38</sup> Thus, the other side of the conflict thought that no law was infringed, and even if it was, there had been an indisputable necessity to do so, or in Pociej's words, "billeting on Church lands had been practised since old times".<sup>39</sup> If the Church lands were excluded from winter quarters, Pociej continued, it would not be possible to maintain more than 3,000 men in the army. According to the hetman, this was a plot against him and the king. The organiser was "the Bishop of Vilnius, outraged by His Majesty's decision to reject the petition to appoint priest Ancuta coadjutor. Unable to retaliate otherwise, he harms the army and my personality, thinking he would avenge His Majesty this way", Pociej concluded.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (12 Dec. 1710).

<sup>36</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (4 Dec. 1712).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (29 March 1713).

<sup>38</sup> BCzart., 5916, L.K. Pociej to A.M. Sieniawski (21 Nov. 1712), 30087.

<sup>39</sup> BCzart., 465, L.K. Pociej to J. Szembek (30 April 1713), 441–3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

The tension was relieved by the king's letter to the primate. Augustus II asked the head of the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth to refrain from the ecclesiastical prosecution of the Polish grand hetman and called for an end to disagreement.<sup>41</sup> Benedetto Odescalchi's action as a broker between the Polish clergy and Siemianowski led to a formal agreement signed in May 1713. The agreement did not free Church lands in Poland from billeting, but the number of soldiers stationed in Church manors was significantly reduced.<sup>42</sup> Augustus also intervened in Lithuania, asking Chancellor Radziwiłł to mediate between the two sides. The chancellor's mediation was accepted by Brzostowski,<sup>43</sup> while Pocij did not have reason to oppose the chancellor's mediation, primarily on account that the chancellor was one of the few persons who could increase the hetman's popularity before the king, which had recently plummeted due to the behind-the-scenes activities of the hetman's political adversaries.<sup>44</sup>

A formal reconciliation between Pocij and three Lithuanian bishops was signed on 13 May 1713 in Vilnius with the chancellor present. Pocij was obliged to swear that the army would observe the immunity of clerical estates, and all injuries inflicted upon the clergy by military personnel would be redressed.<sup>45</sup> The agreement between the clergy and Pocij was met with suspicion by the nobility, which carefully followed the negotiations, fearing that if the ecclesiastical estates were freed from burdens, the hetman would transfer the onus of maintaining Lithuanian troops onto the noblemen's shoulders. The judges of the Supreme Tribunal, which were elected by sejmiks, refused to accept the agreement between Pocij and the clergy into the Tribunal books – according to the laws of the Commonwealth, legal acts not registered in the court books had no legal force whatsoever – crying that “the clergy frees itself from the burdens for the

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 819, Augustus II to S. Szembek (9 May 1713), 351.

<sup>42</sup> Gierowski, *Nuncjusz Benedykt Odescalchi*, 284.

<sup>43</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (3 May 1713).

<sup>44</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 11913, L.K. Pocij to K.S. Radziwiłł (3 April 1713).

<sup>45</sup> *Transakcja ugody między Iasnie Wielmożnym w Bogu Nayprzewielebniejszym Imścią Xiędzem Konstantym Kazimierzem Brzostowskim Biskupem Wileńskim, Iasnie Wielmożnym Imścią Xiędzem Mikołaiem Zgierskim Biskupem Zmuydzkim, Iasnie Wielmożnym Imścią Xiędzem Alexandrem Horainem Biskupem Smoleńskim y innemi IWW Ichm: ... Anno D 1713 dnia 13 maia* (n.p., 1713).

Commonwealth”.<sup>46</sup> Although Brzostowski and the Vilnius cathedral chapter dispatched envoys to the Tribunal to explain the agreement, this did not help. The judges were eager to prepare a public protest, and only the good offices of Tribunal Marshal Władysław Sapieha, who was elected thanks to Pociiej and Radziwiłł, helped to appease the delegates.<sup>47</sup> The only way to validate the pact was to inscribe it into the books of *Lithuanian Metrica* (collection of the fourteenth- to eighteenth-century legal documents of the Chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania), which Radziwiłł agreed to do.<sup>48</sup>

Pociiej had satisfied all of the clergy’s requests “to prevent further confusion”,<sup>49</sup> but, as may be suspected, he did not intend to comply with them. The hetman lost little and gained a great deal with this transaction because he neutralised the clergy’s opposition to his domination in Lithuanian internal politics. Any reimbursement for the depredations committed by the army, he promised in the agreement, could be made only under the sanction of the hetman’s court from future taxes, which would be agreed in a Sejm. The last successful Sejm (not to count the confederate Council of Warsaw) to vote extraordinary taxation had gathered precisely a decade earlier: in the summer of 1703 in Lublin. There is little documentary evidence to suggest that Pociiej honoured the agreement. Kriegseisen’s conclusion that after the agreement was signed, Pociiej did not billet Lithuanian soldiers on the Church lands must be taken with a pinch of salt.<sup>50</sup> Even if some of Pociiej’s chancery documents do not show billets on Church lands, the hetman was free to change his ordinance. One of Ancuta’s letters from late 1714 demonstrates that Pociiej’s promises were of little value because the hetman, “failing to meet the assurance given by him to the clergy ... issued ordinances for the billeting and collection of provisions in a clerical property including billeting ordinances to various clerical property, including the presbytery of Nowogródek”.<sup>51</sup>

There is proof that the similar agreement signed by the Polish grand hetman and Polish clergy was not observed either. Necessity dictated

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<sup>46</sup> BCzart., 465, L.K. Pociiej to J. Szembek (20 May 1713), 527–532.

<sup>47</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (28 May 1713).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*; BCzart., 5916, L.K. Pociiej to J. Dunin (20 May 1713), 30097.

<sup>49</sup> BOss., 2652, L.K. Pociiej to J.W. Mniszech (20 May 1713), 3.

<sup>50</sup> Kriegseisen, ‘Krzywda nad wszystkie krzywdy’, 32.

<sup>51</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (29 Nov. 1714).

other decisions. In his letter to the primate, the king assured him that earlier petitions to protect clergy estates had found compassion in his heart. The king expressed the wish that all remaining contradictions between the clergy and the Polish hetman would be resolved. However, he pointed out that due to the danger from the Turks, “at the moment the Church estates cannot be freed”.<sup>52</sup> According to the king, firstly, adequate financial sources for wages had to be secured for the army, and then the hetmans could demand that military discipline be maintained. The primate, therefore, was asked to agree to supplement the military with contributions from Church manors, which would be reimbursed from future taxes agreed upon at the Sejm.<sup>53</sup>

Although no similar letters by the king to Brzostowski exist, one can surmise that the situation in Lithuania was identical, and the clergy had to promise some contribution to the army in exchange for the order. From the point of view of the Diocese of Vilnius, it seems that the Catholic Church hierarchy strived to defend the very principle of the inviolability of Church lands. The economic downturn was significant, but the ecclesiastical manors were undoubtedly wealthy enough to give more to state needs. Despite all contributions levied by the Lithuanian, Russian or Swedish armies in 1700–14, Brzostowski had enough income to spend several hundred thousand zlotys to refurbish his palace in Werki, to re-roof the Vilnius Cathedral, not counting the money he spent on the refurbishment of other Churches, or a chalice of pure gold, which he donated to the Vilnius Cathedral.<sup>54</sup> Even if the offering of the chalice was an obligation for the bishop through the statute of the Vilnius chapter, the severe economic downturn gave some space for manoeuvre, especially when some earlier bishops of Vilnius had avoided this obligation.

The period of relative peace in Lithuania after the reconciliation between the hetman and the clergy was short. In the summer of 1713, the Turkish-Tatar forces moved toward Poland’s frontiers. The Turks wanted to encourage a rebellion inside the Commonwealth against Augustus II and bring Stanisław Leszczyński back to the Polish throne. Because King Augustus II neither trusted the Polish-Lithuanian

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<sup>52</sup> BCzart., 819, Augustus II to Stanisław Szembek (10 Aug. 1713), 392–3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Kurczewski (ed.), *Kościół zamkowy*, 289; AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (23 Oct. 1712).

armies nor believed they were capable of repelling the Turkish attack, he decided to bring his personal Saxon troops to the Commonwealth, even though he had pledged not to bring them back for any reason at the Council of Warsaw in 1710. The introduction of the Saxon troops created suspicion among the noble society that the king intended to use his forces to mount a coup against the constitutional system of the Commonwealth. Not without reason were the rumours spread. Augustus's plans for reforms had been to tighten the union between Saxony and the Commonwealth and for the election of Augustus's son as his successor. The further plans included legislative and fiscal reforms. The king, however, did not disclose his plans to noble society or convene the Sejm to consider reforms openly.<sup>55</sup>

It would not be a mistake to state that Brzostowski and Ancuta shared the general belief of Lithuanian senators that even though the contributions for the Saxon troops were illegitimate, they should be paid because of the Turkish threat. The king would not fail to withdraw his forces when this danger was over. Ancuta expressed the opinion that Augustus introduced his army as a counterweight to those magnates who had been conspiring against him: "like God had punished humanity for Adam's sin, the king decided that everyone should suffer for the machinations of several people against the king, as it is reported".<sup>56</sup> A few months later, he continued: "everybody expects that this contribution is only for this occasion to protect us from the Ottoman danger, and now, when there is a hope of peace with the Turks, the king will not fail to withdraw his troops from the Kingdom and the Duchy of Lithuania and will prefer to live in peace".<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, the burden for the Saxon army was legion, and when the first news about the entry of the Saxons into Lithuania arrived, Brzostowski returned to Vilnius to "consult collegiately with the assembled chapter".<sup>58</sup> There was little that the clergy could do but seek liberation from the contributions to the maintenance of the Saxons. Help was sought from Chancellor Radziwiłł to whom Brzostowski wrote that he did

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<sup>55</sup> Józef Andrzej Gierowski, *W cieniu Ligi Północnej* (Wrocław, 1971), 106–10, 135–8; Jacek Staszewski, 'Pomysły reformatorskie czasów Augusta II', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lxxxii, 4 (1975), 750–61.

<sup>56</sup> LVIA, f. 1726 ap. II, 96, M.J. Ancuta to J.L. Plater (14 Nov. 1713), 161–2.

<sup>57</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (25 March 1714).

<sup>58</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (8 Oct. 1713).

not doubt “that His Majesty will maintain the estates of Your Ducal Highness in an unparalleled respect, and hence, as long as His Majesty’s grace exalts you, pull us towards you”.<sup>59</sup> Ancuta echoed Brzostowski’s words expressing fear that the Saxons “will destroy our manors and plunder our lands if they behave in the same manner as before”.<sup>60</sup> The race for exemptions from the contributions for the Saxon army had begun, and the clergy was sure it did not want to cross the finish line last.<sup>61</sup> Exemptions, however, were usually granted by the king and his officials to particular persons, typically wealthy and influential magnates. This violation of the principles of egalitarianism, as well as the fact that the king demanded the Saxon taxes without the Sejm’s approval, irritated Lithuanian society, especially the middle and petty nobility.

Yet Brzostowski’s appeal for Radziwiłł’s protection fell on deaf ears. Although the chancellor received a certain amount of exemptions for his estates, he could hardly help the clergy. Radziwiłł did not bother to leak the 1690 roster of Lithuanian farms to the Saxons, according to which the contributions were collected.<sup>62</sup> Such was the price for securing the well-being of one’s estates and subordinates. At first, the Saxon commissariat responsible for managing and allocating the contributions made Brzostowski and the Vilnius cathedral chapter accountable for collecting all contributions from Church lands in the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania, except in Samogitia. One can only imagine how, under the conditions of communication at that time, Brzostowski, sitting in his palace in Verkiai near Vilnius, could control how a parish in the district of Orsha near the Russian border paid taxes to the Saxons. Brzostowski made every effort to avoid such responsibility.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, the nobility had a deep mistrust of this

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (29 Oct. 1713).

<sup>61</sup> For more on the exemptions from Saxon taxes in Lithuania see Šapoka, *Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion*, 137–9.

<sup>62</sup> In 1716, the nobility held Radziwiłł accountable for supplying the Saxons with the roster and demanded he be punished. The chancellor was also accused for stamping the king’s manifestos, asking for contributions for the Saxons to be paid, with the seal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Since the contributions were viewed as illegal, Radziwiłł should have refused the stamping, AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (28 March 1716).

<sup>63</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (19 Jan. 1714).



complicated method of paying contributions from the ecclesiastical estates, because they believed the clergy could secretly come to terms with the Saxons and avoid taxes. In such a case, the entire burden would fall on the shoulders of the nobility. Thus, the sejmiks arbitrarily included Church lands in the agreements on their contributions with the Saxon commissariat. Upon learning this, the Saxons refused to recognise the contracts, while Church estates were threatened with having to contribute twice: the first directly to the Saxons, and the second to tax collectors elected by the sejmiks. After protracted negotiations in September 1714, the Saxons agreed to conform to the sejmiks' decision and give up on direct contributions from Church estates.<sup>64</sup>

The widespread dissatisfaction with the king's policy and a complete mess with the payment of contributions for the maintenance of the Saxon troops, combined with the sums arbitrarily raised by the Lithuanian army, drove Ancuta to despair. The right-hand of Brzostowski was usually very careful in choosing his words in letters to the chancellor. However, in the letter from 4 February 1714, while describing the events in Lithuania, he lost his temper: "This is a great misfortune for the poor people. Everybody strangles us as if we have no laws and no king; it is much worse than if we were under the rule of an absolute monarch because an absolute monarch protects his subordinates so that they can pay him taxes or maintain his troops in the future".<sup>65</sup> Although the clergy were considered guardians of the Commonwealth's constitution, turmoil and war led them to believe that some changes in the country's governance could be beneficial. There is no doubt that the clergy's cry for absolute monarchy would have been music to Augustus II's ears had he not ruined the possibility in the Commonwealth with his ill-advised policy.<sup>66</sup>

In mid-1714, Augustus began to look at Lithuanian Grand Hetman Pocij with distrust, mainly because he suspected that the hetman was plotting with the Russian tsar against him. Then, Brzostowski and

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<sup>64</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (14–26 Jan. 1714, 29 Sept. – 29 Nov.).

<sup>65</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł 4 Feb. 1714).

<sup>66</sup> Ancuta's opinion echoes that of Augustus's favourite, Bishop of Kujavia Konstanty Felicjan Szaniawski, who in 1717, during a private conversation with a Prussian diplomat, expressed a preference to live under absolute monarchy because noble liberties had become a chimera, Gierowski, *W cieniu Ligi Północnej*, 141.

Ancuta assumed the role of mediator between the court and Pociiej. Ancuta wrote that he could not understand how the king could be suspicious of Pociiej, a loyal supporter of the king since the early days of the Great Northern War, who did not leave the king's camp even when Augustus II abdicated the Polish throne. On 17 June 1714, Ancuta promised Radziwiłł that "if we see that something is going on against our Lord, we will definitely inform you, and we, as obedient subjects, will do everything we can to prevent any designs against the king".<sup>67</sup> Brzostowski repeated the same assurance in similar words on 23 June.<sup>68</sup> The change in the clergy's attitude towards Pociiej in just one year was significant. The billeting of Saxon troops in Lithuania and the ill-advised policy of the king brought closer many of the conflicting Lithuanian senators and magnates.<sup>69</sup> Brzostowski and Pociiej were no exception. The bishop's intention to excommunicate the hetman remained nothing more than a footnote that few would remember. In Autumn 1714, Brzostowski could not hide his delight in the agreed-upon marriage between his nephew and the daughter of Kazimierz Aleksander Pociiej, the palatine of Vitebsk and brother of the grand hetman of Lithuania.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, the Catholic clergy found themselves in a difficult situation because the nobility appealed to Brzostowski, who was regarded as the first senator within the Lithuanian hierarchy, to make severe instances to the king to withdraw the Saxon troops. Brzostowski complained on 14 October: "Envoys from the palatinates and districts frequently accuse me that I neglect my duties as the first senator of the Duchy ... The voice of the people incites me in the following words: you, as the main minister and the guardian of the laws, have to plead for the mercy of His Majesty for the motherland ruined in universal affliction".<sup>71</sup> Yet Brzostowski did not appeal to the king but asked Radziwiłł "to plead for his countrymen".<sup>72</sup> According to Brzostowski,

<sup>67</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (17 June 1714).

<sup>68</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (23 June 1714).

<sup>69</sup> The king's reluctance to please the bishop's nephews with certain offices may have influenced Brzostowski's decision to come to terms with Pociiej, the most powerful Lithuanian magnate of the time, AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (2 Nov. 1714).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (29 July, 2 Sept. 1714).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (14 Oct. 1714).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Radziwiłł had more chances to succeed “if he used all his diligence and skill to this aim” because of his credit at the king’s court.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps Brzostowski wanted to put the responsibility on the shoulders of Radziwiłł, but there may have been a practical reason why he did not send a letter to the king. Augustus II was a German prince who did not bother to learn Polish. Even though he could speak Latin quite fluently, he preferred French.<sup>74</sup> Neither Ancuta nor Brzostowski knew German or French, and it was not until the late 1720s or 1730s that French became popular in Poland. In his letter of 30 June 1715, Ancuta complained to Radziwiłł that the clergy in Vilnius “are not able to find a person in the city of Vilnius who could speak and write French and who could write a letter in the name of His Highness, the Bishop of Vilnius, to the king, as Your Ducal Highness has suggested”.<sup>75</sup> Historians frequently neglect the language barrier between Augustus II and his subjects. While it is difficult to state to what degree it contributed to the failure of the king’s undertakings, it is undoubtedly true that it impeded the relations between Augustus and his subjects. Some were lucky enough to have a translator from French to Polish they could trust. Grand Hetman of Lithuania Pociąg had his wife, Emercjanna Warszycka – the future mistress of the king – who acted as a translator and helped restore confidence between the king and the hetman at the highest point of the tension between them in early 1715.<sup>76</sup> Others were not so lucky, and there are examples, like Kazimierz Czartoryski, appointed Lithuanian vice-chancellor in 1710, to illustrate that the knowledge of French was an important attribute that could contribute to moving up the career ladder in the Commonwealth.

Most of the Saxon soldiers billeted in Poland and Lithuania were Protestants. Augustus II conscripted some of his troops in France and Poland, and these troops would have been Catholic, but still, the percentage of these troops should have been negligible. Brzostowski was aware of the issue of religion in the global context. On 2 September 1714, he wrote: “The Queen of England has just died, which probably

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Jacek Staszewski, *August II Mocny* (Wrocław, 1998), 19, 36.

<sup>75</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (30 June 1715).

<sup>76</sup> Российский государственный архив древних актов, ф. 79, оп. I, 1715, A. Dashkov to G. Golovkin (8 Feb. 1715), 10, 33.

will bring another War of Religion".<sup>77</sup> Yet neither he nor Ancuta wrote a single sentence about crimes committed by Protestant Saxons in Lithuania. This can be regarded as further proof that Saxon soldiers behaved quite modestly in Lithuania,<sup>78</sup> and dissatisfaction was caused instead by the very principle of how these troops were introduced and maintained without the summoning of the Sejm.

Interestingly, there is no mention in the letters by Brzostowski and Ancuta of the efforts to limit the political powers of Protestants, even though, after the Silent Sejm of 1717, Brzostowski addressed the Lithuanian sejmiks with a letter in which he interpreted the legislation of the late Sejm in his way and urged the ousting of Protestants from public offices.<sup>79</sup> Thus, by the middle of 1715, the Commonwealth was on the brink of disaster. Dissatisfaction with the Saxon troops billeted in the Commonwealth increased by the day. The Lithuanian nobility demanded that Grand Hetman Pocij protect them from the Saxon contributions by force, if necessary. Pocij responded to such requests by issuing summonses to the irregular, or even unconstitutional (since the summoning of a council of whatever nature was the sole prerogative of a monarch) Council of Lithuanian Nobility in Vilnius. Upon receiving the news about the gathering of the Lithuanian nobility, Augustus II warned Pocij that any decision adopted by the Council would be regarded as illegitimate and hostile to the king. Augustus even considered the possibility of attacking Pocij and the Lithuanian army under his command with Saxon troops.

Before the council and during the gathering, the clergy of the Diocese of Vilnius flirted with all sides: the hetman, the king, and the nobility. Brzostowski left Vilnius so that he would not be forced to take part in the gathering, but before departing, he had "disposed the hetman to uphold the decision to revoke [the council] and to apologise to the knightly order for the convocation, and that he will take no action regarding the rights of His Majesty until the first head [the

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<sup>77</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (2 Sept. 1714).

<sup>78</sup> Thousands of pages of court books record only a few incidents involving Saxon soldiers in Lithuania, Šapoka, *Warfare, Loyalty and Rebellion*, 139.

<sup>79</sup> Wojciech Kriegseisen, 'Postanowienia Sejmu Niemego w kwestiach wyznaniowych i ich konsekwencje, czyli w sprawie genezy "sprawy dysydenckiej"', in Michał Zwierzykowski (ed.), *Sejm Niemy. Między mitem a reformą państwa* (Warszawa, 2019), 184.

king] explicitly agrees on it”.<sup>80</sup> Ancuta remained in Vilnius to maintain a watchful eye on the nobility and Pocięj so that they would not adopt any decision against the king.<sup>81</sup> However, he failed. The nobility decided to resist the Saxon contributions by force but at the same time declared that this decision was not directed against the king but only against illegitimate contributions, which were levied without the Sejm’s approval. “They knew perfectly that His Majesty would be angry at what they had done here, but they still insisted on their design to sign a declaration to maintain the laws and freedoms of the Commonwealth, and they pledged to maintain the noble freedoms and would rather die in defence of them than to endure illegitimate contributions”, Ancuta wrote.<sup>82</sup> To avoid the pressure to sign the resolution of the Vilnius gathering, Ancuta left the city several days before the council ended. He also refused the offer to go as an envoy of the Vilnius gathering to the king. Thus Brzostowski and Ancuta clearly showed that even if they disapproved of the king’s policy on the billeting of the Saxon army, they were reluctant to take any measures against it.

If Ancuta and Brzostowski were trying to strike a balance between the king and the nobility in the summer of 1715, then with the establishment of the Polish Military Confederation on 1 October 1715 and the General Confederation of Poland in Tarnogród on 26 November 1715, they clearly moved to the royalist camp. The confederates attacked the Saxon troops stationed in Poland. While there were no Saxon troops in Lithuania by late 1715, because all units stationed there were moved to Poland to help suppress the confederation, the desire of the Lithuanian nobility to establish a Lithuanian confederation on the Polish example was strong. Brzostowski expressed his concerns about the efforts of the Ashmyany [Oszmiana] sejmik to establish a local confederation and provide military assistance to the Poles, which they believed they were obliged to by “the bonds of the union”.<sup>83</sup> In his letter, Ancuta was more explicit and did not hide his intention to persuade the nobility to abandon plans to form a confederation: “The sejmik of Vilnius will gather on 13 January, to which the nobility

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<sup>80</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (30 Aug. 1715).

<sup>81</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (4 Aug. 1715).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (25 Aug. 1715).

<sup>83</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (15 Dec. 1715).

will probably arrive with arms, but we advise and wish them to sit quietly in peace because they still have it”.<sup>84</sup>

Yet the dissatisfaction with the royal policy was so strong that the clergy could do little to appease it. The General Confederation of Lithuania was established on 23 March 1716 at the Council of Vilnius, summoned by the sejmiks of Vilnius and Ashmyany. The Lithuanian Confederation set the same aims as the Polish Confederation – to free the country from the Saxon troops and contributions for their maintenance. Brzostowski and Ancuta were invited to join the council and the newly formed Confederation of Lithuania. They obeyed, but fear of repression probably played the most critical role in this decision; such fear was well-founded. When the Polish confederates gathered at their council to establish the General Confederation of Poland in November 1715, only a few senators were at the meeting. The absence of senators undermined the legitimacy of any assembly of the nobility; thus, when news arrived that one of the Polish bishops was travelling a few miles away, the confederates jumped on their horses and rushed out to look for him. When the bishop was found, he was brought to the council, where he was compelled to join the Confederation of Tarnogród.<sup>85</sup> This is how Brzostowski described the circumstances under which he joined the General Confederation of Lithuania: “The newly elected marshal of the knightly order or rather the confederation of the province, together with the grand hetman and a large entourage of the confederates, came to me not only to greet me but also to invite me to their council... Unable to resist their demands, I decided to join them. However, I have heard rumours that they intend to adopt some kind of decrees against those absent and against those who resist.”<sup>86</sup> It was better to join the confederation and then try to influence the confederates, the vast majority of whom were petty or middling nobles.

Ancuta and Brzostowski shared the belief of the majority of Polish-Lithuanian society toward Russian mediation between the confederates

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<sup>84</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (10 Jan. 1716).

<sup>85</sup> This was Jan Kazimierz de Alten Bokum, Vice-Chancellor of the Crown and the bishop of Przemyśl; Wojciech Stanek, ‘Generalny zjazd tarnogrodzki w 1715 roku’, in Kazimierz Wajda (ed.), *Między wielką polityką a szlacheckim partykularyzmem* (Toruń, 1993), 268.

<sup>86</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (28 March 1716).

and the king's court. They thought there was nothing wrong with it as long as it would help to end the internal war between the confederates and the Saxons. However, the confederates had approved Russian mediation because they feared that even if Augustus II withdrew his troops, he could introduce them again in the future. In other words, the confederates needed a force that could prevent the king from infringing upon the Commonwealth's constitution. At the same time, Ancuta and Brzostowski were ready to approve the tsar's mediation only because the king had accepted it. However, the negotiations between the king's ministers, the tsar's plenipotentiaries, and the envoys of the confederates in Gdańsk in April 1716, where the plan for future peace talks was settled, alarmed the Vilnius clergy, which feared that something could have been agreed upon between Augustus II and Peter I, contrary to Polish liberties. On 14 April 1716, Ancuta wrote: "We are worried about the conference of the monarchs in Gdańsk that something harmful might explode".<sup>87</sup> The conditions of the future negotiations between the king and the confederates with the mediation of the tsar's envoy, Grigoriy Dolgorukiy, brought little relief. The apprehension of the tsar's power and their helplessness was evident. "His Lordship, the bishop of Kujavia, sent me the tsar's letter and the points on mediation. The mediator's power is evident, and when he orders, you must obey. This is not a remedy", Brzostowski wrote.<sup>88</sup> Further concerns were expressed by Ancuta, who posed a rhetorical question to Radziwiłł: "I am looking at the confederation, and I am thinking of the time when it will be dissolved. Will the Commonwealth need the tsar's protection, and will we not be able to defend our liberties ourselves?"<sup>89</sup>

None of the Vilnius clergy hierarchy appeared at the negotiations between the confederates and the king's plenipotentiaries in Lublin, even though the act of the Vilnius Confederation obliged Brzostowski or, in case of his absence, Ancuta, to take part in these negotiations.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (14 April 1716).

<sup>88</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (15 May 1716).

<sup>89</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł, 31 May 1716).

<sup>90</sup> *Konfederacja generalna nierozdzielnie całej prowincyey Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego z wojskiem, zgodnie od Woiewodztw, ziem, y powiatow uczyniona w Wilnie Anno Domini 1716, mśca Marca dnia 23* (Wilno, 1716); Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka (LMAVB), f. 9, 3116, Diary of the negotiations of Lublin, 8.

Brzostowski excused himself due to his poor health and the lack of money.<sup>91</sup> While the bishop could not speak or write French, he certainly knew specific French phrases from contemporary literature as an educated person. He wrote: “Neither I nor my substitute, His Grace priest suffragan, are going to the negotiations because of provisions withheld by the confederacy: *point d’argent, point de Suisse*”.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, Ancuta was aware of the necessity to represent the interests of the clergy in the negotiations “so that nothing would be invented without us, against us”, but he also was reluctant to set out for Lublin because of the lack of money.<sup>93</sup> He delayed his journey until the negotiations were moved to Warsaw and headed instead for the confederate fiscal commission of Lithuania, which gathered in Brest.<sup>94</sup> This meeting was far more critical for the clergy because the Lithuanian budget and the regular payment for the army were to be drafted. The adopted budget project in Brest did not envisage taxes from the noble and clergy lands. However, this project was rejected in Warsaw, where the negotiations between the confederates and the royal plenipotentiaries were being carried out. Permanent taxes from the noble and ecclesiastical estates that did not require parliamentary approval appeared in the new project, confirmed by the one-day Sejm on 1 February 1717.<sup>95</sup> However, it is challenging to assess Ancuta’s position in these negotiations as to whether he opposed or supported the modified project of the budget.

The negotiations in Lublin and later in Warsaw moved towards the decision that a future peace agreement would have to be approved by the Sejm, which would be convened without complete formality.

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<sup>91</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (21 June 1716).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (12 June 1716). “No money, no Swiss” – the phrase concerns Cardinal Mazarin and the postponements of the remuneration of Swiss regiments in French service in the seventeenth century.

<sup>93</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 126, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (14 June 1716).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, M.J. Ancuta to K.S. Radziwiłł (17 July, 5 Sept., 1 Nov. 1716).

<sup>95</sup> Mindaugas Šapoka, ‘Konfederacka komisja skarbowa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w Brześciu w 1716 roku’, in Tomasz Ciesielski (ed.), *Studia nad konfederacją tarnogrodzką i Sejmem Niemym* (Warszawa, 2020), 62–5. It is, however, difficult to assess the tax burden put on church lands because lump sums of the hearth tax were allocated for each Lithuanian district, which were granted a certain reduction of hearths from the old roster compiled in 1690 that did not correspond to reality. Sejms were to decide on the reduction of hearths for each estate in the district.



It meant that there would be no sejmiks called and no envoys elected, nor would *liberum veto* be in force. The confederates opposed such a plan, while the king's plenipotentiaries ardently defended it because it would save time and end the internal unrest more speedily.<sup>96</sup> In this respect, the Vilnius clergy was closer to the royalist camp, understanding that extraordinary circumstances require exceptional decisions. "Some are displeased with the Sejm without the usual formalities on account of its danger for the common law, even though the very necessity of the circumstances requires alteration, though many things are done and put forward against the law", Brzostowski wrote.<sup>97</sup>

### CONCLUSIONS

Bishop of Vilnius Brzostowski and his suffragan, Ancuta, took a relatively passive position in Lithuanian internal politics from 1709 to 1717. This could have been caused by the fact that Brzostowski (born in 1644) was an older man and had neither health nor desire to participate actively in politics, as he had at the end of the seventeenth century. The Lithuanian Catholic Church was willing to share the burdens imposed by the Council of Warsaw in 1710 equally with the noble lands and approved the king's policy to continue the war. Brzostowski, however, endeavoured to defend the ecclesiastical lands from arbitrary contributions raised by the Lithuanian army, which were viewed as illegal. Yet the confrontation against the grand hetman was brief. In the face of a greater danger, the ill-advised policy of the king, disagreements were soon forgotten.

On the other hand, the clergy of the Diocese of Vilnius was ready to accept further burdens on behalf of Saxon troops, even amid suspicions that with their help, the king was preparing a coup to impose royal absolutism. However, the frustration was so great that the belief was expressed that the Commonwealth was worse off than a country under an absolute monarchy. The irony of fate was that this belief was prompted by Augustus II's desire to introduce absolute monarchy. What is most surprising is that the letters by Brzostowski and Ancuta do not give any information that the issue of religion

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<sup>96</sup> For instance, see the discussion at the session on 29 Oct. 1716, LMAVB, f. 9, 3116, Diary of the negotiations of Lublin, 501–2.

<sup>97</sup> AGAD, AR, V, 1513, K.K. Brzostowski to K.S. Radziwiłł (6 Sept. 1716).

played a significant role in the conflict between the predominantly Protestant Saxon troops and the nobility in Lithuania. Although the clergy constantly complained about the lack of money, at the same time, significant funds were allocated for the repair of the cathedral or the Vilnius bishop's palace.

Brzostowski and Ancuta joined the Confederation of Vilnius of 1716 formed against the king's policy but did not adopt a radical stance. Their joining, however, was insincere. The clergy signed the act of the confederation only because it feared that the nobility might adopt decisions against individuals or the clergy as a whole (e.g. tax Church lands). The bishops were concerned about Russian mediation in the internal conflict between the confederates and the king's court, but they took a passive stance in the peace negotiations. They were more concerned that the future budget would not encompass taxes on Church estates; however, when the confederates and the king's representatives agreed on permanent taxation without Sejm's approval, the clergy did not oppose it. Although the clergy had traditionally been one of the most educated groups in Polish-Lithuanian society, it is pretty surprising that Brzostowski and Ancuta did not speak and write French.

The correspondence of Brzostowski and Ancuta shows a strong sense of helplessness in the face of political challenges. In 1710–17, the activities of the bishop of Vilnius and his suffragan were quite controversial. In domestic politics, the clergy tried to manoeuvre between all interested parties: the king, the grand hetman, other Lithuanian officials and magnates, and the nobility. Also, historical sources do not confirm that any of the clergy of the Vilnius diocese would assume leadership in such a crucial time for the country, which was the post-Poltava period. Like most nobility and officials, they preferred to swim downstream and see where the current would take them.

*proofreading Nicholas Siekierski*

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