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## Unification Policy of the State and the Identity of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Nobility in the Light of Belarusian Districts Deputy Instructions in the 1630s and 1640s

### Abstract

This article aims to show the evolution of the civil consciousness of the nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This text focuses on the analysis results of the instructions (in a modern sense) of Belarusian deputies of the nobility in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 1630s and 1640s. Particular emphasis is put on studying the contexts of references to such concepts as ‘the Commonwealth’, ‘Fatherland’, ‘nation’, and ‘Union’. The article concludes that the union state policy of the Commonwealth bore fruit, and the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania increasingly often identified themselves with the civil identity of the Commonwealth while preserving the specificity of the regional self-consciousness.

### Zarys treści

Celem artykułu jest określenie kierunku ewolucji świadomości obywatelskiej szlachty Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego po unii lubelskiej z Koroną. Tekst przedstawia wyniki analizy instrukcji poselskich szlachty powiatów białoruskich (w dzisiejszym rozumieniu) Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w latach 30. i 40. XVII stulecia. Główny nacisk położono na badanie kontekstów odwoływania się do takich pojęć, jak „Rzeczpospolita”, „ojczyzna”, „naród”, „unia”. W wyniku analizy autor doszedł do wniosku, że unifikacyjna polityka państwowa Rzeczypospolitej była skuteczna, a szlachta Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego, przy zachowaniu świadomości regionalnej, coraz bardziej identyfikowała się z tożsamością obywatelską Rzeczypospolitej.

**Keywords:** Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Sejm, deputy, nobility, district, instruction, law

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rzeczpospolita, Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie, Sejm, poseł, szlachta, powiat, instrukcja, prawo

## The ubiquitous state: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is the Fatherland

In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, instructions of the nobility from Belarusian provinces of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for their representatives to the Sejm were compiled according to a specific pattern, written in a fairly standardised language.<sup>1</sup> It makes it possible to analyse their content, including a general conclusion on the nature of the terminology used characteristic of a state policy. First, we should focus on the use of the term “Commonwealth” (Pol. *Rzeczpospolita*) in the instructions.<sup>2</sup>

In most cases, the term “Commonwealth” was used to directly or indirectly indicate the state that arose due to the Union of Lublin (1569). According to our observations, closer to the mid-seventeenth century, the “Commonwealth” generally became a synonym of the “state”, as perfectly illustrated by the expression in the instructions from 1646 Lida sejmik: “in every Commonwealth”.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Rachuba, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie w systemie parlamentarnym Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1569–1763*, Warszawa, 2002, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Various aspects of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth history have already been studied in depth, including the problem analysed in the present text, and the list of publications is much too long to be quoted here in full. In particular, however, the following works should be noted: H. Wisner, “Naprawa państwa i prawa w uchwałach sejmików Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku”, in: *Studia polsko-litewsko-białoruskie*, ed. J. Tomaszewski, E. Smułkowa, and H. Majecki, Warszawa, 1988, pp. 33–50; E. Opaliński, *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587–1652. System parlamentarny a społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa, 1995, pp. 27–38, 192–226; H. Wisner, *Najjaśniejsza Rzeczpospolita. Szkice z czasów Zygmunta III i Władysława IV Wazy*, Warszawa, 2001, pp. 120–136; *idem*, “Rzeczpospolite szlachty litewskiej”, *Barok. Historia – Literatura – Sztuka*, 13 (2006), no. 1, pp. 17–29; *idem*, *Rzeczpospolita Wazów. III. Sławne Państwo, Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, Warszawa, 2008, pp. 111–118, 257–260; A.B. Zakrzewski, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie (XVI–XVIII w.). Prawo – ustrój – społeczeństwo*, Warszawa, 2013, pp. 262–286; T. Ambroziak, “Rzeczpospolita w litewskich instrukcjach sejmikowych w latach 1587–1648. Próba analizy terminologicznej”, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, 65 (2013), no. 2, pp. 192–214. There is also a number of works on the issue of the article in Belarusian historiography: П.А. Лойка, *Шляхта беларускіх земляў у грамадска-палітычным жыцці Рэчы Паспалітай другой паловы XVI – першай трэці XVII ст.*, Мінск, 2002, pp. 86–93; В. Галубовіч, “Спроба семантычнага аналізу паняццяў: ВКЛ – Рэч Паспалітая – Айчына – народ (па матэрыялах соймакавай дакументацыі полацкай шляхты першай паловы XVII ст.)”, *Герольд Litherland*, 17 (2006), pp. 23–26; *idem*, “Палякі і Карона Польская ў пасольскіх інструкцыях шляхты Вялікага Княства Літоўскага ў час праўлення Уладзіслава Вазы”, in: *Шлях да ўзаемнасці = Droga ku wzajemności: Матэрыялы XV міжнар. навук. канф. (Гродна, 13–14 лістап. 2008 г.)*, Гродна, 2009, pp. 199–202; Г. Сагановіч, “Люблінскі акт 1569 г. у пастулатах шляхецкіх соймакаў ВКЛ XVII ст.”, in: *Праблемы інтэграцыі і інкарпарацыі ў развіцці Цэнтральнай і Усходняй Еўропы ў перыяд ранняга новага часу: Матэрыялы міжнар. навук. канферэнцыі (Мінск, 15–17 кастрычніка 2009 г.)*, eds С.Ф. Сокал, А.М. Янушкевіч, Мінск, 2010, pp. 220–232.

<sup>3</sup> Biblioteka Naukowa Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności i Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie (The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków; hereinafter: BPAU i PAN), MS 365, fol. 155.

In the instructions, we can find alternative names for the country: “states of our Fatherland”, “states of the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania”, and “states of his Royal grace”,<sup>4</sup> but their number is small compared to the frequency of “the Commonwealth”. The term “Commonwealth” completely dominates the term “Grand Duchy of Lithuania”, with some exceptions. For example, it was used equally often in the postulates formulated by the nobility from the Minsk district in 1640.<sup>5</sup> The tendency to generalise the references to the state under the headline of “the Commonwealth” is evident in the royal messages, the answers to which were the sejmik postulates. The phraseology of the instructions for the noble deputies testifies that public propaganda aimed at political integration achieved their objectives, and the Belarusian nobility responded to it adequately, as attested by the use of the following terms: “estates of the Commonwealth”, “needs of the Commonwealth”, “sudden danger for the Commonwealth”, “all the Commonwealth”, “harm of the Commonwealth”, “our Commonwealth”, “treasure of the Commonwealth”, “request of the Commonwealth”, “consent of the Commonwealth”, “dignity of the Commonwealth”, “forces of the Commonwealth”, “dissidents of the Commonwealth”, etc. In this linguistic and semantic space, finding an equivalent usage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was difficult, as in the instructions of the nobility, it was the Commonwealth that acted as a subject of international relations and a partner of “foreign monarchs” in commercial matters.<sup>6</sup>

The pacifist sentiments of the nobility dominated in relations with “the heathens”, where preference was given to concessions and the search for peaceful solutions. But this compromise could not harm the “dignity of the Commonwealth”, which could not be sacrificed. In general, however, the international issues in the instructions of the Belarusian districts were usually set aside for the discussion of “all estates of the Crown and Grand Duchy of Lithuania”.<sup>7</sup>

One of the features of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s perception by the nobility was that it was regarded as a common value of both “nations”, and thus it was identified with such concepts as “publicity” – “liberty (freedom)” – “equality”. The Commonwealth was represented as a state organisation that guaranteed the implementation of these democratic values, which were not indifferent to the nobility. The authors of Vawkavysk instructions from 1639 expressed this

<sup>4</sup> Российская национальная библиотека, Санкт-Петербург (The National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg; hereinafter: РНБ СПб.), фонд 971, inv. 2, file 132, fol. 13; Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw; hereinafter: AGAD), Archiwum Warszawskie Radziwiłłów (Warsaw Archive of Radziwiłł Family; hereinafter: AR), Division 2 (hereinafter: Dz. II), ref. no. 1177, fols 3, 5.

<sup>5</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1188, fols 1–6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 3.

idea as follows: “deputies [...] in free Commonwealth should have free voices, and our elder brothers senators should not have more prerogatives than deputies in domestic liberties”.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy that all the nobility of the Grand Duchy served and obtained glory not for themselves or the Duchy but for the Commonwealth. For example, in 1640, the Polotsk nobility enumerated the merits of the representatives of the Viskousky family and separately singled out sir Hermogen, who, “serving the Commonwealth, gained immortal glory with damage to his life, but he did not get three-quarters of the deserved”.<sup>9</sup>

The Belarusian nobility associated civic duty with participation in public events common to the entire Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Social activity was perceived as the primary criterion for assessing the nobleman at the district level. Thus, according to the decision of the Lida nobility in 1632, the most suitable to hold the posts in their district were those who wanted to participate in the work of the Sejm and be “on the services of the Commonwealth”.<sup>10</sup>

The states were united in 1569, and they did not have a joint code of laws, and the Sejm laws did not always apply to the whole of the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, the integration gradually took place by passing and replacing national names of laws. So, the case of the use of the private seal by the king for drawing up some documents caused an adverse reaction from the Slonim nobility in 1646. They demanded the punishment for those who dared to violate both chancellor’s prerogatives and the “rights of the Commonwealth”.<sup>11</sup> This language, quite rare in Belarusian instructions, testified to the success of integration. In 1646, the Brest nobility stated that only “the ancient customs and rights of the Commonwealth” should provide the basis for ensuring the trousseau of the Queen, “our success and happiness”.<sup>12</sup>

The Parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – the Sejm – was the central institution of the federate state, and some expressions used in the instructions allow us to consider the words as synonyms. In 1638, for example, in the instruction of the Polotsk nobility, it was noted that “The Commonwealth needs very much” Sejms sessions without breaking up. Demands for a more economical disposition of the collected taxes and control of the treasurers also appeared at this time. As for the nobility themselves, they identified the Commonwealth, a legislator, with their Fatherland. Thus, hoping for the increase of “the Commonwealth glory and power”, they wanted greater glory and power for themselves.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1174, fol. 6.

<sup>9</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1197, fol. 7.

<sup>10</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1064, fol. 1.

<sup>11</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 160v.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 128.

<sup>13</sup> PHB ЦП6., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 124, fols 166–166v.

The nobility assembled at the Sejm sessions considered “the matters of the Commonwealth” as the whole, and not any particular provincial problems of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Commonwealth institutions, particularly the treasury, had to fulfil orders of the “federal” subject, as evidenced by the 1639 sejmik resolution of Novogrudok.<sup>14</sup> In general, since it was impossible to declare war without the consent of the nobility and the Sejm, the monarch’s rights and actions in this matter were subordinated to the Commonwealth, which in 1646, as the Brest nobility wrote, “does not think to declare a war”.<sup>15</sup>

It is well correlated with the conscious separation of the monarch from the state – the property of the nobility. For instance, in the 1632 pre-election instructions, the Vitebsk nobility reasoned about the choice of the candidates for the “crown of our state”, and recalled the election of Sigismund III Vasa.<sup>16</sup> The Commonwealth was regarded as a specific ‘employer’ of the monarch. According to the general belief of the society, blood and origin give the right to power, but only special services to the Commonwealth guaranteed the candidate for the crown the reliable support of the nobility. The king’s son Władysław Vasa met such criteria according to the Vitebsk nobility, and they affirmed with pleasure: “in our Fatherland the consecrate descendants of the kings were never offended, all the more those who had great merits and do not stop serving our Commonwealth”.<sup>17</sup> In the first instance, the monarch should work for the state’s good and demonstrate “paternal care of the Commonwealth”. Moreover, he had to encourage his subjects to think about the country’s affairs.<sup>18</sup> The monarch was the principal administrator of the Commonwealth’s property: in the 1639 Novogrudok instructions, he is called “the arbitrary benefits distributor of the Commonwealth”.<sup>19</sup>

The integration line of the state is evident in the efforts to cement the consciousness of the nobility by the phraseology used. The main burden was taken by the word “Fatherland” as it was in Polotsk nobility instruction, 1640.<sup>20</sup> In the sejmiks instructions, the term “Fatherland”<sup>21</sup> appears alone (in 1632, the Vitebsk nobility presented themselves as “sons of the common and inseparable Fatherland”<sup>22</sup>), and in combination with its synonym “the Commonwealth” (as in 1637

<sup>14</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1177, fol. 7.

<sup>15</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 122v.

<sup>16</sup> PHB СПб., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 132. fol. 1v.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 1.

<sup>18</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fols 122, 148, 127.

<sup>19</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1177, fol. 3.

<sup>20</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1197, fol. 4.

<sup>21</sup> According to Henryk Wisner, the term “Fatherland” was used as the synonym to “the Commonwealth” from the reign of King Sigismund III Vasa: H. Wisner, *Rzeczpospolita Wazów. Czasy Zygmunta III i Władysława IV*, Warszawa, 2002, p. 51; Wisner, *Rzeczpospolita Wazów. III*, pp. 111–118, 259; Zakrzewski, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie*, p. 272.

<sup>22</sup> PHB СПб., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 132. fol. 1.

and 1638 Novogrudok instructions: “to that Commonwealth our Fatherland”<sup>23</sup>). In the 1634 instruction, the Novogrudok nobility required the negotiations with the Swedes to be finished “taking into account the common interests and prestige of the country and the Commonwealth without restrictions for our homeland”.<sup>24</sup>

The nobility always identified the homeland with a joint state of two nations, which created the necessary conditions for the realisation of their interests, especially in external matters. Thus, the Vawkavysk sejmik in 1639, after discussing the question of the sea tax commission created at the last Sejm, insisted on choosing the collectors of this tax from among “influential permanent residents of our Fatherland among both nations and sworn allegiance”.<sup>25</sup>

However, in some cases, the two nations merged into one, as, for example, in the final phrase of the pre-election Ashmyany instructions of 1632, the right of free political choice was called “an exceptional liberty and decoration of our nation”.<sup>26</sup> The defence of the Fatherland was identified with the protection of the Commonwealth. In 1638 Polotsk nobility emphasised their unwillingness to pay new taxes and stated that during the last war, they collected more than twenty direct taxes over the Sejm ones “for the protection of the Commonwealth and for love of the Fatherland”.<sup>27</sup>

The specific phrases found in the instructions reveal the nobility’s political culture, the ideals imitated by the noble citizens of both nations. Thus, in 1634 Novogrudok instructions, the deputies were ordered to thank the monarch and all those who “for love of Fatherland, as the good patricians in the Commonwealth, without delay fight in the troops of the Commonwealth against the heathens”.<sup>28</sup>

The Belarusian nobility also saw the danger for the fatherland in the disorganisation of power, the disparagement of the authority of the Grand Duchy institutions and official registration of royal decrees sealed up with private seals.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, in 1640 this problem was presented by the Minsk nobility at the Sejm as an internal matter of the Grand Duchy: “the citizens of the Lithuanian Principality complain very much”. In this case, the “Fatherland” term is narrowed down to the Grand Duchy.<sup>30</sup>

What is characteristic of the language of the analysed sejmik instructions is the interchangeability of the terms “Fatherland” and “Commonwealth”. It is not

<sup>23</sup> Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie (The Princes Czartoryski Library and Archive in Kraków; hereinafter: BCz), MS 375, fols 635, 647.

<sup>24</sup> PHБ ЦПб., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 321/2, fol. 1v.

<sup>25</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1174, fol. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie (The National Museum in Krakow; hereinafter: MNKr.), MS 160, fols 25–27.

<sup>27</sup> PHБ ЦПб., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 124, fol. 167.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, file 321/2, no. 222, fol. 1.

<sup>29</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1188, fol. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

accidental that the play with words-symbols appears at the beginning of the 1645 Slonim instructions: “paternal care for us” is represented as care of “our Fatherland health, integrity, glory and security”.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, sometimes the nobility used the term “Fatherland” to designate neither the monarch nor the Sejm, but themselves. For example, the 1646 Slonim instructions gave permission for “worthy maintenance of the Queen” and stipulated that it would be “without new taxes for the Fatherland”.<sup>32</sup>

To be a son of the Fatherland was honourable, but the Fatherland was not in a hurry to reward its defenders-sons appropriately – they had to stand with outstretched hands for a long time and to demand the authorities through the district structures continuously. In the 1638 Polotsk instructions, the Livonian nobility who had served the Commonwealth faithfully, but had not received the money promised to them, were called “Good sons of the Fatherland”.<sup>33</sup>

## Nation or nations of one Fatherland?

In the instructions, the term “nation” was used relatively rarely, usually to designate the population of a foreign country (“Moscow nation”) or a different ethnic group (“Jews”). This term also served to determine citizens belonging to the united state. For example, in the 1634 Ashmyany instructions, the term “nation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania” emphasised separation from the Poles.<sup>34</sup> But gradual identification of the Grand Duchy nobility with their “brethren” from the Crown bore fruit, and in time there was no “Lithuanian nation” in the “free Commonwealth, our Fatherland”. The Commonwealth had one monarch and one “our nation”, as recorded in Bratslav postulates to the Sejm in 1640.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, the union of the Crown and Lithuanian offices was relatively stable. In the sejmiks’ instructions, the offices were called the offices of “both nations”.<sup>36</sup>

## Enemies of the common Fatherland

The nobility saw the main danger for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in their “permanent” external and internal enemies. In 1638, the Novogrudok instructions specially ordered the deputies to monitor the situation in relations

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<sup>31</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 120.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 160v.

<sup>33</sup> РНБ СПб., фонд 971, inv. 2, file 124, fol. 167.

<sup>34</sup> MNKr., MS 160, fols 113–114.

<sup>35</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1192, fol. 1.

<sup>36</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1197, fol. 6.

with the “Moscow nation”, which could start a war again.<sup>37</sup> They also had to guard their privileges against their internal enemies. When King Władysław Vasa began recruiting soldiers without the consent of the Sejm, the sejmiks immediately required to hold an investigation of the case and find out the names of those “consultants” who had pushed the monarch to war with Turkey. At the 1646 Brest sejmik, those persons were called “the main enemies of the Fatherland”.<sup>38</sup>

There were also more apparent enemies. Brest nobility considered it reasonable to inform the Sejm in 1646 that “without permission” of the Commonwealth, the Jews organised “congresses”, which had to be prohibited because those meetings sent the messages “to the Turks and other enemies”, posing a threat to the country.<sup>39</sup>

### **The model of integration without any alternative: the Crown<sup>40</sup>**

The Polish “order” was undoubtedly a standard, and the Grand Duchy residents were guided by it in various situations, including financial ones. Before the 1632 Convocation Sejm, Lida sejmik demanded that a quarter levy (Polish: *kwarta* – as a quarter of income from the royal lands was to be used for that purpose) from the royal domains in the Grand Duchy was transferred to the defence of the Commonwealth “according to the Polish pattern”.<sup>41</sup> In 1637, the Novogrudok nobility demanded that “according to the customs of the Polish Crown”, at the special Supreme treasury court “on the model of Radom”, not only the collectors, but also the Treasurer of the Grand Duchy should report before the nobility. It also should be registered officially in the form of a law.<sup>42</sup>

The adaptation of the Crown methods through the adoption of the Polish legal regulations was common and concerned the activities of various institutions of the Grand Duchy. For example, in 1640, the Ashmyany nobility asked for the implementation of the Crown law on the supreme court judges forbidding them

<sup>37</sup> BCz, MS 375, fol. 648.

<sup>38</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 127v.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 131.

<sup>40</sup> In general, the attitude of the Grand Duchy nobility to the Crown nobility was ambiguous, despite the desire to follow the examples of their Polish brethren: Галубовіч, “Палякі і Карона Польская”, pp. 199–202. The idea of equalisation dominates in the instructions of the Crown nobility regarding the Grand Duchy: Галубовіч, “Вялікае княства Літоўскае ў пасольскай дакументацыі кароннай шляхты ў 1632–1648 гг.”, in: *Шлях да ўзаемнасці = Droga ku wzajemności: Матэрыялы XIV Міжнародні навуковыя канферэнцыі, Гродна, 26–27 кастрычніка 2006 г.*, Гродна, 2007, pp. 236–240.

<sup>41</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1064, fol. 6.

<sup>42</sup> BCz, MS 375, fol. 637.



to simultaneously be the deputies to the Grand Duchy.<sup>43</sup> In 1646, the Grodno nobility asked the deputies to take measures and use in the Grand Duchy some “Crown laws”. It was to be implemented at next Sejm.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the Brest nobility made a list of the things that should be done “as in the Crown”: to set the district military censuses at Christmas to organise the protection from offenders who cross the Grand Duchy frontiers; to determine specific places for salt sale by law, as in Lublin and Podlasie provinces; to pass laws as in the Crown to make local Jews give a third of the taxes collected by the state every year and forbid the Jews to rent the *czopowe* – the highly profitable taxes on the sale and service of alcoholic beverages.<sup>45</sup> In 1640, the Minsk nobility demanded the organisation of the armoury on the Polish model: “the example of the Crown Armoury”. Bratslav nobility wanted the same in 1640.<sup>46</sup>

In 1646, the Lida nobility wanted to follow the Crown’s example in the matter of taxation: they demanded to collect poll tax from the Jewish population, as the Poles did, i.e. annually. In 1647, the Lida nobility proposed the Crown formula in this matter again.<sup>47</sup>

The problem of inequality in relations between the Polish state and the Grand Duchy is evident in the sejms instructions of the Belarusian nobility. The problem of inequality arose during Sejm discussions, especially it concerned those Sejms held in the Grand Duchy. In 1640, the Minsk nobility proposed that the next Sejm be held under the leadership of the representative of the Grand Duchy, “because it is impossible to consider a disrupted Sejm right”; or, as it was specified in the 1641 sejmik instructions, such “a director [Sejm marshal] cannot be considered a director”.<sup>48</sup>

The Belarusian nobility certainly wanted equal rights with that of the Crown one. They thus demanded new governments and the determination of their seats, done “following the clauses on the equalisation of all governments of the Crown and the Grand Duchy, written in the *pacta conventa* at the election and coronation”, as it was noted in 1637 Novogrudok instructions.<sup>49</sup> This matter was undoubtedly not regulated since such a request concerning the seat of government officials “according to the order of the Crown” was repeated in 1646 at Brest and Minsk sejms.<sup>50</sup>

An evident sign of the inferiority complex of the Belarusian nobility in relations with the Crown is the following fragment of the 1642 Ashmyany nobility

<sup>43</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1191, fol. 2.

<sup>44</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 150.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, fols 128v, 130, 131.

<sup>46</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1188, fols 3–4; ref. no. 1192, fol. 6.

<sup>47</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fols 155–156, 169–174.

<sup>48</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1188, fol. 5; AGAD, AR, Dz. II supl., ref. no. 511, fol. 4.

<sup>49</sup> BCz, MS 375, fol. 637v.

<sup>50</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fols 130, 137.

instruction: “To guarantee according to the law security and authority of the Supreme Court of the Great Duchy of Lithuania and elected deputies, equally with the nobility of the Crown”.<sup>51</sup>

## Solidarity

There were some issues common for all the Commonwealth nobility. The sense of solidarity was worked up by international issues that were the responsibility of the Crown. In such matters, the Belarusian nobility usually allowed their deputies to consider the opinion of their Polish brethren. The 1636 Ashmyany sejmik instructed their deputies in the questions of the Turkish threat and destiny of the Pomeranian Principality to interact with the Crown brethren without consultations with the representatives of the Grand Duchy.<sup>52</sup> In 1639, the Vawkavysk sejmiks instructed their deputies to discuss the problems with all the deputies, both with the Crown nobility and the Grand Duchy representatives, but the revision of the land plots from which military service was carried out, to which attention was paid in the royal instructions, should be discussed only “with other provinces of the Duchy of Lithuania”.<sup>53</sup> In response to the reports on the threat from “heathen forces” in the royal instructions before the 1643 Sejm, the Slonim nobility noted that this issue was the responsibility of the Crown, and the case of “subsidy” was left for discussion of all “the estates of the Grand Duchy”.<sup>54</sup> According to the instructions of the 1641 Minsk sejmik on the problem of Prince Casimir, it was necessary to debate “with other deputies of the Duchy of Lithuania” and, in the end, to postpone it for discussion in the district.<sup>55</sup> In 1641, the Ashmyany sejmik allowed its deputies to discuss directly with the Crown nobility the question of the Łębork and Bytów Land returned under the dominion of the Commonwealth.<sup>56</sup>

## “The Sacred Union Alliance”: political myth and state identity

The myth of the Union of Lublin was a specific and effective means of integration with the Commonwealth. The context in which the term “Union” was used in the sejmiks documents makes it possible to trace the political mythologisation

<sup>51</sup> Нацыянальны гістарычны архіў Беларусі, Гродно (National Historical Archives of Belarus in Grodno), fond 1663, inv. 1, file 411, fol. 66.

<sup>52</sup> MNKr., MS 160, fols 118–119.

<sup>53</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1174, fols 2–4.

<sup>54</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II supl., ref. no. 505(2), fol. 1.

<sup>55</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II supl., ref. no. 511, fols 2–3.

<sup>56</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1201, fol. 3.

of the Lublin events of 1569. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, “Lublin myth” was already an instrument of the state ideology, it had some typical features of such political structures, and it implemented some characteristic functions in the society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: interpretation of the past, unification of contemporaneity, integration of the society, legitimation of power.<sup>57</sup> References to the Lublin Union of 1569 appear in the instructions relatively rarely. As a rule, they are connected with a topical issue and have a political or legal meaning.

The regulations approved during the Lublin Sejm were considered inviolable, and any attempts to circumvent them, either to change the status or the owners of estates in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before 1569, caused protests from the nobility. In 1632, at the pre-convocation sejmik in Lida, it was declared that the Tatars had dared lease to the nobility estates granted before the Union, and it was required that the transfer could not be tolerated and it should be confirmed by law.<sup>58</sup>

The Polotsk sejmik instruction to the Sejm of 1640 seems to be one of the most saturated with the term “Union”, as it is mentioned four times: in reference to the constitutions (laws) of the 1569 Union Sejm; in the demand to maintain the right introduced by the Lublin Sejm to use the titles by the “princes who came with the Union” and the ban on the title for all others; in petitions of the Polotsk nobility requiring property compensation.<sup>59</sup> The demand to keep the rights and privileges as it had been “*ante unionem*” is also included in the Novogrudok instructions of 1639.<sup>60</sup> In 1639, Vawkavysk sejmik also reminded of the 1569 Union: “for the sake of Union duties, all offices must keep princely titles of those who had deserved such titles before Union”.<sup>61</sup> The 1641 Minsk sejmik mentioned the problem of new titles and those who assume them on a par with those who had received them “before the Union”. The deputies were “strictly ordered to fulfil” the sejmik demands.<sup>62</sup>

Sometimes the mythologised interpretation of the Union decisions infiltrated into sejmik instructions. The nobility of Lida took the trouble not only to remind of the necessity to stick to the decisions of the Union regarding the titles but also to recall the “sacred” nature of the decisions of 1569: “Since the Union is properly guaranteed as it is, neither their Majesties kings, nor all the estates of both nations, nor the deputies even in the case of the unanimous agreement have

<sup>57</sup> Г.И. Мусихин, “Политический миф как разновидность политической символизации”, *Общественные науки и современность*, 5 (2015), pp. 102–110.

<sup>58</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1064, fol. 5.

<sup>59</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1197, fols 3, 5, 7.

<sup>60</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1177, fol. 6.

<sup>61</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1174, fol. 7.

<sup>62</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II supl., ref. no. 511, fol. 3.

power and can change and break any point of the Union”.<sup>63</sup> The same problem was addressed in the 1640 Bratslav instruction; though the Union was not mentioned, it was undoubtedly meant.<sup>64</sup>

The idealised vision of the Union, fixed in the minds of the nobility by the corresponding phraseology, was not always reflected in the reality of the two nations. Before the Sejm of 1643, the Mazyr sejmik instruction stated that the Crown nobility, paying attention neither to the recently confirmed laws nor the “Sacred Union Alliance”, encroached on the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and involved the Lithuanians in burdening litigations. The true character of these relations and the ultimate goal was evident to the Mazyr noblemen who suffered “hurt and harm” from their neighbours, done “under cover of the brotherhood”.<sup>65</sup>

One more long-drawn-out history with the division of Brest province and Lublin and Podlasie spoiled the idyllic relationship with the Crown. In 1646, the Brest nobility persistently asked their deputies to end the border division,<sup>66</sup> although without using stern expressions contrary to earlier appeals on behalf of all the Grand Duchy.<sup>67</sup>

The divergence between the practice of coexistence of the “two nations” and the declared union acts is also evidenced by the incident with the distribution of the right to direct the Sejm meetings. From the Grand Duchy nobility’s point of view, after the Sejm was broken up, the next one should be held under the directorship of the nation, whose representative led the disrupted session. The Poles’ unwillingness to adhere to the order was perceived in the Grand Duchy as an attempt to limit the equal rights of the nobility of both nations, which should not be done by “our brothers in the Union body”.<sup>68</sup>

The topic of the Union also arose in connection with the financial assistance of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the nobility of the Crown. The Lithuanians did not want to pay to the Crown treasury. As the Novogrudok nobility stated in 1639, they agreed to help “not only out of love, which united those nations into the single union body but also of necessity”.<sup>69</sup>

Lublin Union conditions were proved to be in demand also in discussions about the army provision. In 1639, the Novogrudok nobility demanded that

<sup>63</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1189, fol. 3.

<sup>64</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1192, fol. 3.

<sup>65</sup> Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (The National Archives in Kraków), Archiwum Młynowskie Chodkiewiczów, MS 87, fol. 1.

<sup>66</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 128.

<sup>67</sup> В.У. Галубовіч, “Люблінская ўнія ў кантэкście наратыўнага мінімалізму і прававога гістарызму канца XVI – першай паловы XVII ст.,” *Журнал Беларускаго гасударственнаго універсітэта. Історыя*, 2 (2019), p. 27.

<sup>68</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1189, fol. 1.

<sup>69</sup> AGAD, AR, Dz. II, ref. no. 1177, fol. 1.

*hiberna* tax (winter allowance for the army, called “winter bread”) for the maintenance of the Polish army be collected only from the territory of the Crown. It was necessary to confirm it at the next Sejm, especially as the Polish army did not have the right to cross the borders of the Grand Duchy “according to the Union pacts”.<sup>70</sup>

The Union was also reminded during the conflict between Poland and the Grand Duchy after the transfer of Trubetsk to the Russian state. The Lida nobility regarded the actions of the monarch and his Crown entourage not only as an insult to all the Commonwealth and especially those who had lost property but also as a danger that “is threatening the rights, freedoms, and acts of the Commonwealth and concerns the relations between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Crown”.<sup>71</sup>

Summing up, we should note the following: the sejmiks’ instructions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were a response to the Sejm agenda, which the monarch had proposed for discussion in his instructions at sejmiks. Besides informing, the instructions performed a vital function of forming a single political space, a common political culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The analysis of Belarusian nobility deputy instructions in the 1630s and 1640s allows asserting that the unitary state policy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had positive results. In most cases, the nobility used the terms “Commonwealth” and “Fatherland” as synonyms and considered themselves a part of the common nation. Despite the apparent contradictions of life in the “Union” with Poland, the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania preserved the elements of their regional self-consciousness and did not formulate an alternative to the identification with the Commonwealth.

## **Unifikacyjna polityka państwa a tożsamość szlachty Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w świetle instrukcji poselskich białoruskich powiatów z lat 30. i 40. XVII wieku Streszczenie**

Instrukcje poselskie szlachty z białoruskich powiatów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego pisane są w języku polskim i niewiele różnią się od postulatów szlachty koronnej, zwłaszcza w kwestiach ogólnych. Świadczy o daleko idącym procesie integracji wewnątrzstanowej, który uzupełniał politykę państwa, kulturową inkorporacją „narodu Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego” do „narodu Rzeczypospolitej”.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 2.

<sup>71</sup> BPAU i PAN, MS 365, fol. 155v.

Ówczesne instytucje ustrojowe Rzeczypospolitej (monarcha, Sejm), pomimo rozbieżnych interesów dążyły do realizacji głównego celu, jakim była integracja społeczeństwa, a przede wszystkim mas szlacheckich, i stworzenie jednej ponadnarodowej wspólnoty w oparciu o polską kulturę.

Analiza zachowanych instrukcji białoruskich powiatów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego pozwala stwierdzić, że w drugiej ćwierci XVII w. nastąpił rozwój świadomości obywatelskiej szlachty, która coraz bardziej utożsamiała się z „Ojczyzną – Rzeczpospolitą” kosztem identyfikacji z Wielkim Księstwem Litewskim.

## **Unification Policy of the State and the Identity of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania Nobility in the Light of Belarusian Districts Deputy Instructions in the 1630s and 1640s Summary**

The instructions for the representatives of the nobility from Belarusian districts are written in Polish and differ only a little from the postulates of the Crown nobility, especially in general matters. This proves the far-reaching process of intra-state integration, which complemented the state policy, with the cultural integration of the ‘nation of the Grand Duchy’ into the structure of the “Commonwealth of nations”.

The institutions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth state system, with all the divergence of their interests (the monarch, the Sejm), nevertheless, had one primary goal: the integration of the Grand Duchy society and, first of all, the whole nobility into a single national community based upon Polish culture.

An analysis of the preserved instructions written in the second quarter of the seventeenth century for the members of the Belarusian nobility reveals the transformation of civil consciousness in the direction of identification with the “Fatherland – the Commonwealth” at the expense of the concept of “Fatherland – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania”.

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