

THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF SIGISMUND I AND SIGISMUND II AUGUSTUS IN THE REFORMATION PERIOD: *STATUS QUAESTIONIS*

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the role of the last Jagiellonian monarchs, Sigismund I (1506-1548) and his son Sigismund II Augustus (1548-1572), in promoting and securing religious peace in the multi-confessional society of the 16th-century Rzeczpospolita. The author argues that the Jagiellonian dynasty, which ascended to the Polish throne in 1386 and ruled until 1572, contributed significantly to the rise of religious pluralism in Poland and Lithuania, and paved the way for a mechanism of tolerance which made it possible for religious groups to live together and to respect their religious diversity. The author analyses the anti-heretical laws passed by Sigismund I in the 1520s, and Sigismund II in the 1550s, which were intended to suppress the dissemination of Reformation ideas. In these documents, both monarchs declared their loyalty to the Roman Church, and threatened followers of the Reformation with severe penalties. All these documents give an insight into the religious policy of the Polish kings. Anti-heretical legislation was just one part of a more complex and sophisticated policy of the Jagiellonian kings, which aimed at preserving the religious status quo in the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Rzeczpospolita.

KEY WORDS: Reformation, Poland, religious policy, confessional relations.

ANOTACIJA

Straipsnyje tiriamas paskutinių Jogailaičių monarchų, Žygimanto Senojo (1506–1548) ir jos sūnaus Žygimanto Augusto (1548–1572) vaidmuo skatinant ir užtikrinant religinę taiką daugiakonfesinėje Respublikos visuomenėje. Autorius teigia, kad 1386–1572 m. Lenkijos sostą išlaikiusi Jogailaičių dinastija stipriai prisidėjo prie religinio pliuralizmo augimo Lenkijoje ir Lietuvoje, praskindama keletą tolerancijos mechanizmams, kurie religines grupes įgalino sugyventi kartu ir gerbti vienas kito religinius skirtumus. Autorius tiria Žygimanto Senojo XVI a. 3-iajame dešimtmetyje ir Žygimanto Augusto XVI a. 6-ajame dešimtmetyje paskelbtus įstatymus prieš eretikus. Šiuose dokumentuose abudu monarchai pareiškė ištikimybę Romos katalikų bažnyčiai, grasindami reformacijos sekėjams griežtomis bausmėmis. Šie dokumentai leidžia įsigilinti į Lenkijos karalių religinę politiką. Įstatymai prieš eretikus tebuvo dalis sudėtingesnės ir kompleksinės Jogailaičių karalių politikos, kuria siekta išlaikyti status quo daugiaetnėje ir daugiakonfesėje Respublikoje.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: reformacija, Lenkija, religinė politika, konfesiniai santykiai.

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In the treatise entitled *Poloneutychia*, Andrzej Lubieniecki (ca. 1551–1623), a well-known leader and historian of the Polish Brethren,¹ pays much attention to the achievements of the Jagiellonian dynasty in making Poland and Lithuania prosperous countries, which enjoyed great political and military successes, expanded their territories, and radiated across Europe with their nobles' democracy and Renaissance culture. Lubieniecki attributes that breathtaking prosperity of the Commonwealth to the religious peace and social order which was promoted by the Jagiellons. With great enthusiasm and admiration, the Arian historian presents the religious policy of all Jagiellonian monarchs, starting with Władysław Jagiełło and ending with Sigismund II August, who secured tolerance and pluralism in a country populated by various religious groups. In his portrait of Jagiełło, Lubieniecki makes the following comments: 'When the famous doctrine of Wycliffe and later that of Hus, the morning star of Christ's teaching, was spreading, God gave Poland King Jagiełło of everlasting memory, who brought the Lithuanian and Samogitian nations to Christianity, and did whatever he could to strengthen the Christian faith, but in such a way that he never harmed those Christians who varied from him in their religious practice, both Eastern Orthodox and Armenian, as well as Hussites, who were his neighbours [...] Never did he fight against Jesus Christ and harvest in the Lord's field, that is why his enemies called him *fautor haereticorum*. But he took no notice of that, and did not rebel against the Lord Jesus, and in his grace and blessing he lived a wonderful life ... and that blessing of the Lord, which is the most precious treasure, he bequeathed to his successors, who followed in his footsteps.'²

Lubieniecki evaluates in similar words Jagiełło's successors, who in the turbulent period of the 16th-century Reformation saved the country from religious unrest and granted peace to '*dissidentes in religione*'. According to his report, 'During the reign of Sigismund I, Poland and the royal court were filled with people of various denominations. The king treated all of them as a good father, and that is why he was endowed by God with His abundant blessing and enjoyed numerous successes in his reign [...] But first of all, Sigismund I was a wise and God-loving king; he knew that the Roman Church was in a disparate need of reforms, and feared its sudden collapse; that is why he sent his diplomats to the Pope [...] to warn him and encourage him to convoke a general council, which might introduce necessary reforms and defuse religious tensions. When he did not see his request fulfilled, he did his best to secure peace in Poland and Lithuania, tolerated religious differences, and ignored the anti-heretical laws of Wieluń and Nowy Korczyn.'³ Lubieniecki comments with even greater ent-

¹ For more on the life of Andrzej Lubieniecki, see TAZBIR, J. Lubieniecki Andrzej. In *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. T. XVII. Wrocław, 1972, s. 594-596; BARYCZ, H. *Szlakami dziejopisarstwa staropolskiego. Studia nad historiografią w. XVI-XVIII*. Wrocław, 1981, s. 204-218.

² LUBIENIECKI, A. *Poloneutychia* (Biblioteka Pisarzy Reformacyjnych, 15). Oprac. A. LINDA, M. MACIEJEWSKA, J. TAZBIR, Z. ZAWADZKI. Warszawa-Łódź, 1982, s. 139-140.

³ *Ibid.*, s. 142-143.

huasiasm on Sigismund II Augustus, who 'ruled the Lord's people with much grace and a father's love [...] Thanks to this friendly approach, his country and court were populated by men who opposed the Holy See.'⁴

The above-mentioned comments of Andrzej Lubieniecki let us pose some important questions relating to the approach of the Jagiellonian monarchs towards Church reforms and the Protestant Reformation. The first is to what extent those opinions represent the standing of Polish and Lithuanian dissidents? Are they characteristic of the whole Protestant milieu, or only of the Polish Arians? Can they sustain the confrontation with the recent extensive research on the Reformation in Poland and Lithuania? Does such a friendly pro-Reformation policy of Sigismund I and Sigismund II, as described by Lubieniecki, match the available data? For a number of reasons, *Poloneutychia* by Andrzej Lubieniecki is a valuable and crucial source for any study on Polish Protestant historiography, and for an evaluation of religious developments in 16th-century Poland and Lithuania. The Arian historian produced his treatise in a particular period of the history of the Rzeczpospolita, at the end of the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, whose successful election in 1587 was secured thanks to his close relations with the Jagiellonian dynasty. It is worth recalling here the opinion of Janusz Tazbir, who has analysed the intentions of Lubieniecki and which can be found in his works. *Poloneutychia* is a historiosophical treatise, which presents the history of Poland, its successes and misfortunes from a particular point of view, the enforcement of God's truth. The very title of Lubieniecki's work defines clearly its principal objectives. It is intended to present the historical growth of Poland and demonstrate those factors which contributed to the welfare of the whole country. In the opinion of Andrzej Lubieniecki, the prosperity of the Commonwealth, which reached its climax under the reign of the Jagiellonian kings, is closely associated with its religious pluralism and tolerance. He has no doubt that Poland experienced steady growth and avoided religious turmoil and social unrest in the period of the 16th-century Reformation, thanks to the reasonable religious policy of the Jagiellonian dynasty. Commenting on the religious changes in his own days, he blames King Sigismund III Vasa (1597–1632) for straying from the Jagiellonian principles of religious tolerance, which threatened to undermine the future prosperity of the Commonwealth. The deaths in 1611 of two Protestants, Franco di Franco and Ivan Tyszkiewicz, had a shocking impact on Lubieniecki himself and the whole Reformation camp in Poland and Lithuania. The two Protestants were sentenced to death for their public attacks on the Catholic cult of the Eucharist. These dramatic events alarmed the whole Protestant camp, provoking hostile comments on dangerous precedents which threatened the religious status quo in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Andrzej Lubieniecki was very interested in the cases of di Franco and Tyszkiewicz, and his *Poloneutychia* provided detailed coverage of them. His alarming comments on these events sought

⁴ Ibid., s. 143-144.

to reflect widespread opinions which circulated among Polish and Lithuanian Protestants.⁵ The whole treatise might be considered a strong protest against religious violence, which directly challenged the stability and welfare of Poland-Lithuania. For Lubieniecki and his fellow dissidents, the deaths of two, even radical, Protestants was a warning and a dangerous indication of the changes which had occurred in the religious policy of King Sigismund III Vasa, and which threatened to overturn the tolerant tradition of the Jagiellonian rulers. This confrontation of two opposing religious policies provides a mainline narrative of Lubieniecki's treatise. That is why *Po-loneutychia* is actually a great apology for the Jagiellonian dynasty, whose members respected the multi-cultural and multi-religious composition of their realm. In the eyes of Lubieniecki, yielding to the religious needs of their subjects, they restrained from enforcing any sort of uniformity, and, in consequence, were able to construct a powerful state.⁶

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The Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania in the 16th century gained a wide reputation as a state with religious tolerance, where no organised persecution of religious dissidents took place. In the turbulent period of religious repression and bloody wars which shook most European states, the Kingdom of Poland remained a country where nobody was burnt for his or her beliefs, and religious freedom was respected, at least in relation to the gentry. However, acts of religious violence did occur, but they were few and isolated. The religious policy of the 16th-century Polish kings secured the religious status quo within their realm, and prevented any general campaign of persecution against advocates of the Reformation or other religious groups. For a long time, religious tolerance in the early modern Rzeczpospolita has been a subject of extensive research. The present paper does not discuss the historical complexities of Polish tolerance, but instead its focus is on the attitude of King Sigismund I (1506–1548) and his son Sigismund Augustus (1548–1572) towards the Reformation. There is no doubt that these two members of the Jagiellonian dynasty played a significant role in promoting principles of religious tolerance, which secured political growth and economic prosperity for Poland and Lithuania. The main role in establishing and securing the system of religious tolerance in medieval Poland was played by the late medieval kings of Poland, in particular Casimir the Great and Władysław Jagiełło, the founder of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The former granted all Jews in Poland judicial autonomy and religious freedom, and endorsed the rights of Ruthenians and Armenians in his kingdom. The latter continued the policy of religious tolerance towards the non-Catholic population, confirming earlier privileges.⁷ In early modern times, all ethnic and religious communities formed integral parts of Polish-Lithuanian society, contributing to the variety of its culture. A long tradition of peaceful coexistence of various

⁵ TAZBIR, J. Wstęp. In LUBIENIECKI, A. Op. cit., s. VI-VII.

⁶ Ibid., s. XI-XV.

⁷ DRABINA, J. Koegzystencja religii i wyznań w Polsce w latach 1333-1370. *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego - Studia Religioznawcze*, 1992, z. 25, no 2, s. 37-50.

Christian confessions and non-Christian religions gave rise to the mechanism of mutual acceptance and cooperation, which functioned rather well even during the period of the Reformation. In the 16th century, the medieval traditions of religious pluralism paved the way for the principle of religious freedom, which became the cornerstone of the Polish legal system. It made it possible for many peoples with different religions to respect their diversity and live side by side in peace.⁸ Neither the king nor the gentry, the political nation of the Kingdom of Poland, questioned the rights of the Eastern Orthodox population or other religious minorities to develop their own religious practices. The only exception to that principle of religious tolerance were the Polish Hussites, who were persecuted in the 15th century as heretics by the Roman Church and as enemies of public order by the king. In accordance with the medieval concept of heresy, dissidents from the Roman Church could not be tolerated, and should either be forced to abjure their errors and return to the Catholic Church or exterminated. In 1420, the provincial council of the Church in Wieluń drew up guidelines for the treatment of heretics, and four years later King Władysław Jagiełło ordered that heretics, with Polish followers of the Hussite doctrine in mind, should be punished by secular officials by death and confiscation of property.⁹

Despite these severe anti-heretical laws, no campaign of religious persecution was carried out to enforce Catholic uniformity in medieval Poland. Thus, the arrival of advocates of the Reformation did not undermine the religious status quo in Poland and Lithuania. Protestant newcomers were welcome to join the mixed society, and enjoyed the same protection as other confessions. Alongside political democracy, religious pluralism constituted the most important feature of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the largest state in 16th-century Europe.

The first inroad by the Reformation into Poland took place during the reign of Sigismund I the Old (1506–1548). The extensive research on the early Polish Reformation recently reexamined by Wojciech Kriegseisen has demonstrated how the new religious ideas came to Poland from Germany and circulated within the country.¹⁰ First, the reformist teaching of Martin Luther reached the German townspeople in the towns of Royal Prussia and Greater Poland. As a result of the strong national and

⁸ KŁOCZOWSKI, J. *Młodsza Europa. Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w kręgu cywilizacji europejskiej*. Warszawa, 1998, s. 310-312.

⁹ KRAS, P. *Husyci w piętnastowiecznej Polsce*. Lublin, 1998, passim; KRAS, P. Pro fidei defensione contra modernos haereticos. Hérétiques et inquisiteurs en Pologne au Moyen Âge (XIVe-XVe siècles). *Heresis: revue d'hérésologie médiévale*, 2004, n° 40, p. 69-94.

¹⁰ KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Stosunki wyznaniowe w relacjach państwo-kościół między reformacją a oświeceniem (Rzesza niemiecka – Niderlandy późnocne – Rzeczpospolita polsko-litewska)*. Warszawa, 2010, s. 430-445; see also overviews on the spread of the Reformation in Poland provided by PALMITESSA, J. R. The Reformation in Poland and Bohemia. In *Companion to the Reformation World*. Ed. by R. PO-CHIA HSIA. Oxford, 2006, pp. 185-204; PETTEGREE, A.; MAAG, K. The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe. In *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe*. Ed. by K. MAAG. Aldershot, 1997, pp. 2-18; MURDOCK, G. Eastern Europe. In *The Reformation World*. Ed. by A. PETTEGREE. London, New York, 2006, pp. 190-209.

commercial ties with Germany, German burghers were the first to learn about Luther's attack on indulgences and the spread of the religious movements it inspired. Merchants and artisans in the biggest towns of Gdańsk Pomerania, the historical province called Royal Prussia, like Gdańsk, Toruń and Elbląg, took up the ideas of the Lutheran Reformation, treating them as a chance for religious and social change.¹¹ That is why in some Prussian towns the spread of the Reformation was associated with social unrest. The lower ranks of townspeople promoted the religious programme of the Reformation in order to challenge the political and social system of government, which was dominated by wealthy patricians¹². The most dramatic events took place in Gdańsk, where in January 1525 crowds of townspeople rose up in arms against Mayor Eberhard Ferber and the town council. The town authorities were overthrown, and replaced by advocates of the new faith; churches were turned over to Lutheran preachers, and monasteries were closed. The rebellion of the Gdańsk plebeians provoked military intervention by King Sigismund I, who was unhappy about the social and religious unrest in the main Baltic port of his kingdom. In April 1526, Sigismund I himself, accompanied by 8,000 troops, arrived in Gdańsk to restore order and peace. The deposed mayor and town council were reinstated. Fourteen rebels, including their leader Johann Wendland and Peter Köning, were beheaded in the central market square.¹³

The peaceful spread of the Reformation in Poland was secured by the religious policy of the two last Jagiellonian kings, Sigismund I (1506–1548) and his son Sigismund II August (1548–1572). Recent research has demonstrated that they played an important role in making 16th-century Poland a state without stakes. At first glance, it may seem striking that the traditional Catholic piety of the two kings and their loyalty to the Holy See did not stop them accepting the spread of the Reformation in Poland. They both remained Catholic and supported the Roman Church in many ways, but at the same time they conducted a policy of tolerance which made it possible for various dissidents to come to Poland and live in peace.¹⁴ A closer examination reveals that the piety of Sigismund I and his son was very conservative and tradi-

¹¹ MAŁĘK, J. The Reformation in Poland and Prussia in the sixteenth century. Similarities and differences. In *The Reformation in Eastern...*, pp. 182-191; SCHRAMM, G. Danzig, Elbing und Thorn als Beispiele Städtischer Reformation (1517-1558). In *Historia Integra. Festschrift für Erich Hassinger zum 70. Geburtstag*. Hrsg. von H. FENSKE, W. REINHARD, E. SCHULIN. Berlin, 1977, S. 219-235.

¹² SCHRAMM, G. Reformacja w miastach Prus Królewskich. Przykład Gdańska, Elbląga i Torunia w latach 1517-1558. In, SCHRAMM, G. *Polska w dziejach Europy Środkowej*. Poznań, 2010, s. 135-148.

¹³ DWORZACZKOWA, J. O genezie i skutkach rewolty gdańskiej 1525/26 roku. *Roczniki Historyczne*, 1962, rocznik 28, s. 97-109; ARNOLD, U. Luther und Danzig. *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 1972, Jhg. 21, S. 94-121; BOGUĆKA, M. Die Wirkungen der Reformation in Danzig. *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung*, 1993, Jhg. 42, S. 195-206.

¹⁴ KRAS, P. Religious Tolerance in the Jagiellonian Policy in the Age of the Reformation (Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). In *Die Jagiellonen – Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*. Hrsg. von A. LANGER, D. POPP. Nürnberg, 2002, S. 131-138; see also important remarks on the royal piety of the Jagiellonian kings by BOGUĆKA, M. *Renesansowy władca a religia. Kilka refleksji na temat*

tional. They attended Mass regularly, prayed to the Virgin Mary and the saints, went on pilgrimages, and gave alms to the poor. Like their predecessors, they had their favourite cults, in particular the cult of the Holy Cross, the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, as well as their favourite places of pilgrimage, such as the Paulinian monastery at Częstochowa, the Benedictine monastery at Łysa Góra, and the Church of St Stanislas in Skalka, to which they granted privileges and donated liturgical items.¹⁵ The strong and traditional piety of Sigismund I was formed in the highly religious climate of the court of his father Casimir IV, at which his older brother, St Casimir also grew up. In his private forms of devotion, Sigismund I continued religious practices he had learnt from his parents. Every day he attended morning Mass, and spent a lot of time in private prayer. Even when he was old and ill, the king devoted much energy to religious matters, and, as one of his former courtiers reported, 'no inconvenience of place or time could prevent him from worship.'¹⁶ In his attitude to the new religious ideas promoted by the Reformation, Sigismund I was hostile and uncompromising. In his opinion, Luther was not a reformer, but rather a troublemaker, whose attack on the Roman Church undermined social stability and led to public disorder.¹⁷ Hostile to violence, the king was not able to see any good that the Reformation might offer the Church. On the contrary, he blamed Luther and his followers for dismantling the religious unity of Europe and provoking social unrest across the continent. As a peace-loving monarch and a classic Renaissance ruler, Sigismund I was open to the humanistic ideas radiating from Italy, and receptive to the irenic philosophy of Erasmus of Rotterdam.¹⁸ He shared Erasmus' concept of Christian philosophy and love of the Bible. He himself knew the whole Bible by heart, and was able, in a given situation, to cite appropriate passages.¹⁹ The king belonged to a group of Polish correspondents of Erasmus, and exchanged a couple of letters with him.²⁰ At a time of growing tensions between Luther and the Roman Church, 'the prince of humanists' called for maintaining the unity of Western Christianity at any price. In his letters to the Polish king and his courtiers, Erasmus rejected any forms of repression and violence against dissenters. Instead, he promoted dialogue and direct negotiations between Christians based on the Bible. His idea of religious peace gained the support of Sigismund I and a group of humanists at the royal court. It looks as if the

pobożności ostatnich Jagiellonów. In *Ecclesia, cultura, potestas. Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa ofiarowane Siostrze Profesor Urszuli Borkowskiej*. Red. P. KRAS. Kraków, 2006, s. 501-511.

¹⁵ The problem of the Jagiellonian piety has been examined by BORKOWSKA, U. *Życie religijne polskich Jagiellonów. Zarys problematyki*. In *Chrzest Litwy. Geneza, przebieg, konsekwencje*. Red. M. T. ZAHAJKIEWICZ. Lublin, 1990, s. 149-180 and BORKOWSKA, U. *Dynastia Jagiellonów w Polsce*. Warszawa, 2011, s. 390-474.

¹⁶ KROMER, M. *Mowa na pogrzebie Zygmunta I*. Oprac. J. STARNAWSKI. Olsztyn, 1982, s. 153.

¹⁷ WYCZAŃSKI, A. *Zygmunt Stary*. Warszawa, 1985, s. 26-28.

¹⁸ BOGUĆKA, M. *Renesansowy władca a religia ...*, s. 504-507.

¹⁹ KROMER, M. *Op. cit.*, s. 112; see also BORKOWSKA, U. *Życie religijne...*, s. 151.

²⁰ BORKOWSKA, U. *Humanism at the Court of the Jagiellons*. In *Christianity of East Central Europe in the Middle Ages*. Ed. by J. KŁOCZOWSKI, P. KRAS, W. POLAK. Lublin, 1999, s. 149-153.

tolerant policy of the Polish king was welcomed warmly by the great humanist. In his letter of 17 May 1527, Erasmus emphasised Sigismund's concern with keeping peace and avoiding bloodshed among Christians. In addition, he praised the king's virtues: his love of God, his magnanimity and his far-sightedness, which restrained him from wars and conquest.²¹

Despite his hostile attitude towards new religious ideas, Sigismund I realised the deep crisis in Western Christianity and the urgent need for a thorough reform of the Church.²² Together with Erasmus and other reformers, he supported strongly the idea of a general council, which might resolve the religious controversies between Catholics and Lutherans, and restore the unity of the Church.²³ As long as an agreement between Catholics and Protestants was possible, the king was determined to promote religious tolerance, and rejected the use of force in matters of faith. The concept of religious peace among Christians appears to be crucial for his understanding of Church reforms. Throughout the whole long reign of Sigismund I, peace and the rejection of violence were two principles of his religious policy. They are well illustrated in his letter of 19 January 1535 to Johannes Dobeneck (Cochlaeus), the canon of Wrocław, who urged him to take severe measures against the Lutherans. Responding to Dobeneck's suggestions, the king declared that he wished to be 'the shepherd of sheep and goats', thus clearly confirming his determination to keep peace in his multi-religious state.²⁴

Until his death in 1548, Sigismund I remained ill-disposed to the Reformation. He criticised unlicensed preaching and the free interpretation of the Bible among Protestants.²⁵ As an eager follower of Erasmian concepts and an advocate of religious peace, he felt hostile to the growing radicalism of the Reformation and the disintegration of Western Christianity. His critical declarations against Luther and his religious programme left no doubt about his feelings. As a Catholic monarch, he took some precautions to prevent the spread of Lutheran ideas in Poland and Lithuania. First of all, in the 1520s he issued a series of decrees aimed at restricting the dissemination of Lutheranism. In two edicts in 1520, directed particularly at Prussian towns, where Protestant ideas gained some adherents, Sigismund prohibited his subjects from bringing and distributing the writings of Martin Luther on pain of exile and confiscation.²⁶ These severe restrictions seem to have been ineffective, for two years

²¹ JOBERT, A. *Od Lutra do Mohyły. Postawy wobec kryzysu chrześcijaństwa 1517-1648*. Warszawa, 1994, s. 22; KRAS, P. *Religious Tolerance...*, pp. 132-133.

²² WOJCIECHOWSKI, Z. *Zygmunt Stary (1506-1548)*. Warszawa, 1946, s. 14-17.

²³ GOŁĄB, J. *Starania Polski o sobór powszechny i reformę Kościoła za pontyfikatu Klemensa VII (1523-1534). Studium historyczne*. Kraków, 1911, s. 38.

²⁴ JOBERT, A. *Op. cit.*, s. 18; KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Op. cit.*, s. 444.

²⁵ KROMER, M. *Op. cit.*, s. 154.

²⁶ *Corpus iuris Polonici*. Vol. III. Typis mandavit adnotationibus instruxit O. BALZER. Cracoviae, 1906, no. 234, s. 579-580 and no. 237, s. 584.

later the king issued a new decree in which he ordered enforcement of his previous anti-Lutheran laws. At the same time, Sigismund expressed his disappointment at the leniency of his officials, and complained that, contrary to his edicts, 'heretical books were freely on sale, and, what is more, Lutheran ideas were propagated in public.' A year later, he granted royal officials the right to search private houses for Protestant books, and established the office of censorship entrusted to the rector of Cracow University.²⁷

From 1520 until 1543, King Sigismund I issued several charters protecting the Catholic Church, and banning the dissemination of Lutheran ideas. First of all, he forbade the unlicensed preaching of new religious ideas and the bringing of heretical writings from Germany to Poland. Poles were also advised to refrain from studying at German universities controlled by Lutherans. Those who did not comply with the royal bans faced the loss of the king's favour, infamy and confiscation of their property.²⁸ Most of these anti-Protestant edicts were published in the 1520s, at a time when the first adherents of Lutheran doctrine started to operate in the Kingdom of Poland. Some of them, like the laws against Lutheran writings from 1520 and 1523, might have been inspired by papal legates who were instructed to encourage the Polish king to protect the Catholic Church against 'new heretics' with all available means. The political and religious contexts in which these documents were published have been never thoroughly studied, and deserve more detailed examination. It remains unclear whether these anti-Protestant charters were issued to counter a real threat posed by the significant inflow of Lutheran preachers and books, or whether they were intended more to prevent the spread of new religious ideas and intimidate their Polish followers. Most scholars are ready to accept the latter, as evidence for the widespread propagation of Lutheran doctrine in the 1520s, excluding the Prussian towns dominated by a German population, is very meagre. It is worth noting that the formulary and discourse of all Sigismund's charters look similar to late medieval laws against heretics. They apply vocabulary and rhetorical devices which are characteristic of the body of European anti-heretical legislation inspired by the constitutions of Emperor Frederick II from the 1220s. In Poland, the edict of Władysław II Jagiełło against the Hussites and their followers from 1424 became a model anti-heretical document, which throughout the 15th century was reissued and incorporated into the laws of the Kingdom of Poland.²⁹ Following Jagiełło's regulations and later anti-heretical documents, King Sigismund emphasised the duties of

²⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV. Cracoviae, 1910, no. 27, s. 103-105.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. III, s. 579-580, 583-584, 647-650; Vol. IV, s. 3, 28-30, 103-105. See comments by ZAKRZEWSKI, W. *Powstanie i wzrost reformacji w Polsce*. Leipzig, 1870, s. 228-229 and KRIEGSEISEN, W. Op. cit., s. 440-445.

²⁹ KRAS, P. *Edykt wieluński z 1424 roku i udział brachium saeculare w walce z husytyzmem w piętnastowiecznej Polsce*. *Summarium*, 1997-1998, t. 26-27, s. 63-77; KRAS, P. *Praedicatores – inquisitors – persecutors. Wokół historiograficznego sporu o średniowieczną inkwizycję*. In *Inkwizycja papieska w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*. Red. P. KRAS. Kraków, 2010, s. 16-18.

a Christian king, who is obliged by divine law to protect the Catholic Church and the tradition of his ancestors (*mos maiorum*) against any new religious ideas. Furthermore, he realised that his power was granted by God, and as God's obedient servant he had to use a 'material sword' to preserve ecclesiastical law and public order in his country. Lutheran ideas which were the main target of those regulations were treated as novelties (*innovatione, novitates*), or errors (*errores*), and the Lutheran denomination as a heresy or sect. In the traditional discourse of anti-heretical polemic, King Sigismund I used strong language to demonstrate the lethal consequences which might follow from the unrestrained proliferation of Lutheran doctrine. The new heresy not only attacked the Roman Church, but also threatened directly public order and social stability. The king was obliged to protect his state from disorder, and to secure peace in his lands. These were his priorities, and if 'the Lutheran heresy' threatened peace and public order, the king had to react and destroy it by force, if necessary. The treatment of heresy as an evil to be destroyed made it possible for the king to apply severe penalties, such as infamy, expulsion and confiscation of property.³⁰

As has been already noted, none of the above-mentioned anti-Lutheran laws was put into effect. Some historians argue that the enforcement of such severe regulations might infringe upon judicial privileges and personal freedoms of the gentry. The harsh prescriptions of the royal edicts alarmed the gentry, and encouraged them to take counter-measures. In 1543, they forced the king to repeal his ban on travel to Protestant countries. It seems that at that time Sigismund had already reconciled himself to the spread of Protestant ideas among his subjects. He continued to issue anti-Protestant laws, trying to restrict the impact of the Reformation, but did not insist on their strict enforcement. The principle of tolerance was also applied to radical Protestant groups. The Anabaptists, persecuted all over Europe, found refuge and protection in Poland. Most settled on gentry estates in Greater Poland. Their arrival in 1535 moved the king to issue an edict in which he forbade his officials to admit Anabaptists into the country. The decree threatened severe penalties, but in contrast to the laws of the Emperor Charles V, it did not say anything about the death penalty. According to the testimonies of the Anabaptists, none of their co-religionists died in Poland because of their faith.³¹

³⁰ The Edict issued in Toruń on 3 May 1520: „Manifestum facimus, quia intelligentes ad regnum et dominia nostra inferri nonnullos libellos cuiusdam fratris Martini Luter, ordinis Eremitarum, in quibus multa continentur contra Sedem apostolicam, quam etiam in perturbationem communis ordinis et status rei ecclesiasticae et religionis [...]”. Edictum de libellis Lutheranis in regnum non importandis nec a quopiam adhibendis aut vendendis; “Non ignorat Tua Sinceritas officium esse uniuscuiusque boni principis id potissimum curare, ut in subiectis sibi populis unitas, concordia et tranquillitas conservetur, idque hoc uno fieri, si leges atque instituta divina et humana, longo usu et communi approbatione recepta, diligenti custodia manuteantur, hominesque seditiosi et plus sapere volentes, quam oportet, quamque ad illos pertineat, coherceantur”: *Corpus iuris Polonici...* Vol. III, no. 234, s. 579-580; see also *Ibid.*, no. 263, s. 649-650 and Vol. IV, no. 1, s. 3.

³¹ TAZBIR, J. *A State without Stakes. Polish Religious Toleration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*. Warsaw, 1973, pp. 40-41.

A careful analysis of the above-mentioned decrees reveals the slow evolution of the king's attitude to the spread of Protestantism. Probably, while the Reformation grew and spread to vast areas of Europe, Sigismund I realised that the use of force against its adherents would be futile, and might only incite internal unrest. This assumption moved the king to adopt a milder policy towards Protestants. This may also explain why under his reign no Polish advocates of the Reformation were burnt at the stake or had their property confiscated. It may be argued that the harsh royal decrees against Protestants were issued 'rather for Rome than for Poland'.³²

In his foreign policy, Sigismund I put the interests of the Polish state over the universal aims of the Roman Church. His flexible policy towards the Lutheran Duchy of Prussia seems to be characteristic of the way he handled matters of religion. The king turned a blind eye to the spread of Lutheranism in the territory of his Prussian vassal Albrecht Hohenzollern, and approved the secularisation of the Teutonic Order. The above-mentioned Treaty of Cracow of 1525 became a clear manifestation of the priority of political thinking over the interests of the Church in the policy of Sigismund I.³³ It is worth stressing that the Cracow treaty was the first pact between a Catholic ruler and a Protestant duke, which anticipated the future separation of political and religious affairs. It is also worth noting that the treaty made no reference to the religious faith of the duke and his subjects, and had only a vague provision that Catholics in Prussia would have the right to organise public worship.³⁴

Despite vigorous protests from Pope Leo X, the Emperor Charles V, and many European rulers, the King of Poland steadfastly defended the Treaty of Cracow and the secularisation of the Teutonic state. To explain the reasons for the king's policy towards the Duchy of Prussia, Andrzej Krzycki, a famous Polish humanist, advisor to Sigismund I and later Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of all Poland, produced a treatise *De negotio Pruthenico*. In this well-structured work written in high-quality Latin, Krzycki listed a number of religious and political arguments to endorse the secularisation of the Teutonic Order in 1525. First, he expanded on the deep crisis and decline in religious life among the Teutonic Knights, stressing that the Holy See had done nothing to prevent the situation. Further, he criticised the papacy for its continuous political support of the Teutonic Knights against the King of Poland. In his opinion, the Treaty of Cracow put an end to the prolonged conflict and restored peace among Christians. Another argument in *De negotio Pruthenico* related to the religious situation in Teutonic Prussia, where Lutheran ideas had gained much popularity. In the eyes of Krzycki, the secularisation of Prussia had already been enforced, before Sigismund I formally acknowledged it. Responding to vicious attacks on the Polish king for making a politi-

³² WOJCIECHOWSKI, Z. Op. cit., s. 178.

³³ WYCZAŃSKI, A. *Zygmunt...*, s. 28-29.

³⁴ WOJCIECHOWSKI, Z. Op. cit., s. 161-165.

cal deal with the Lutheran duke, Krzycki made his well-known comments on the pluralist composition of the Polish state. He argued that Poland had long been populated by various religious groups, such as Orthodox Ruthenians, Armenians, Jews and even Moslem Tartars, who learnt how to live peacefully together with Catholics in one state. That is why he was convinced that in such a multi-religious society, there was also a place for Lutherans.³⁵ Krzycki's opinions on the traditions of pluralism and the concept of religious peace seem to have circulated widely at the court of Sigismund I. Even the senior Catholic clergy, who were ill-disposed toward the Reformation (Piotr Tomicki, Stanisław Hosius), had no doubts that the coexistence of the Catholic and non-Catholic population in Poland and Lithuania facilitated the spread of Protestant ideas.³⁶

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Sympathy for the Reformation, restrained during the reign of Sigismund I, broke out in the first years of Sigismund II Augustus' rule. Pro-Reformation gentry hoped that the new king would support their programme for political and religious reform in the country.³⁷ They saw in the ideas of the Reformation a very convenient weapon, which might be effectively employed in their struggle for the execution of the law.³⁸ Contrary to these expectations, in the first decade of his rule, Sigismund Augustus did little to facilitate the spread of the Reformation.

Brought up in an atmosphere of Renaissance culture, the new king was closer to Erasmian concepts than to the doctrinaire ideas of Protestant theologians. The last Jagiellon on the Polish throne was educated at the court of his mother, Queen Bona, which was open to ideas critical of the traditional Church.³⁹ There were supporters of the Reformation in the young prince's inner circle. Bona's confessor, the Italian Franciscan Francis Lismanino, and her physician George Blandrata, were both advocates of Protestantism. The former, after being sent in 1554 by Sigismund Augustus to Geneva on a book-buying mission, converted to the Calvinist faith and married. The latter became a leader of the radical anti-Trinitarian movement in Poland.⁴⁰

At his court in Lithuania, where Sigismund Augustus ruled independently from 1544, two advocates of the Reformation, Jan of Koźmin and Wawrzyniec Discordia, took refuge from ecclesiastical jurisdiction. They both became preachers to the court. In their sermons, delivered not only to courtiers but also to the inhabitants of Vilnius and the Lithuanian gentry, they denounced the abuses of the Catholic clergy, and promoted the ideas of the Reformation. In addition, John of Koźmin was appointed royal librar-

³⁵ *Acta Tomiciana: epistole, legationes, responsa, actiones, res geste Sigismundi I Regis Poloniae*. T. VII. Per S. GORSKI. Posnaniae, 1857, s. 251-252.

³⁶ WYCZAŃSKI, A. *Między kulturą a polityką. Sekretarze Zygmunta Starego 1506-1548*. Warszawa, 1992, s. 167-171.

³⁷ SCHRAMM, G. *Der polnische Adel und die Reformation, 1548-1607*. Wiesbaden, 1965, S. 232-251.

³⁸ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. *Zygmunt August król Polski i wielki książę litewski 1520-1562*. Warszawa, 1996, s. 150-162.

³⁹ BOGUĆKA, M. *Bona Sforza*. Warszawa, 1998, s. 88.

⁴⁰ TAZBIR, J. *A State without Stakes...*, p. 44; KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Op. cit.*, s. 448-449.

ian, and purchased a number of Protestant books for Sigismund's collection.⁴¹ Despite their open sympathies for the Reformation, the king defended his courtiers against charges of heresy, and refused to expel them from his court.⁴²

His four-year rule in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where Lithuanians, Poles and Ruthenians lived together with Germans, Jews, Armenians and Tartars, may have influenced his tolerant attitude towards other religions. It looks as if Sigismund Augustus was very interested in the religious life of non-Catholic groups. While in Lithuania, he visited Orthodox churches, and granted them privileges and gifts. The king felt a deep respect for other religions, and did his best to prevent religious conflict. He realised that only the maintenance of religious tolerance would let him rule the religiously and ethnically mixed population peacefully and efficiently. Anna Sucheni-Grabowska has remarked that 'the rich and complex mentality of Sigismund Augustus combined traditionalism and conservatism, as well as an openness to new currents both in politics and in religious life.'⁴³ The king remained faithful to the Catholic Church. In his letters and public declarations, he often stressed his strong attachment to the faith of his forefathers, whose tradition he cherished so much. In his letter to the Emperor Charles V of 7 July 1554, Sigismund Augustus declared his loyalty to the Church to which his ancestors had belonged and in which he was brought up. At the same time, he expressed his hostility to religious innovation.⁴⁴ According to the report of the papal nuncio Berardo Bongiovanni of 1560, Sigismund Augustus went to confession once a year, attended Mass every day, received communion in one kind, listened to sermons on feast days, and sang loudly the *Introit, Gloria, Credo, Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* together with a choir of Church singers.⁴⁵ Even during his long visits to Lithuania, where he was surrounded mostly by Protestants, he attended Catholic services, sometimes almost alone. Jan Dymitr Solikowski, a courtier, royal secretary and later Archbishop of Lviv, in a speech given at the king's funeral, pointed to the wisdom and prudence of the last Jagiellon, who had managed to preserve peace in a country inhabited by many peoples with different religions. Furthermore, he stressed the uniqueness of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth among European countries which were devastated by religious conflict.⁴⁶

⁴¹ HARTLEB, K. *Biblioteka Zygmunta Augusta*. Lwów, 1928, s. 81-86; KAWECKA-GRYCZOWA, A. *Biblioteka ostatniego Jagiellona. Pomnik kultury renesansowej*. Wrocław, 1988, s. 33, 58, 62-67.

⁴² Stanisłai Hosii S.R.E. *Cardinalis Maioris Poenitentiarum Episcopi Varmiensis (1504-1579) et quae ad eum scriptae sunt epistolae tum etiam eius orationes legationum*. T. I. Ed. F. HIPLER, V. ZAKRZEWSKI. Cracoviae, 1879, s. 429; see also FERENC, M. *Dwór Zygmunta Augusta. Organizacja i ludzie*. Kraków, 1998, s. 85-89.

⁴³ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. Op. cit., s. 318.

⁴⁴ *Dyaryusze sejmów koronnych 1548, 1553 i 1570* (Scriptores rerum polonicarum, T. I). Wyd. J. SZUJSKI. Kraków, 1872, s. 102.

⁴⁵ *Relacje nuncyuszów apostolskich i innych osób o Polsce od roku 1548 do 1690*. T. I. Wyd. E. RYKACZEWSKI. Berlin-Poznań, 1864, s. 88.

⁴⁶ SOLIKOWSKI, J. D. *In funere Sigismundi Augusti Poloniae regis... oratio*. Cracoviae, 1574; quoted also in LUBIENIECKI, A. Op. cit., s. 50.

Sigismund Augustus' attitude to non-Christian religions is well illustrated by his favourable policy towards Jews. The king permitted them to settle freely in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as making some of them responsible for his revenues. During his reign, Jews enjoyed full autonomy, and established their own parliament (Waad Arba Aracot) in Lublin, which became the highest autonomous institution for all Jews in Poland and Lithuania.⁴⁷ Jews were legally protected by the king, who attempted to prevent anti-Jewish unrest. In the controversial trial of Dorota Łazęcka and three Jews from Sochaczew, accused of profaning a host (in 1556), Sigismund Augustus took steps to obstruct the enforcement of the death penalty, stressing that Jews were covered by royal jurisdiction. The trial attracted attention throughout Poland, and provoked a rise in anti-Jewish sentiment. In order to curb these hostile emotions and prevent further excesses, Sigismund Augustus issued new edicts, in which he guaranteed the safety of all Jews in Poland. In addition, in January 1557, the king established a detailed procedure for examining accusations of ritual offences against Jews.⁴⁸

The open and lively approach of the king also made him interested in the ideas of the Reformation. In the eyes of his contemporaries, both Catholics and Protestants, his interest in the doctrine of the Reformation went so far that he planned to adhere to one of the forms of Protestantism. Various attempts to convert Sigismund Augustus to Lutheranism were undertaken by Duke Albrecht Hohenzollern of Prussia. From his residence in Königsberg, the duke sent Sigismund Lutheran theological treatises, religious songs and psalms, published en masse by his printing presses.⁴⁹ The religious preferences of the king were so unclear that in the late 1550s, the papal nuncio Bernardo Bongiovanni reported to Cardinal Giovanni Moroni that many Polish Catholics feared the possible conversion of the king to the Reformation. Bongiovanni himself denounced this gossip, and provided an explanation, which characterised the king's attitude towards religious controversies. In his opinion, the king 'did not have enough courage to convert to Protestantism and force Catholic senators to follow in his footsteps in the same way that he did not want to suppress Protestants in order to keep the peace and avoid trouble'.⁵⁰ Despite his deep interest in the reform of the Church, Sigismund Augustus remained true to the Catholic Church. He was firmly convinced that the general council, which at that time was in session at Trent, would put an end to the painful breach of Western Christianity and reestablish the unity of the Church.

In facing the rapid growth of Protestantism in Poland and Lithuania, Sigismund Augustus had to choose a path of conduct in matters of faith. The king could strengthen

⁴⁷ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. Op. cit., s. 318.

⁴⁸ TAZBIR, J. *Szlaki kultury polskiej*. Warszawa, 1986, s. 174-185; WĘGRZYNEK, H. „Czarna legenda” Żydów. *Procesy o rzekome mordy rytualne w dawnej Polsce*. Warszawa, 1995, s. 44-45.

⁴⁹ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. Op. cit., s. 308.

⁵⁰ *Relacje nuncjusów...*, T. I, s. 88.

the position of the Catholic Church and introduce reform of the state by means of the persecution of Protestants. He might also declare his adherence to the Reformation following the examples of England and Sweden. This could give him the support of the gentry and let him subjugate the Church. The former solution was promoted by the popes, their nuncios, and some of the eager Polish bishops.⁵¹ They exerted a lot of pressure to make the king suppress the Polish Protestants by force. The latter course of action was advocated by the Protestant *szlachta*, who pressed him to take control of matters of faith and convene a national synod.⁵²

The controversy over the celibacy of the clergy triggered the first sharp conflict between the Protestants and the Catholic Church, and became a springboard for parliamentary debates on the position of the Church in the state.⁵³ In 1550, the noble deputies jointly declared their support for Stanisław Orzechowski, a Catholic priest and popular political writer. When in 1549 Orzechowski made public his opinions on clerical celibacy, and announced his intention to get married, Bishop Jan Dziaduski of Przemyśl immediately excommunicated him. The severe ecclesiastical punishment imposed on such a well-known person caused anger among the gentry, who protested against Dziaduski's action and considered it an infringement of noble freedoms. At the parliament in Piotrków in 1550, the deputies presented their demands to abolish ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the laity. During the session, Stanisław Orzechowski made a long speech to the deputies 'to make his cause their own and not permit the bishops to threaten human life and welfare with such cruel anathemas'.⁵⁴ The demands of the parliament encountered the opposition of King Sigismund Augustus, who did not wish to risk an open conflict with the Polish bishops. Anxious to secure their consent to the coronation of his wife Barbara Radziwiłł, on 12 December 1550 he enacted a new anti-Protestant decree, in which he declared he would maintain unity of faith, promised not to appoint supporters of Protestantism to the senate and other high offices, and to exile those who refused to abandon their support for the Reformation. In a separate edict, he ordered his officials to search for adherents of the Reformation and punish them according to the laws of his father. Furthermore, he ordered his officials to protect the rights and privileges of the Catholic Church, threatening those who failed to obey with a loss of royal favour. Officials were obliged to seek out suspect heretics and arrest them. Persons condemned by the ecclesiastical courts as heretics were to be punished according to the law (death and confiscation of property).⁵⁵ These harsh measures against Polish protestants never came into force. Commenting on the consequences of the decree, Wojciech Kriegseisen recently no-

⁵¹ WOJTYSKA, H. D. *Papieżstwo-Polska 1548-1563. Dyplomacja*. Lublin, 1977, s. 35-53.

⁵² SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. Op. cit., s. 303-314.

⁵³ BRÜCKNER, A. *Różnowiercy polscy. Szkice obyczajowe i literackie*. Warszawa, 1905, s. 73-79; for the recent overview of that problem and further literature, see KRIEGSEISEN, W. Op. cit., s. 464-467

⁵⁴ SCHRAMM, G. *Der polnische Adel...*, S. 64-68.

⁵⁵ TAZBIR, J. *A State without Stakes...*, pp. 61-62; SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. Op. cit., s. 304-309.

ted that ‘assuming it was not the king’s intention to introduce religious uniformity [...] he wanted to weaken the Reformation movement, which had started to undermine the power of the state authorities, and to reduce it to the religious sphere without attacking Catholic structures. He hoped that the Protestants would be able to reach a compromise with a reforming Catholic party.’⁵⁶

The anti-Protestant laws of 1550 disappointed most of the gentry and provoked strong resentment. At the parliament of 1552, the deputies openly demonstrated their pro-Reformation sympathies, and criticised Sigismund Augustus for his hostile approach to Protestants. Under growing political pressure from Protestant deputies, the king suspended the enforcement of ecclesiastical verdicts in matters of faith for a year. As it turned out later, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was cancelled for ever.⁵⁷ The dramatic change in religious policy was quickly acknowledged by the Catholic dignitaries, who protested against the royal decision to no avail. Bishop Andrew Zebrzydowski of Cracow commented that ‘if he were no longer allowed to judge heretics in Poland, he would wonder whether he was a bishop or an usher.’ In reply, Jan Tarnowski, a loyal Catholic, but at the same time one of the noble leaders, said that ‘it might be more convenient for you to be an usher than for me to be your slave.’⁵⁸

Encouraged by this success, the dissident deputies presented more ambitious demands at the parliamentary session of 1555. After a long and stormy debate, the parliament, presided over by Mikołaj Sienicki, one of the leaders of the Protestant party, accepted a compromise agreement, which guaranteed equal rights for Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant gentry were granted the abolition of clerical celibacy, the right to choose priests, the introduction of the Polish language into religious services, and the administration of communion in both kinds. These provisions were to remain in force until the convocation of a national synod.⁵⁹ In 1556, a special delegation of Polish deputies was sent to Rome to ask for the Pope’s consent for a national synod. Pope Paul IV was amazed by the demands presented by the Polish delegation, and forbade the introduction of any religious changes without his approval.⁶⁰ The papal reply strengthened the king’s conviction that, for the time being, he should avoid direct involvement in religious controversies, and let them go their own way. Probably at that time, Sigismund Augustus finally realised that his support for one religious party might bring about a civil war. Therefore, he chose the third way, and adopted a policy of tolerance and keeping a balance among opposing religious groups. This policy let him maintain internal peace and secure the stabilisation of the country in the turbulent period of political and religious upheavals.

⁵⁶ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. *Op. cit.*, s. 308-313; KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Op. cit.*, s. 461.

⁵⁷ KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Op. cit.*, s. 477-479.

⁵⁸ TAZBIR, J. *A State without Stakes...*, p. 64.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-69; KRIEGSEISEN, W. *Op. cit.*, s. 469-470.

⁶⁰ SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA, A. *Op. cit.*, s. 311-312.

The growth of Protestant influences in the 1550s and the concessions granted to them by the king alarmed the papacy and some uncompromised Polish bishops, who tried to encourage Sigismund Augustus to take severe measures against Protestants. Aloisio Lippomano, papal nuncio from 1555 to 1557, argued that only the use of force might protect the Catholic Church against Protestant attacks.⁶¹ He often called on Sigismund Augustus on to punish the organisers of the Protestant synods (in Pińczów and Secymin), denouncing the sacrilegious activity of the participants.⁶² In response, Sigismund Augustus explained that he could not do anything, because his power was limited by law. He only promised that the whole matter would be carefully examined at the forthcoming parliament. Even when the king yielded to Lippomano's demands and summoned the organisers of the synods before his court in Lithuania, the nuncio was not satisfied, and doubted that the king would apply severe penalties to Protestant boyars. He compared ironically the royal citation for the Lithuanian Protestants with the summoning to the Last Judgement in the Jozafat Valley.⁶³

At the 1556–1557 parliament, Sigismund found himself in an awkward position when the *szlachta* requested the abolition of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, uncontrolled propagation of 'the true word of God', the right to keep Protestant ministers on the landed estates, and the extension of the same religious freedom to the burghers. On 13 January 1557, the king yielded to diverse pressures and issued an edict in which he accepted the religious status quo in the country, and prohibited any further changes.⁶⁴ Despite its tolerant character, the new royal law failed to satisfy either party. Protestants resented the ban on the propagation of their faith, as well as the fact that freedom of religion was not extended to other groups. The bishops and nuncio Lippomano regarded the king's edict as another concession to the Polish Reformation. The latter reported to the Pope that the Polish king granted anyone the right to choose any religion.⁶⁵

In fact, Sigismund Augustus respected the religious choices of his subjects and did not wish to be the arbiter in matters of faith, as he openly declared at the parliament in 1569. This principle of religious tolerance was clearly adopted in his policy towards the Lutheran inhabitants of Gdańsk Pomerania (Royal Prussia). In the years 1557 and 1558, the king granted full religious freedom to the Lutherans in Gdańsk, Toruń and Elbląg. This was later extended to other towns in Royal Prussia, with the exception of

⁶¹ WOJTYSKA, H. D. Op. cit., s. 65-104.

⁶² *Acta nuntiaturae Polonae*. T. 3, Vol. 1: *Aloisius Lippomano (1555-1557)*. Ed. H. D. WOJTYSKA. Romae, 1993, p. 137-138.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶⁴ *Diariusz sejmu walnego warszawskiego z roku 1556/7*. Wyd. S. BODNIAK. Poznań-Kórnik, 1939, s. 138-140; see also comments by KRIEGSEISEN, W. Op. cit., s. 473-475.

⁶⁵ *Relacye nuncyuszów...*, T. I, s. 68.

towns under the civic rule of bishops. The same religious freedom was given to Livonia, the Baltic province which was joined to Poland in 1561.⁶⁶

Sigismund's policy of religious tolerance left its mark on his attitude towards the inhabitants of the royal towns and villages. In his own domains, Sigismund Augustus enforced the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, and defended the position of the Catholic Church with the full power of a feudal owner. In 1556, he even ordered royal governors not to allow religious innovations in royal towns and villages, and to remove all Protestants from them. But, like other anti-Protestant edicts, this decree was not aimed at introducing religious persecution. In fact, the king remained flexible towards the religious demands of non-Catholic inhabitants of royal estates. Under his reign, the royal towns in Lithuania were granted religious freedom, and their non-Catholic inhabitants were allowed to attend religious services in either Eastern Orthodox or Protestant churches.⁶⁷

In the 16th century, the principle *cuius regio eius religio*, implemented in the Treaty of Augsburg from 1555, determined for a long time the religious status quo in most European countries. It secured the right of any ruler or feudal lord to impose his faith on all his subjects, thus creating a sort of religious uniformity, or rather a confessional absolutism, in one country or landed estate. Contrary to that principle, in 16th-century Poland, and from 1569 in the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, various churches and denominations were allowed to flourish, and the *szlachta*, members of the political nation, could choose their faith by their own free will.⁶⁸ The last Jagiellonian kings, Sigismund I and Sigismund II Augustus, were determined to pursue a policy of religious tolerance, which served to maintain the internal peace and stability of their multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country. Sigismund I declared himself 'the shepherd of sheep and goats', and his son did not wish to act as a judge in matters of faith. Making religious peace their *raison d'état*, the Jagiellons respected the confessional preferences of the Polish and Lithuanian gentry, and rejected the use of force to protect the privileged position of the Roman Church. The accession of Sigismund Augustus in 1548 coincided with the explosion of the Reformation in Poland and Lithuania, which posed a serious threat to the hegemony of the Catholic Church. In the difficult period of religious upheaval and animated political debates, the king did his best to compromise the opposing expectations of the Catholic and Protestant parties. He was clever to negotiate with all parties, and at the same time not to take any radical

⁶⁶ TAZBIR, J. *A State without Stakes...*, pp. 80-81; KRIEGSEISEN, W. Op. cit., s. 482-484; MÜLLER, M. G. Protestant Confessionalization in the Towns of Royal Prussia and the Practice of Religious Toleration in Poland-Lithuania. In *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*. Ed. O. P. GRELL, B. SCRIBNER. Cambridge, 1996, pp. 262-281.

⁶⁷ KOSMAN, M. *Protestanci i kontrreformacja: z dziejów tolerancji w Rzeczypospolitej XVI-XVIII wieku*. Wrocław, 1978, s. 62-77.

⁶⁸ TAZBIR, J. *Szlaki kultury...*, s. 164-173.

actions which might support one of them. In the long term, this policy turned out to be a successful instrument in maintaining the balance among 'dissidentes in religione' and preventing sectarian violence. In the turbulent period of the 16th-century Reformation, Sigismund I and his son Sigismund Augustus managed to handle the growing religious controversies competently and prudently. The Warsaw Confederation of 1573, the first European statute of general tolerance protecting the religious freedom of its citizens, should be considered the offspring and the historical legacy of that Jagiellonian policy.⁶⁹

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ŽYGMANTO SENOJO IR ŽYGMANTO AUGUSTO RELIGINĖ POLITIKA REFORMACIJOS LAIKOTARPIU: STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Paweł Kras

Santrauka

XVI-XVII a. rašytojai protestantai, pvz., arijonų dvasininkas, istorikas ir rašytojas Andrzejus Lubienckis (1551–1623) garbino paskutinius Lenkijos valdovus Jogailaičius už išmintį ir pragmatizmą saugant religinę pusiausvyrą. Esą būtent šis religinis pakantumas tiesė kelius į šalies ekonominį ir kultūrinį klestėjimą. Tačiau naujaisi tyrinėjimai (pvz., Urszulos Borkowskos) atskleidė, kad Lenkijos karaliai Žygimantas Senasis (1506–1548) ir Žygimantas Augustas (1548–1572) privataus pamaldumo sferoje liko ištikimi Romos katalikų tradicijai ir buvo konservatyvūs. Šios interpretacijų priešybės kontekste straipsnyje naujai vertinami Žygimanto Senojo XVI a. 3-iajame dešimtmetyje ir Žygimanto Augusto XVI a. 6-ajame dešimtmetyje paskelbti įstatymai prieš eretikus. Jie suvokiami kaip dalis sudėtingesnės ir kompleksinės Jogailaičių karalių politikos, kuria siekta išlaikyti *status quo* daugiataetnėje ir daugiakonfesėje Respublikoje. Minėti įstatymai buvo priimti bandant sustabdyti protestantizmo plitimą valstybėje. Juose atsiskleidžia pačių valdovų pažiūros ir intencijos tuo

metu: nuo protestantizmo rėmimo siekta atgrasyti griežtomis bausmėmis reformacijos sekėjus ir kaip valstybės stabilumo garantą įtvirtinti teisinį Romos katalikų bažnyčios pirmumą. Nuoseklus to įgyvendinimas grėšė vidaus neramumais ir esamo konfesinio gyvenimo sambūvio pažeidimu. Taip atsitiko kitose šalyse, pvz., 1525–1555 m. Šv. Romos imperijoje, 1562–1598 m. Prancūzijoje. Jogailaičių dinastija kaupė patirtį, kaip į šalies politiką įtraukti Graikų katalikų bažnyčios ir kitų konfesijų išpažinėjus. Gebėta neatstumti Armėnų bažnyčios ir net nuosaikiųjų lenkų husitų atstovų.

Pakantumas turėjo ribas, ir iškilus pavojui valstybės tvarkai buvo veikiama ryžtingai. 1420 m. Bažnyčios susirinkime Veliune buvo priimtos gairės dėl eretikų traktavimo, o po ketverių metų mirties bausme ir turto konfiskavimu husitams grasinti pradėjo ir karaliaus. 1520 m. protestantizmo judėjimo paskatinti plebėjai sukėlė socialinius neramumus svarbiausiame Lenkijos karalystės uoste Gdanske. 1526 m. balandį Žygimantas I su 8 000 karių būriu numalšino prasidėjusį prastuomenės sukilimą ir atkūrė tvarką.

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Visgi abu valdovai, nepaisant įstatymų griežtumo, buvo nusiteikę šiuo klausimu ieškoti taikaus konfesinių nesutarimų sprendimo būdų ir kompromisų su bajorais. Konfesinis pakantumas ir pusiausvyra, siekiant taikaus sambūvio, tapo pagrindiniu prioritetu. Štai kodėl nekatalikų grupėms buvo daroma tam tikrų nuolaidų. Maža to, nors, kaip atskleidė U. Borkowskos tyrimas, privataus pavaldumo sferoje Žygimantas Senasis ir Žygimantas Augustas liko ištikimi katalikų tradicijai, tai nelėmė jų politikos naujokų protestantų atžvilgiu. Abu jie *raison d'État* respublikoje kėlė aukščiau už Romos katalikų bažnyčios interesus. 1527 m. gegužės 17 d. Lenkijos karaliaus politiką užtikrinti taiką tarp krikščionių neliejant kraujo šiltai sveikino Erazmas Roterdamielis. Ją iliustruoja karaliaus atsakymas į Vroclavo kanauninko Johaneso Dobenecko (Cocthlaeuso) raginimus imtis priemonių prieš evangelikus liuteronus. Žygimantas I pareiškė, kad bus „avių ir ožkų piemeniu“, t. y. karaliumi visų konfesijų išpažinėjams. Tokia laikysena išskyrė Lenkiją iš kitų žemyno šalių, kuriose dominavo nuostata „kieno valdžia, to ir religija“.

Realių priemonių prieš radikaliają reformacijos atšaką – arionizmą – buvo imtasi jau valdant Zigmantui Vazai. Paskutinių Jogailaičių dinastijos valdovų kurtas skirtingų konfesijų sugyvenimo vienoje valstybėje modelis leido veikti kartu, gerbti skirtingas tradicijas ir užtikrinti ramesnio šalies vidaus gyvenimo tąsą.