The Formation of Lithuanian Eastern Policy: the Dietine of Rūdninkai, September 24-27, 1572

Antanas TYLA

Research on political relations between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its neighbours has not been spread evenly. Lithuanian scholars have paid most attention to Lithuanian competition and conflict with the Teutonic Order, and to her relations with Poland. We can say that there is no tradition of studying the Lithuanian relationship with Muscovy/Russia either before the Union of Lublin (1569) or after it. Indeed there is no synthesis or monograph devoted to this subject. In part, Šapoka's investigation of the Treaty of Kėdainiai deals with the problem¹. During the Soviet occupation Lithuanian historians carefully avoided this problem because there was no possibility of assessing it objectively. There can be no doubt, however, that especially since the end of the fifteenth century these relations were very important to Lithuania. The dynamics of the relationship have been affected as much by Lithuanian and Russian politics as by the ambitions of third parties.

One stage in the development of Lithuano-Russian relations took place during the First Interregnum which followed the death on July 7 1572 of Grand Duke-King Sigismund Augustus, the last ruler of the House of Gediminas-Jogaila (the Jagiellonians). The dietine of Rūdninkai played a significant part in establishing a Lithuano-Russian relationship².

The Dietine of Rūdninkai forms a part of a wider political process during the Interregnum and is directly connected with similar congresses, held in the Grand Duchy and Poland at this time and attended by Lithuanian statesmen (see Table 1). However, by its concrete and deliberate stances with regard to certain matters it had a lasting effect on Lithuanian traditions.

Table 1: Dietines of magnates from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to decide the succession following the death of Sigismund Augustus

Date of Diet(ine)	Location
Spring, 1572	Forest near Warsaw
August 10, 1572	Grodno

¹ A. Šapoka, *1655 metų Kėdainių sutartis arba švedai Lietuvoje 1655-1656 metais*, Vilnius, 1990.

² Rūdninkai is a village and former grand-ducal estate situated south of Vilnius; the dietine is sometimes referred to as the Diet of Rūdninkai R. Hejdensztejn, *Dzieje Polski od śmierci Zygmunta Augusta do roku 1594*, I, St Petersburg, 1857, 13; *Lietuvos Istorija*, red. A. Šapoka, Kaunas, 1936, 227-228.

August 24-31, 1572	Knyszyn (with delegates from Poland)
September 24-27, 1572	Rūdninkai
December 6-7, 1572	Mstibov
December 20, 1572	Vilnius

We are justified in asking why the dietine was held in Rūdninkai. Historical tradition would lead us to imagine that the dietine was held in secret, but even so a Muscovite envoy, Ivan Malygin was expected to take part and the Poles were informed of his presence in the dietine³. If the meeting was secret, it was only relatively so. The location is more easily explained by unwillingness to foregather in a larger town in time of plague. In 1571, owing to the dangers posed by an outbreak of plague, Sigismund Augustus offered to convoke the dietine of the Vilnius Palatinate at a location selected by the delegates, rather than the usual meeting place⁴. The epidemic raged in Lithuania as well as in Poland and the Ukraine. Even the late monarch's corpse was not taken from Knyszyn to Warsaw or Cracow, because of the danger of spreading the plague via the royal escort⁵. At the end of 1572 the Ruthenian magnates assembled in the open, near a river in the vicinity of Wysznia, rather than in their accustomed meeting place, the town itself⁶. In a letter to the Poles written in August 1572, the Lithuanian magnates indicated that plague was rampant everywhere⁷. Thus we may presume that Rūdninkai was selected due to the danger of plague. However, the magnates also noted in their letter, that they did not wish to receive the Muscovite envoy in Vilnius and for that reason met him in Rūdninkai. Thus there may be an additional, related motive for meeting in Rūdninkai.

The aim of the present study is to assess the dietine of Lithuanian politicians which met at Rūdninkai at the end of September 1572, analysing how its decisions were arrived at, their influence on strategy and tactics in Lithuanian relations with Russia during the First Interregnum and later interregnal crises.

Lithuanian historians have paid scant attention to the First Interregnum despite its significant revelations concerning the main political tendencies and activities of Lithuanian nobles. The Rūdninkai Dietine has not been investigated in Lithuania as a separate topic, although it was discussed by Russian and Polish historians who were interested in a series of issues discussed at the Dietine and the Lithuanian representatives' position. Only Novodvorski,

³ See the letter sent by the Lithuanian magnates to the Polish senators from Rūdninkai on September 25, 1572: E. de Noailles, *Henri de Valois et la Pologne en 1572*, III, Paris, 1867, 177-181.

⁴ I. Lappo, *Velikoe Kniazhestvo Litovskoe vo vtoroi polovine XVI stoletia: litovsko-russkii povet i ego seimik*, Yur'ev, 1911, Appendix, 25-26.

⁵ S. Gruszecki, *Walka o władzę w Rzeczypospolitej polskiej po wygaśnięciu dynastii Jagiellonów (1572-1573)*, Warszawa, 1969, 82.

⁶ A. Trachevskii, *Polskoe bezkorolev'e po prekrashchenii dinastii iagellonov*, Moscow, 1869, 163.

⁷ R. Hejdensztejn, op. cit., 23.

Gruszecki and Floria wrote at more length about the Dietine⁸. Floria studied Lithuanian eastern policy from the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth. In 1911 Lappo characterised the Rūdninkai Dietine as completely unknown to scholarship⁹. From the context of this statement it seems he viewed all the pre-diet general gatherings of representatives of the Grand Duchy (such as those at Volkhovysk and Slonim) in the same light, despite the fact that the smaller meetings were no less significant. Despite the cited interest, Lappo began to research the interregnal dietines only from the death of Stefan Bathory (1586) and ignored the preceding period.

The Union of Lublin completely changed the political status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Grand Duchy lost its right to elect its sovereign lord (the Grand Duke) and became part of a political confederation, with its position considerably weakened after the Polish Crown annexed the palatinates of Podlachia, Volyn, Kiev and Podolia. However, the creation of the Commonwealth did not change the political stances of the Lithuanian nobility nor did it alter the geopolitical status of the Grand Duchy.

The first years following the Union exposed three very important matters for the politicians' consideration, namely (1) the Livonian War which was already in its twelfth year. Lithuania needed stable conditions in Eastern and Central Europe in order to pursue its war with Russia. A three years' truce had been concluded with Russia (June 22 1570-June 29 1573). This was a temporary arrangement and none knew when Russia would resume military operations; (2) the Lithuanian nobles had to deal with aspirations seeking the restoration of Lithuania's previous political status; (3) there was a desire to regain all territories lost to Russia and the Polish Crown by the Grand Duchy.

In the years following the Union these problems became more and more acute, especially following the sharp decline in the health, and later, the death of Sigismund Augustus. After the death of the monarch, the right to elect a grand duke and the restoration of the office of grand duke was directly connected with the restoration of the state's territorial integrity and safeguarding of its security with respect to other states. As is well known, the Union of Lublin eliminated certain aspects of Lithuanian statehood, including the grand duke's position as sovereign: "the election and elevation of the grand duke of Lithuania which previously took place separately ("osobno") in Lithuania should be carried out in the following manner: henceforth there should be no symbol, nor any such thing, which should indicate or signify the elevation or inauguration of the grand duke of Lithuania. The style "Grand Duchy of Lithuania" should be maintained along with its offices, hence at his election and coronation, [the ruler] should be declared first to be King of Poland and next, Grand Duke of Lithuania, Russia, Prussia, Mazovia, Żemaitija, Kiev, Volyn, Podlasia, Livonia"¹⁰.

⁸ Ibid., 23-24; A. Trachevskii, op. cit., 251; V. Novodvorskii, *Bor'ba za Livoniu mezhdu Moskovoiu i Rechiu Pospolitoiu (1570-1582)*, St Petersburg, 1904, 13-14; B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka magnatów litewskich w okresie pierwszego bezkrólewia, Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, XX, 1973, 45-67; S. Gruszecki, op. cit., 213.

⁹ I. Lappo, op. cit., 616.

¹⁰ *Volumina Legum*, II, St Petersburg, 1859, 90.

It was ordained that the king would be elected only in Poland where he would also be consecrated and crowned - in Cracow¹¹. According to a charter issued by Grand Duke Alexander, the failure of envoys from one side to appear at the election did not invalidate the election. Of course such a condition was useful only to Poland and the Polish electors exploited it in the election of the first three monarchs after the death of Sigismund Augustus. The Poles could hardly fail to take part in an election held in Poland. However, during the interregnum the Lithuanians had their own political agenda, different from that in Poland; their agenda led Lithuanians to follow their own policies, which recent non-Lithuanian scholarship has defined as separatism.

At that time the Lithuanian political elite consisted of the highest officers of state who had suffered disastrously in the wake of the Union of Lublin, namely: Nicholas Radziwill the Red, Chancellor of Lithuania and palatine of Vilnius; Grzegorz Chodkiewicz, Grand Hetman and castellan of Vilnius; Eustachy Wollowicz, Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania and castellan of Trakai; Stefan Zbaraski, palatine of Trakai; Jan Chodkiewicz, Grand Marshal of Lithuania, captain of Żemaitija, administrator of Livonia; Nicholas Christopher Radziwill the Orphan, Marshal of the Lithuanian Palace; Nicholas Naruszewicz, Grand Treasurer of Lithuania; Nicholas Talwojsz, castellan of Żemaitija; Jerzy Oscik, palatine of Mstislavl. There were also one or two other state officials who were active in political life, but the aforementioned officers dominated Lithuanian domestic and foreign policy. Generally it is noted that the helm of the ship of state was manned by the Radziwills, at least three of whom (in addition to the two noted above) there was also Christopher Radziwill, the Sewer and Carver (*krajczy*) of Lithuania occupied important state offices¹². Apart from these, Jan Chodkiewicz was particularly influential.

The Legacy of Sigismund Augustus

After the king's death the most important matter was the election of his successor. The Jagiellonian dynasty in the male line died with Sigismund. The election was extremely important not only as far as procedure was concerned, but also for the selection of a candidate. Although Sigismund had been seriously ill for a long time, his death came as a shock, especially in Poland. There trials were suspended and licentiousness was rife, now that the king was dead. According to Hejdensztejn rumours spread that the state would be destroyed when the king died¹³. Confusion and chaos were increased by the fact that it was not clear how the new king would be elected, plague was rampant everywhere, a comet appeared in the skies and there were disturbances throughout Europe¹⁴.

¹¹ Ibid., 89-90.

¹² S. Gruszecki, *op. cit.*, 19.

¹³ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 11-12, 23-24.

Poland was unprepared for the interregnum. Quarrels arose among the various provinces and competing groups. There were particularly sharp divisions between the magnates and nobles of Little Poland and Great Poland over who was to govern the state during the interregnum and who had the right to arrange the election. Since there were no rules governing who had the right to summon the Senate, which would announce the date and place of election, the Great Poles asserted that the Archbishop of Gniezno should do this, while the Little Poles announced that this was the prerogative of the Grand Marshall of Poland who at that time happened to be the influential palatine of Cracow, Jan Firlej¹⁵. Congresses of magnates and noblemen from one or both provinces were held in Lowicz (July 18-23), Sandomierz (August 2), Cracow (August 10), Knyszyn (attended also by Lithuanians), Sroda (September 7), Kolo (October 9), Warsaw (October 17), Kaski (Great Poland, October 25) and elsewhere. The aim of these meetings was to legitimise the desire of senators from one or other province to take power into their own hands and independently decide matters of election, domestic and foreign policy, or eventually establish a compromise. The desire to speak on behalf of the united Polish and Lithuanian state was voiced¹⁶. Lithuania was regarded as subject to Poland. Several candidates were discussed for the throne in Poland. In Lowicz the following candidates were considered: the king of Sweden, the Habsburg, the tsar of Muscovy, the duke of Prussia, the palatine of Siebenburg, the king of France's brother, and the Piast representative Duke Henry of Legnica¹⁷.

The Lithuanian side evaluated the Polish nobility's opposition and desire to appropriate for themselves the rights of the Lithuano-Polish state during the Mstibov Congress when they met the Polish representatives Piotr Zborowski, palatine of Sandomierz and Jan Tomicki, castellan of Gniezno. They had been sent to Lithuania by the nobles of Little and Great Poland who gathered in the village of Kaski¹⁸. The Lithuanians accused the Poles of violating their rights by arranging congresses during which only Poles selected the place and date of the royal election and decided other important matters such as the electoral procedure, payment for mercenary troops and so forth, which should have been discussed in a general assembly¹⁹. At the end of July Nicholas Christopher Radziwill wrote anxiously to Nicholas Radziwill the Red, that perhaps the Poles wished to remove Lithuania from the election proceedings²⁰.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75; R. Hejdensztejn, *op. cit.*, 16-17.

¹⁶ A. Trachevskii, *op. cit.*, 74-90, 106-111.

¹⁷ S. Gruszecki, *op. cit.*, 56-57.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214-215; R. Hejdensztejn, *op. cit.*, 39-40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁰ A. Trachevskii, *op. cit.*, 95, citing a letter of July 29 1572.

Attitude of Lithuanian politicians' towards the candidacy of the sovereign

Lithuanian politicians did not incline to solve everything concerning the election together with Poland. The competition between Little and Great Poland over electoral arrangements, and Poland's unwillingness to discuss affairs of Lithuanian security together predisposed Lithuanian politicians to attend to vital interests of the Lithuanian state by themselves. It is unquestionable that the political helm of Lithuania at that time belonged to the Radziwiłł family. Just before the death of the sovereign the papal legate, Gian Francesco Commendoni, managed to reconcile the captain of Žemaitija Jan Chodkiewicz with Nicholas and Nicholas Christopher Radziwiłł. This helped create a strong base for consolidated response to all the most important spheres of internal and foreign policy of Lithuania. N.C.Radziwiłł who had kept constant watch by the side of his sick sovereign in Knyszyn kept in touch with N.Radziwiłł informing him about everything he considered to be of importance, giving advice as to what actions should be taken. During the last week of the sovereign life almost day-by-day correspondence began between these Lithuanian politicians²¹.

While Sigismund Augustus was seriously ill, Lithuanian magnates gave considerable thought about who his successor to the throne should be. A new sovereign had to solve the three most significant Lithuanian problems which be mentioned above during the meeting held in the forest near Warsaw. On Commendoni's initiative, Chodkiewicz and N.C.Radziwiłł decided to support the candidacy of prince Ernest, son of Emperor Maximilian II as Grand Duke of Lithuania.²² This candidacy was approved by N.Radziwiłł too, although without enthusiasm²³. The emperor was informed about this, but he lingered.

The Lithuanian aspirations were linked with Ernest. It was foreseen that he would marry Anne, a sister of Sigismund Augustus, occupy the throne of the GD of Lithuania and thereby Poland would be faced with a *fait accompli* and compelled to elect Ernest as king. He was to hand back to Lithuania the territories of the GD of Lithuania which Poland had annexed as a result of the Union of Lublin. Moreover Ernest was popular during the election of 1587 too²⁴.

From the very beginning N.C.Radziwiłł felt that it would be difficult to elect Ernest. Poland was categorically opposed to a Habsburg candidacy. This became especially obvious during consulta-

²¹ Ibid.

²² S. Gruszecki, *Zmowa w Podwarszawskim lesie w 1572 r.*, *Rocznik Warszawski*, VI, 1967, 272-273; S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 51-52; H.Wereszycki, *Historia Austrii*, Wrocław etc., 1986, 82-83.

²³ H. Lulewicz, Mikołaj Radziwiłł, zwany Rudym, in *Polski słownik biograficzny [PSB]*, XXX, Wrocław etc., 1987, 328.

²⁴ K. Lepszy, *Walka stronnictw w pierwszych latach panowania Zygmunta III*, Kraków, 1929, 16-21.

tions in Łowicz when it was proposed to expel Commendoni, who had campaigned for the Habsburgs, from the Commonwealth's territories. So it was no coincidence that N.C.Radziwiłł wrote his uncle a letter warning that: "I am afraid very much, that our affairs will not proceed well, for the Poles are extremely opposed to the House of Austria and it seems we shall have to defend our interests with weapons..."²⁵.

The Emperor hesitated over the Lithuanian proposal. His hesitation forced Lithuanian politicians to change their minds and to find another solution. Interrupting the sequence of events, we should remember that then they reached the Diet on April 13, 1573, Chodkiewicz and N.Radziwiłł mentioned their hesitations concerning the Prince Ernest to the papal legate. The legate agreed with them and became their ally in searching for an alternative Catholic²⁶. However, this was after the Rūdninkai dietine when decisions held there would have diminished in importance. All the changes of plan for nominating candidates show that the same persons took an active part in it. Only their circle of support was changing.

Rūdninkai dietine. After the Sovereign's death the Poles were occupied with their own internal affairs. Lithuania was virtually forgotten or they thought it would submissively carry out whatever they decided. They did not think that they should do what the Lithuanians suggested. The balance of international relations in Eastern and Central Europe was important to Lithuania. The Russian threat was an everyday problem for it. The death of the ruler and the interregnum period was very dangerous because it was not known how Ivan the Terrible might behave with regard to the earlier armistice agreement. The preservation of peace with Moscow was connected with the election or could be connected with it as an alternative to a warfare. Lithuania could expect help from nowhere. When Polish senators met in Łowicz after the death of the ruler to discuss election matters, Lithuanian politicians sent them a written regrets for assistance against Moscow and the peril Moscow presented. The Poles answered that Lithuania had to take care of its own security because Poland had no means to help²⁷. So independent protection of the state by Lithuanian politicians, one could say, was a Polish suggestion.

Although the Poles advised the Lithuanians to look after their own defence, they were not about to leave Lithuania to elect its own ruler and kept an eye on what was going on in Lithuania, assessing Lithuanian policy. At that time R.Hejdensztejn wrote: "It was said of the Lithuanians that some of them were with Austria, while others negotiated with Moscow and have the strangest suspicious about estates"²⁸. From his study of the talks held by the Lithuanians with Commendoni in a forest near Warsaw concerning the election of

²⁵A letter of N.C. Radziwiłł to N. Radziwiłł the Red, July 29, 1572. Knyszyn, in A. Trachevskii, op. cit., 95.

²⁶ S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 262-263.

²⁷ R. Hejdensztejn, op. cit., 16.

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

Ernest as grand duke, Gruszecki emphasised twice that the Lithuanians were prepared to dissolve the union with Poland and to found a separate Lithuanian state ("they originated bold plans to tear away Lithuania from the Kingdom", i.e. from Poland)²⁹. He noted that this had been a goal of magnates. At that time the disputes between Lithuania and Little Poland over Podlachia, and the Palatinates of Volyn and Kiev became increasingly bitter.

In the Rūdninkai dietine the most famous Lithuanian politicians met together. There were presented: the bishop of Vilnius Valerian Protasewicz (Lith.: Valerijonas Protasevičius), the bishop of Žemaitija Jerzy Petkiewicz (Jurgis Petkevičius), the bishop of Kiev Nicholas Pac (Mikalojus Pacas), the palatines of Vilnius - N.Radziwiłł the Red, of Trakai - S.Zbaraski, of Mstislavl' - G.Ościk, captain of Žemaitija Jan Chodkiewicz, the castellans of Žemaitija J.Tolwojsz, of Minsk - Jan Hlebowicz (Jonas Hlebavičius), of Polotsk Jerzy Zenowicz (Jurgis Zenavičius), the Lithuanian marshal of the court N.C.Radziwiłł, the cup-bearer of Lithuania and the hetman of court C.Radziwiłł, the grand treasurer of Lithuania N.Naruszewicz, the duke of Slutsk Jerzy Olelkowicz (?) (Jurgis Olelkaitis). According to this list, three palatines and the captain of Žemaitija, three castellans, three bishops and the other officers attended this dietine. 14 at all. There were eight palatinates and the captainship of Žemaitija and ten castellanates in Lithuania. It is not clear why the other senators were absent. If they had been invited and refused to attend, this could have been for political motives, and then they were unwilling to take part while discussing the planned question. As it turns out some absent members of the former Lithuanian Council were included in the list of delegates (see below).

Information about the dietine itself is very scanty. One of its initiators was N. Radziwiłł³⁰. Efforts to find information about what was discussed there have been unsuccessful. The books of the Lithuanian Metrica recording political events at that time have not survived. Our main advance is the documents of the dietine. The most significant of these is the letter of Lithuanian magnates to Ivan The Terrible sent with Michał Haraburda (Lith.: Mykolas Haraburda)³¹ the sworn-clerk of Lithuania. In the middle of the 19th century it was published in a collection of historical sources by Włodzinirz Stanisław Broel-Plater³².

²⁹ S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 18-20.

³⁰ N.C. Radziwiłł in his letter of January 31, 1573, to N. Radziwiłł reminds his "plot" prepared in Rūdninkai: in A. Trachevskii, op. cit., 13.

³¹ For a journey to Moscow M. Haraburda was chosen not by chance. He was an Orthodox believer, spoke fluent Russian. During the reign of Sigismund Augustus he took part in at least several diplomatic missions to Russia, in 1572 was head of delegation. Ivan the Terrible asked namely M. Haraburda and Wołłowicz to arrive for negotiations (K. Lepszy, *Haraburda Michał Abdank*, in *PSB*, 9, Wrocław etc., 1961, 288-290.

³² *Zbiór pamiętników do dziejów polskich, oprac. W.S. Broel-Plater*, III, Warszawa, 1858, 20-21.

In this letter it was written that the aforesaid Lithuanian magnates, except the bishop of Vilnius N.C.Radziwiłł, had sent the sovereign of all Russia, Grand Duke Ivan Vasilevich their envoy M.Haraburda, charging him with the task, confirmed by this letter, of informing prince Fedor that he had been chosen as a master and ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. First he, his brother Ivan and the Grand Duke himself had to swear that they would protect and not change liberties and rights existing within the GDL. Lithuanian officials confirmed their intentions with seals and signatures. It is pointed out at the end that the letter had been written in Rūdninkai on October 27, 1572. This date undoubtedly is erroneous. V.Novodvorsky has noted that it must have been written in September, not October³³. This is corroborated by other correspondence from the delegates of the dietine.

This letter from the Rūdninkai dietine should have been given to M. Haraburda and delivered to Moscow. However, as we shall see, it turned up in a place, absolutely different from where it had been intended to appear.

In his commentary of the published decision of the dietine Broel-Plater noted, that it had only seven seals, - those of Pac, of the palatines of Vilnius, Trakai, Mstislavl - N.Radziwiłł, S. Zbaraski and G. Ościk, of the captain of Żemaitija Jan Chodkiewicz, of the castellan of Minsk J. Hlebowicz and of the cup-bearer of Lithuania, C. Radziwiłł. It is not entirely clear why only seven of the twelve listed participants sealed the letter.

But let us take a look at the circumstances surrounding the consideration of a Muscovite candidacy exactly at that time. It is known that this idea arose as the Habsburg candidacy lost ground. An idea to install a Muscovite candidate on the throne was a novelty neither in Lithuanian society nor in Poland. Already in 1570, Jan Krotoszyński and Nicholas Tolwojsz, sent to Moscow to negotiate an armistice, mentioned this idea to Ivan the Terrible³⁴. By promising him the throne, they encouraged the Tsar to return conquered territories and to sign a peace treaty. During this period, the Muscovite candidacy was supported by individual statesmen and social claims. The *vaitas* (Pol.: *wójt*, Germ.: *Voigt*) of Vilnius Augustus Rotundus discussed the choice of the sovereign in a published essay entitled "Concerning the election of a new king"³⁵. The author depicts himself as nobleman of the GD of Lithuania, who grew up from an early age among other nations and had only just arrived in the capital Vilnius. He has heard a lot about the candidacies of a future ruler. He singles out three of them: the prince of France, the prince of Russia and his son. Rejecting the candidacy of Ivan the Terrible, he gives the follow-

³³ V. Novodvorsky, op. cit., 13.

³⁴ S. Solov'ev, *Istoriya Rosii s drevneishikh vremion*, 6-10, St. Petersburg, 1896, 203.

³⁵ Zdanie o obieraniu nowego króla, oprac. J. Czubek, in *Pisma polityczne z czasów pierwszego bezkrólewia*, Kraków, 1906, 349-355.

ing reason: "...in the old Lithuanian chronicles we read that during the time when the Grand Duke of Lithuania governed Lithuania alone, he was a great lord who expanded the boundaries of his state from the Prussian sea to the Pontian sea, governing far to the north, west and south. But when we, i.e. the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, came to be ruled by the same sovereign, the colours of the Duchy began to fade as does a flower in autumn. The longer this has gone on, the more faded has she become, of the colour of ancient Lithuania there remains only a piece.: we no longer possess the lands of Pskov, Novgorod and Seversk and an enemy waves his sword almost at the brick-walls of Vilnius. This decay of the Lithuanian state occurred because there is no king in the Duchy etc."³⁶. Therefore, according to the author, the Tsar should sit in Moscow and fight the pagans. His son is quite a different matter, it would be possible to teach him to respect liberties and to wean him from tyranny. The prince of France, even if he promises millions, differs in customs and language and it is impossible to understand him without an interpreter. The author recalled other bad characteristics of that country. But in electing a Moscow candidate "we could have an everlasting peace etc."³⁷. Avoiding the danger of an attack after the electing of a Muscovite candidate was highly ranked in Lithuania.

The Aftermath of the Rūdninkai Letter

The position of several persons who did not sign the Rūdninkai letter to Ivan the Terrible is understandable. N.C.Radziwiłł, one of the most active defenders of Lithuanian independence and the sponsor³⁸ of an independent grand-ducal election wrote to his uncle just after the death of Sigismund Augustus that it would have been better if the sovereign would have been one of their grandfathers or great-grandfathers, "rather, God help us, a turban or Moscow 'hood' should give us orders. In any case, for God's sake, Your Worship, have the kindness to forestall this Muscovite in time, otherwise he would not miss his chance..."³⁹. It is supposed that the initiator of the decision taken in Rūdninkai was N.Radziwiłł the Red⁴⁰. However, this should not be taken to mean that he was a convinced supporter of the Moscow candidacy. On the contrary, I. Radvanus calls him the "bogyman of the Volga's barbarians", fighting against Moscow"⁴¹. True, at that time the administrator of Livonia Jan Chodkiewicz had more to do with Moscow. N.Radziwiłł was apparently induced to support the Muscovite

³⁶ Ibid., 350.

³⁷ Ibid., 349.

³⁸ E. Kothubaj, *Galeria Nieświeżska portretów Radziwiłłowskich*, Wilno, 1857, 310.

³⁹ July 15, 1572. Knyszyn, A letter of N.C.Radziwiłł to N.Radziwiłł the Red, in A.Trachevskii, op. cit., 91.

⁴⁰ H. Lulewicz, Mikołaj Radziwiłł, zwany Rudym, in *PSB*, XXX, 1987, 328.

⁴¹ D.Kuolys, *Asmuo, tauta, valstybė Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės istorinėje literatūroje: Renesansas ir barokas*, Vilnius, 1992, 203.

candidacy by a political situation of that time when he wished to avoid a surprise attack of Ivan the Terrible. Later after the fight of Henry Valois he opposed the Moscow candidacy in the most persistent way and placed guards on all the roads to Moscow in order to prevent anyone from arriving from there⁴².

There are no doubts about why J. Olelkowicz did not sign. It is believed that he was never at Rūdninkai in the first place⁴³. As we see from the correspondence of J. Hlebowicz, signatures were collected after the dietine ended. On October 4, as he travelled from a meeting with the Palatine of Vilnius, Chodkiewicz caught up with J. Hlebowicz and informed him that he need not go to Lomża or make arrangements for such journey. Hlebowicz was pleased to hear that after a mutual agreement which was to their own as well as the Republic's benefit, he and C.Radziwiłł had to visit the duke of Slutsk and to bring him the text ("spis") of the Rūdninkai dietine's decision approval and sealing. For this reason Hlebowicz was advised to go see N.Radziwiłł at Jašiūnai and to take that document. J.Hlebowicz asked in his letter to N.Radziwiłł when he had to arrive and consult. Apparently the palatine had his doubts about J.Hlebowicz and did not give him the decision when he arrived in Jašiūnai. He said that he would send it and a letter to C.Radziwiłł and after this they could meet and go to J.Olelkowicz together. C.Radziwiłł informed J.Hlebowicz that he had not received any letter or document. Meanwhile J.Hlebowicz had already informed J.Olelkowicz about his future visit. Insulted and offended J.Hlebowicz described all his mortification in a letter to the captain of Žemaitija as this letter had involved him into this abasement. He confessed that after he had suffered a personal insult and earned the contempt of the duke of Slutsk, he wrote a letter to Haraburda and took this document from him, which it seems "I pressed the palm of my hand even now"⁴⁴. Later on J.Hlebowicz handed it to Olelkowicz. The latter accused the Radziwiłłs and Chodkiewicz of a scenary of an independent foreign policy which they kept hidden from Poland and the document was passed to the Polish senators at the convocational diet in Warsaw representatives of Lutsk⁴⁵. **Thus due to J. Hlebowicz and J. Olelkowicz the decision of the Rūdninkai dietine did not turn up in Moscow, but in Warsaw.** The political stance of J. Olelkowicz led to this. As in 1575, the pro-Habsburg group was rallying in Poland and J. Olelkowicz promised to support it⁴⁶. From all this it is possible to decide that he was not a

⁴² E. Kottubaj, op. cit., 70.

⁴³ H. Kowalska, J. Wiśniewski, Olelkowicz Jerzy, in *PSB*, 23, Wrocław etc., 1978, 743.

⁴⁴ October 5, 1572. Vilnius. A letter of J.Hlebowicz to N.Radziwiłł, *AGAD. AR*, dz. V, No. 5220, 1; November 4, 1572. Zaslavl. A letter of J.Hlebowicz to I.Chodkiewicz, *ibid.*, 3-5.

⁴⁵ S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 215; B. Floria, op.cit., 62; *PSB*, XXIII, Wrocław etc., 1978, 743.

⁴⁶ *PSB*, XXIII, 1978, 741-742.

supporter of the Moscow candidacy, but his attitude towards the Radziwiłłs and Chodkiewicz was hostile.

It is necessary to say a little about J. Hlebowicz. His biography was linked with Moscow. In 1563, when the Russians attacked Polotsk, he was taken prisoner. Before he returned to Lithuania the Russians made him swear that he would help them achieve their dynastic aims. He tried to send an envoy, Sziling by name (Lith.: Šilingas) to negotiate with Ivan, but Chodkiewicz prevented this action⁴⁷. He supported a Moscow candidate not only during this interregnum but also during the next one. As B. Floria notes his signature appears on no document supporting the Habsburg candidacy⁴⁸. A short poem from a "Lover of the Fatherland to the Lithuanian Senate and Nation" about San's relative, the castellan of Vilnius Nicholas Hlebowicz, who lived at the beginning of the next century, records that Jan had been the Russians' man⁴⁹.

J. Hlebowicz knew about the difference of opinion among the nobles concerning the Moscow candidacy and, apparently, trying to avoid opposition inside society, he intercepted the letter carried by M. Haraburda from the Rūdninkai conference. However, if he really wanted this, by behaving in such a way he sharpened not only internal disputes but also increased the conflict with Poland. Evidently he was worried about other matters, because next year he would try to catch envoy M. Haraburda again, but this time on his return from Russia⁵⁰.

As is known from the appeal to the Poles passed at the dietine, the bishop of Vilnius Valerian Protasewicz, was present in Rūdninkai⁵¹. Why he did not sign the document sent to Moscow is difficult to answer exactly. Obviously he manoeuvred between Lithuanian dignitaries and the Polish primate and bishops. He became very anxious when he learned that information about the secret negotiations with Russia had reached the Poles assembled for the convocation.

Chodkiewicz who had experienced Muscovite aggression most keenly while defending Livonia was favourable to Ivan the Terrible. Like others who signed in favour of this candidacy, he did so because the existing situation compelled him.

Hlebowicz's treatment of the Rūdninkai letter did not lay the idea itself to rest. Lithuanian dignitaries were indignant at Hlebowicz and Olelkowicz's self-will. N.C. Radziwiłł called Hlebowicz "the traitor of Fatherland"⁵².

⁴⁷ B. Floria, *Russko-polskie otnoshenia i politicheskoe razvitie Vostochnoi Evropy vo vtoroi polovine XVI- nachale XVII v.*, Moskva, 1978, 33.

⁴⁸ B. Floria, *Magneteria litewska a Rosja w czasie drugiego bezkrólewia, Odrodzenia i Reformacja w Polsce*, XVII, 1977, 147-150.

⁴⁹ D. Kuolys, op. cit., 217.

⁵⁰ B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka...*, 63.

⁵¹ E. de Noailles, op. cit., 177-181.

⁵² B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka...*, 62.

In the 19th century an incomplete copy of Ivan's the Terrible appeal to Lithuanian dignitaries was found in the archive of the Seniawski family in Galich. It is undated. It can be seen from this text that almost everyone who signed the decision of the Rūdninkai conference, except, naturally, Hlebowicz and C.Radziwiłł, but including a new signatory, the incisor of Lithuania Jan Kiszka (Lith.: Jonas Kiška), sent the courier, Stepan Matveev, to Ivan the Terrible with a document whose content is very similar to that of the dietine letter. The document sought permission to elect Fedor as Grand Duke of Lithuania. Simultaneously there was a promise to encourage the Poles to elect him their king⁵³. The Russian historian Solov'ev, who pays a lot of attention to the negotiations during the interregnum period, does not mention a visit by Matveev in Moscow. Floria has no doubt about it⁵⁴. V. Novodvorsky thought that Matveev had been sent by the Rūdninkai dietine⁵⁵. Without rejecting the possibility that he delivered the letter of Lithuanian dignitaries to Moscow, it is believed that Lithuania's aspiration to elect its sovereign independently had been known in Moscow.

It would be expedient here to recall that Fedor Voropai was sent as an envoy to Moscow (in about September)⁵⁶ and spoke there on behalf of the Republic. On behalf of Lithuanian and Polish dignitaries he informed Ivan the Terrible of the death of Sigismund Augustus and expressed the wish to see him the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the King of Poland. The Tsar asked that a delegation be sent without delay⁵⁷. So Moscow found itself at the cross-roads of two political proposals. The alternative suggestion made the Lithuanian possibilities of electing a grand duke more difficult.

Piotr Zborowski and Jan Tomicki who had been sent to Lithuania by the Polish congress in Kaski then had decided to call the convocation in Warsaw, attended the meeting of Lithuanian dignitaries in Mstibov. The Poles invited them to the Warsaw convocation to discuss a time and place for the election. The Lithuanians did not accept the Polish proposals. They voiced bravely with their own demands, accusing Poland of separatist actions, of weakening Lithuania's power, and spoke of the Russian danger⁵⁸. They decided to call a separate Lithuanian dietine in Vilnius and to select delegates to the convocation and discuss other matters.

The dietine of Vilnius was convened on December 20. The castellans of Trakai and Vitebsk E.Wołowicz and Paul Pac together with some other nobles, were chosen as delegates to the convocation and received an instruction which described the danger that threatened Lithuania from Moscow and strongly urged that the election of

⁵³ *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Zapadnoi Rosii, sobranie i izdanie Arkheograficheskoi komissii, III*, St. Petersburg, 1848, 161-162.

⁵⁴ B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka...*, 56-57.

⁵⁵ V. Novodvorski, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁵⁶ Solov'ev points out that since the visit of F.Voropai to Moscow till the arrival of M.Haraburda on February 23, 1572, 6 months had passed (Solov'ev, *op. cit.*, 239.).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-10, 236-239; V. Novodvorski, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁵⁸ Konwokacja warszawska na dzień Trzech królów złożona w roku pańskim 1573, *Zbiór pamiętników*, III, 1858, 1-3; Novodvorski, *Polskie Bezkorolew'e*, 175-176.

the sovereign take place no earlier than after Easter (April 6), i.e. when the thaw would begin and the Russian army could not intervene⁵⁹. In the dietine the programme of preventing Muscovite aggression was discussed. Lithuanian politicians became anxious about Polish indifference towards Muscovite desires as reported by Voropai, that Lithuanian and Polish envoys should be despatched as soon as possible⁶⁰. They discussed the Russian candidacy to the grand ducal throne. It was considered how this question would be co-ordinated with Poland, and delegates were empowered to negotiate with the Poles over the structure of an embassy⁶¹. However, without approval of Poland, a new document was presented separately to M. Haraburda and he was sent to Moscow to invite Fedor to ascend throne of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. Thus, according to this document, Lithuanian independance was completely rejected during the election process. Haraburda arrived at the Tsar's residence in Novgorod only on February 23, 1573⁶².

The negotiations between Haraburda and Ivan the Terrible are a separate subject, but they are partly the fulfilment of decisions taken by the Rūdninkai dietine. So it would be useful to survey the main questions of the negotiations. They involved three problems: 1) co-ordinating the nominations of candidates to the thrones of Lithuania and Poland; 2) territorial questions; 3) the conclusion of a peace treaty. Haraburda explained that due to the outbreak of plague, it had been impossible to arrive earlier, as the Tsar had suggested to Voropai. For the same reason, apparently, the senators of Lithuania and Poland could not concern in a general congress, but after the epidemic abated, they had joint consultations (here he had a conference in Mstibov in mind, then they met in Vilnius and elected representatives to go to Warsaw. While speaking on the subject of the candidacy to the throne Haraburda informed the Tsar about the intention of the Lithuanian dignitaries to elect the Tsar himself or his son Fedor to the throne of Lithuania and Poland and to try to persuade the Poles to support this action. With that end in view he asked for a speedy reply as to whether the Tsar himself wished to be elected or would permit the election of his son. In both cases the guarantees of all liberties and rights were required. Unlike the decisions of Rūdninkai here the co-ordination of Polish-Lithuanian actions was stressed. It was said that there had been no desire to elect the Lithuanian ruler alone.

While discussing the second question Haraburda required the cession of four towns - (Smolensk, Usviaty, Polotsk and Jezeriszczce) to Lithuania and in the case of Fedor's election some more towns would be required.

⁵⁹ S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 214-215.

⁶⁰ S. Solov'ev, *op. cit.*, VI-X, 238.

⁶¹ January 3, 1573. Vilnius. An instruction of the dietine for delegates to the convocation diet, in *Skarbiec historii polskiej*, 2, Paryż, 1840, 263; B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka...*, 61.

⁶² Poselstwo moskiewskiego przez Haraburdię sprawowane dnia 29 grudnia w roku 1572, in *Zbiór pamiętników*, III, 1858, 58-65.

Ivan the Terrible did not agree with the territorial claims of Lithuania, saying that his son had not been a girl and it would be unsuitable to give a dowry. He did not agree to allow his son to be elected, because he was too young (13 years old) and would not be able to rule. In his son's place he proposed his own candidacy to the throne of Lithuania only. Countering the territorial demands, expressed by M. Haraburda he offered Lithuania Polotsk with its surrounding districts and Courland. Russia was to get Livonia as far as to the Dvina river⁶³ and Kiev. The Tsar also promised to help Lithuania regain the territories annexed by Poland. In addition, the Tsar was inconsistent in his proposals, for he approved the candidacy of Emperor's son too, expecting that the peace treaty could be signed immediately⁶⁴. Generally the Tsar had no clear position how to deal with the Lithuanian after his response to Haraburda was not consistent. However, the desire to set Lithuania off against Poland and gain political capital from this, could be felt clearly. At that time Moscow itself began to urge the separate election of the Grand Duke of Lithuania without reference of Poland, as had been discussed during the Rūdninkai Dietine. The only difference was that the Tsar was unwilling to allow his son to accept the throne but pushed his own case forward.

Polish politicians reacted very sharply to the independent voyage of Haraburda for negotiations to Moscow. Wołłowicz and Pac, the Lithuanian delegates to the convocational diet, felt the full brunt of Polish fury themselves. In a letter to N. Radziwiłł, they reported that "the Poles had reproached them for sending Haraburda to Moscow. Most of all they were blamed because it was impossible to act in that way without joint consultations and discussions". Then they asked N. Radziwiłł to send someone as quickly as possible to recall Haraburda. They reported that the Poles had promised to discuss matters concerning Livonia and protection of "Russian" territories during the convocation too⁶⁵. There was an attempt to meet this demand, but Haraburda had already crossed the border and it was impossible to recall him⁶⁶. Due to information held by the Poles about Haraburda's mission, bishop Valerian of Vilnius was worried too. He also considered Haraburda should be recalled⁶⁷.

Upon returning from Russia, Haraburda went to the electoral diet in Warsaw to present a report on the results of his mission. The terms suggested by Ivan the Terrible rather dampened the enthusiasm of the Muscovite party. This candidacy failed in the diet. Lithuanian politicians began to support Henri Valois' election⁶⁸. N.C. Radziwiłł

⁶³ Besides Russian army attacked Livonia on January 5, 1573, and caused great anxiety to the administrator I. Chodkiewicz (A letter of I. Chodkiewicz to Polish senators), Biblioteka Czartoryskich, syg. TN, vol. 81, doc. 11.

⁶⁴ Solov'ev, op. cit., 240-241.

⁶⁵ January 22, 1573. Warsaw. A letter of E. Wołłowicz, V. Protasewicz and P. Pac to N. Radziwiłł, *AGAD, AR*, dz. V, vol. 451, 293-234.

⁶⁶ B. Floria, *Wschodnia polityka...*, 63.

⁶⁷ January 30, 1573. Verkiai. A letter of bishop V. Protasewicz to N. Radziwiłł, Biblioteka PAN in Kraków. Rrps. syg. 342, 9; S. Gruszecki, *Walka...*, 213.

⁶⁸ R. Hejdensztejn, op. cit., 72-73.

was a member of the mission that went to Paris to hand Henri the letter of invitation and accompany him back to Poland⁶⁹; N.Radziwiłł the Red bore the orb during the coronation ceremony. In a letter to the new sovereign, the Lithuanian Senate wrote: "... we raised our eyes to heaven, stretched out our hands and with tears and prayers thanked God, that he inspirited us to elect your sacred royal majesty as our king from among all the other candidates"⁷⁰. He was elected under the same conditions as the other candidates.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In the second half of the 16th century the foreign policy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania focused on building a relationship with Russia. Those relations were not stable because of the aggressive policy of Russia. Modifying relations by military means was not acceptable to Lithuania and thus was a search for ways of establishing a permanent peace. Continual war over Livonia required a solution which would provide a more steady guarantee than a simple treaty.

2. The end of the Jagiellonian dynasty after the death of Sigismund Augustus gave Lithuanian statesmen hopes to revise the unfavourable political after-effects of the Union of Lublin. They had their own political agenda to restore the independent election of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, to regain territories annexed by Poland and Russia, and to ensure Lithuania's security. The implementation of this agenda was linked with the election of a new sovereign. Preventing Russian aggression was a question of vital importance to Lithuania which was related to the election question. So under such circumstances the project to elect the tsarevich appeared. During the interregnum this policy was prepared at the Rūdninkai dietine by a group of Lithuanian politicians led by Radziwiłł the Red and Jan Chodkiewicz. This project sought to employ dynastic ties to safeguard Lithuania and her Livonian dependency from Russian aggression and to solve all the political problems pressing upon Lithuania.

3. The plan prepared in Rūdninkai to elect tsarevich Fedor as Grand Duke of Lithuania met opposition in both Lithuania and Poland. The conditions stipulated in the plan were not acceptable to Russia either. During the first interregnum the project was not implemented. However, it was discussed until the very beginning of the 17th century as one of the various means of protecting Lithuania from Russian aggression.

4. In the agenda set by Lithuanian politicians, the Muscovite candidacy was one among several possible election alternatives. Thus it was easy to move on to support the election of other candidates, but these had to meet requirements concerning their orientation towards Eastern policy.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 92, 107.

⁷⁰ October 21, 1573. Vilnius. A letter of Lithuanian senators to Henri Valois, in *Diariusz poselstwa polskiego do Francji po Henryka Walezego w 1573 roku*, Wrocław etc., 1963, 287.