Ярослав Федорук, *Віленський договір 1656 року. Східноєвропейська криза і Україна у середині XVII століття* [Yaroslav Fedoruk, *The Treaty of Vilnius [1656]. The East European Crisis and Ukraine in the Mid-Seventeenth Century*], Kyiv: VD „Kiëvo-Mogilyans'ka akademiya“, 2011. 624 p. ISBN 978-966-518-559-8

The monograph covers a period of only a few years of history: from the end of 1654 to the end of 1656, with a review of the later consequences of this agreement in the relations between the Polish-Lithuanian state and Russia, especially for the Ukraine (until 1658).

In the introduction, describing unpublished sources, the author points out that Russian authors writing about these negotiations have relied so far mainly on their own archives, while Polish and Western authors relied on Polish archives, and this has made the study one-sided. Attention is drawn to the published sources in different countries and the abundance of articles and monographs, which indicate the topicality of the theme.

The first chapter analyses the question of war and peace in relations between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (further – Republic), the state of Moscow, and Sweden in the first half of 1655. First of all, the position of Austria is discussed, which from the autumn of 1654 offered to mediate in peace talks between Moscow and the Polish-Lithuanian state. Brandenburg–Prussia tried to convince Vienna that it should make all possible effort to reconcile the Swedes with the Poles and Lithuanians, and in this way direct them along with the Crimean Tatars against Moscow.

It is shown how the Commonwealth and Sweden were moving towards war with each other. It is presumed that the war with Moscow and the Cossacks prevented King John Casimir, from correctly assessing the situation in his relations with Sweden, that the Swedes and King Karl X Gustav himself, until the spring of 1655, debated who to attack first, the Commonwealth or Moscow (pp. 73–74). The reluctance of John Casimir to give up his claims to the Swedish throne and the Livonian lands that belonged to it led the Swedes to opt for aggression. An interesting observation by the author is that the contradictions between Polish and Lithuanian politicians were responsible for this undetermined position of the Commonwealth on which priority was more important at that time, peace with the already attacking Moscow, or with Sweden preparing to attack. In his opinion, Lithuanians (primarily in the person of Prince Janusz Radziwiłł), at least in the first half of 1655, primarily sought peace with the Swedes, and then, with their help, to defeat the Muscovites. It was noted that only at the end of March 1655 did the Secret Commission of

the Stockholm Riksdag finally approve the decision already confirmed in December to attack the Commonwealth, even though Swedish conflicts with Moscow were apparently larger. As the author repeatedly notes, for both Poland–Lithuania and Sweden, and for Brandenburg–Prussia and Courland, the best option would have been to fight against Moscow (pp. 83–112).

The positions of Austria and France with regard to the brewing conflict are discussed. The active efforts by Austria to mediate are shown, initially trying to convince the Swedes to attack Russia together with the Commonwealth; but when it became clear that a compromise with the Swedes could not be reached, fearing that it would be drawn into the conflict, it began to mediate between Russia and the Commonwealth. Meanwhile, France tried to divert the conflict against Austria, its greatest opponent at that time (pp. 126–129).

The second chapter of the book deals with the development of diplomatic relations in the conflict area in the second half of 1655. It discusses the numerous diplomatic relations between Central and East European countries at the beginning of the Swedish invasion of the Republic (pp. 130–161). Describing John Casimir's efforts to negotiate with the Swedes, the author draws attention to the fact that in virtually all cases there was a demand to help fight against Moscow and regain the lands that had been seized. Nevertheless, the greatest hopes of the Republic to get support (whether military or diplomatic, or financial, etc) were associated with Austria. Trying to negotiate with both Moscow and Stockholm, so that either one of them would make peace with the Commonwealth and jointly direct forces against the third, the Austrians sought to preserve the balance of power in the region. The author states that between the two possible options of reconciliation between Poland and Lithuania, whether with the Swedes or with the Muscovites, the latter was more preferable for the Austrians.

We should note that if the author discusses very thoroughly other various aspects of relations between the region's countries, providing with grounds their various options, then the Union of Kėdainiai (Kiejdanj, the treaty between Sweden and part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) in the autumn of 1655) is discussed only in passing and superficially. The fear of a union of the GDL and Sweden in the autumn of 1655 led the tsar to seek an agreement with the Lithuanians and Poles. A weighty argument by the Lithuanians forcing the tsar to seek peace was their assertion that after defeating the Republic, Karl X Gustav in the spring of 1656 would turn against Moscow. The author refutes the claims of some Russian historians that in the autumn of 1655 negotiations with the Republic were completely uninteresting for the Russians.

The third chapter of the book is devoted to the preparations by the Muscovites and Poles with the Lithuanians for negotiations, and a description of the diplomatic relations in the first half of 1656 (pp. 209–322). Having concluded an alliance with the Prussians, the Swedes avoided in

all possible ways the mediation of the Austrians, because they considered that the latter applied double standards, mediating on behalf of the Commonwealth with both Moscow and Sweden, and therefore refused the services of the Austrians. This forced the Poles and Lithuanians to intensify their negotiations with Moscow. The Swedes at that time were still considering with whom it would be best to form an alliance, with the Commonwealth against Moscow, or vice versa. It is interesting that, as the Riksdag protocols show, the Swedes were more inclined towards the first variant, on the grounds of the commonality of European values, that the Commonwealth was not as barbaric as Moscow (p. 219).

The whole section is devoted to the diplomatic activity by the French, Prussians, Dutch, Danes and Swedes. The French tried with the help of the Prussians to reconcile the Commonwealth with Sweden, in the hope that it would move against Austria. The French initiatives were not answered directly, they were held in reserve as a possible means to put pressure on the Russians. When Moscow began the war against Sweden, Karl Gustav himself sought to make peace with the Commonwealth, but he did this both with diplomatic pressure and by ravaging Poland (pp. 280–306).

John Casimir and the tsar pressed the emperor to enter into a war against the Swedes, but the Austrians insisted that first a treaty had to be signed between the Commonwealth and Moscow. When this happened on 1 December 1656, Austria signed a treaty of military alliance with the Commonwealth, but only sent its army in May 1657 (pp. 307–312).

Discussing the Ukrainian position on the negotiations between Moscow and the Commonwealth near Vilnius, the author notes that these negotiations dealt a blow to Bohdan Khmelnytsky's plans for a new war with the Commonwealth. He tried to convince the tsar that such an alliance was not very reliable, while the tsar asserted that he was a defender of Cossack interests, so did not want the involvement of the Cossacks in the negotiations. Khmelnytsky nevertheless prepared his delegation for negotiations near Vilnius. The Cossacks were planning to subjugate for themselves a large part of the Belarusian lands of the GDL (pp. 312–322).

Chapter four is devoted to a description of the negotiations near Vilnius (pp. 323–442). It is emphasised that, from the beginning, the Muscovites had the upper hand, because the negotiations were taking place in their captured lands. At the start of the negotiations, the position of the Russians was bolstered by the arrival of the cities of Dünaburg and Kokenhusen from Swedish Livonia. In the instructions received by the Muscovite envoys, it was specified to try to legitimise the seizures, but actually to seek the lands up to the River Berezina and Swedish Livonia with Riga. In the instructions, the questions of borders and the position of Orthodox believers in the Commonwealth were also addressed, but most important was the election of the tsar as the ruler of the Commonwealth while John Casimir was still alive.

The instructions of the Polish and Lithuanian envoys indicated demanding lands according to the 1634 treaty of Polianov; but if the Muscovites did not yield, then to give away Starodub and the Duchy of Severi and Smolensk. According to the author, this instruction was not a reality after the military disaster of 1654–1655. Negotiations began on 22 August, when both sides, after proclaiming their incompatible maximum positions, later sought to make concessions and seek a compromise (pp. 337–338).

In the work, quite a lot of attention is paid to the position of the Lithuanian gentry and aristocracy on closer ties with Moscow, and supporting the tsar's election as their ruler (pp. 345–348). But this position by some nobles more likely reflected the desire to adapt to the situation and keep their holdings than a natural desire to get closer to Moscow. The subsequent massive return of the nobles to their rightful ruler shows this, when the war began to turn out badly for the Muscovites.

The delegation of Poles and Lithuanians affirmed that the demand to elect the tsar as their ruler broke one of the most important privileges of the nobles, to freely elect their ruler, so they wanted to get instructions from John Casimir, with which the Russians agreed. Both sent messengers for new instructions. With good grounds, the author writes that the Russian autocracy, demanding to elect the tsar as king, essentially sought to change the entire noble-caste political system of the Commonwealth.

According to the author, the ruling men of the Commonwealth agreed to make a compromise when accepting the Muscovite requirement to elect the tsar as ruler of the Commonwealth, because they understood very well how difficult it would be to convoke the Sejm (parliament) and for it to adopt any decisions. This was a conscious playing for time. The Russians were not very knowledgeable about Polish and Lithuanian internal affairs, and thus in this way they were actually fooled. The need was for the two negotiating sides to stop the war on two fronts, and for negotiations with the Austrians for a military alliance, which was possible only after the conclusion of peace with the Russians (p. 397).

The most important remaining problem was the agreement on territory. The Russians said that they would return Vilnius and Lithuania as soon as the Sejm adopted the decision on the election of the tsar. According to the author, this shows that both sides (Russia and the Commonwealth) were pursuing unrealistic policies, some positions opposed others, and they were united only by a common enemy, Sweden. Diplomatic failures and also military ones near Riga forced the Muscovites to conclude a treaty more quickly. Retreating from Riga, the tsar instructed the envoys in the negotiations to do everything they could so that there would not be a war on two fronts, even offering to bribe the Austrian commissioners and intermediaries (pp. 404–406). The text of the treaty was finally agreed and signed on 3 November.

The author thinks that this agreement did not abolish the conflicts between the Commonwealth and Muscovy, and affected all the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. It was very important for both sides to establish a common front against the Swedes. The Muscovite achieved what they wanted, an agreement to elect the tsar as the ruler of the Commonwealth, but did not understand how to implement it, especially during a war. They refused to return the occupied lands, but agreed to negotiate on them (p. 442).

The fifth and final chapter discusses how much in the commission's work the problems of the Ukrainian–Polish border and Khmelnytsky's approach to the negotiations and their outcome were touched on (pp. 443–510). To whom Ukraine should belong was one of the most important issues, because the tsar had launched the war for it. The Russians asserted that the Ukrainians had voluntarily surrendered to Moscow, so if they were returned to Poland, they might surrender to someone else (e.g. the Turks). The Polish and Lithuanian commissioners replied that Moscow had no right to the Ukraine, because after the epoch of the (Kievan) Rus principalities, their territory went to the GDL. These statements stressed more the Lithuanian than the Polish past of the Kievan Rus territories. All this led to the collapse of the negotiations, which neither side wanted. Therefore, the Russian envoys sought the election of the tsar and the determination of the borders of the GDL, and postponed the question of Ukraine.

The Poles feared that after the collapse of these negotiations, and then with the start of negotiations with the Swedes, all of the GDL might surrender to Moscow. But the author does not provide any new or additional arguments for this reasoning or conclusion. So it was in the interests of both sides in the negotiations to postpone the issue of Ukraine (p. 466). Knowing that Khmelnytsky wanted to ruin the negotiations in Nemėžis, the Russians sought to isolate the Cossacks. The truce imposed by Moscow was not acceptable to Khmelnytsky, because he did not attain his goal to be entrenched in the Ukrainian lands, and therefore drew closer to Transylvania and Sweden (pp. 501–505).

The conclusion states that the Russians were happy for the tsar to be elected ruler of the Republic, and thought that the matter was resolved. But Russian politicians educated in an autocracy could hardly imagine what a complicated procedure it was. The main problem after the negotiations was when the electoral Seimas would convene, because without it the tsar could not be elected. Therefore, the king diplomatically did everything he could for this Seimas to be delayed as much as possible. It was explained that not all the GDL's nobles could vote, because a large part of it was occupied by the Muscovites themselves (pp. 518–522).

In the second half of 1657, the situation in the Republic was already completely different: Austria and Denmark joined the war, the Swedes and Hungarians were expelled, Khmelnytsky died, and peace was made with

Brandenburg–Prussia. And even though the king wrote to the tsar that he would call the Seimas in May 1658, and asked him to send envoys, this meant, and the Russians realised this, that their hope that the tsar would be elected had failed, and that Khmelnytsky was correct in warning that the Poles and Lithuanians would agree to anything so that a ceasefire could be agreed, and afterwards, having recovered, would do everything to elude what had been agreed (pp. 527–528).

Describing the monograph, we have to say that it would hardly be possible to find a short section of the political history of the region in such detail and seen from all sides. The author was able to analyse all the problems related to these negotiations near Vilnius, to show how they emerged, matured and were resolved, as well as how most European countries at that time were related to them. As can be seen from the facts presented in the monograph, the most natural (and, apparently, the most favourable for Lithuania and Poland) development of events would have been not to get involved in a war in Sweden, and, if one began nevertheless, to conclude a truce with them, and redirect their joint forces against the aggressor from the east. Unfortunately, the national interests of the Austrian intermediaries, and the mostly personal ones of the ruler John Casimir and some nobles, turned in the opposite direction.

It is true that the agreements near Nemėžis were tactical decisions for both sides. The treaty allowed Russia and the Polish–Lithuanian state to halt the war on two fronts, but this respite was important for the latter because it allowed the accumulation of forces and the avoidance of total disaster, and, although with great losses, the preservation of the state at that time. Khmelnytsky particularly objected to the treaty, foreseeing correctly that the Polish–Lithuanian state would benefit the most from it. Unfortunately, we can suggest that perhaps the worst affected side at the time remained Ukraine, which at that time failed to assert its statehood; in the end, it was left divided between Russia and Poland, and the consequences of that we can see in part also now, in 2014 and 2015...

This book has already received international recognition. Its author Yaroslav Fedoruk was awarded the prize of the Polish Historical Society at the 2nd International Congress of Foreign Historians of Poland in Krakow in 2012.

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