Gintautas Sliesoriūnas. *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė vidaus karo išvakarėse: didikų grupuočių kova 1690–1697 m.* [The Grand Duchy of Lithuania on the Eve of the Internal War: the Struggle of the Noble Factions Between 1690 and 1697]. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2000. Pp. 341, 12 ill., 2 maps.
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The book under review marks a new stage in the Lithuanian studies of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). It should be of interest to the historians of other countries as well, since it also covers the affairs of both the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the entire related region. By presenting an in-depth analysis of a short seven-year period the author often debates with his Polish colleagues and corrects certain entrenched stereotypes.

A historiographical survey shows that it was Polish historians of the nineteenth century who developed the idea (supported by others) that the then most powerful family of the GDL – the Sapiegas (Sapiehas) ‘sought to tear the GDL away from Poland’ (p. 6). Statements about Lithuanian separatism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, that are repeated in modern times too, ‘are not based on special studies and the analysis of the historical process, but on the interpretation of isolated facts, and therefore should have a better factual basis’ (p. 16). The author does not doubt that the problem of internal war was most closely related to the problems of the noble oligarchy and the development of the statehood of the GDL. Investigating these issues in the context of the entire Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and even of Europe in general makes this study especially novel and valuable.

The book is characterized by a copious use of sources because, in the author’s opinion, the weakness of all recent works on the seventeenth century was ‘an insufficient exploitation of the factual material of the history of the GDL’ (p. 14).

Part One presents a review of the ruling élite of the GDL, its composition, the occupation of the principal posts by particular families and the causes of their hostility towards the Sapiegas. Especially valuable are Tables 1 and 2, illustrating the formal influence of each major family. These data are compared with those covering a wider period between 1648 and 1697. Thus it becomes clear that the oligarchic nature of Lithuanian politics emerged at the end of the seventeenth century, when five dominant families increased their supremacy at the expense of others. The author states that the basis of the Sapiega hegemony was its control of the office

of grand hetman, directly influencing senators and senior officials. A comparative analysis of the economic power of the two dominating families – the Radvilas and the Sapiegas – is presented, and their influence in the particular regions of the GDL and on the political life of the whole state is revealed.

The author could have presented his conclusions or more detailed explanations concerning different data relating to the number of *dūmas* (hearths) – about 7,970 in the official 1690 account of Kazimieras Jonas Sapiega and 17,093 in a private information. The difference is too great to be left unaccounted for by merely mentioning the versions of Jerzy Morzy (as a fiscal unit the *dūmas* could comprise several farms) and of Andrzej Rachuba (it could have been Sapiega's undue influence).¹ The explanation of this disproportion would have required extra efforts and additional sources. Nevertheless, it would have been worth doing that. On the other hand, one cannot but agree with the author and Polish historians that 'there are still many gaps in the information about the fiscal system' (p. 48), and that would have complicated the research.

The time-consuming Tables 10 and 11 are very informative and complement one another, as does the author's map of the GDL which accompanies them, and shows the family's main possessions and their concentration. The tables and the map illustrate the possible influence of the Sapiegas and the Radvilas in each *povet* (district) of the GDL. The author also indicates that 'the quarrel about the control of the Neuburg possessions (the possessions of the Biržai-Dubingiai branch of the Radvilas, taken over by Duke Charles Philip Wittelsbach of Neuburg through marriage – E. M.) – their guardianship or possible inheritance was the main property quarrel in the GDL in the late seventeenth century, affecting the whole of political life'. (p. 68). If either the Radvilas or the Sapiegas had taken over those possessions, they would have concentrated about 'one fifth (sic) of the economic potential of the GDL in their hands' (p. 68).

The middle layer of the GDL gentry is compared with the nobility, and thus its economic power and political influence are defined. The author again amends the accepted schemes of historical scholarship in the analysis of land rule and gives his reasons. In his opinion, the information on the Trakai *povet* 'corroborate the statement about a high land concentration in the hands of the GDL nobility and in particular of its élite' (p. 81). Nevertheless, such a conclusion might be slightly overdone, since it was made after the analysis of only one *povet*. The book also shows how the nobility formed their clientele by mortgaging its lands.

¹ J. Morzy, *Kryzys demograficzny na Litwie i Białorusi w II połowie XVII wieku* (Poznań, 1965), pp. 18-19, 214-215; *Metryka litewska. Rejestry podymnego Wielkiego księstwa Litewskiego: województwo wileńskie 1690 r.*, ed. A. Rachuba (Warsaw, 1989), p. 18.

The investigation of the Sapiega property quarrels with different noble families of the GDL displays both their causes and the results. Land-owning issues were among the most important for the GDL gentry. They affected the vital interests of the noble families and of their clientele and should be regarded as 'the most important causes of the internal wars in Lithuania' (p. 100). The author states that the defeat of the Sapiegas was possible only with the united forces of the nobility and gentry. Alas, 'the main property quarrels continued after the internal war as well. Foreign countries, primarily Russia, were involved in that process' (p. 101).

In summarizing the review of the first part of Sliesoriūnas' book, it must be said that the author perceives the differences between the constitutional crisis in Poland (the predominance of nobility at the expense of the gentry) and that in Lithuania (the rise of some noblemen at the expense of others), and these processes are illustrated by the example of the Sapiega clan.

In the second part Sliesoriūnas deals with the political issues, masterly associating them with the economic ones. Again, on the basis of compelling facts and persuasive arguments, certain time-honoured attitudes are corrected, e.g., the assertion that Sapiega's adherents were elected in the dietines to the Sejm of 1690 – the author established that this was not the case in at least nine *povets* (of the total number of twenty-one) (p. 105), and that attempts to suspend the Sejm of 1690 were made not by Sapiega adherents, as was previously believed, but by the supporters of the king. In the author's opinion, Sapiegas' commitments concerning the treaty of Neuburg possessions was one of the chief reasons for the worsening of relations with the Sobieskis. Besides, there were disagreements with them about foreign policy: to continue the war with the Turks as was required by the Austrians or to stop it pressed by the French.

Describing the conflict with the Bishop Konstantin Kazimierz Brzostowski of Vilnius, the author draws a conclusion that the conflict was inspired by the bishop himself, and not by the ruler, and that the latter only supported the bishop and urged him to continue the conflict. Succinctly discussing the legitimacy of billeting the GDL army in the ecclesiastical possessions, the author endorses the idea that K. J. Sapiega's behaviour towards those possessions was justified. That conflict 'acquired an image of a corporation quarrel' (p. 138), i.e., it was a conflict between the clergy and the military. Therefore it is surmised that the gentry would support the military for fear that, otherwise, it would have to shoulder the ecclesiastical share of the burden for the upkeep of the army.

Writing about the Warsaw Sejm of 1693 Sliesoriūnas makes several important observations. Firstly, the ruler's indictment of separatism shows 'an attempt to change the level of the GDL's statehood' because Jan Sobieski was the first ruler, who 'in principle did not recognize the provincial session of the GDL either to assemble independently or to adopt

political acts even of a declarative nature, such as the instructions for the envoys to the king, which was a legitimate right of any dietine of the GDL *povets* (p. 146–147). Second, ‘disagreements among the Lithuanian nobility created conditions for the prevention of the eventual realization of Lithuanian statehood in the spheres, not regulated by the laws’ (p. 147). Thirdly, ‘the attempts of the Sapiega grouping to consolidate the subordination of the bishop of Vilnius to the Primate of Poland had a similar effect’ (ibid.).

In the analysis of the process of K. J. Sapiega’s excommunication, emphasis is placed on the effect of this case on the statehood of the GDL. The author shows that in the defence of their interests the contending groups resorted to actions both strengthening and weakening the ties between the GDL and Poland (p. 156).

In the book particular attention is paid to the quarrels over the legacy of the duchess Ludvika Karolina Radvilaitė – the Neuburg possessions because, in the opinion of the author, that quarrel was crucial to the balance of forces in the GDL (p. 173). Well-grounded Sobieski claims to these possessions have been noticed for the first time in historical scholarship. Despite different positions with respect to the Neuburg possessions the two clans of the Radvilas and the Sapiegas found themselves in the same camp against the Sobieskis, ‘preventing Jakub Sobieski from gaining the crown’ (p. 182). The author clearly shows the activity of the Sapiegas and the ruler in co-equalling law and justice in the Commonwealth and further dividing the gentry (p. 192–194).

In the reviewer’s opinion, Part III, dealing with the interregnum of 1696–1697 and the electoral Sejm, is the strongest in the book. At the beginning the opinion about the separatist Sapiega tendencies during the interregnum is refuted; at that time the Sapiegas were actively engaged in preserving Lithuanian statehood, although they were also ‘concerned that Poland, by unilateral actions, did not damage the equality of the GDL in the commonwealth’ (p. 199). The author maintains that namely in the period of the Sapiega hegemony (in the last two decades of the seventeenth century) nothing new was achieved or proposed to sustain the traditions of Lithuanian statehood – there were merely attempts to preserve the status quo. All that is accounted for by the stability of the international situation of the country in that period and by the changes in the ruling élite of the GDL – ‘the representatives of the noble families of non-Lithuanian origin became dominating’ (p. 205). Nevertheless, some of the statements seem not quite precise. Thus on p. 201 it is stated that in 1678 many GDL dietines required to transfer the sejms from Grodno to Vilnius, while footnote 648 mentions only two such dietines (of Słonim and Orsha).

The author believes that the 1696 Confederation of the GDL army was instigated by the Queen and that the widespread charges against

K. J. Sapiega for allegedly wasting resources and high-handedly enlarging the army are not truthful. Although he repeats the praises of the contemporaries and of modern historians for the GDL army, the author, however, does not offer any counter-argument to the statement that ‘throughout Europe the GDL army had a reputation for marauding’ (p. 242). On the basis of facts it is stated that the law of *coaequatio iurium* limited the modernization of the Lithuanian army, and the subsequent defeat of the Sapiegas terminated that process and demoralized the military.

The author indicates that in the electoral sejm the idea of the coequation of laws was chosen as a counter-measure against the proposals to investigate the case of the contacts between the Queen and the Confederation. The law was upheld enthusiastically by the majority of Polish representatives (even by the Sapiegas’ proponents) as well, in the hope that thus the union could be strengthened. Although the Sapiegas managed to resist, direct pressure on the marshal of the sejm and a favourable situation led to the adoption of an insignificant evasive introduction to the coequation of laws, neutral with respect to the Sapiegas. The author proves that it was only later that the law proper, which was especially unfavourable to the Sapiegas, was signed mostly by their opponents already after the split of the sejm. That law prescribed the transfer of some authorizations of the grand hetman was to the sejm, and thus ‘restricted the extent of the GDL statehood by strengthening the authority of an institution (i.e., the sejm – E. M.), joining the two states’ (p. 258).

The author maintains that the royal election of 1697 was significant for almost the whole of Europe and it was the last in which ‘the will of the gentry rather than that of the foreign states were crucial’ (p. 260). The candidacy of the French Prince de Conti was considered the most acceptable to both the Sapiegas and the Radvilas due to his neutrality in the quarrel over the Neuburg possessions, and at long last they chose him. The international situation was also of great importance – it was not in favour of de Conti, who was opposed by three great powers – Russia, Austria and Brandenburg-Prussia, and that finally decided the election of the Saxon Friedrich August Wettin. The author presumes appropriately that the candidacy of the Elector of Saxony was favoured by the Sapiegas. It was only by accident that he was not chosen, and that was their fatal error.

The forces of the adherents of the Frenchman and the Saxon were approximately equal, while several magnates voted twice for one and the other candidate. However, the fear of a de Conti victory and consequently the possibility of the absolute domination of the Sapiegas led to the situation that in the latter half of 1697 ‘the leaders of the anti-Sapiega movement began looking for backers and possible military support abroad’ (p. 273). Analyzing various actions and statements of the anti-Sapiega

grouping, the author maintains that the leaders of that movement started orientating towards Russia on their own and that 'the Russian diplomatic mission had not planned such a move' (p. 275). Intent on the complete destruction of the Sapiegas, that grouping sought overt Russian intervention in the GDL, ignoring the danger of state sovereignty (p. 275). For those 'republicans' the fight against the Sapiegas 'was a priority, and matters concerning the GDR statehood were inferior' (p. 276). The activities of that grouping 'in 1690–1697 left a particularly negative imprint on status of the GDL statehood in the commonwealth' (p. 283). Possibly also true is another statement that the grand hetman of the GDL and his adherents lost the Battle of Valkininkai on 18 November 1700 because 'on 27 June 1697 the Sapiegas had found themselves on the wrong side of the electoral field' (p. 277).

Judging from Sliesoriūnas' book, one does not doubt that it was in the last decade of the seventeenth century that the magnates started turning their state into a puppet for self-seeking reasons. This vast and relatively powerful Republic of Poland and Lithuania, due to its history, geographic position, religious and ethnic composition and some other peculiarities having been for a long time a barrier and a link between the Catholic and the Orthodox realms, and capable of remaining as such in the future, in the subsequent century was gradually erased from the map of the world both as a subject and as an object. On the other hand, a separate more comprehensive research on the contribution of the Polish nobility and Lithuanian gentry into those events is still missing. Also lacking is a similar work on the role of the three principal neighbours and participants of the impending partitions – Russia, Prussia and Austria – in the processes and events in their ailing neighbour.

The book contains a bibliography, an index and twelve illustrations – portraits of the principal historical personages of the period under investigation. There is also an extensive English summary (21 pp.).

Gintautas Sliesoriūnas' book is a meticulously prepared contribution to the understanding and revision of a most complicated period of our history, which directly began the degradation of the state and statehood, and the conditions for which were laid down by our forebears' self-interest and inability to find a common language.

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