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POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH.
POLITICAL GAMES, SOCIAL COMMUNICATION,
DIPLOMACY

Edited by
Aleksandra Ziober and Alessandro Boccolini



EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: LA RIVISTA

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The Editorial and Scientific Board are proud delighted to present the *Eastern European History Review* under the aegis of Sette Città Editore.

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XIV-XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997, from an idea of Prof. Gaetano Platania, today Director Emeritus of this journal.

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The editorial initiative we present comes from the obvious lack of a journal, in Italy, concerning the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the Modern Age, this despite its fundamental role in the history and culture of that part of the continent, wrongly considered distant and peripheral.

Quite the contrary is true, in fact. Main objective of the journal is to create a space for reflection and discussion on topics pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, but also relations with Continental Europe, encouraging dialogue between scholars and experts in the field, and between different approaches of scientific research.

The Editorial and Scientific Board

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SECURITY OF THE GREATER POLAND DURING THE ELECTIONS OF THE POLISH VASA DYNASTY. MECHANISMS, ORGANIZATION AND LEGAL STATE

ABSTRACT

The interregnum is an exceptional time for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During its duration, some institutions did not function as normal as the reign of the monarch, so it was necessary for the assemblies to develop certain rules of conduct at these times. One of the most important issues in this difficult period was security. In the resolutions of the province assembly, it was decided to establish own armed forces, which were to defend the local territory. The representatives of Vasa in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were elected three times. During each election, province assembly of Greater Poland, shared for the Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships, appointed soldiers who were to guard Greater Poland. How large were these enlistments, what were their characteristics and who were their leaders, as well as many other issues will be explained by the author in the article.

KEYWORDS: Interregnum; Local assembly; County troops; Home defence; Greater Poland.

During the interregnum, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth operated in changed legal circumstances. The king not only embodied the majesty of the state, but was also the guarantor of the functioning of its basic elements, such as the justice system, military and administrative issues. The lack of a monarch on the throne resulted in a lack of continuity in the state's activities and, consequently, led to a number of problems that could have a particularly negative impact on the safety of its subjects¹. In order to limit the negative effects of the interregnum as effectively as possible, the nobility tried to develop formulas that would allow them to ensure security in their nearest territory. It should be mentioned that both the interregnum and the confederation introduced a new legal status according to which the state was to function. During its validity, decisions regarding actions taken in connection with security were made at local assemblies (*sejmiki ziemskie*). Among numerous tax, economic, judicial, administrative, social and religious matters, much attention was paid to military issues². They largely concerned local security and this article will focus on them.

1 Oskar Kanecki, *Sądy kapturowe Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* (Sopot: Arche, 2020), 15; Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz, *Koronne zjazdy szlacheckie w dwóch pierwszych bezkrólewicach po śmierci Zygmunta Augusta* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998), 7-8.

2 Wojciech Kriegseisen, *Sejmiki Rzeczypospolitej Szlacheckiej w XVII i XVIII w.* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1991), 80-1.

The main purpose of this article is to draw attention to the measures taken by the assembly, in this particular case the one from Greater Poland, in the field of internal security (*internae*) of the immediate territory during the three successive interregnums, after which the representatives of the Vasa dynasty were elected. Very often, in such situations, armed formations of the nobility's self-government were established – the county troops or the levy of nobility³. It is important to trace these three periods, so years 1587, 1632 and 1648, in terms of showing how the security of the immediate territory was ensured and what decisions were made regarding it.

THE STATE OF RESEARCH

Issues of local defence during the interregnum appear most often in monographs devoted to the interregnum itself. This topic is discussed by Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz⁴, Stanisław Płaza⁵ and Anna Pieńkowska⁶. An extremely important work showing the activities of the nobility during the interregnum is the one written by Emil Kalinowski, titled *Szlachta ziemi bielskiej wobec bezkrólewia w XVI–XVII wieku* [The Nobility of the Bielsko land towards the interregnum in the 16th–17th centuries]⁷. It corresponds very closely to the subject of this article, although it concerns nobility assemblies from a completely different territory of the Commonwealth.

Research on armed troops established to ensure security also seems to be an important issue. Bartosz Staręgowski wrote about this topic and concerned on the nobility's self-government in Greater Poland, which correspond to the above-mentioned historical moments⁸. The topic of Greater Poland's local government armed formations also appeared in an article written by Jolanta Dworzaczkowa⁹. However, within the time scope covered by the topic, it only concerns those incurred during the interregnum after the death of Władysław IV Vasa. This issue also occasionally appears in work (county troops during the interregnum after the successive rulers of the Vasa dynasty) in the monograph by Dariusz Kupisz¹⁰ and

3 Bartosz Staręgowski, *Formacje zbrojne samorządu szlacheckiego województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w okresie panowania Jana Kazimierza (1648–1668)* (Warszawa: DiG, 2022), 70–2, 285–89.

4 Dubas-Urwanowicz, *Koronne zjazdy*, 82.

5 Stanisław Płaza, *Wielkie bezkrólewia* (Kraków: Krajowa Agencja Wyd., 1988).

6 Anna Pieńkowska, *Zjazdy i sejmy z okresu bezkrólewia po śmierci Stefana Batorego* (Pułtusk: Wyd. Akademii Humanistycznej im. A. Gieysztora, 2010).

7 Emil Kalinowski, *Szlachta ziemi bielskiej wobec bezkrólewia w XVI–XVII wieku* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2021).

8 Bartosz Staręgowski, “W służbie województwom wielkopolskim i Rzeczypospolitej. Okoliczności sformowania i działalność pułku Bogusława Leszczyńskiego w latach 1648–1649”, *Res Historica*, 44 (2017): 33–63; Id., *Formacje zbrojne*;

9 Jolanta Dworzaczkowa, *Sprawy wojska na sejmikach wielkopolskich w latach 1648–1668 in Pax et bellum*, ed. Karol Olejnik (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1993), 55–64.

10 Dariusz Kupisz, *Wojska powiatowe samorządów Małopolski i Rusi Czerwonej w latach 1572–1717* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2008).

the article by Albert Borowiak¹¹, while levy of nobility was mentioned in the book by Karol Łopatecki¹². Information on military matters included in the resolutions of the Greater Poland local assemblies can also be found in the study by Stanisław Płaza¹³.

THE NOBILITY ASSEMBLY OF GREATER POLAND PROPER – THE BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR A LOCAL SECURITY

At the beginning, it is worth explaining the principle of operation of the Greater Poland nobility assembly and the area in which it acted. The territory of Greater Poland, i.e. actually two voivodeships – Poznań and Kalisz, included the jurisdiction of a joint local assembly held most often in Środa (currently Środa Wielkopolska)¹⁴. It was one of the most influential noble gatherings in the Greater Poland province and even in the entire country. Other assemblies from neighbouring areas very often took into account the decisions of the one from Środa, or at least were greatly influenced by his decisions¹⁵. Both voivodeships were divided into smaller administrative units: nine counties (counties of the Poznań Voivodeship: Poznań, Kościan and Wałcz; counties of the Kalisz Voivodeship: Gniezno, Kalisz, Kcynia, Konin, Nakło and Pyzdry) and the Wschowa Land¹⁶.

The sessions were most often held in Środa, but they also took place in other places, such as Poznań, Koło, Kalisz, Pyzdry, Poniec and Krobia. Despite so many places of local noble gatherings, Środa became the key place where most of the gatherings took place. Historically, these places were established during the times of King Casimir Jagiellon, when at the *Sejm* in Piotrków in 1459, two meeting places were designated for the Greater Poland nobility: Środa and Koło¹⁷. This was confirmed

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- 11 Albert Borowiak, *Wojska powiatowe przed kampanią piławiecką w 1648 r. in Studia nad staropolską sztuką wojenną*, vol. 2, ed. Zbigniew Hundert (Oświęcim: Napoleon V, 2013), 129-60.
 - 12 Karol Łopatecki, *Organizacja, prawo i dyscyplina w polskim i litewskim pospolitym ruszeniu (do połowy XVII wieku)* (Białystok: Instytut Badań nad dziedzictwem kulturowym Europy, 2013).
 - 13 Stanisław Płaza, *Sejmiki i zjazdy szlacheckie województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego. Ustrój i funkcjonowanie (1572–1632)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 1984).
 - 14 Antoni Gąsiorowski, "Wielkopolska jako region historyczny", in *Dzieje Wielkopolski*, vol. 1, ed. Jerzy Topolski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1969), 33.
 - 15 Michał Zwierzykowski, *Samorząd sejmikowy województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w latach 1696–1732* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), 23; Władysław Konopczyński, "Wielkopolska w dobie Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej", *Roczniki Historyczne*, 1 (1925): 76.
 - 16 Antoni Gąsiorowski, *Powiat w Wielkopolsce w XIV–XVI w. Z zagadnień zarządu terytorialnego i podziałów Polski późnośredniowiecznej* (Poznań: PWN, 1965), 83.
 - 17 Zwierzykowski, *Samorząd sejmikowy*, 27; Michał Zwierzykowski, and Ewa Tacka, "Miejsca obrad sejmików województw Wielkopolski właściwej od XVI do XVIII wieku", *Res Historica*, 42 (2016): 76-7.

by the constitution of the Diet of 1496¹⁸. Derogations from these normal processes were influenced by extraordinary situations, such as an interregnum or rebellion. In the case of the rebellion, there was even phenomenon of a split assembly, when the rebels met in one spot and their opponents in the other place. Informally, there was also a custom that during the interregnum, an assembly was called to the capital of Greater Poland, Poznań, where resolutions were adopted to ensure the safety of the immediate area and stabilize the situation until the election of a new monarch.

Ewa Tacka and Michał Zwierzykowski explained the advantages of Środa that made it chosen as the meeting place. According to these two researchers, Poznań seemed to be a natural centre, conveniently located and with appropriate infrastructure that could accommodate many participants, it also had extensive socio-cultural facilities. However, the nobility from Kalisz complained about this location, as it was located slightly on the outskirts of the voivodeships and made them feel left out. Środa was a compromise, as it had the most central and convenient location to satisfy both the nobility of Poznań and Kalisz¹⁹. The collegiate church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was chosen as the venue for the assemblies sessions²⁰.

Local officials, including voivodes²¹, castellans, and the general starost of Greater Poland, had a significant role in the administrative functioning of voivodeships, as well as in the formation of the army. The first two were mainly responsible for organizing the levy of nobility²², but it was the third one who carried the greatest responsibility for local security. While in the case of ordinary town starost, the influence on military matters was small, but this one, commonly called “general”, retained certain competences that allowed him to form and organize the armed forces of the local government²³. It is important to note the fact that “general” was treated as key person in the process of ensuring security, as we learn from one of the resolutions of the local assembly: «that the *principaliter*, as our leader, should advise on our peace and security and take care of any subsequent danger *pro posse*»²⁴.

18 VC, t. 1: (1493–1549), vol. 1: (1493–1526), eds. Waław Uruszczak, Iwona Dwornicka, and Stanisław Grodziski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1996), 77.

19 Zwierzykowski, *Samorząd sejmikowy*, 28; Id.-Tacka, “Miejsca obrad sejmików”, 77.

20 Płaza, *Sejmiki i zjazdy*, 78; Zwierzykowski-Tacka, “Miejsca obrad sejmików”, 91-7.

21 Jan Majchrowski, *Wojewoda w dawnej Polsce* (Warszawa: Sejmowe, 2019), 82.

22 Płaza, *Sejmiki i zjazdy*, 149; Marek Plewczyński, “Rotmistrz zaciężny na urządzie ziemskim w XVI w.”, in *Kultura–polityka–dyplomacja. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Jaremi Maciszewskiemu w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, eds. Andrzej Bartnicki, et al. (Warszawa: PWN, 1990), 301-02.

23 Antoni Gąsiorowski, *Wielkopolska jako region*, 35; Andrzej Kamieński, “Rola kasztelanów w systemie obronnym Wielkopolski w XVI–XVIII wieku”, *Czasy Nowożytne*, 28 (2015): 25-6; Plewczyński, *Rotmistrz zaciężny*, 302.

24 “Uchwała koła województwa kaliskiego na okazowaniu województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego pod Środą 17 IX 1613 r.”, in ASWPiK, ed. Włodzimierz Dworzaczek, t. I: (1572–1632), part 1: (1572–1616) (Poznań: PWN, 1957), 425. In original: «aby principaliter o naszym pokoju i bezpieczeństwie jako wódz nasz radził i wszelkiemu następującemu niebezpieczeństwu pro posse zabiegał».

The reforms carried out in the years 1621–1624 gave the general starost even greater opportunities to create local armed forces. He received full authority over the local levy of nobility and county troops, which he could call up if necessary. His competences were further developed during the times of Stanisław Przyjemski (1628–1642)²⁵. He was given the ability to call the nobility to arms in case of danger and then organize and lead them, while the competences of castellans and voivodes in this respect were limited only to issuing proclamations calling the nobility to arms²⁶.

THE FIRST ATTEMPTS TO CREATE LOCAL ARMED FORCES TO DEFEND THE TERRITORY – INTERREGNUM AFTER THE DEATH OF STEPHEN BATORY

The first opportunity to attempt to create a system for protecting the local territory appeared with the first free election. After the death of Sigismund Augustus – the last representative of the Jagiellon dynasty – the assembly made quite general decisions regarding security. They were to be provided by each local starost, but if their capabilities turned out to be insufficient, they were to be supported by the nobility itself, which should gather in a levy of nobility and face the people who would threaten order and security²⁷. Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what the security measures taken after the escape of Henry Valois looked like because no resolutions from that period have survived²⁸.

Only the interregnum after the death of Stephen Batory brought several certain solutions of the system. Bishop Stanisław Piasecki described them in his chronicle as follows:

After the death of King Stephen, Poland was in great turmoil... Due to this circumstance, when the knights' order [nobles]... gathered, each voivodeship unanimously reserved the security of its count from a possible attack. Such protection is usually carried out in a way that troops are stationed in voivodeships, especially those where the border area is suspicious, to keep a close watch on any danger [...] ²⁹.

25 *Urzędnicy wielkopolscy XVI-XVIII wieku. Spisy*, ed. Antoni Bieniaszewski (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1987), 165.

26 Łopatecki, *Organizacja, prawo*, 395, 402-05; Kamieński, "Rola kasztelanów", 32.

27 ASWPiK, t. 1/1, "Uchwała zjazdu województw wielkopolskich w Kole 15 październik 1572 r.", 5-8.

28 ASWPiK, t. 1/1, 25-8.

29 Paweł Piasecki, *Kronika Pawła Piaseckiego, biskupa przemyskiego*, ed. Julian Bartoszewicz (Kraków: Drukarnia UJ, 1870), 60. In original: «Po śmierci króla Stefana Polska pod ciężkim stękała rozruchem [...] Z tej okoliczności gdy się stan rycerski [...] zgromadził, każde województwo, naprzód bezpieczeństwo swego okręgu od mogącej się wydarzyć napaści rad jednomyślnie zastrzegło. Takowego zaś ubezpieczenia ten zwykle jest sposób, że po województwach, zwłaszcza tych, gdzie od pogranicza podejrzane jest sąsiedztwo, rozstawiają się załogi wojsk [...], któryby na wszelkie niebezpieczeństwo [...] pilnie czuwali».

The Greater Poland nobility decided to raise an enlisted force for home defence. At the session of the local assembly on 29 December 1587 in Środa, it was decided to raise the county troops and create several banners. The responsibility for organizing these soldiers fell on Hieronim Gostomski, chamberlain (*podkomorzy*) of Rawa. The designated pay was agreed as 30 zlotys per three months for horseman and one thaler per week for the infantryman. Gostomski, as a colonel, was to choose his captains (*rotmistrz*) and appear with them at the muster near Kalisz. Their service was to last one quarter (three months), during which they were advised to «keep guard» and «defend the crossings»³⁰.

The soldiers recruited by the local assembly were to support the levy of nobility, which was called to defend the election of Sigismund Vasa as king and to repel the attack of Habsburg troops intervening on behalf of their candidate Maximilian Habsburg. The field near Kalisz was designated as the place and time for the muster of the levy of nobility on 25 January 1588. The mobilization was to be preceded by two joint local assemblies, separate for the Poznań counties on 18 January near Poznań and the Kalisz counties on 21 January near Pyzdry³¹. Written confirmation signed by colonel Hieronim Gostomski and one of the *rotmistrz*, Jakub Bielawski, indicates that some banners were formed and ready for service³². Meanwhile, the expected joint muster of the levy of nobility from both voivodeships took place three days later than planned, because only on 28 January the nobility appeared near Kalisz. Delay was caused by unjustified procrastination, first in arriving at local meetings and then in reaching the muster place. Finally, a certain group arrived, and at the same time «a large part of the other brothers [nobles] stayed in the houses»³³. Despite these organizational difficulties, a decision was made to march towards Silesia and join the forces of Hetman Jan Zamojski.

When the nobles of Greater Poland were slowly gathering their forces and deciding on further steps, the coronation of Sigismund Vasa took place in Cracow on 27 December. Later Hetman Zamojski defeated the forces of Maximilian Habsburg in the battle of Byczyna on 24 January 1588. The situation was brought under control and the Greater Poland levy of nobility was no longer needed, so was ordered to return homes. As a consequence, the services of the soldiers whom Gostomski was

30 ASWPIK, t. I/1, "Uchwała sejmiku województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie 29 XII 1587 r.", 72-3. In original: «by straż trzymali» and «przepraw bronili».

31 ASWPIK, t. I/1, "Uchwała sejmiku województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie 29 XII 1587 r.", 71-72.

32 ASWPIK, t. I/1, "Pokwitowanie dane przez Jakuba Bielawskiego, rotmistrza Stanisławowi Zebrzydowskiemu, poborcy powiatów kcyńskiego i nakielskiego, w Środzie 1 stycznia 1588 r."; "Pokwitowanie dane przez Hieronima Gostomskiego, podkomorzego rawskiego Stanisławowi Zebrzydowskiemu, poborcy powiatów kcyńskiego i nakielskiego, w Środzie 20 I 1588 r.", 73.

33 ASWPIK, t. I/1, "Uchwała zjazdu na pospolite ruszenie szlachty województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Kaliszu 28 I 1588 r.", 74-5. In original: «braci drugiej wielka część w domiech została».

supposed to recruit were also discontinued³⁴, because the nobility had returned, and the dangers connected with their absence for the levy of nobility muster was no longer the issue.

The interregnum and the election of the first Vasa to the Polish-Lithuanian throne are important in the context of the discussed topic. For the first time, the nobles of Greater Poland decided to raise an enlisted force to defend their territory. The danger appeared in connection with the organization of the levy of nobility and the possibility of its departure outside the area of two voivodehsips. This meant a significant weakening of security and public order, which is why such new process was developed. We can consider those enlisted soldiers as a prototypes of the county troops established in 1619, i.e. a local government armed formation, an equivalent of the former territorial self-defence. Soldiers within it were called up both for home defence, i.e. the immediate territory, and to support the state army. The process of establishing county troops lasted between 1613 and 1619, with Marcin Broniewski, a political activist from Greater Poland, lobbied very strongly for them³⁵. Discussions and work on the formula of the county troops ended in 1619, when a constitution that was crucial from the point of view of this formation was adopted. It specified the rules for forming and financing such government soldiers by the local assemblies within a period of one year, calculating funds for count soldiers from local taxes, and selecting officers and tax collectors who were to be elected at local assemblies. Therefore, this armed formation was given a specific shape and was placed within the legal framework of the Polish-Lithuanian state, according to which it should function in the future³⁶.

During the reign of Sigismund III Vasa, another important decision was made regarding the defence of the local territory. In 1624, it was decided to implement a procedure defined by K. Łopatecki as “declaring martial law”. It included situation, when each time Diet accepted a resolution of the local assembly establishing home defence based on the levy of nobility, county troops or both formations at the same time due to the security threat, and then the appropriate point was entered into the Diet’s constitution. The state of emergency remained in force until the next Diet, when a decision was made to suspend or continue it³⁷. The general starost played

34 Karol Olejnik, *Obrona polskiej granicy zachodniej od końca XIV do schyłku XVIII w.* (Poznań: Wid. Naukowe UAM, 1985), 285-87; Tadeusz Nowak, and Jan Wimmer, *Historia oręża polskiego 963-1795* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1981), 361-66; Jan Wimmer, “Wojsko i skarb Rzeczypospolitej u schyłku XVI i w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku”, *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości*, 14 (1968): 7.

35 VC, t. III: (1611–1640), vol. 1: (1611–1626), eds. Waław Uruszczak, Iwona Dwornicka, and Stanisław Grodziski (Warszawa: Sejmowe, 2010), 118; Janusz Byliński, *Dwa sejmy z roku 1613* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 1984), 40, 79, 82-3; Janusz Byliński, *Marcin Broniewski–trybun szlachty wielkopolskiej w czasach Zygmunta III* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 1994), 137; Kupisz, *Wojska powiatowe*, 34-52.

36 VC, t. III/1, 246-47.

37 Janusz Dorobisz, *Sejm nadzwyczajny z 1624 roku* (Opole: OTPN, 1996), 51, 57; Marta Pietrusiewicz, “Konstytucje sejmowe wobec konfederacji wojskowych w latach panowania Zygmunta III”, in Bartnicki et al., *Kultura-Polityka-Dyplomacja*, 296-97; Łopatecki, *Organizacja, prawo*, 394-95.

a key role in the entire system, who, together with voivodes and castellans, was to seek the king's consent to organize a levy and issue letters of recommendation for count captains. The royal consent for the recruitment of count officers was the most important condition set by the monarch to make it possible to organize a regular troops by the local nobility self-governments³⁸. Such a provision appeared in the constitution of the extraordinary Diet in Warsaw of 1624. It was point 7 entitled: *Laudum of the Poznań, Kraków, Kalisz, Sieradz, Wieluń lands*³⁹. The resolution mentioned here were to be the appropriate determinant of the form of defence during future interregnums.

DANGER "...AT THE BORDER OF THE GREATER POLAND LANDS..." – HOME DEFENCE DURING THE INTERREGNUM AFTER THE DEATH OF SIGISMUND III

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In the years 1627–1632, the nobles of Greater Poland several times utilised their options to create home defence. It was generally decided to enlist count soldiers for defence, but the possibility of mustering the levy of nobility was also considered. At the last Diet before the death of Sigismund Vasa, one of the points of the constitution read:

[...] that the border wars have not calmed down yet [...] at the border of the Greater Poland lands [...] we summarize in *toto* the constitution of the last Diet on the home defence of the Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships [...] ⁴⁰.

Interestingly, the expenses of noble local governments spent on the troops they raised were to be covered by the state treasury from the revenues from alcohol tax (so called *czopowe*)⁴¹. This was quite an unusual decision, considering the monarch's unfavourable attitude towards county troops as such, not to mention the financing itself.

At the time of the death of Sigismund III Vasa in 1632, the interrex Primate Jan Wężyk immediately issued a proclamation addressed to all noble gatherings in the country, asking them to ensure "home security" against bandits and people illegally crossing the border⁴². In accordance with what was offered to them by the procedure adopted a few years earlier, the nobles of Greater Poland considered two options. One of them was to raise the levy of nobility, another to enlist county troops.

38 ASWPiK, t. I/2, "Uchwała sejmiku przedsejmowego województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie 13 I 1624 r.", 168-69; Byliński, *Marcin Broniewski*, 169.

39 VC, t. III/1, 336-37.

40 VC, t. III, vol. 2: (1627–1640), eds. Waław Uruszczak, Stanisław Grodziski, and Marcin Kwiecień (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2013), 139-40. In original: «[...], iż się wojny pograniczne do tych czasów jeszcze nie uspokoiły [...], przy granicy krajów wielkopolskich [...] konstytucją sejmu przeszłego, o obronie domowej, poznańskiego i kaliskiego województw *in toto* reasumujemy [...]».

41 Jan Seredyka, *Rzeczpospolita w ostatnich latach panowania Zygmunta III (1629–1632). Zarys wewnętrznych dziejów politycznych* (Opole: WSP im. Powstańców Śląskich w Opolu, 1978), 174.

42 VC, t. III/2, 149-150; Piasecki, *Kronika Pawła Piaseckiego*, 355.

General starost Stanisław Przyjemski issued a proclamation in which he informed the nobility about the king's death and called on them to mobilize militarily, be ready to respond to the call of the voivodes and react to any possible threats⁴³.

The key decisions were made by the congress of the Greater Poland nobility in Poznań on 10 May 1632. It was unanimously decided to implement the security procedure of 1624, as confirmed in 1627 and 1631. The possible decision to gather levy of nobility was to be made by Stanisław Przyjemski, as the main defence coordinator. Moreover, it was decided to maintain in force the provisions of the constitution of 1631 regarding the establishment of three 50-horse Cossack cavalry banners for defence purposes, supervised by the general starost, supported by the city garrison, chosen infantry (*wybraniecka*) and possibly the levy of nobility. However, detailed decisions on this subject were postponed to the next meeting. In addition, it was decided to provide additional powers to individual starosts in the scope of protecting the borders against illegal attempts of foreigners crossing them and to immediately report each such attempt to the general starost or the interrex. Customs guards and the chosen infantry supporting them were to ensure the integrity of the border lines⁴⁴. A few days after the meeting in Poznań, Stanisław Przyjemski issued a proclamation in which he asked the land tenants to provide infantrymen to the chosen infantry so that they could effectively secure the borders of the voivodeship «from where the greatest danger should be feared»⁴⁵.

Further important decisions regarding defence were made at the local assembly on 3 June 1632. It was preceded by a proclamation from Primate Jan Wężyk, who, in addition to indicating the date of the convocation Diet, made an urgent appeal to make decisions regarding defence and security during the interregnum⁴⁶. At the assembly, it was decided that the recently mentioned 150-horse Cossack cavalry unit would be joined by another one in the same strength with a pay of 30 zlotys per horseman per quarter of service. The place and date of the musters were to be determined by Stanisław Przyjemski or his deputy, chosen from among three people: Adam Olbracht Baranowski, Tyburcy Złotnicki and Stanisław Strykowski. During his absence, the selected person was to manage the count home defence force. The assembly also elected commissioners whose task was to supervise the musters and record the number and personnel of the banners. The following were elected commissioners: Wacław Ossowski, Jan Kiełczewski, Maciej Niegolewski

43 “Uniwersał Stanisława Przyjemskiego marszałka nadwornego, starosty generalnego Wielkopolski, ogłaszający bezkrólewie–Konin, 2 maja 1632 r.”, in ASWPiK 1632–1655, eds. Michał Zwierzykowski, Robert Kołodziej, Igor Kraszewski, and Andrzej Kamieński (Poznań: Wyd. Naukowe FNCE, 2022), 3–4.

44 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Laudum zjazdu województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Poznaniu, 10 maja 1632 r.”, 4–7; VC, t. III/2, 112; Seredyka, *Rzeczpospolita w ostatnich latach*, 126–27.

45 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Uniwersał starosty generalnego Stanisława Przyjemskiego do szlachty województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego, Poznań 13 maja 1632”, 8–9. In original: «skąd nawiętszego niebezpieczeństwa obawiać się trzeba».

46 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Uniwersał prymasa Jana Wężyka zwołujący sejmik przedkonwokacyjny województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie na dzień 3 czerwca 1632 r. Warszawa 5 maja 1632 r.”, 10–2.

and Stanisław Kobierzycki. In turn, Prokop Stogniew, Remigian Dembiński, Krzysztof Szczodrowski and Jerzy Chełmski became captains (*rotmistrz*) of the Cossack cavalry. The strength of individual banners was also changed, from now on they were to consist of 75 horses each. The tasks of the established force included protecting the border with Silesia against the invasion of troops participating in the Thirty Years' War and fighting criminals and demobilized soldiers who could cause destruction in the Greater Poland voivodeships⁴⁷.

In addition, the resolution ordered the organization of a 150-men strong Polish infantry banner, its task being to support customs guards. Command over them was entrusted to the general starost. An additional 50 infantrymen were sent to reinforce the Zbąszyń garrison. It was left to Stanisław Przyjemski to designate the remaining places that needed increased protection. Money from the heart tax of 10 groszy from all cities and villages, including clerical, royal and noble estates, was allocated to pay for the cavalry banners and the infantry unit. Stefan Korzeniewski in Poznań and Mikołaj Mieszkowski in Kalisz were appointed tax collectors. Tax gathering was to begin on 24 June (St. John's Day) and to be carried out within two weeks. The money should then go to Stanisław Przyjemski or his deputies. It was also forbidden for soldiers to leave the count borders of the Poznań and Kalisz voivodeships, and even more so the borders of the Commonwealth⁴⁸. The deputies sent to the convocation Diet were to seek approval of all the above-mentioned forms of defence⁴⁹.

The situation was so serious that the convocation Diet was extremely quick to confirm the decisions of the Greater Poland assemblies⁵⁰, and even the primate himself declared financial support from the funds of his own diocese⁵¹. Due to his function as a Court Marshal and the need to stay at court, Stanisław Przyjemski appointed Adam Olbracht Przyjemski, a Crown Camp-master, as his deputy for the duration of his absence. For his part, he was to decide on the organization of the county troops, but he could also call the levy of nobility. He even issued a proclamation for this purpose⁵², but this formula was ultimately rejected in favour of an enlisted county troops.

The county troops actively defended the borderland, which is confirmed in local

47 BUWr, 1949/439, "Uniwersał sejmiku średzkiego subinterregio o obronie i rządzie domowym poznańskiego i kaliskiego województw Proclamation of Środa province assembly during subinterregio about defence and local government poznański and kaliskie voivodeships", ff. 277-78.

48 ASWPiK 1632-1655, "Laudum sejmiku przedkonwokacyjnego województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie, 3 czerwca 1632 r.", 17-20.

49 ASWPiK 1632-1655, "Instrukcja dana posłom na konwokację z sejmiku województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie, 3 czerwca 1632 r.", 21-34.

50 Włodzimierz Kaczorowski, *Sejmy konwokacyjny i elekcyjny w okresie bezkrólewia 1632 r.* (Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1986), 128.

51 Sereyka, *Rzeczpospolita w ostatnich latach*, 136.

52 ASWPiK 1632-1655, "Uniwersał Adama Olbrachta Przyjemskiego oboźnego koronnego, ogłaszający wici jedne za dwoje na pospolite ruszenie do obrony województw przed zagrożeniem z zagranicy. Miejska Górka, 27 IX 1632 r.", 42-3.

assembly resolution of 13 September 1632⁵³ and the official written complaint by Jan Szczucki⁵⁴. The accounts presented at the Środa local assembly in December 1632 by collectors Korzeniowski and Mieszkowski confirm the names of the captains of the Cossack cavalry banners, as well as the infantry units of Stanisław Przyjemski and the Castellan of Śrem, Abraham Ciświcki, who was to take care of the garrison in Zbąszyń. In the Poznań Voivodeship, it was collected 12,341 zlotys of the hearth tax and in the Kalisz Voivodeship 11,434 zlotys, of which 2,350 was paid to Krzysztof Szczodrowski, 4,350 to Remigian Dembiński and 4,700 to Jerzy Chełmski. 5,837 zlotys was spent on the general *starosta*'s infantry under the command of Lieutenant Wyganowski and 4,000 zlotys on Abraham Ciświcki's infantry. However, no payment was planned for Prokop Stogniew but we know that he was also in command of the count soldiers, as his name was mentioned in Jan Szczucki's complaint, mentioned above. Some of the officers served two quarters (Chełmski, Dembiński) while others just one (Szczodrowski and perhaps Stogniew)⁵⁵. The coronation Diet in 1633 approved all the local assembly's decisions regarding defence during the interregnum⁵⁶.

During the second interregnum, after the death of Sigismund III, significantly more decisions were made regarding defence of the region. In addition to the count Cossack cavalry banners with a total of 300 horsemen, also chosen infantry and Polish infantry banners formed by the assembly were used to defend the borders and the town of Zbąszyń. This time the threat resulted from the Thirty Years' War that had been ongoing near the Polish borders since 1618. It led to troops from both warring sides crossing the borders of the Greater Poland Province. Enlisted troops were mainly deployed to counter this threat.

THE INTERREGNUM AFTER THE DEATH OF LADISLAUS IV – A CRITICAL MOMENT FOR THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

The death of Ladislaus IV coincided with an extremely unfortunate moment for the state. The largest Cossack uprising in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian state broke out in the south-eastern borderlands. Bohdan Khmelnytsky, the newly elected Cossack leader, managed to defeat two of the three groups of the Crown army in the battles of Korsun and Yellow Waters, and soon also neutralized the third one. The hetmans were captured, and the situation of the army seemed critical. Worrying signals reached Greater Poland, even though it was far from the endangered regions⁵⁷. Therefore, the general *starosta*, Bogusław Leszczyński, sent his proclamation to the inhabitants of Greater Poland, informing about the king's death, the defeat of the army at Korsun and calling on the nobility to «be as diligent

53 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Laudum sejmiku deputackiego województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie, 13 września 1632 r.”, 39-40.

54 APPozn., Gr. Pozn., 677, “Protestacja Jana Szczuckiego Jan Szczucki's protest”, f. 545-45v.

55 BUWr, 1949/439, “Rachunki poborców z wydatków na wojsko sejmikowe”, 14 XII 1632, f. 309v.

56 VC, t. III/2, 196, 218.

57 Staręgowski, *Formacje zbrojne*, 73-74.

as possible in readiness, so that...all dangers can be prevented early»⁵⁸. Together with the Voivode of Poznań, Krzysztof Opaliński, they also summoned the nobility to an extraordinary assembly in Poznań on 8 June 1648⁵⁹.

At the assembly, it was agreed that the inhabitants of Greater Poland would form a large force of the county troops divided into three regiments composed of harquebusiers cavalry and hussars, and one of dragoons under the command of Colonel Jacek Rozdrażewski. These forces, numbering 2,200 soldiers, were to be sent to support the state army fighting against the Cossacks⁶⁰. Considering the topic of this article, the most important paragraph of the resolution concerned the establishment of home defence during the interregnum. For the safety of the local territories, it was decided to recruit an additional regiment under the command of the general starosta himself. It was supposed to involve the service of three captains, each of whom was to enlist a banner of 100 horses of harquebusiers cavalry. A pay of 50 zlotys per quarter of service was to be offered to each soldier, and 1,000 zlotys of special pay (so called *kuchenne*) for captains. In the absence of the general starosta, supervision over the forming home defence regiment was to be taken over by commissioners: Krzysztof Mielżyński, Władysław Strykowski, Aleksander Kobierzycki and Chryzostom Jaskólski. In addition, it was intended to supplement the local defence with private troops of the local officials. Voivode of Poznań, Krzysztof Opaliński, declared that he would send banner of 100 infantry and 60 dragoons, Castellan of Poznań, Franciszek Czarnkowski, would send 100 infantrymen to defend the border count of Międzyrzecz, and the starost of Wschowa, Wojciech Gajewski, would send 150 infantrymen to defend the Wschowa land. Soldiers assigned to home defence were prohibited from crossing the state borders⁶¹. Voivode Krzysztof Opaliński wrote to his brother Łukasz about the forces raised the assembly and his own participation in ensuring the security of Greater Poland: «[...] three hundred men as mounted service to defend the local borders, of whom one and a half hundred are under my regiment, [while – B. S.] Rucki will be stationed to guard here from Głogów, along with my infantry and dragoons [...]»⁶². At the

58 ASWPK 1632–1655, “Uniwersał Bogusława Leszczyńskiego starosty generalnego Wielkopolski, informujący o śmierci króla. Przygodzice 27 maja 1648 r.”; “Uniwersał Bogusława Leszczyńskiego starosty generalnego Wielkopolski, wzywający do gotowości do obrony Rzeczypospolitej. Przygodzice 28 maja 1648 r.”; “Uniwersał starosty generalnego Wielkopolski. Pierzchno 7 czerwca 1648 r.”, 432–33, 436. In original: «w gotowość wszelaką jako najpilniej się usposabiali, tak żeby [...] wszelakim niebezpieczeństwom wcześniej zabezpieczyć mogło».

59 ASWPK 1632–1655, “Uniwersał Bogusława Leszczyńskiego starosty generalnego Wielkopolski zwołujący nadzwyczajny zjazd do Poznania, na dzień 8 czerwca 1648 r., Przygodzice, 29 maja 1648 r.”; “Uniwersał Krzysztofa Opalińskiego wojewody poznańskiego do województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego, ogłaszający termin zjazdu w Poznaniu, na 8 czerwca 1648 r. Sieraków 30 maja 1648 r.”, 434–35.

60 Staręgowski, *Formacje zbrojne*, 75.

61 ASWPK 1632–1655, “Laudum nadzwyczajne zjazdu w Poznaniu, 8 czerwca 1648 r.”, 439, 441.

62 “Krzysztof Opaliński do brata Łukasza, Sieraków 12 VI 1648”, in *Listy Krzysztofa*

pre-convocation assembly in Środa on 25 June 1648, it was decided that Zygmunt Twardowski will be chosen as the commissioner to muster the home defence regiment⁶³. Due to the absence of “general” Leszczyński in Greater Poland, who was at that time at the general convocation, the commissioners took over his duties to ensure that the Greater Poland Voivodeships were properly protected against dangers and soldiers coming from “foreign corners”.

The document issued by the commissioners contained clear rules of conduct for soldiers and officers. Horsemen from harquebusiers cavalry were to be stationed at their banners and the officers were to be responsible for order and compliance with military articles. Severe punishments were to be issued to those who did not comply with these regulations, because efforts were made to ensure that «[...] human tears did not follow these banners [...]». The soldiers were to ensure security at the borders and roads, but only in the area of both voivodeships. The following patrol areas were assigned to the home defence banners: Stanisław Rucki –the area from the northern border and Czaplinek under the Brandenburg border up to Międzyrzecz, Jan Szlichtyng – the area of Kościan Count from Święciechowa to Poniec, and Jerzy Chełmski – the Silesian border from Bystrzewa to Poniec. These officers were advised to pay for all services provided to their soldiers, not to be burden for the local cities and towns and to prevent their men from hurting the local population. Supply areas for each banner were also designated. Chełmski was assigned clerical and secular estates in the Konin and Pyzdry counties of the Kalisz Voivodeship, also all areas in the vicinity of Dubica. Szlichtyng was granted clerical and royal estates in the Kościan count and, additionally, the area of Wschowa land. Rucki was assigned to counties in the Poznań Voivodeship and additionally in the Kalisz, Kcyński and Nakło Voivodeships⁶⁴.

On 14 July, Bogusław Leszczyński issued recruitment letter to Samuel Szlichtyng and Stanisław Rucki, in which he obliged them to enlist banners of 100 horses harquebusiers cavalry or Cossack cavalry, for the period of one quarter. If they resigned from harquebusiers cavalry in favour of Cossack cavalry, they were to «[...] raise Cossacks with three guns, in ‘quarter army’ style, in mail, *misiurka* helmet and arm-guards, and good sabre [...]». With this banner they were to appear before Zygmunt Twardowski, *surogator*⁶⁵ of Poznań⁶⁶. Muster took place near Śrem on

Opalińskiego do brata Łukasza 1641–1653, ed. Roman Pollak (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1957), 413–14. In original: «ludzi trzystu także konną służbę na obronę tutecznych granic, z których pułtorasta pod moim regimentem Pan Rucki mój stawiawszy pilnować tu od Głogowa będzie przy piechocie moich i draganach».

63 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Laudum sejmiku przedkonwokacyjnego województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego w Środzie, 25 czerwca 1648 r.”, 459.

64 ASWPiK 1632–1655, “Dyspozycje komisarzy sejmikowych w sprawie dyscypliny, lokacji i prowiantów do czasu wymarszu na Ukrainę. Poznań, 15 lipca 1648 r.”, 467–68.

65 In Commonwealth he was special deputy of the local starosta, chosen by Diet.

66 APPozn., Gr. Kal., 273, “List przypowiedni starosty generalnego Bogusława Leszczyńskiego dla Stanisława Ruckiego. Przygodzice 14 VII 1648”, ff. 443–45;

31 July 1648. According to Commissioner Twardowski, the assigned quarters of Rucki were changed so that his banner would not choose them from the positions designated for Jakub Rozdrażewski's regiment⁶⁷.

The home defence regiment was established to protect the territory of the Greater Poland voivodeships against possible Swedish aggression, in case if Swedes would want to take advantage of the time of the civil war in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, at that time there was simply no such threat. This was confirmed by Krzysztof Opaliński himself, when he was assuring the security of the voivodeships and justifying it with the declarations of the Swedish governor residing in Pomerania, who gave him his personal word of the inviolability of Polish borders⁶⁸. Taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances, after serving three months, the home defence banners were disbanded and the soldiers returned home⁶⁹.

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SUMMARY

The activities undertaken during the subsequent interregnum to ensure the security of the local territories of Greater Poland were very diverse. The period of three consecutive elections, after which the Polish Vasas were elected is a good illustration of their diversity. In all these periods, the county troops were recruited, being the armed formation of the local government seen as best suited to the task of defending its territory. Sometimes attempts were made to support it with the levy of nobility or other formations, such as chosen infantry, but the county cavalry banners were always the pillar of defence.

In 1624, both voivodeships guaranteed the possibility of organizing their own defence in parliamentary constitutions. The procedure for declaring a state of emergency allowed them to defend themselves with the help of the county troops or levy of nobility. Over the years, the effectiveness of these methods and the dangers itself has varied. In case of the lack of the latter, banners served for a very short time, usually only one quarter. It is important to highlight though, that the people of Greater Poland tried to organize defence formations to guard their internal security, which seems pretty obvious, considering the nobility's concern for their property and peace.

ASWPiK 1632–1655, "List przypowiedni Bogusława Leszczyńskiego starosty generalnego dla Samuela Szlichtynga na rotmistrza rotę arkebuzerskiej województw wielkopolskich. Przygodzice 14 lipca 1648 r.", 466. In original: «[...] wystawić kozaka z trojgiem strzelb, trybem kwarcianym, w pancerzu, w misiurce z karwaszami i z szablą dobrą [...]».

67 APPozn., Gr. Kal., 273, "Uniwersał surogatora poznańskiego Zygmunta Twardowskiego do mieszkańców województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego. Śrem 31 VII 1648", f. 445r-v.

68 "Krzysztof Opaliński do brata Łukasza 12 VI 1648", in Pollak, *Listy Krzysztofa Opalińskiego*, 414; Alojzy Sajkowski, *Krzysztof Opaliński. Wojewoda poznański* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1960), 98.

69 APPozn., Gr. Kal., 273, "Manifestacja chorągwi Stanisława Ruckiego", 24 IX 1648, f. 540v.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASWPiK: *Akta sejmikowe województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego*.

ASWPiK 1632–1655: *Akta sejmikowe województw poznańskiego i kaliskiego. Lata 1632–1655*.

BUWr: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu.

APPozn.: Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu.

Gr. Pozn.: Księgi grodzkie poznańskie.

Gr. Kal.: Księgi grodzkie kaliskie.

VC: *Volumina Constitutionum*.

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