

Political crisis in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 1430s¹

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Historical background

By 1430, the year of grand duke Vytautas' death, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was stretching "from one sea to another", i.e. from the Baltic to the Black sea, embracing the historical core, the so-called *Lithuania propria* (modern east Lithuania and west Byelorussia), Samogitia (Žemaitija) – the land between *Lithuania propria* and Prussia, as well as huge Ruthenian (Russian) lands once belonging to Kievan Rus', which were subdued by Lithuanian dukes from the 13th to the beginning of the 15th century. Lithuania's expansion into Rus' was one of the main sources of the wealth and authority of its rulers – dukes, their relatives – princes, from the end of the 13th century descending from grand duke Gediminas, and the warriors called *boyars* (the word borrowed from Old Russian). Simultaneously they had to withstand the wars with the Teutonic Order attacking *Lithuania propria* and Samogitia from Prussia and Livonia. In order to combine these two tasks grand duke Jogaila in 1385–1386 entered a union with Poland, ascending its throne and being baptized under the name of king Władysław II Jagiełło. In the beginning he was trying to retain the immediate power over the Grand Duchy, but soon had to surrender it to his cousin Vytautas, retaining only vague supremacy over him². Vytautas, at first Jagiełło's vicegerent, took decided measures to strengthen his authority: he removed from appanage principalities the most influential princes, who could rival him, and installed instead of them his lieutenants recruited mostly from the Lithuanian boyars; started granting land to them in return for military service, and created his permanent court with a chancery. These measures helped him solve the problems of defeating the Teutonic Order, further subjugation of Rus' (which took not only military forms) and strengthening his position outside his realm as well. By the end of Vytautas' reign his Grand Duchy became one of the leading powers of East Central Europe, supported by its ally Poland, and would intervene not only the struggle

¹ This text is a summary of the unpublished PhD thesis defended in 2011.

The lands of Rus' belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are hereafter referred to as Ruthenian, their inhabitants as Ruthenians, according to the Latin tradition, in order to distinguish them and the modern Russians whose ancestors inhabited the North-Eastern and North-Western lands of Rus' – Moscow, Tver', Novgorod etc. For the personal names, the basic forms are those established in the English tradition, i. e. the Lithuanian ones for the grand dukes and nobles of Lithuania and the Polish ones for the kings of Poland. The Polish and Russian forms extant in research literature are also provided in brackets.

² On the genesis of the Grand Duchy's union with Poland, see *H. Łowmiański, Uwagi w sprawie podłoża społecznego i gospodarczego unii jagiellońskiej*, [in:] *H. Łowmiański, Studia nad dziejami Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*. (Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza, Ser. Historia, Nr 108.) Poznań 1983; *J. Nikodem, Jadwiga król Polski*, Wrocław 2009.

for power in the Golden Horde, the nomadic state coming to its decline, but also the interrelations between the Russian states – the Grand Duchies of Moscow, Tver', Ryazan' as well as the republics of Novgorod and Pskov. In 1429–1430 Vytautas was even going to shift his status inside and outside the country by receiving a crown from the Roman king Sigismund I von Luxemburg, making his Grand Duchy a kingdom³.

Everything changed immediately after the death of Vytautas on October 27th, 1430. Grand duke became Švitrigaila (rus. Svidrigailo, pol. Świdrygiełło) who was widely known in the Grand Duchy due to his struggle for power against Vytautas which had lasted for almost 40 years⁴. The new ruler came into open conflict with the king of Poland (paradoxically, his native brother) Władysław II Jagiełło. Its issues were the prospects of the union with Poland which Švitrigaila didn't want to renew as well as the fate of the Grand Duchy's southern Ruthenian borderlands Podolia and Volhynia. Hostilities broke out in the south, and in the summer of 1431 the Poles even besieged the castle of Lutsk in Volhynia. However, both sides came to nothing, while Švitrigaila was nearing politically and military to the Teutonic Order and delaying the negotiations on an "eternal peace" with Poland. In 1432 Švitrigaila was overthrown by a group of nobles, but fled to the city of Polotsk and started a war against the new grand duke Žygimantas Kęstutaitis (rus. Sigismund Keistutovich, pol. Zygmunt Kiejstutowicz), who was supported by Poland and managed to take under his control *Lithuania propria*. Although Žygimantas' positions were not strong at all, he proved to be more successful than his rival: Švitrigaila, enjoying the support of the huge Ruthenian lands, waged several campaigns aimed at pushing Žygimantas out of Lithuania, but none of them reached the goal. In 1432 he lost the first great battle at Oszmiany, and next year he was unable to take the castles of Vilnius (Wilno) and Trakai (Troki). On September 1st, 1435 Švitrigaila suffered a crushing military defeat at Ukmergė (pol. Wiłkomierz) in Lithuania and soon lost the northern part of his former possessions including the lands of Smolensk, Polotsk and Vitebsk. Nevertheless, he managed to retain control over the Kyivan land and even to extend it to Volhynia with the city of Lutsk. I suppose that it was Žygimantas' fruitless campaigns for the southern part of the Grand Duchy that led him to an effort of concluding an alliance with the Roman king Albrecht II and the Teutonic Order. Meanwhile Žygimantas was trying to win Švitrigaila's partisans for himself by granting them general (i.e. applied to all the princes and boyars) and particular privileges as well as by means of secret negotiations. The most famous case is that of metropolitan of all Rus' Gerasim who was burnt at stake in 1435 for his participation in an anti-Švitrigailan plot. Although Žygimantas managed to push his rival out of the Grand

³ On Vytautas, see *J. Pfitzner*, *Grossfürst Witold von Litauen als Staatsmann*, Prag – Brünn 1930; *Lietuvos istorija*, t. 4. *Nauji horizontai: dinastija, visuomenė, valstybė. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1386–1529 m.*, Vilnius 2009; *R. Petrauskas*, *Valdovas ir jo karūna: Neįvykusios Vytauto karūnacijos aplinkybės*, [in:] *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2009 metai, t. 2, Vilnius 2010.

⁴ On his struggle for power, see my popular article: *С. Полехов*, «Русины опять провозгласили его своим господином». Князь Свидригайло – оппозиционер номер один в Великом княжестве Литовском, [in:] *Родина. Российский исторический журнал*, 2011, № 10.

Duchy by the beginning of 1439 and thus won the war, he himself was assassinated a few months later, in 1440. This was followed by a series of uprisings in the provinces of the Grand Duchy against the central power (the data on Smolensk, Volhynia, Samogitia are extant; it is unclear whether something like that took place in Kyiv and the newly restored principality of Mstislavl'). In Lithuania Casimir Jagiellończyk, a 13-year-old son of Władysław II, was proclaimed grand duke, and the situation on the country's periphery was settled by 1443.

Problems, sources and approaches

My degree research issue described above is no innovation *per se*. The civil war in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after Vytautas' death has been studied by plenty of historians, its special study beginning with the monograph by the Polish scholar Anatol Lewicki (1892)⁵. What remains unclear is the reasons and character of those events. It is clear neither why Švitrigaila was overthrown nor why this caused the split of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, leave alone the uprisings in its provinces at the beginning of the 1440s. The historians were trying to follow the scarce direct explanations of the sources and see these events as a conflict between the two parts of the state, the Lithuanian and the Ruthenian ones. There was some debate on that issue, but in my opinion, they add up to details, however important, e.g., whether the reasons of that struggle were religious, national or territorial. To sum up the traditional view(s), Švitrigaila during his short reign over the whole Grand Duchy (1430–1432) was especially favoring either the Orthodox Church or the Ruthenians, introducing them to the ruling class (it should be stressed here that the very word *Ruthenian* could mean *Orthodox*, for it was e.g. applied to the princes conscious of their Lithuanian origins from Gediminas but practicing Orthodoxy⁶). That must have displeased the Lithuanian Catholic nobility (boyars), and thus the coup d'état in 1432 was their reaction. The reason for the subsequent events must have been the Ruthenian elites' attempt to get rid of the Lithuanian predominance in the country, either by winning the high places in the grand-ducal milieu or by reviving in some way the Ruthenian statehood of the Grand Duchy's regions.

The scheme outlined above was created at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (the names of such scholars from Poland and Russia as Anatol Lewicki, Matvey Liubavsky⁷, Oskar Halecki⁸ or Henryk Łowmiański are worth mentioning) and seems to

⁵ A. Lewicki, *Powstanie Świdrygiełły. Ustęp z dziejów unii Litwy z Koroną*, Kraków 1892 (a reprint from: *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności, Wydział historyczno-filozoficzny*, t. 29).

⁶ For example, see the signature of prince Jurgis Lengvenaitis (rus. Yuri Lugvenevich, pol. Jerzy Lingwenowicz) under his letter sent in 1440: "Von Gotes gnaden furst Joerge Lingwenavytz Ruyschesser furst, erbeling czu Littawen" (*Liv-, est- und curländisches Urkundenbuch*, Bd. 9, hrsg. von H. Hildebrand, Riga – Moskau 1889, Nr. 558, S. 410).

⁷ His principal work on the subject: *М.К. Любавский, Литовско-русский сейм. Опыт по истории учреждения в связи с внутренним строем и внешнею жизнью государства*, Москва 1900.

have been to a certain extent politically influenced. It was widely discussed before World War II, also in the Ukrainian and Lithuanian historiographies⁹. After 1945, when East Central Europe came under the Soviet rule, the topics like that were unwelcome in the historiography¹⁰. Some aspects of the period were also studied at the beginning of the 21st century, that reflects the scholars' growing interest¹¹. However, the traditional explanatory scheme of the conflict is still extant in the syntheses of the region's history¹². It seems very contradictory, for it takes into account only a part of facts and ignores the other ones. For instance, it is unclear why Žygimantas Kęstutaitis had some very prominent Ruthenian (Orthodox) partisans and Švitrigaila – some Lithuanian, Polish and German (i.e. Catholic) ones, nor why they would change their loyalty going over from Žygimantas to Švitrigaila and vice versa. That's why the social and political history of the period is worth re-examining.

The period is covered with quite many sources of different types. It should be stressed that the meaning of the word “many” is different in the case of Grand Duchy of Lithuania than even in the case of neighboring Poland, leave alone any West European country. The sources depicting Grand Duchy's history before the 16th century are rather scarce. However, the situation is not so bad as in the 13th and 14th century. The traditional basis for the study of my topic has been the narrative sources – the Russian/Ruthenian chronicles (first of all the so-called “Smolensk chronicle” written by a contemporary¹³, - it should be reminded that Smolensk was a part of the Grand Duchy, - as well as those of Tver' and Pskov¹⁴) and *Annales Poloniae* (often also referred to as “The History of Poland”) by Cracow canon Jan Długosz¹⁵, written in the second half of the same century. These sources depict the events in the Grand Duchy very fragmentary and sometimes inaccurate, nevertheless, they are of great importance for my study. It is necessary to distinguish

⁸ O. Halecki, *Ostatnie lata Świdrygiełły i sprawa wołyńska za Kazimierza Jagiellończyka*, Kraków 1915; *idem*, *Litwa, Ruś i Żmudź jako części składowe Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, [in:] *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejętności*, t. 59 (Ser. 2, t. 34), Kraków 1916; *idem*, *Z Jana Zamoyskiego inwentarza archiwum koronnego. Materyały do dziejów Rusi i Litwy w XV wieku*, [in:] *Archiwum Komisji Historycznej*, t. 12, cz. 1, Kraków 1919; *idem*, *Dzieje unii Jagiellońskiej*, t. 1. *W wiekach średnich*, Kraków 1919.

⁹ See in particular: Б. Барвіньский, *Жигимонт Кейстутович Великий князь Литовско-русский*, Жовква 1905; М.С. Грушевський, *Історія України-Руси*. Т. 4. XIV – XVI віки – відносини політичні. Київ – Львів 1907 / Київ 1993 (reprint); J. Matusas, *Švitrigaila Lietuvos didysis kunigaikštis*. 2-as leid., Vilnius 1991 (1st ed. – Kaunas 1938).

¹⁰ In 1955 an important study reviewing the whole 15th century was published by a German scholar: H. Jablonowski, *Westrussland zwischen Wilna und Moskau. Die politische Stellung und die politischen Tendenzen der russischen Bevölkerung des Grossfürstentums Litauen im 15. Jh.*, Leiden 1955.

¹¹ See the principal work: R. Petrauskas, *Lietuvos diduomenė XIV a. pabaigoje – XV a.: Sudėtis – struktūra – valdžia*, Vilnius 2003. See also: *Lietuvos istorija*, t. 4 (above fn. 3), summarizing the recent study.

¹² The main of them are: Э. Гудавичюс, *История Литвы с древнейших времён до 1569 года*, т. 1, Москва 2005 (originally published in Lithuanian in 1999); G. Blaszczyk, *Dzieje stosunków polsko-litewskich*, t. 2: *Od Krewa do Lublina*, cz. 1, Poznań 2007.

¹³ Different manuscripts are published in: *Полное собрание русских летописей*, т. 35, Москва 1980.

¹⁴ Their edition: *Ibid.*, т. 5, вып. 1–2, Москва 2000–2003; т. 15, Москва 2003.

¹⁵ *Dlugossii J. Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae. Liber XI (1413–1430)*, Varsaviae 2000; *Liber XI et liber XII (1431–1444)*, Varsaviae 2001.

between the facts of Grand Duchy's political life they reflect and their authors' images of the past. The second major group is acts – both treaties with neighboring states (Poland, the Teutonic Order etc.) and documents confirming the donation of land and serfs (to borrow an English word). Of great importance are their lists of attestants/guarantees, providing important contemporary information on noble groupings. The sources of that kind also reveal the territorial developments in the Grand Duchy and neighbouring lands, providing information on the offices in the territorial administration held by the nobles as well as some direct evidence on the two “grand dukes” possessions. This information allows to see the war in a more differentiated and complicated way, not as a simple conflict between Lithuania and Ruthenia, as it was perceived by contemporaries. Most of the acts are published, however, it proved possible to obtain several unpublished documents in the archives and libraries of Cracow, Kórnik, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vilnius and Warsaw. The third group of sources (last, but not least) is political correspondence of the 1430s – letters of Lithuanian and Polish monarch and nobles as well as those of the Teutonic Order's dignitaries. It should be stressed that they are of principal significance for the research, since they reflect an immediate picture of events, distorted neither by the knowledge of their subsequent course and outcome nor by “learned” images of developments characteristic of the narrative sources. The information is provided in the letters not in so a clichéd way as in the chronicles and acts. Due to the correspondence intensity (several hundred letters have survived dating back to the period under consideration) one can sometimes trace the developments on the scale of months, weeks and even days. The largest part of political correspondence relevant for the topic of my dissertation is unpublished and preserved in Berlin, among the papers of the so-called historical Königsberg archive which once belonged to the grand master of the Teutonic Order – Švitrigaila's main ally¹⁶. However, that type of sources covers only several regions of the Grand Duchy – first of all *Lithuania propria*, then Švitrigaila's court wandering with the duke himself, Samogitia and Volhynia. Thus, the extant sources allow to investigate the political and social situation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 1430s.

In order to understand the events of the 1430s in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania adequately, one should carry out three tasks. (1) First of all, the course of events has to be reconstructed. An old monograph of A. Lewicki, “Švitrigaila's uprising”, remains the principal work revealing the developments which led to Švitrigaila's defeat¹⁷. Something was added and corrected by his followers, especially by Oskar Halecki¹⁸. Nevertheless the debate concerning the civil war of the 1430s was dedicated to its reasons and character, basing on the data collected by Lewicki, without an investigation of the unpublished sources. Meanwhile the explanatory role of the short-time developments should not be

¹⁶ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStAPK), XX. Hauptabteilung, Ordensbriefarchiv (OBA), Ordensfolianten (OF). I am currently working on their edition.

¹⁷ See above, fn. 5.

¹⁸ See above, fn. 8.

underestimated: for instance, such turning points as the coup d'état of 1432 or the murder of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis cannot be explained with the help of the *longue durée* approach. (2) Secondly, one has to understand who actually supported Švitrigaila and Žygimantas. There is a more or less complete list of Žygimantas' adherents compiled by the Ukrainian scholar Bohdan Barvins'kyj¹⁹. Much has been said and written on Švitrigaila's "party", nevertheless, its systematic prosopography has been lacking, so I had to compile it²⁰. Having completed this work, I could make so far the last step (3), i.e. answering the question, what were the aims of the nobles and townsmen taking during the civil war and the following uprisings in the Grand Duchy. In order to understand them adequately, we should pay much attention to case studies and explanations present in the sources – unfortunately, they are too often overseen by historians looking for “serious reasons” (and not “particular” ones) of historical events.

Conclusions and outlook

The agenda of the Grand Duchy's political life from the 1420s onwards was not the rise of the Ruthenian elites and their alleged struggle for power, but the relationships with neighboring countries, first of all with Poland. The latter were regulated not so much by the legal acts (treaties of the Polish-Lithuanian union) as by the personal relations of the monarchs. Vytautas managed to maintain good relations with his cousin Władysław II Jagiełło, but they were deteriorated by Švitrigaila who was eager to rule as “*heres naturalis*”, not as the king's vicegerent (the view expressed by the union acts). Combined with a struggle on vast and rich borderlands of Podolia and Volhynia, the dispute lasted for almost two years. Švitrigaila was reluctant to reconcile with Poland, but was nearing politically to the Teutonic Order and building an anti-Polish coalition. I am inclined to think that the very conflict with Poland led to the coup d'état in 1432, Švitrigaila's deposition and Žygimantas' elevation to the grand-ducal throne. By delaying the peace negotiations with Poland (or helping the grand duke do so) the Lithuanian ruling class didn't gain anything, neither settlement of the problem nor personal security, because feeling of an approaching new war was in the air. In my opinion, that explanation fits the source data best; however, I don't reject another explanation, namely, that Švitrigaila was overthrown because there was a violation of some rights of nobility (or its certain part) not reflected in the extant sources. The circumstances of Žygimantas' assassination in 1440 indicate that a plot could emerge very quickly without leaving any traces in the sources we are studying today. In general, Švitrigaila was lacking political skills and experience gathered by Vytautas during his 40 years reign.

¹⁹ See above, fn. 9.

²⁰ The results are to be published in: С. Полехов, «Свидригайлова война»: опыт просопографического подхода (forthcoming).

Anyway, there are no reasons to believe that Švitrigaila was protecting the Ruthenians and/or their faith: no evidence on his donations to the Orthodox Church of this period is known, and the composition of the ruling elite practically didn't change since the last years of Vytautas' reign. True, in 1413 the Horodło Union act explicitly prohibited the "Schismatics and adherents of other sects" to hold the highest state offices and to be present at the grand duke's council meetings. The act also continued excluding the Ruthenian nobles from estate privileges granted by grand dukes to Lithuanian boyars since 1387²¹. But there is evidence that the prohibition referred only to the four offices in the territorial administration – those of the palatines and castellans of Vilnius and Trakai. They were occupied by Lithuanians from the end of the 14th century, and the first Ruthenian to be appointed castellan of Vilnius was prince Konstantin of Ostroh (Ostrožsky) at the beginning of the 16th century. It should also be borne in mind that grand-ducal council cannot be regarded as an institute at the beginning of the 15th century. The monarch was formally free to invite higher ecclesiastics and nobles to consult with them on crucial issues, but he had to reckon with the most prominent people in his realm who were Lithuanians. It seems that the only Ruthenians/Orthodox who could compete with them were the members of several princely clans, related to Vytautas by birth or by marriage. It is hard to imagine that Vytautas didn't admit a prince of Holszany or Drutsk to his council meeting just because of their Orthodox faith. Moreover, persons from these princely clans held important offices such as lieutenants of Kyiv or Polotsk. Another cornerstone of the theory enrooted in the historiography is a famous letter of Cracow bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki to Italian cardinal Giuliano Cesarini who presided the church council of Basel, written in 1432²². The Polish bishop insists that Švitrigaila distributed the main castles in his Grand Duchy among the "Schismatics", so that they dominate his council meetings. Our sources don't confirm these accusations as well. The four highest offices mentioned above were held by Lithuanian boyars, and even if in Ruthenian regions there were some lieutenants of local origins, it was by no means Švitrigaila's innovation. Referring to religious issues was one of the main traces of ecclesiastics' political rhetoric. The same historians who paid so much attention to the letter of Oleśnicki gave no credence to similar accusations pronounced by the Teutonic Order against Vytautas and Jagiełło.

The next issue to discuss is the effects of Švitrigaila's deposition. The supporters of Žygimantas Kęstutaitis were initially a respectively small, but very influential group of Lithuanian boyars and princes. What they had in common was their membership of the Grand Duchy's ruling elite rather than their Catholicism (the princes taking part in the coup d'état were actually Orthodox). These people were politically broad-minded and could adequately understand international as well as inner relations of their state – a feature the

²¹ The Horodło act is edited in: *Akta unji Polski z Litwą, 1385–1791* / Wyd. St. Kutrzeba i Wł. Semkowicz, Kraków 1932, nr 51.

²² Published in: *Codex epistolaris saeculi XV*, t. 2, ed. A. Lewicki (*Monumenta medii aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, t. 12), Cracoviae 1891, nr 204.

Ruthenian (i.e. local) elites were lacking for. In addition, the conspirators were holding important offices in the territorial and central (court) administrative structures of *Lithuania propria*, where they also had large estates, so that they could take the territory under their control in the name of the new grand duke. Nonetheless it should be stressed that the ruling elite of the Grand Duchy was also split: among those highest nobles who fled with Švitrigaila to Polotsk were the palatine of Vilnius Jurgis Gedgaudas (pol. Jerzy Giedygołd) and his nephew Jonas Manvydaitis (pol. Iwaszko Moniwidowicz), both Catholics-Lithuanians. Whereas prince Semen of Holszany was one of the leading conspirators against Švitrigaila, his brother Mikhail, the lieutenant of Kyiv, supported the overthrown grand duke.

Švitrigaila was initially supported by those, who didn't take part in the conspiracy and could treat his deposition as a riot against the legitimate ruler, mostly the Ruthenian princes and boyars, although there were some Lithuanian nobles in his milieu. Žygimantas was very little known and had spread his whole life in the shadow of his great brother Vytautas. Švitrigaila's grouping was additionally strengthened by personal connections: some of his active partisans were his old "friends" (or, to put it in modern terms, political allies) he had won during his political career. Besides, very much depended on his relations with the most prominent Ruthenian princes and boyars (the latter were sometimes called *pany* meaning "higher nobles"), whose influence in their regions was deeply enrooted in their origins, land property and personal qualities. It must be stressed that the sources do not notice any special ties between Švitrigaila and the Ruthenian elites "as a whole"; an eventual mechanism of their creating and working is also hard to imagine. It was already mentioned above that there are numerous facts "inconvenient" for the adherents of the traditional explanation of the conflict, namely, that such influential individuals and even regions en masse would change their monarch, leaving Švitrigaila for Žygimantas Kęstutaitis and vice versa. Case studies show that the reasons was neither actual participation in ruling the state nor estate privileges issued by Žygimantas (the most famous of them was that of 1434; an earlier one, dating back to 1432 and often mentioned in historiography, did not come into force²³), though these measures were used by both rivals to win new adherents and win back the former ones. Indeed, the relationships between the nobles and a grand duke were perceived in a personalized way: in other words, it was necessary for the princes, boyars and prominent townspeople to have a "good" and "merciful" ruler who would rule in accord with them and grant them lands and serfs and would not punish them without guilt²⁴. Both rulers took repressive measures, but those of Švitrigaila – such as drowning his Kyivan lieutenant, prince Mikhail of Holszany in 1433,

²³ The documents are published in: *Codex epistolaris saeculi XV*, t. 3, ed. A. Lewicki (*Monumenta medii aevi historica res gestas Poloniae illustrantia*, t. 14), Cracoviae 1894, dod. nr 17, 22.

²⁴ Cf. the speeches of Lithuanian boyars referring to Vytautas and Žygimantas as "good rulers", cited in: *R. Petrauskas, Lietuvos diduomenė* (see fn. 11), p. 197, 202. The notion of a good ruler in the Ruthenian lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania deserves a special investigation.

arresting the lieutenant of Podolia prince Fedko of Nieświcz which pushed him into the hands of the Poles in 1434 or burning at stake metropolitan of all Rus' Gerasim in 1435 – seem to have contributed to his loss of popularity. It is also quite obvious that Švitrigaila's partisans were not going to create a separate state, their aim was to help him regain power over the whole Grand Duchy of Lithuania (indeed, he continued using the title “Grand Duke of Lithuania, Ruthenia etc.” till the end of 1438 when he had no power in both regions²⁵). The “Grand Duchy of Ruthenia” mentioned by the Smolensk chronicler remains his own explanatory scheme of the past reality.

These conclusions seem to be confirmed by the subsequent events. The uprisings in the Grand Duchy's lands were caused not by Žygimantas Kęstutaitis' assassination *per se* (it was planned and carried out by a small group of dignitaries for some reasons which remain unclear), but by the Lithuanians' attempts to interfere into the regions' inner affairs. What those lands' elites needed was indeed not a place in the grand duke's milieu, but some guarantees of their leading position in their homelands and a certain level of autonomy within the frames of the common state. The same impression is left by other political conflicts of the 15th-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such as the emigrations of Chernigov nobles to Muscovy 1406–1408, the uprising in Samogitia 1418, the conspiracy of the Volhynian nobles 1453 or the so-called “princes' conspiracy” against grand duke Casimir 1481. Returning to the events of the 1430s and early 1440s, it is characteristic that without Švitrigaila (who was invited only to the Volhynian princely throne in 1442) the rebels made no attempts to unite. The careers of Švitrigaila's active noble adherents also tell us a lot: none of them tried to make a career on the level of central administration afterwards, except the Lithuanians, who belonged to the ruling elite by birth. On the contrary, some of Švitrigaila's partisans left their native lands to join him in Lutsk. As a matter of fact, the only successful careers at the grand duke's court made by Ruthenian nobles in the middle and the 2nd half of the 15th century were those of Sapiehas and Soltans, but originally they were not so noble as to have any long-term ambitions during the civil war of the 1430s. Thus, although the expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Rus', which had started in the 13th century, had come to its end in the reign of Vytautas, the real integration of the newly acquired territories was still far from its end for a very long period of time.

I understand that the conclusions presented here may seem incomplete without comparative European context. It is necessary for the discussion of such problems brought up in my research as the role of castles in taking a territory under control, the theoretical and practical approaches to fidelity and treason, the sources of the nobles' influence over a region or the integration of a region into a medieval polity. I am going to fulfill this task in my future monograph based on the Ph.D. dissertation presented above.

²⁵ See his title in the letter written on December 6th, 1438, already in Przemyśl in Poland: “Swidrigal, von gotz gnadin grosfurste zcu Lithawen und zcu Rewsin etc.” (GStAPK, OBA 7530).