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PRIMATE JAN WĘŻYK IN THE ROLE OF INTERREX
AND SENATOR OF THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN
COMMONWEALTH IN THE PERIOD OF INTERREGNUM
FOLLOWING THE DEATH
OF SIGISMUND III VASA IN 1632

INTRODUCTION

The Primate of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania held the highest position both in the Church and the State in the period of interregnum. He was entitled to *ius praeeminentiae*, that is the right of advantage over others. However, the Primate as the interrex did not possess the full king's powers. In his *universal* (proclamation), he could officially announce the fact of the King's death and – at the same time – the beginning of interregnum. He took over the duties belonging in the scope of representing the State outside, prepared the process of choosing a new monarch and it was with this aim that he convoked assemblies of local parliaments and the Convocation *Seym*. He was responsible for arranging minor matters, submitting more important ones to debates by Parliament. At last, the Primate announced the choice of the

elect, that is executed the nomination [Jezierski 2017, 21-23; Presiowski 2019, 59-66].

S. Grodziski, an outstanding historian of the Polish state and law, while making a presentation of the office of interrex in the Polish historical tradition, stated, among others, that: "It would be an interesting thing to prepare a «list of Polish interreges», beginning with the year 1572. The catalogue should be then limited to those primates who performed the function of the king's deputy during interregnum. Such a task would consist in examining their organizational activity, at times carried out in very demanding conditions of political strife, split elections and accompanying anarchy" [Grodziski 2008, 174]. It needs underlining that J. Dziegielewski, a researcher of the Polish parliamentarism, offered a synthetic evaluation of the activity of primates-interreges who held this post in an unquestioned manner from 1572 on (following the death of Sigismund II Augustus) till the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Jakub Uchański, Stanisław Karnkowski, Jan Wężyk, Maciej Łubieński, Michał Prażmowski, Kazimierz Florian Czartoryski, Andrzej Olszowski, Michał Radziejowski, Teodor Potocki, Władysław Łubieński [Dziegielewski 2002, 39-50; Idem 1994, 195-200; Serebryakova 1999, 54]. J. Dorobisz and W. Kaczorowski, undertaking to explain the unproportionally high share of inhabitants of Sieradz in the Crown Episcopate during the reign of the Vasas, concentrated their attention on, among others, two primates-interreges coming from Sieradz Region – Jan Wężyk and Maciej Łubieński [Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 263-81]. In turn, J. Swędrowski presented Primate Jan Wężyk as an employer and patron of culture and art [Swędrowski 2009, 229-43]. Here, it is worth also mentioning M. Kosman who elaborated on a 'hall' of archbishops of Gniezno and primates of Poland, in which he included a short biographical note of Jan Wężyk [Kosman 2012, 223-26]. Lastly, W. Kaczorowski threw more light on the activity of Jan Wężyk during the Convocation and Election *Seyms* in 1632, as well as at the time of the crowning of Vladislav IV Vasa in 1633 [Kaczorowski 1986; Idem 1992; Idem 2011, 346-64; Idem 2019, 219-38].

The aim of this article is to present the activity of Jan Wężyk till 1632, and then to offer an evaluation of his organizational activity as the Primate-interrex in the period interregnum after the death of Sigismund III Vasa in 1632, being the fourth instance chronologically of such a case in the Commonwealth.

1. LIFE AND ACTIVITY OF JAN WĘŻYK UNTIL 1632

Jan Wężyk was born in 1575 in Wężykowa Wola near Łask, a place located in Sieradz Voivodeship. He was a son of Hieronim of Wąż Coat of Arms and Dorota of the Zalewski Family, descending from the medium nobility of Sieradz [Wieteska 1988, 5; Swędrowski 2009, 229-30].¹ Initially, he was educated at home and then was placed at the Jesuits' College in Calisia. In 1591, he was transferred to Cracow, where he was enrolled in the *Artium* Faculty of the Jagiellonian University for the summer term of that year. Upon completing the studies, for seven years (1597-1604) he pursued his education in Rome, studying law and theology and finally earning a double doctorate in theology and cannon law [Kosman 1997, 192; Swędrowski 2009, 230; Prokop 2014, 412]. He also studied medicine, which manifested itself also by the collection of well-known works on this subject found in his library. He used his medical knowledge when he was taking care of the sick and suffering [Wieteska 1988, 5]. While staying in Italy, J. Wężyk made a number of contacts, among others, with the Rev. Filippo Neri, the founder of the Congregation of Philip's Priests (the Congregation of Oratory Fathers) and the future saint [ibid.]. The future Primate could speak three foreign languages – Italian, Latin and German. It remains unclear where he learnt to speak German [Leitsch 2009, 2055]. His studies abroad were financed most probably by Bishop Jan Tarnowski, which explains why he stayed the chancellor at his patron's court after he had returned to Poland [Korytkowski 1889, 695; Barycz 1938, 220]. After the death of Jan Tarnowski (14 September 1605),² for a short period of time, Jan Wężyk remained without a protector, yet already in the same year he took the post of a writer of the Crown Chancellery and then was given the position of the Secretary to King Sigismund III Vasa, in this way finding a royal patron [Dorobisz 2000, 29]. Jan Wężyk obtained the canonry of Włocławek, archidiaconry of Lublin, and soon the canonry of Cracow and the parsonage of Sandomierz [Kosman 1997, 193; Idem 2012, 223]. In 1613, he was offered – as a prebendary – the Cistercian Abbey in Mogiła, near Cracow. He obtained the nomination to hold the office of Bishop of Przemyśl on 2 January 1620 and was appointed the Bishop of Posnan on

¹ Jan Wężyk's mother was Barbara or, possibly, Zofia of the Zaleski Family *vel* the Zalewskis of Dołęga Coat of Arms [Prokop 2014, 412].

² Jan Tarnowski died on 11 November 1605 [Leitsch 2009, 2054].

13 May 1624, Archbishop of Gniezno and the Primate of Poland on 22 March 1627 [Leitsch 2009, 2055].

It is obvious that Jan Wężyk owed his quick advancement to the protection of King Sigismund III Vasa, but also to Queen Constance. The foundation of their mutual relation of trust between the Queen and him was the knowledge of the German language. As the Secretary, Jan Wężyk primarily was responsible for dealing with the King's private correspondence. Sigismund III Vasa, who had been entrusting his Secretary with execution of difficult tasks for a long time, was satisfied with the performance of the latter. For instance, the King realized how significant his Secretary's diplomatic endeavours aimed at winning the dignity of cardinal for Nuncio Claudio Rangoni were. The Viennese historian, Walter Leitsch, claims that Sigismund III Vasa and Claudio Rangoni understood each other particularly well. For this reason efforts to obtain the cardinal's dignity for the latter were of primary importance; however, Pope Paul V persisted in refusing. The endeavours, commenced still before the Nuncio's leaving Poland, lasted until his death (Rangoni died on 2 August 1621), that is throughout the time of Jan Wężyk's holding the office of the King's Secretary. Himself, he proved a skilful and effective negotiator in the talks running between the King, the Pope and Rangoni, hence his promotion to the Bishopric of Przemyśl in 1620 was a natural consequence of that contribution [Byliński and Kaczorowski 2013, 213-19]. His merits – as W. Leitsch concludes – were only too significant to justify that promotion [Leitsch 2009, 2056-2057].

Jan Wężyk stayed the Primate, following the death of Archbishop of Gniezno Henryk Firlej (25 February 1626),³ in the time of the Prussian war with Sweden (1626-1629), which was exceptionally hard for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After his ingress to the Cathedral of Gniezno (21 June 1627), he came to live in the Castle of Łowicz, the main residence of Gniezno Bishops. It was from there that, as a Spiritual Senator, he was leaving for diets called by Sigismund III Vasa. In the years 1621-1632 (until the Convocation *Seym* in 1632), Jan Wężyk participated in all seven assemblies of the Parliament (1627, 1628, 1629 (I), 1629 (II), 1631, 1632 (I), 1632 (II)), and voted at three of them [Dorobisz and Ka-

³ *Urzednicy centralni i nadworni Polski XIV–XVIII wieku. Spisy* [Central and court officials in Poland of the 14th-18th c. Registers]. Compiled by K. Chłapowski et al., ed. A. Gąsiorowski, Biblioteka Kórnicka, Kórnik 1992, p. 167.

czorowski 2000, 270; Serebryka 2000, 246-61]. At that time he devoted his life to the service for the State as a Senator and work for the Church as its Primate, despite his chronic and painful ailment – gout [Wieteska 1988, 193]. Jan Wężyk's care of proper functioning of the Church was founded on concrete and well-grounded bases, that is church councils which regulated the style of conduct in the legal way. The Primate's output in this domain was undoubtedly impressive. Apart from diocesan councils: held in Przemyśl in 1621 and in Gniezno in 1628, it was the provincial ones: in Piotrków in 1628 and in Warsaw in 1634 that came to the fore [Swędrowski 2009, 233]. At the first Church Council which assembled in Piotrków on 22 May 1628, there were voted 22 statutes relating to confession of faith, catechization, preparation for priest's ordination, bishop's office, convents, church celebrations, participation of clergy in works of the Crown Tribunal [Kosman 2012, 224]. During Jan Wężyk's holding the Primate's dignity the case of *compositio inter status* (composition between the estates) was partially settled, the problem having weighed heavily on the relations between the nobility and the clergy for decades then [Kaczorowski 2012, 145-65]. During the sessions of the mixed commission in November 1631, Jan Wężyk, sure of having Sigismund III's and Apostolic Nuncio Honorat Visconti's support, was able to afford to ignore the postulates of noblemen addressed to clergy. In the era of interregnum, the interrex turned to the Holy See, suggesting the necessity of making concessions by the clergy regarding the composition between the estates. He opposed the immediate realization of the noblemen's postulates, using as the excuse the lack of the Pope's acceptance [Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 293; Kosman 1997, 193].

Jan Wężyk was not an individuality to match his predecessors, although he performed his Primate's service in a perfect way. As regards political matters he remained open to cooperation with anybody who would work towards peace for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [Dziegielewski 2002, 45]. In the years 1630-1632, he backed up the project of legally describing the manner of conducting a free election, precisely reforming it, which should guarantee the highest chances of electing Vladislav Vasa to the Polish throne [Kaczorowski 2010, 91-107]. The failure of the project and the death of Sigismund III caused Jan Wężyk, as the Primate and the interrex, to find himself in a doubly difficult situation, since the external threat to the Commonwealth was growing stronger –

particularly on the part of the Muscovite state [Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 270-71]. In the face of those events he came to be responsible for managing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for 198 days. The last interrex preceding Jan Wężyk was Stanisław Karnkowski who had performed the function 45 years prior to the former [Kosman 1997, 171-78, 193; Idem 2012, 224].

2. MANAGING THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE RULER

Sigismund III Vasa died in Warsaw on 30 April 1632 [Kaczorowski 1983, 54; Idem 2015, 21-40], the death of the first of the Polish Vasas commencing the fourth interregnum in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. S. Kobierzycki noted: "The corpse of the King was – in compliance with the Polish custom – clothed in the robes which he had worn during the coronation, and in the afternoon it was put to public viewing so that everybody could pay the last tribute to the King. The head of the deceased was decorated with the crown, in the right hand there was the sceptre and in the left one – the orb, while the Swedish crown was lying beside on a cushion. Then the dignitaries, like during his lifetime, honoured him and surrounded the corpse with a mourners' ring. Such was the scene that Jan Wężyk, Archbishop of Gniezno and the Primate of Poland, encountered. His duty was to take care of matters pertaining to the State after the King's death" [Kobierzycki 2005, 418-19]. The initiative of calling the convocation parliament was the duty of the interrex who – upon establishments made with other Senators – was expected to set the date and place and the length of time of the assembly, as well as to send the relevant proclamation to call pre-convocation local *Seyms*. The Primate, in order to quickly summon the convocation, instantly set about performing the duties that he was responsible for during the interregnum. He did know that the interregnum following the death of Sigismund II Augustus in 1572 lasted 18 months, the one following the fleeing of Henry III in 1574 – 28 months; in turn, that after the death of Stefan Batory in 1586 – 12 months. In the case under discussion, chiefly due to the existing threat of the Muscovites' attack to ensue shortly, the Commonwealth

could not afford to remain without a monarch for too long [Kaczorowski 1986, 30-31].

As early as on 2 May 1632 the first meeting with the Senators took place, presided by Primate Jan Wężyk. During it the most significant issues for the State were discussed, among others, the question of summoning a convocation *Seym*, taking into account the time and place, as well as the participation of the nobility. As a result, dates for the sittings of particular local parliaments were established for the Crown and Lithuania [Radziwiłł 1980, 113; Ziober 2020, 111]. The senators' decision was reflected in the Proclamation prepared by the Primate, which was sent out to all the castle-towns in the Crown and Lithuanian. The interrex's intention was to dispatch hundreds of documents as soon as possible, so on 4 May he sent a transportation letter to the King's Cossacks with the order for them to deliver the Proclamation and other state documents to the addressees.⁴ Apart from dispatching the Proclamation dated on 5 May 1632, on the very same day Jan Wężyk sent out letters to prominent Senators, in which he informed them of the decision concerning the calling of the Convocation *Seym*.⁵

The Proclamation prepared by Primate Jan Wężyk included information on the death of Sigismund III Vasa and ordered the castle-town Starosts to make the news public. It is worth mentioning that such a document generally avoided detailed listing of issues that were to make the subject matter of parliamentary debates. In that particular case, however, the Primate sketched fairly broadly the program of the Convocation *Seym* to be held. This obviously was the consequence of the lack of legation which customarily discussed thoroughly the matters which were the subject of parliamentary sittings. Jan Wężyk decided to treat the Proclamation as the legation, motivating the fact with considerable limitation of time. Thus, practically, that was a unique act – a proclamation-legation, since it contained information relating to local *Seyms* which were going to

⁴ List podwodny Jana Wężyka dany kozakom koronnym na roznoszenie uniwersału [Transportation letter of Jan Wężyk issued to Royal Cossacks to deliver the Proclamation]. Warszawa, 4 V 1632, Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich – Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, rkps 124, no. 45.

⁵ Jan Wężyk do wojewodów, kasztelanów i innych urzędników [Jan Wężyk to Voivodes, Castellans and other officials], Warszawa, 5 V 1632, *ibid.*, no. 46.

be held both in the Crown and in Lithuania at the same time, that is on 3 June 1632 [Kaczorowski 1986, 33].

The Convocation *Seym* was supposed to commence its proceedings in Warsaw on 22 June 1632. Among the questions expected to be discussed, the issue of establishing the place, time and duration of the election was treated with the utmost priority in the Proclamation. It also included postulates connected with the initial discussion of exorbitances (violations of law) and *pacta conventa* which subsequently were to be presented at the Election *Seym* to the newly-elected king for pledging. Jan Wężyk postulated also that the local pre-convocation parliaments should make initial establishments with reference to the manner of electing the monarch, including conclusions from the discussions contained in the instructions for the Deputies. The Primate's propositions dealt also with vital problems which were noblemen's exorbitances. That was a very skilful move on the part of Jan Wężyk, since it anticipated intentions of a considerable part of the nobility. This kind of standpoint earned Jan Wężyk both popularity and support for implementing indispensable reforms. That was a most legitimate program which, however, collided with the tasks of a convocation *Seym*. Considering, at such a diet, the way of conducting a future election, discussing exorbitances and determining the content of *pacta conventa* exceeded the time allotted to sessions of such a *Seym*. The manner of conducting an election raised controversy already at the Extraordinary *Seym* held in Warsaw (11 March-3 April 1632), which had been convened when Sigismund III Vasa was still alive [Seredyka 1978, 154-210]. Similarly, it could be predicted that raising that question at a convocation would not meet with the expected unanimous reaction, which undoubtedly would result in prolongation of the sittings. Discussions over a substantial number of instances of violation and pacts could not be exhaustive enough due to limited time. Apparently, the Primate counted just on that. His stance can rightly be considered a propaganda move aimed at convincing the nobility of support for their legitimate endeavours to present and consider exorbitances at a convocation *Seym* [Kaczorowski 1986, 34-35].

The pre-convocation *Seyms* were held at the determined time. Their sittings and decisions were to prove whether the majority of noblemen would take up the Primate's postulates contained in the Proclamation. The standpoint of the nobility expressed at the local *Seyms* towards issues that should make the subject matter of the Convocation *Seym* coming closer

were characterized by instructions of the local parliaments. It follows from the analysis of the contents of the instructions that the noblemen's opinions on the tasks of the Convocation *Seym* were divergent. Many local *Seyms*, both in the Crown and in Lithuania, demanded that apart from the above-mentioned functions, the *Seym* of 1632 should – in compliance with the Primate's suggestions – undertake to prepare exorbitance and *pacta conventa* [ibid., 57-58].

The opening of the Convocation *Seym* took place in Warsaw on 22 June 1632 and its closing – on 16 July of that year. There were nineteen effective days during the 25-day-long term of the Parliament (due to the fact that there were six days which were holidays). The discussion of exorbitances occupied the most of the time – nine days altogether. Three days were devoted to Senators' voting. Taking the decision of the *Seym* took the same amount of time. One day of the parliamentary sessions was devoted to hearing the Primate's proposition. Discussing many relevant questions took much less time. There were eight commissions set up at the Convocation *Seym*, which were responsible for preparing materials for the plenary sessions of the Deputies' Chamber and indirectly – the Senators' one [ibid., 88-185].

The noblemen's doctrine treated interregnum as a period that offered chances of removing any restrictions to the functioning of democracy and also as one of further broadening of the range of noblemen's rights and privileges. Beside this, a part of the progressive nobility and magnates perceived in it a possibility of carrying out a real reform of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Following the conception of the programme assumed by this group, they strove, among others, to reform the parliamentary procedure and correct faulty laws. It was believed that in the absence of a legitimate king, it should be easier to obtain support of masses of noblemen for this sort of reforms, the more so as the project came into existence in some measure – as an initiative of the noblemen's community. However, it was expected that both programmes would materialize – the all-nobility one and that of the reformatory group – but following the Election *Seym*, since according to the almost common belief, the competences of a convocation parliament were limited to taking decisions concerning the establishment of the place and time of election, as well as securing indispensable safety means when it was being held [ibid., 335].

The course of events in the interregnum of 1632, especially the unexpected initiative of the interrex, Jan Wężyk, predetermined the necessity of alterations made to realization of the programme of reforms. Before the Convocation *Seym*, the Primate announced a proclamation-legation in which – apart from establishments relating to the time and place of the election, as well as securing safety – he proposed considering exorbitances. In this way, the Primate as if sped up the discussion about both of the above-mentioned programmes of repairing the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which – as it was mentioned – were not expected to be dealt with until after the Election *Seym* or at the local *Seyms* preceding it, at the earliest. This unexpected decision of the interrex weighed both on the course of the Convocation *Seym* and on its final decisions. In compliance with the Primate's suggestion included in the proclamation-legation, there were not only many problems of state importance discussed at that diet, but also in the majority of cases they were given the form of conclusive parliamentary decisions, or – at the least – made a legislative proposition of the estates taking part in future local *Seyms* and election *Seyms*. The last of the establishments made a peculiar instruction for the local diets before the Election *Seym* that was drawing closer, which replaced the previous royal legation and eventually the Primate's one. It was now formalized with signatures of the Deputies' Marshall and the Primate, which were laid on behalf of the Deputies' and Senators' Chambers. The effects of the Convocation *Seym*'s activity had then to be read by the nobility as the binding standpoint of the two houses or a kind of directive – or at least a proposition addressed to the "brothers" [ibid., 336-37].

The opening of the Election *Seym* took place on 27 September 1632 and the diet was concluded on 15 November of that year [ibid., 213]. The programme of the noblemen's repair of the Commonwealth was indeed analysed then and framed in the newly-edited *pacta conventa*, chiefly however as a confirmation of the systemic foundations of the noblemen's democracy. Out of the 58-item set of exorbitances included in the decision of the Convocation *Seym*, only a few took the constitutional form, like the following: the prohibition of commencing wars by the King without the agreement of the *Seym*, the obligation to execute the rights on vacancies and *incompatibilia*, the prohibition of foreigners' doing military service at the royal court and being granted estates and offices by the King. The other points were deferred, remaining in recess, planned to be resumed at the

Coronation *Seym* or still were simply excluded from the further discussion – both then and in the future [ibid., 338].

The Primate found himself in a rather favourable situation since there was a common agreement as to the candidate to be offered the Polish crown, that is Vladislav Vasa, the eldest son of King Sigismund III Vasa. It was feared, though, that there might occur disturbances in the course of the election upon proposing the candidature of Swedish King Gustav II Adolf, whom some of the dissenters would hope to see on the throne.

The election of Vladislav Vasa to Poland's throne was executed in the election fields between Wola and Warsaw. That event came on the 192nd day of the interregnum following the death of Sigismund III [de Dydyński and Kaczorowski 2006, 273]. However, before the Parliament embarked on electing the new king, the Senators and Deputies gathered at the Election *Seym*, which had already lasted 40 days, had to take an important decision on 8 November whether to conduct the procedure of choosing the new king on that very day, according to the decision of the Convocation *Seym*, or to postpone the action till later. The problem was that they had not managed to discuss all the points of the exorbitances and *pacta conventa* which were to be prepared for the king to accept and sign. In that case, Primate Jan Wężyk declared that the King should be elected on 8 November in a very efficient manner while the official nomination would be postponed and follow a few days later, upon concluding the election. Actually, the election of Vladislav IV Vasa was executed on 8 November 1632 most efficiently – as Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł recorded, “in one hour's time the election was a fact” [Radziwiłł 1980, 208]. Formally, Vladislav IV Vasa stayed the King on 14 November 1632 – a week after the date assigned by the Convocation *Seym*. On that day, after the church service performed by Jan Wężyk at St John's Church in Warsaw, the ceremonial taking the oath by the King took place. The King approached the altar and swore on the Bible that the *pacta conventa* sworn by the Assembly on his behalf on 13 November would be obeyed by him, as well as would be sworn again after the crowning ceremony in Cracow [Kaczorowski 2019, 219-38]. At that moment Primate Jan Wężyk's holding power, which had lasted 198 days, came to the end.

The interregnum following the death of Sigismund III Vasa ended with the funeral of the monarch and his second wife, Constance, as well as with the ceremonial crowning act of Vladislav IV Vasa – the new king-elect – in

1633 [Idem 1992, 27-44]. After finishing the coronation there begun a diet of the ordinary *Seym* called the Coronation *Seym* in historiography, during which all the rights voted during the interregnum were accepted (there were held a convocation *Seym* and an election one during that period) as well as a good many vital decisions were made with reference to external and internal issues concerning the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [Szczerbik 2001].

Primate Jan Wężyk participated in the funeral ceremony of the royal couple – Sigismund III and Constance – which took place in Cracow on 4 February 1633, celebrating the holly mass in St Stanislaus Church [Sobieski 2008, 52-58; Radoszewski 2002, 27-38]. On Sunday, 6 February 1633, in the Wawel Cathedral being the witness of the fifteenth crowning ceremony of the Polish monarch [Kaczorowski 1992, 37], he crowned Vladislav IV Vasa [Sobieski 2008, 67-73]. After 240 days following the death of Sigismund III Vasa, the Commonwealth honoured the newly-crowned monarch. Then the Primate took part in the Coronation *Seym*, voting on 9 February 1633 [ibid., 96-97].

The interregnum after the death of Sigismund III Vasa was short and has generally been regarded as one of the calmest, which is testified by, among others, the record found in the Bernardines' chronicle in Łowicz: "It is worth admiring how wisely and with what calm the Primate managed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. There were absolutely no violations occurring during the time of that interregnum; neither was there anybody who would disturb the election of Vladislav, as all the voices, even on the part of foreign powers, pointed to Vladislav as the future king."⁶ F.S. Jezierski observed, "[...] Vladislav, the eldest son, was elected with such an ease as if he had been entitled to the throne by the right of succession" [Jezierski 2017, 41]. Entrusting the office of interrex to primates proved only too reasonable, since – as Jan Dziegielewski argued, "as a rule they enjoyed the highest personal authority" [Dziegielewski 2002, 50]. It was this sense of reliability and reasonableness of interrex Jan Wężyk during discussions run at convocation and election *Seyms* which brought about a positive effect. It needs underlining, though, that Jan Wężyk, while managing the State in those difficult days, only formally 'endorsed' the most significant decisions. In reality, they were taken with-

⁶ Quotation imported from Wieteska 1988, 6.

in a wider circle of Senators, which entitles us to “formulate the thesis on the functioning of a collegial interrex, without external diminishing of the prerogatives that primates were entitled to at the time of interregnum. Expanding this thesis beyond the periods of interregnum, as well as searching for dependences and analogies between the position of the king and the primate within the liberty-based polity of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth requires further in-depth studies” [Dorobisz and Kaczowski 2000, 276]. The interrex had no right to independently make decisions and from 1632 on he had counsellors (consultants) assigned during interregna, who recruited from the senators and knights. Moreover, customarily a primate’s ‘assistant’ (deputy-primate) was the Bishop of Kuyavia. The institution of interrex was not included in the statutory law (does not appear in the Union of Lublin, in Henrician Articles, *pacta conventa* or texts of the *Seym* constitution) [Augustyniak 2008, 174-75].

3. THE LAST YEARS OF THE STATE- AND CHURCH-DEDICATED ACTIVITY OF PRIMATE JAN WĘŻYK

In the years 1634-1638, Jan Wężyk took part in six *Seyms* (1634, 1635(I), 1635 (II), 1637 (I), 1637 (II), 1638), and voted at five. All in all, he participated in fifteen, voting at nine [Seredyka 2000, 252-57]. Already at the Coronation *Seym* of 1633, the Primate gave his support for the war programme. The election of Vladislav IV was deciding in speeding up preparations to repulse the Muscovite Army which for weeks then had been besieging Smolensk. In May 1633, Vladislav IV headed for the eastern front and the Primate took over the ruling of the country as the vicerent, holding the office until the King’s return in the middle of July 1633. He greeted the latter enthusiastically back in Warsaw [Kosman 1997, 194]. The Primate opposed prolongation of the military actions due to the Turkish threat. Two treaties – a peace treaty with the Muscovites’ state (signed in Polanów on 14 June 1634) and the truce signed with Sweden (in Sztumska Wieś on 12 September 1632), which the Primate thanked the commissioners for on behalf the Senate, cast a shadow on the unrealistic plans of Vladislav IV of taking over the Swedish Vasas’ crown as well as the crown of Muscovite Tsars. On 3 May 1635, at John Collegiate Church, Jan Wężyk accepted Vladislav IV’s oath, endorsing the

peace treaty concluded in Polanów and relinquishment of the rights to the Tsar's throne [Wieteska 1988, 6].

On 13 November 1634, Primate Jan Wężyk summoned a provincial council that commenced its proceedings in St John Church in Warsaw on 15 November. The predominant number of decisions taken by the Council concerned issues of the internal system of episcopal curia, chapters, fraternities, questions relating to agreements for priests to say three holy masses on All Souls' Day and also the prohibition of entering churches with a weapon [ibid.]. Resolutions of the Council were approved by Pope Urban VIII [Swędrowski 2009, 238].

On 12 September 1637 at 18 hours, at St John Church in Warsaw, Jan Wężyk joined in holy matrimony Vladislav IV and Cecilia Renata Habsburg and the following day saw the coronation of Cecilia Renata [Rudzki 1987, 104]. At the ordinary *Seym* which was taking place between 10 March and 1 May 1638, Primate Jan Wężyk, who was seriously ill at the time, arrived already after the voting, yet he did not manage to stay to the end of the parliamentary sessions and had to leave for Łowicz, where his health deteriorated seriously [Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 268]. He died in Łowicz on Sunday, 27 May 1638, while saying the holy mass [Swędrowski 2009, 242]. He was buried in St Anna's Chapel of the Basilica Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption – the necropolis of twelve primates of Poland [ibid., 243] in compliance with the records of the testament he drew up three weeks prior to his death [Wieteska 1988, 12, 17]. P. Piasecki noted as follows, "He left the number of the living at the 63rd year of his life, Jan Wężyk, Archbishop of Gniezno, while expecting the dignity of a cardinal which had been promised to him by Pope Urban; man equal to such an honour by his merits, having at his disposal clever, yet liberal kind of wit, highly skilled at liberal and political arts, the most penetrating at managing the matters of the Polish Commonwealth" [Piasecki 1870, 422]. The successor of Jan Wężyk was Jan Lipski (1589-1641), Archbishop of Gniezno in the years 1638-1641 [Kosman 2012, 227-29; Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 278], whereas the next interrex, following the death of Vladislav IV, was Maciej Łubieński (1572-1652), who held the dignity of Archbishop of Gniezno in the years 1641-1652 [Dorobisz and Kaczorowski 2000, 278].

CONCLUSION

It fell to Primate Jan Wężyk to manage the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the time which was difficult for the State because of the interregnum after the death of Sigismund III Vasa. Between 1630 and 1632, the Primate supported the project of describing the manner of conducting a free election with the records of law and precisely – such a reform of it that should offer the greatest chances to electing Vladislav Vasa to the Polish throne. The fiasco of those projects and the death of Sigismund III Vasa put the Primate-interrex to the challenge of a doubly difficult situation, since apart from the temporary duty of running the State, there was the growing threat to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth approaching primarily from the Muscovite state. In the face of those developments the Senators were ready not to convene the Convocation *Seym* at all and to summon the Election *Seym* straight away, during which the election of the new king was supposed to follow, yet that other suggestion was too radical to be accepted by the interrex. It was decided then to call the convocation as soon as possible (22 June), after which – within six weeks – the Election *Seym* would be convened. The assembly would thus have fallen on the time of harvest so at the Convocation the nobility decided to postpone it and assemble on 27 September.

Throughout the period of interregnum, Jan Wężyk availed himself fully of the rights of interrex. Being assured of support of the senators who were connected with him, he was able to boldly present to the noblemen the motion that postulates addressed to the throne should be collected already prior to the Convocation. This enabled the Senators to take over the initiative in the process of formulating *pacta conventa*, and – in consequence – eliminated the possibility of the nobility's introducing into them records aimed at limiting the King's power. And even if the *pacta conventa* had not been prepared in time, it must be underlined that Primate Jan Wężyk made efforts to carry out his public service to the State in the best way available.

The question of dependences and analogies between the position of the King and that of the Primate in the context of the principle of relations between the State and the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth requires conducting further detailed studies, the effect of which should be a series of biographic studies devoted to all the ten Primates-interreges who per-

formed this function in the years 1572-1764, including a scientific biography of Jan Wężyk.

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**Primate Jan Wężyk in the Role of Interrex and Senator
of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Period of Interregnum
Following the Death of Sigismund III Vasa in 1632**

Summary

It was customary in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that the current Primate and – at the same time – Archbishop of Gniezno in one person – accepted the

function of interrex after the death of the incumbent monarch and was responsible for taking over the duties of representing the state outside as well as preparing election of the new king. To make it happen he convened local assemblies and the so-called Convocation Sejm. At last, it was also the interrex's duty to finally announce the selection of the elect and duly execute the enthronement procedure.

Following the death of King Sigismund III Vasa in 1632, the function of interrex during the interregnum fell to Primate Jan Wężyk (1575-1638). It must be stated that he was extremely successful at carrying out the duties, and the offices that he held won him a well-deserved place among the personages who influenced the shape of the Commonwealth and the Church in the history of Poland. Apart from that, during Jan Wężyk's holding of the dignity of the Primate, the case of *compositio inter status* was partially solved. For several decades, the problem had been weighing heavily on the relations between the nobility and the clergy. Primate Jan Wężyk was also a patron of culture and art.

Keywords: interregnum; interrex; convocation Sejm; election Sejm; royal election

Prymas Jan Wężyk w roli interreksa oraz senatora Rzeczypospolitej w okresie bezkrólewia po śmierci Zygmunta III Wazy w 1632 roku

Streszczenie

W Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów prymas, a zarazem arcybiskup gnieźnieński po śmierci monarchy przejmował obowiązki w zakresie reprezentowania państwa na zewnątrz, przygotowywał wybór nowego króla i w tym celu zwoływał sejmiki oraz sejm konwokacyjny. Prymas wreszcie ogłaszał wybór elekta, czyli dokonywał nominacji.

Po śmierci Zygmunta III Wazy w 1632 r. funkcję interreksa w okresie bezkrólewia pełnił prymas Jan Wężyk (1575-1638). Z funkcji tej wywiązał się znakomicie. Sprawowane przez niego urzędy postawiły go w rzędzie osób, które wpływały na kształt Rzeczypospolitej i Kościoła. Za prymasostwa Jana Węzyka częściowo rozwiązano sprawę *compositio inter status*, od kilkudziesięciu latciążącą na stosunkach szlachty z duchowieństwem. Prymas Jan Wężyk był również mecenasem kultury i sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: bezkrólewie; interreks; sejm konwokacyjny; sejm elekcyjny; elekcja

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