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LIETUVOS
Didžioji Kunigaikštystė
Parlamentarizmas. Konstitucija. Visuomenė

LIETUVOS ISTORIJOS INSTITUTAS

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Sudarytoja

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Kad Tėvynė gyvuotų. Lietuva ir Lenkija 1791 m. konstitucijos epochoje: tarptautinės parodos katalogas, 2021 m. spalio 19 d. – 2022 m. sausio 16 d., Nacionalinis muziejus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai [Vilnius] / *O dobro Ojczyzny. Litwa i Polska w epoce Konstytucji 3 maja / To Keep the Homeland Alive. Lithuania and Poland in the Epoch of the 1791 Constitution*, sudarytojos Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, Gintarė Džiaugytė-Burbulienė (serija *Lietuvos didžiųjų kunigaikščių rūmų parodų katalogai*, t. XXXII), Vilnius: Nacionalinis muziejus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai, 2022. – 600 p. ISSN 2351-7115, ISBN 978-609-8061-75-8. *Tomas Vaitkus* ... 367

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FOREWORD

The final phase of the history of the united Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – the history of the late eighteenth century – has attracted increasing attention from scholars and the general public over the past decades. The reign of the last two Kings of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, Augustus III Vetin and Stanislaw Augustus Poniatowski, often referred to as the ‘short eighteenth century’, have been the subject of two volumes in the 7th volume of the academic *History of Lithuania*, edited by Zigmantas Kiaupa.¹ In 2020, a solid monograph by the British scholar Richard Butterwick appeared, providing a comprehensive look at the period of the rebirth of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, which the author associates with the reign of Stanislaw Augustus.² The Polish translation of this book was published in 2022.³ At the same time Valdas Rakutis’ book, intriguingly titled (as translated from Lithuanian) *Before plunging into twilight. Lithuania in the eighteenth century: when both Poland and Warsaw were ours*, was published, presenting to the general public a structured narrative of the political history of the eighteenth century.⁴

Despite the extensive work done in historiography, certain issues of the structure of state institutions, social development, and cultural change in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the eighteenth century have not yet been sufficiently analysed. Scholars still disagree on the forms of expression of the Enlightenment ideas, as well as on the extent of the reforms carried out in the late eighteenth century, the results of the process of centralization, and the assessment of the collapse/destruction of the state. In the context of historiographical controversies, the question of the development of the dual Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as outlined by the act of the Union of Lublin of 1569, remains of particular importance, and is analysed in the context of the reforms of the Four-Year Sejm (1788–1792), which culminated in the Constitution of 3 May 1791. In addition to the view that the Constitution of 3 May was a joint achievement of the Polish and Lithuanian nobility at the time, reflecting the aspirations of the advocates of a centralized constitutional monarchy, Lithuanian historiography also emphasizes that the Governance Act of 3 May 1791 can be considered as part of the history of Lithuanian constitutionalism only in the context of the Mutual Assurance of the

1 Zigmantas Kiaupa, *Lietuvos istorija*, t. 7, d. 1: *Trumpasis XVIII amžius (1733–1795 m.)*, Vilnius: Baltų lankų leidyba, 2012; Idem, *Lietuvos istorija*, t. 7, d. 2: *Trumpasis XVIII amžius (1733–1795 m.)*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2018.

2 Richard Butterwick, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1733–1795. Light and Flame*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020.

3 Idem, *Światło i płomień. Odrodzenie i zniszczenie Rzeczypospolitej (1733–1795)*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2022.

4 Valdas Rakutis, *Prieš panyrant į sutemas. Lietuva XVIII amžiuje: kai ir Lenkija, ir Varšuva buvo mūsų*, Vilnius: Alma litera, 2022.

Two Nations – the Mutual Pledge – adopted by the Sejm on 20 October 1791. As the result of the political maturity of the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Constitution of 3 May is still accepted only with reservations.

Another important subject of historiographical debate is the development of parliamentarism in Poland and Lithuania. The comparison of noble parliamentarism with noble anarchy is still prevalent in public discourse. However, have we analysed in sufficient depth the activities of the Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the participation of Lithuanian envoys in the Sejm of the Commonwealth of Both Nations to be able to make an unambiguous assessment of the parliamentary culture of the Lithuanian nobility? Suppose society was trapped in internal strife and the grip of the interests of the estate, what was it that led to the active participation of the aristocracy and nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and not only of the Kingdom of Poland, in the processes of the ‘peaceful revolution’, which engulfed the Commonwealth of Both Nations? What socio-cultural changes led to the formation of civil society and how deeply did the ideas of the Enlightenment touch the whole society of the Commonwealth of Both Nations?

The desire to analyse these issues in more detail became the stimulus for the international scientific conference “The Dawn of the Freedom of the Homeland – the Constitution of 3 May 1791: Genesis, Content, Significance”, on 19–21 October 2021, organized by the Lithuanian Institute of History and its partners at the National Museum – Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. Commemorating the 230th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations, the speakers of the conference, presented the latest research on the changes in society, the development of parliamentarism, the genesis and the context of the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, analysed the impact of this legal act on the development of society and the state, and aimed to assess the place of the Constitution in the historical memory of the states of the Commonwealth of Both Nations. The articles based on the papers presented at the conference form the bulk of the ninth volume of the *Eighteenth Century Studies*. The volume focuses on three main aspects: parliamentarism, the Constitution of 3 May 1791, and the socio-cultural changes in society that both led to and inspired the adoption of the Constitution.

The aspects of parliamentarism and the relationship and links between the Constitution and society have also shaped the structure of this publication. The first part of the book, “The Development of Parliamentarism”, includes articles on the activities of provincial dietines (*sejmiki*) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under Augustus III (by Andrejus Macukas), the contribution of the representatives of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the legislature of the Grodno Sejm of 1784 (by Andrzej Stroynowski), and the changes in the system of the domination

of the Russian Empire by Russia in the Commonwealth of Both Nations at the juncture of the 7th and 8th decades of the eighteenth century (by Dorota Dukwicz). The study of parliamentary life is complemented by an article by Arnaud Parent, who analyses the assessments of the First Partition, adopted by the Sejm of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, in the French-language literature of the time.

The second part of the publication is devoted to the work of the Four-Year Sejm (1788–1792) and the behind-the-scenes of its activities: the issues discussed during the Sejm sessions, the analysis of the laws passed and the peripeteia of the drafting of political projects. Two published research papers touch on the codification of law and the reform of the court system. The preparation and content of the reform of the courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is presented in an article by Adamas Stankevičius, while Paweł Zając's research sheds light on the circumstances of the preparation of Andrzej Zamoyski's *Zbiór praw sądowych [...]* (also known as the Zamoyski Code). Ewa Zielińska uses new archival material to look at the activities of the Polish Grand Hetman Franciszek Ksawery Branicki in the Four-Year Sejm.

The third part of the volume, dedicated to the Constitution of 3 May, presents research that offers a new perspective on the Governance Act and its so-called constitutional amendment, the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations, adopted on 20 October 1791. Andrzej B. Zakrzewski, in his article "The False Primacy of the Governance Act", challenges the myth of the Constitution of 3 May as the second modern constitution in the world and the first in Europe, which has been established in the historiography and the public domain, yet Robertas Jurgaitis discusses the concept of the legislature and its limits in this Constitution. Richard Butterwick's analysis of the texts of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 and the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations reveals that the legislation adopted in the last year of the Four-Year Sejm tends to abandon the idea of merging the Republic into a single 'Polish nation', consisting of 'both nations', i.e. the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The study shows that during the period under analysis, not only the language and content of the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations but also the language and content of other legal acts amplified the status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė's article reveals that the readers of the periodical press of both the Commonwealth of Both Nations and the Western countries (France, the Netherlands, and Italy) were aware of the Mutual Assurance of the Two Nations, adopted on 20 October 1791, and the content of the document as well as its significance for the Lithuanian-Polish relations in the federated Republic.

The fourth part of the publication, "The Constitution and Society", focuses on two main thematic blocks – cultural processes in the late eighteenth century and the reflection on the Constitution of 3 May in literature and art. The Maliat-

sichy church as a symbol of Catholic unity is presented in the research conducted by Rūta Janonienė. Ewa Kula reviews the projects of civic education of young people in the documents of the National Educational Commission, while Joana Vitkutė, referring to the work of Franciszek Smuglewicz, analyses the image of the Enlightenment Child, created by this great master.

Janina Kamińska reveals the public's attitude towards the Constitution of 3 May by presenting the enthusiastic attitude of the community members of the Principal School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania towards the Governance Act, while Katarzyna Buczek gives an overview of the celebrations of the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May in the schools of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The theme of research on the celebrations of the Constitution is continued by Lina Balaišytė's study. Analysing the visual works of the commemorative celebrations to mark the Constitution of 3 May, the author shows that the Constitution celebrations used a wide range of means to emphasize the unity of the King and the nation, such as images, sounds, and lights, which influenced the audience's sensory impressions. These tools were highly effective and well-suited to creating an atmosphere of general enthusiasm and joy. Festivals also played a didactic role, promoting new values and new images of the state, the King, and the estates, using images and texts and, even more so, through descriptions of the decorations published in the periodical press and in commemorative publications. One of the most important tasks of the celebrations of the 'gentle revolution' era was to promote the unity of society and its determination to defend the Constitution.

Danuta Kowalewska's study, which goes beyond the eighteenth century, shows how the Constitution of 3 May is received in contemporary Polish culture.

By presenting the ninth volume of the *Eighteenth Century Studies* to the dear reader, we hope that this publication will not only broaden the research on the political culture of the nobility with new insights, provide new knowledge about the political thought of the society of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the entire Commonwealth of Both Nations, the content and significance of the Constitution of 3 May, but at the same time will contribute to the deepening of the knowledge of the eighteenth-century society in terms of its cultural and political aspirations while reinforcing the understanding that the fate of the state lies in the hands of its citizens.

Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė
Vilnius, September 2023