

To understand the incomprehensible. Diplomats of king Philip II of Spain on a mission to the Polish-Lithuanian Republic during first free elections (1573-1587)

Comprender lo incomprensible. Los diplomáticos de Felipe II de Habsburgo frente a las primeras elecciones libres en la República polaco-lituana (1573-1587)

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**Resumen:** Las tres primeras elecciones libres en la República Polaco-Lituana (1573-1589) involucraron la actividad de muchos diplomáticos y agentes internacionales. Su objetivo principal, aunque no el único, era ganar el trono para su candidato. Fue particularmente difícil para los diplomáticos de monarquías como España que apenas tenían experiencia con Polonia y Lituania (las negociaciones sobre el pago de las famosas "sumas napolitanas" no habían conducido a un reconocimiento mutuo). En consecuencia, la diplomacia española no conocía el país en el que iba a competir con sus rivales mortales, Francia e Turquía. Eso la puso en una situación muy difícil. Primero, tenían que actuar en una realidad muy diferente, principalmente debido a las diferencias en la cultura política y los valores estatales. En segundo lugar, fueron privados de sus aliados. La famosa, internacional red española de agentes (partido español) no llegaba a la República y la cooperación con la diplomacia imperial en este asunto produjo malos efectos.

Sobre la base de la correspondencia diplomática española sobre el llamado “negocio de Polonia” podemos analizar el choque de dos diferentes sistemas socio-políticos, culturas políticas y valores estatales. El estudio de la imagen de la República vista a través de los diplomáticos españoles ofrece una oportunidad para destacar algunos aspectos de la construcción de la Europa Moderna en el siglo XVI.

**Palabras clave:** Pedro Fajardo, Guillén de San Clemente, Felipe II de España, archiduque Ernesto de Habsburgo, la República Polaco-Lituana, elecciones libres, cultura política, valores estatales, civilización, estados de Europa Moderna, proyectos estatales de la Europa Moderna

**Abstract:** The first three free elections in the Polish-Lithuanian Republic (1573-1589) involved the activity of many international diplomats and agents. Their main goal, though not the only one, was to win the throne for their candidate. It was particularly difficult for diplomats from monarchies like Spain that had hardly any experience with Poland and Lithuania (negotiations of the famous „Neapolitan sums” repayment had not lead to mutual recognition). In consequence, the Spanish diplomacy did not know the country in which they were to compete with France or Turkey, their deadly rivals, which put them in a very difficult situation. First, they had to act in a whole different reality, mostly due to differences in political culture and values. Secondly, they were deprived of their allies. The famous international Spanish network of agents (*partido español*) did not reach the Commonwealth and cooperation with the imperial diplomacy produced poor effects.

On the basis of Spanish diplomatic correspondence concerning the so-called “Polish Buissnes” (*negócio de Polonia*) we may analyze the clash of two different sociopolitical orders, cultures and sets of values. Studying the image of the Commonwealth seen through the eyes of Spanish diplomats offers a great opportunity for highlighting some aspects of the construction of the Modern Europe in XVI century.

**Keywords:** Pedro Fajardo, Guillén de San Clemente, Philip II of Spain, archduke Ernest of Habsburg, Polish-Lithuanian Republic, free elections, political culture, state values, civilization, states of the Modern Europe, state projects in Modern Europe.

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## INTRODUCTION

During XVI century a great process of change in the state models took place, from the definite fall of *Christianitas* to the rise of many new political structures. The Spanish Monarchy demonstrated enormous ability to adjust and incorporate different socio-political models of states along the century. Additionally, the Spaniards had already had essential worldwide experience of international contacts and effective *modus operandi* in various circumstances, though they always acted in a hierarchical and centralized manner. In such conditions, they coaxed their methods of conducting intelligence and taking action<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the more stable and firmer the model was, the more unavoidable the clash with other state concepts was; as was the case of the monarchy of the French Valois. The lack of acceptance of a given model did not mean withdrawal from diplomacy. On the contrary, Spanish diplomats tried to understand and penetrate the system in order to effectively push their

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<sup>1</sup> DÍAZ SERRANO, Anna, “La doble orilla. El modelo político de la Monarquía Hispánica desde una perspectiva comparada. Los cabildos de Murcia y Tlaxcala durante el siglo XVI”, in DUBET, Anne, RUIZ IBÁÑEZ, Javier, *Las monarquías española y Francesa (siglos XVI-XVIII) ¿Dos modelos políticos?*, Madrid 2010, pp.145-157.

political agenda. There are many works indicating that the Spanish diplomats did not accept even the imperial model of the Holy Roman Empire. Nevertheless, they were able to correctly define the Reich's political culture, properly recognize customs and act with great efficiency, thus marking their presence and exerting constant influence<sup>2</sup>.

In the case of relationships with European political entities, extensive contacts were maintained continuously and the knowledge of counterparts deepened - despite different political models. The relations between the Spanish Monarchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Republic (*Rzeczpospolita*) were, however, different. Both monarchies had undergone that process of constructing its identity separately. Relations between them were neither permanent nor well-developed. The decades of diplomatic struggle of Jagiellonian monarchs to regain the so-called "neapolitan sums" did not lead to a deeper knowledge of a distant country by the Spanish elites. Furthermore, the majority of those relations took place outside *Rzeczpospolita*, at the court of Madrid, Naples, Rome or Vienna. The monarchies maintained to be a distant countries, albeit not unknown to each other<sup>3</sup>. As an example let us use the figure of Juan Dantiscus, ambassador of Jagiellon king in Madrid. During his diplomatic missions at the court of Charles V, he was able to adapt perfectly, surrounded by Spanish court elites. Obviously, his excellent humanistic skills, knowledge and personality were important, but it was his erasmianism that created the basis for understanding between people from the distant corners of the Old World. Yet a half a century later, when the process of forming separate models of the state orders was already advanced, reaching such an understanding was impossible. It was not just a question of the incompatibility of state models or merely a clash of composite or polycentric monarchy with a mixed monarchy. It was also the contrast between a centralized, hierarchical world of the court and a decentralized reality, with power dispersed between different power-

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<sup>2</sup> EDELMAYER, Fredrich, *Söldner und Pensionäre. Das Netzwerk Philipps II. im Heiligen Römischen Reich*, Wiedeń-Monachium 2002; JIMÉNEZ DÍAZ, Pablo, *El coleccionismo manierista de los Austrias. Entre Felipe II y Rodolfo II*, Madrid 2001; MAREK, Pavel, *La embajada española en la corte imperial (1558-1641) figuras de los embajadores y estrategias clientelares*, Universidad Carolina de Praga 2013.

<sup>3</sup> RUIZ MARTÍN, Felipe, *Relaciones entre España y Polonia durante el siglo XVI: Carlos I y Felipe II, Segismundo I y Segismundo II Augusto*, inedited PhD tesis, Univeristy Complutense in Madrid 1944, syg. T. 556.

centers of the nobility of Rzeczpospolita. A specific form of contact only added to those communication difficulties<sup>4</sup>.

In this article I want to focus on the practical side of the aforementioned process. On the basis of the opinions of Spanish diplomats on the political and social reality of Rzeczpospolita, I want to show that in the last decades of the sixteenth century, these models were already so different that no form of understanding was possible.

The period of the first three free elections of the king of Rzeczpospolita was very important for its image across western European monarchies. In 1572, when Sigismund Augustus, the last Jagiellon king died, Rzeczpospolita finally became a truly elective monarchy. The election was not, as previously, limited to dynasty members, but from now on anyone could present his candidature for the throne. It brought crucial changes not only in a political or governmental aspect but also in a form of contact with the West<sup>5</sup>. The foreign monarchs started to promote their interests in the Republic to an incomparably bigger extent than previously. The prospect, though not the only one, of gaining the throne of a country stretching over one million square kilometers and with a population of eight million, combined with its access to agricultural resources that could be transported relatively cheaply and easily, was surely not to be underestimated. What is more, during the elections, the western envoys were not communicating with their Polish and Lithuanian counterparts (high-rank king's officials). It was then that for the first time they had to deal with Rzeczpospolita's society of nobles and with its very peculiar political values and its republican, decentralized socio-political model<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> To mention basic works: ELLIOTT, John, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies", in *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48-71; CARDIM, Pedro, HERZOG, Tamar, RUIZ IBÁÑEZ, José Javier and SABATINI, Gaetano (eds.), *Polycentric Monarchies. How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal Achieve and Maintain a Global Hegemony?*, Sussex 2014; GONZÁLEZ CUERVA, Rubén, KOLLER, Alexander (eds.), *A Europe of Courts, a Europe of Factions. Political Groups at Early Modern Centres of Power (1550-1700)*, Brill: Rulers & Elites, Volume: 12, 2017; MAĆZAK, Antoni, „Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: władza i przestrzeń”, in KOPCZYŃSKI, Michał, TYGIELSKI, Wojciech, (eds.), *Rzeczpospolita – Europa XVI-XVII wiek. Próba konfrontacji*, Warsaw, Optima, 1999, pp. 15-27.

<sup>5</sup> KACZMARCZYK, Zdzisław, LEŚNODORSKI, Bogusław, *Historia państwa i prawa Polski*. vol. II, Warsaw, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1971, pp. 110-117, 176-190.

<sup>6</sup> The general description of the Republic's sociopolitical reality by: OPALIŃSKI, Edward, *Kultura polityczna szlachty polskiej w latach 1587-1652: system parlamentary* a

## 1. DISTANT OTHERS

The Jagiellon kings followed the western models of diplomacy but it was not as developed as in the western monarchies. In the second half of the XVI century Jeciellonian diplomacy was deprived of a developed network of permanent embassies<sup>7</sup>. What is more, the first free election (1573) was the culmination point of the struggle of the nobility for the equal and full access to power. From now on international relations were controlled by the nobility. The king remained the leading figure in international politics, but he was no longer able to send and accept legations, declare war and make peace. The monarch often maintained his private diplomacy, using his own financial and human resources. However, without the support of the nobles of Rzeczpospolita, this diplomacy was more modest and more limited in scope than the diplomatic activities carried out on behalf of the Res Publica. Apart from those differences, this way of functioning of diplomacy made consistent flow of information about the Rzeczpospolita reality not possible and western politicians were hardly ever familiar with it<sup>8</sup>. The relations with Spain certainly belonged to matters that did not enjoy much interest amongst the nobles. What is more, dynastic alliances between the Jagiellons and Spanish Habsburgs also did not lead to more frequent contacts between the royal courts and did not affect mutual understanding. Neither the marriages contracted during the congress of Vienna of 1515, nor the fact that the archduchess Maria Habsburg, a governor of the Spanish Netherlands (1531-1555) was a former wife of Luis II of Jagiellon, improved the intensity of diplomatic relations. Also Habsburg wives of Sigismund Augustus, cousins of Philip II did not

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*społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warsaw, Wydawnictwo sejmowe, 1995; PIETRZYK-REEVES, Dorota, *Ład Rzeczpospolitej. Polska myśl polityczna XVI wieku a klasyczna tradycja republikańska*, Cracow, Księgarnia Akademicka, 2012; GRZEŚKOWIAK-KRWAWICZ, Anna, *Dyskurs polityczny Rzeczpospolitej Obojga Narodów. Pojęcia i idee*, Toruń, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> NAHLIK, Stanisław, *Narodziny dyplomacji nowożytnej*, Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1971, pp. 58-59.

<sup>8</sup> RACHUBA, Andrzej, „Osobliwości polskiej dyplomacji w okresie nowożytnym (XVI-XVIII wiek)” in KOZMIŃSKI, Maciej (ed.), *Cywilizacja europejska. Eseje i szkice z dziejów cywilizacji i dyplomacji*, Warsaw, Collegium Civitas, 2010, pp. 225-244.

manage to deepen bilateral relations<sup>9</sup>.

From the political point of view, free elections marked the beginning of the new international political theatre in Rzeczpospolita. That is why Philip II, as well as many other monarchs, decided to involve in the so-called *negocio de Polonia* (*Polish business*). Political facts and the background are quite well known thanks to works of Ryszard Skowron<sup>10</sup>. What is less known is the socio-cultural aspect of Spanish political involvement in the free elections, namely the way Spanish diplomats interpreted the reality of Polish-Lithuanian Republic in the electoral context.

The Spanish diplomats' perspective was a unique one. First of all they did not know the country as they had hardly had any contacts with Poland and Lithuania states before. The relations between Poland and Spain in XVI century, until the first election (1573), were unilateral. Jagiellon monarchs were sending their envoys to Madrid, Naples as well as to Rome in order to regain the so-called *Neapolitan sums* (the loan in the amount of 430,000 ducats that Bona Sforza, queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania lent to Philip II of Spain in 1557)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> PRZEŹDZIECKI, Reginald, “Los embajadores de España en Polonia. Desde la edad media al siglo XVII”, in *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, no CXXI, (1947), pp. 402-440.

<sup>10</sup> CONDE PAZOS, Miguel, *La Monarquía Católica y los confines orientales de la cristiandad. Relaciones entre la Casa de Austria y los Vasa de Polonia*, (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation), Universidad Autónoma de Madrid 2016; SKOWRON, Ryszard, *Polish diplomats in Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries*, Cracow, Universitas, 1997; SKOWRON, Ryszard, *Olivares, los Vasa y el Báltico: Polonia en la política internacional de España en los años 1621-1632*, Warsaw, DiG, 2008; SKOWRON, Ryszard, “El espacio del encuentro de los confines de Europa: España y Polonia en el reinado de Felipe II”, MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN, Jose (ed.), *Felipe II (1527-1598) : Europa y la monarquía católica Congreso Internacional Felipe II (1598-1998)*, vol. 1, tomo 2, Madrid, Parteluz, 1998, pp. 881-892; GÓRALSKI, Zbigniew, “Las relaciones históricas entre España y Polonia”, in *Trocadero*, 1 (1989), pp. 37-50.

<sup>11</sup> RIVERO, Manuel, “Philip II, John III and the Sforza legacy: Patrimony and Religion in the relationships between Sweden and Spain (1573-1584)”, MARTÍNEZ RUIZ, Enrique, PAZZIS PI CORRALES, Magdalena (eds.), *Spain & Sweden in the Baroque Era (1600-1660). International Congress Records*, Madrid, Fundacion Berndt Wistedt, 2000, pp. 265-277; SKOWRON, Ryszard, “Bari, la Polonia, l’Europa. L’eredità di Bona oggetto di gioco nell’arena internazionale nell XVI e XVII secolo. Bari Polska, Europa. *Heritage of Queen Bona as a subject of international games in the 16th and 17th centuries*, BINACO, Rosanna, (ed.), *Bona Sforza: regina di Polonia e duchessa di Bari: catalogo della Mostra*,

Nevertheless, these actions did not provoke any interest of the Spanish politicians towards a distant country. On the contrary, Polish claims in Naples basically caused the dismissal of the Polish problem as the Spaniards pretended the issue was non-existent and consistently dodged it.

Secondly, the Spaniards were deprived of allies, agents (so called *partido español* or *facción española*) in Rzeczpospolita. The famous Spanish network of agents that reached even such distant lands of Habsburg Empire as Moravia and Bohemia, was not used for the purpose of *negocio de Polonia*<sup>12</sup>. Thirdly, Philip II did not command an independent political action in Rzeczpospolita. It was not of highest importance for the Spanish international policies and Spain had no instruments to act there. For that reason, Philip II made the Polish business dependent on the emperor's policies in that region. The two diplomatic missions (during the first election - Pedro Fajardo and during the third one - Guillén de San Clemente) the Spanish monarch sent to Rzeczpospolita were aimed at supporting the activities of the Emperor to win the crown for the archduke Ernest of Habsburg, Philip's nephew. There were also unofficial reasons: to secure Philip's financial and political influence in this new international political game<sup>13</sup>. It is also

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[Bari, Castello Svevo, 27 stycznia - 26 kwietnia 2000: Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle, 14 September - 19 November 2000], vol.1, Rome, Nuova Comunicazione, 2000, pp. 227-248.

<sup>12</sup> MAREK, Pavel, *La embajada española en la corte imperial (1558-1641). Figuras de los embajadores y estrategias clientelares*, Karolinum, Ibero-Americana Pragensia, Supplementum 33, 2013; ARIENZA ARIENZA, Javier, "Don Guillén de San Clemente, un embajador hispano en la corte de Bohemia", in *Ibero-Americana Pragensia-supplementu*, 20 (2007), pp. 93-101; ARIENZA ARIENZA, Javer, "La historia de Guillén de San Clemente, un embajador hispano en el corazón de Europa entre los años 1581 y 1608", in *Ibero-Americana Pragensia*, 45 (2017), pp. 73-98; URJASZ-RACZKO, Matylda, "Duma i uprzedzenie. Strategia dyplomacji hiszpańskiej wobec pierwszych wolnych elekcji w Rzeczpospolitej", HANUSIEWICZ-LAVALLEE, Mirosława (ed.), *W przestrzeni Południa. Kultura Pierwszej Rzeczpospolitej wobec narodów romańskich: estetyka, prądy i style, konteksty kulturowe*, Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016, pp. 405-429.

<sup>13</sup> RODRÍGUEZ PÉREZ, Raimundo A., "Bajo la sombra de don Luis de Requesens. El encubramiento cortesano del Marqués de los Vélez", in *Investigaciones Históricas*, 31 (2011), pp. 11-34; RODRÍGUEZ PÉREZ, Raimundo A., "Servir al rey, servir a la casa. La embajada extraordinaria del III marques de los Velez en el Imperio y Polonia (1572-1575)", MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN, José, GONZÁLEZ CUERVA, Rubén, (eds.), *La dinastía de los Austria: las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, vol. 1, Madrid, Polifemo,

worth noticing that apart from this, Philip the Prudent engaged his diplomats in many indirect political actions not only in Vienna but also in Rome and Venice. In these cities his diplomats, agents and allies tried to lobby for the Spanish solution of the Polish business<sup>14</sup>. Additionally, Philip II ordered (twice) to draft economic analysis of Rzeczpospolita. This task was entrusted to the Papal Nuncio in the Republic of Alberto Bolognetti (April 1581-April 1585) and in 1586 to a Portuguese grain merchant, Benito Nuñez. Spanish monarch also examined the possibility of blocking the sale of grain to Dutch merchants in Gdansk<sup>15</sup>.

It can be concluded that on one hand it was an opportunity to extend the Spanish influence behind the eastern border of the Habsburg Empire. On the other hand, Philip II preferred to leave this task to the emperor, therefore he did not excessively engage his diplomatic staff in the direct reconnaissance work in Rzeczpospolita. Consequently, Spaniards observed and judged Republic's political events from the perspective of principles and values practiced in their sphere of activity in the Western Europe.

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2011, pp. 439-478; GONZÁLEZ CUERVA, Rubén, "The Spanish Embassy in the Empire, watchtower of Poland (1590-1624)", SKOWRON, RYSZARD, (ed.), *The House of Vasa and the House of Austria. Correspondence from the Years 1587 to 1668*, Katowice, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016, pp. 115-143.

<sup>14</sup> DUBAS-URWANOWICZ, Ewa, „Między troską o losy Kościoła w Rzeczpospolitej a sympatią do Habsburgów. Hannibal z Kapui w Rzeczpospolitej w latach 1588-1591”, DROZDOWSKI, Mariusz R., WALCZAK, Wojciech, WISZOWATA-WALCZAK, Katarzyna, (eds.), *Od Kijowa do Rzymu: z dziejów stosunków Rzeczpospolitej ze Stolicą Apostolską i Ukrainą*, Białystok, Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy, 2012, pp. 431-451; SKOWRON, Ryszard, „Nuncjusz i ambasador. Korespondencja Annibala z Capui z Guillénem de San Clemente (1586-1591)”, *idem*, pp. 453-67; URJASZ-RACZKO, Matylda, „La estrategia diplomática de Felipe II frente a la Tercera Elección Libre en La República Polaco-Lituana, 1586-1589”, in *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna*, 36 (2014), pp. 213-232; RIVERO RODRÍGUEZ, Manuel, “The Kingdom of Naples in the Spanish Monarchy and it's Relationship with Poland”, SKOWRON, Ryszard, (ed.), *The House of Vasa and The House of Austria. Correspondence from the Years 1587 to 1668*, I, Katowice, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016, pp. 187-204.

<sup>15</sup> RUIZ MARTÍN, Felipe, „El pan de los países bálticos durante las guerras de religión. Andanzas y gestiones del historiador Pedro Cornejo”, in *Hispania*, no 84 (1961), pp. 549-579; SKOWRON, Ryszard, „Współpraca nuncjuszy apostolskich w Polsce z dworem madryckim w latach 1578-1598. W kręgu koncepcji politycznych i praktyki dyplomatycznej”, CHYNCZEWSKA-HENNEL, Teresa, WISZOWATA-WALCZAK, Katarzyna, (ed.), *Nuncjatura apostolska w Rzeczypospolitej*, Białystok, Benkowski Publishing & Balloons, 2012, pp. 161-175.



## 2. TO UNDERSTAND THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE

The Spanish cornerstone principles were formed in the world of royalty, court and catholic religion. Even though the Spanish monarchy had been constructed from different forms of political orders and the republican thought was present in the social dialogue, the society had a very steep hierarchy with an extremely exclusive center of power on the top (the king and his closest secretars). The king was above the law. He was the only one who enjoyed real, absolute freedom. Even though his diplomats and politicians occupied high ranks of the social ladder, they were still merely king's subjects. The position on the social ladder (prestige, money, privileges) was determined by the access to the king and position at the royal court<sup>16</sup>. In the Republic the situation was quite different. The social structure was much flatter and there were many dispersed centers of power<sup>17</sup>.

If we focus not on facts and data but on diplomats' impressions, the things most astonishing to them, as well as on the most widely commented situations, it becomes clear that this encounter represents a clash of opposite political cultures and state values: a civic political culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic and the Spanish Monarchy's

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<sup>16</sup> HORTAL MUÑOZ, José Eloy, VERSTEEGEN, Gijs, *Las ideas políticas y sociales en la Edad Moderna*, Madrid, Editorial Síntesis, 2016, p. 45-46; ELLIOTT, John, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies", in *Past & Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48-71; GIL PUYOL, Francisco Xavier, "Una cultura cortesana provincial. Patria, comunicación y lenguaje en la Monarquía Hispánica de los Austrias", FERNÁNDEZ ALBALADEJO, Pedro, (ed.), *Monarquía, Imperio y Pueblos en la España moderna. Actas de la IV Reunión Científica de la Asociación Española de Historia Moderna. Alicante, 27-30 de mayo de 1996*, Alicante 1997, pp. 225-257; MAĆZAK, Antoni, *Rządzący i rządzeni. Władza i społeczeństwo w Europie wczesno nowożytnej*, Warsaw, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986, p. 131; TOMÁS Y VALIENTE, Francisco, *La España de Felipe IV. Historia de España*, t. XXV, Madrid, Espasa/ Calpe, 1964, p. 21-82; MARAVALL, José Antonio, *Teoría del Estado en España en el siglo XVII*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997, pp. 198-205.

<sup>17</sup> MAĆZAK, Antoni, „Pierwsza Rzeczpospolita: władza i przestrzeń”, KOPCZYŃSKI, Michał, TYGIELSKI, Wojciech, (eds.), *Rzeczpospolita – Europa XVI-XVII wiek. Próba konfrontacji*, Warsaw, Optima, 1999, pp. 15-27; GRZEŚKOWIAK-KRWAWICZ, Anna, "Anti-monarchism in Polish Republicanism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", GELDEREN, Martin van, SKINNER, Quentin, *Republicanism. A shared European Heritage*, vol. I, Cambridge, University Press, 2002, pp. 43-59.

political culture of the royal court<sup>18</sup>.

Spanish diplomatic correspondence referring to Polish matters is quite abundant due to the fact that the diplomatic system was based on an extensive, bureaucratic network of diplomatic outposts, where each element was obliged to pass the information on to another one in order to deliver it to the center in Madrid. Nevertheless, the data concerning Rzeczpospolita's internal situation and its socio-political core, can be reconstructed mostly on the basis of the letters, reports of very few Spaniards coming to Polish elections and some of their colleagues observing its reality from the empire<sup>19</sup>.

The fundamental rule of the Republic's political system was the balance of power between its three pillars: the king, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. All were equal and had to obey the same law<sup>20</sup>. During the elections Spanish diplomats saw these three state structures, but they were unable to uncover the actual shape of relations between them.

To them, the Senate was the main decision-making body. Perhaps because the foreign envoys had their only official audience in front of the senate, while presenting their candidate in front of senators. Secondly, it was the Senate where they saw wealthy palatines (provincial governors),

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<sup>18</sup> OPALIŃSKI, Edward, "Civic Humanism and Republican Citizenship in the Polish Renaissance", GELDEREN, Martin van, SKINNER, Quentin, *Republicanism. A shared European Heritage*, vol. I, Cambridge, University Press, 2002, p. 147-166.

<sup>19</sup> The mayor materials are gathered in Archivo General de Simancas [AGS], some parts of the documents from AGS section Estado was published by MEYSZTOWICZ, Walerian, *Elementa ad fontium ediciones. Documenta Polonica ex Archivo Generali Hispaniae in Simancas*, [EFE] ROME, Antemurale 1963-1970, vol. VIII, XI, XII, XV, XVI, XIX, XXI, are dedicated to the diplomatic relations of Poland and Spain; also *Colección de Documentos Inéditos para la Historia de España por el marques de la Fuensanta del Valle*, t. CI, CIII, CXI, Madrid 1895; some materials are also gathered in Instituto Valencia de Don Juan (IVDJ), Archivo Histórico Nacional de España [AHN], sección Santa Sede (SS), but they refer more to the international relations; some are also in edited collections as: AYERBE marques de, *Correspondencia inédita de Don Guillén de San Clemente, embajador en Alemania de los Reyes Don Felipe II y III sobre la intervención de España en los sucesos de Polonia y Hungría (1581-1608)*, Saragossa 1992.

<sup>20</sup> EKES, Janusz, *Trójpodział władzy i zgoda wszystkich. Naczelna zasada ustroju mieszanego w staropolskiej refleksji politycznej*, Siedlce, Instytut Historii Akademii Podlaskiej, 2001.

the highest-rank clergy, castellans and nobility<sup>21</sup>. In the subsequent election, these mighty members of the Senate were considered potential allies of the Habsburg candidates as, it was thought, they had the greatest influence on the course of the electoral activities. Spaniards addressed letters offering cooperation and pleaded for support for the Spanish candidate with none other than the catholic clergy and catholic, highest rank nobility from the Senate<sup>22</sup>.

This way of perceiving Polish-Lithuanian reality was understandable as Spaniards were applying a well-known, western pattern and continuously searched for the hierarchy. They looked for the most important posts and people in the state. As in their own eyes they saw wealth and social differences in the nobles' state, where else would they search for the allies if not in the Senate? It was crucial to find out at whose door one should knock to try to make a deal.

When describing the highest deputies from Senate of Rzeczpospolita, Spaniards applied titles in order to point to a rank of a person. They used to apply the term palatine (voivod) to the highest rank nobility, but inconsistently; they interchanged it with terms as: castellans, bishops, captains, senior men and as well as electors, barons, *grandes* and for describing the lower classes of nobility - *hidalgos*<sup>23</sup>. For example the

<sup>21</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip, n. d. ante 6 IV 1573, EFE t. XII, no 129: *hara comencada la dieta a los 6 de abril sera oyr los embaxadores cada uno por si en senado pleno donde asisten todos los prelados palatinos y castellanos con los demas oficiales del reyno y todos los de la nobleza del, que quisieren mas.*

<sup>22</sup> N. N. to N. N., cs. 1573, EFE t. XXI, no 163; Pedro Fajardo to count Monteagudo, Łowicz 8 V 1573, EFE t. XI, no 83; Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Łowicz 5 V 1573, EFE t. XI, no 151; Ignotus [marchio de los Velez?] to Philip II, n. d. post 23 XI 1575, EFE t. XI, no 190; Count Monteagudo to Philip II, 11 I 1576, EFE t. XII, no 30; Juan de Zúñiga to Philip II, Rome 16 I 1577, EFE t. XV, no 15; Philip II to archbishop of Gniezna, 28 III 1587, AGS E. 2449, f. 5; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 17 XI 1587, EFE t. XV, no 143; Juan de Cornoca to Philip II, Venice 28 XI 1587, AGS E. 1342, f. 58; Guillén de San Clemente's account of his stay in Poland, post 23 VIII 1588, EFE t. XV, no 166; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 18 IX 1587, EFE t. XV, no 201; Philip II to cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł, Eskorial 28 III 1587, EFE t. XV, no 204; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 25 VII 1589, EFE t. XVI, no 147

<sup>23</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Łowicz 5 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 151: *el senado todo está asentado, que son obispos, palatinos, castellanos, capitanes, señores de vasallos y toda gente principal todos los demás de la nobleza, que son los hidalgos, están en pié*; Count Monteagudo to Philip II, 12 V 1573, CODICIN t. CXI, p. 214; Diego de Zúñiga to Gabriel

main “barons” in the state were Stanisław Szafraniec and archbishop of Gniezno. The last one was to perform duties similar to the viceroy at the time of the interregnum<sup>24</sup>. This method was very misleading. Nobles had administrative titles but, as it has been mentioned already, there was no social hierarchy amongst the nobility. They were equal amongst themselves, not in an economic sense, but in terms of freedom, rights and privileges. What was essential for nobility, occurred unacceptable or even defective to Spaniards. To them, the social hierarchy was visible in titles, functions at the court and in the access to the king. The equivalence of the voice of an archbishop from the Senate, a rich nobleman from the Chamber of Deputies and the lowborn landlord, was regarded as total public disorder<sup>25</sup>.

What is more, the Polish and Lithuanian nobles considered themselves not only equal amongst each other, but also free people. Their liberty was not limited by a king or their social status. It was limited only by the law, the law proclaimed by themselves<sup>26</sup>. This principle was incomprehensible to the Spaniards. It was shocking to see such a large number of nobles taking part in elections with the right to vote and demand new rights and privileges. It was thought that the crowd meant a multiplicity of opinions, votes, and consequently formed an easy target for a clever, generous manipulators as, for example, the French. In their eyes, the nobility had too many rights and privileges. Such huge numbers entitled to vote resulted in the creation of countless factions and groups of interest. The way Spaniards saw it, it provoked anarchic social divisions (political and religious ones as well as and amongst

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Zayas, Paris 27 V 1574, AGS B 36, K. 1534, f. 60; Prince of Parm to Philip II, Brussels 28 IV 1587, AGS Estado 592, f. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Hrabia Monteagudo do Pedra Fajardo, b. m. 22 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 13; [Annibale di Capua] do N. N., b. m. b. d., 1587, EFE t. XXI, no 159.

<sup>25</sup> Count Monteagudo to Pedro Fajardo, n. d. 20 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 12: *La condición, umor y trato de los polacos es grande altiva, y aunque barbara, no tan cayda y flematica como la de los tudescos y de otras naciones sus circunvezinas; de aqui se ynfiere que quieren ser tratados con mucha cortesia, amor y afavilidad, quieen ser estimados en mucho; y gustarán como todas las demas naçiones que les loen la patria, y los buenos usos, y cosas d'ella;* Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Viena 25 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 160: *...de manera que el mesonero y el carretero y otro qualquier hombre perdido sea tan senador en ella como el Arçobispo de Gnesna, es neçessario que tal elección no pueda ser de otra manera.*

<sup>26</sup> GRZEŠKOWIAK-KRWAWICZ, Anna, *Queen Liberty: the Concept of Freedom in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, Leiden, Brill, 2012.

individuals). These characteristics were noticed even before the first free election, when Sigismund Augustus was still in rein. Spanish diplomats emphasized that among the senators of Rzeczpospolita there were too many controversies over the anti-Turkish Holy League, as each of them had a different opinion<sup>27</sup>. What is more, excessive freedom meant to Spaniards that a vast number noblemen had already been 'infected with heresy' and not just that. The high-rank nobility, obviously a major political force, may impose a heretic candidate on the Polish-Lithuanian throne<sup>28</sup>.

Polish and Lithuanian nobility felt responsible for the country, and considered themselves the real owners of the Republic. The right to elect the king was one of the most tangible examples to back up that belief. To Spaniards this approach to the monarch, a crowned head and generally to monarchy was unacceptable. From the very beginning they had assumed that the strategy of distribution of money, valuables and offices was the French path for to the Polish throne. Therefore they quickly concluded that money and promises were the only way to persuade an impulsive and disorganized crowd of noblemen. Their belief was confirmed by Spaniards when Albert Laski and many other senators 'shamelessly took off the mask', accepted bribes from the Habsburg, but voted for Henry Valois. The conclusion was that the French must have offered them more<sup>29</sup>. During the second and third election it was the same ball game. Nobility was seen as corruptible and fickle, they changed the political factions several times, regardless of the agreements

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<sup>27</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, s.l. ante 6 IV 1573, EFE t. XII no 129: *...mas que quarenta o cinquenta mill cavalleros y todos estos tienen voto [...] El estado de este negocio esta bien oscuro y dubdoso hasta agora por la multitud desta gente y la variedad de sus ingenios que es grande y asi lo que el dicho don Pedro Fajardo puede conjeturar a tiento en ello de las cosas y avisos que han venido a los embaxadores del Emperador y otros indicios ordinarios, es, que el frances teania levantados los animos desta gente con grandes ofertas y promesas;* also: Cartas de Varsovia, n. d. 6 II 1572, AGS E. 1505, f. 107; Count Monteagudo to Pedro Fajardo, n. d. 22 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 13.

<sup>28</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Łowicz 5 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 151; N. N. to count Monteagudo, Cracow 25 VI 1575, EFE t. XI, no 179; Guillén de San Clemente to Juan de Idiaquez, Prague 24 VI 1587, EFE t. XV, no 175; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 24 VI 1587, EFE t. XV, no 176.

<sup>29</sup> Guzman de Silva to Philip II, Venice 12 VIII 1573, AGS E. 1332, f. 78; Pedro Fajardo to count Monetagudo, Łowicz 8 V 1573, EFE t. XI, no 83.

and commitments they had made with Habsburgs<sup>30</sup>.

The most glaring example was the rivalry -dangerous and harmful for Rzeczpospolita- between the house of Zborowski and chancellor Zamoyski. Deadly conflicts like this one were not uncommon amongst other nobles. This way of interpreting the Republic's reality eventually led Spaniards to the conclusion that there was no sense of negotiating the terms of *pacta conventa* (king's obligations) with Polish supporters of the Habsburgs. By analogy, they thought that the speech of the foreign envoys before the senate did not matter. It was only a ceremony, an electoral spectacle, in which a given player presented his own candidate. It was concluded that the real battle was fought behind the scenes, where they would hold talks with each of the contenders. The conversation was mainly about offering gratification and future lucrative offices in exchange for support<sup>31</sup>.

In the Spanish eyes the election was mainly about demonstrations of power. Its result was decided by the strength and efficiency of private armies. This was a picture presented by Pedro Fajardo, even just before the election:

it is plausible that, if the matters keep unfolding the way they are now, bloodshed will be unavoidable. There are so many armed people in the field and if the election is left to chance (God forbid) to be resolved between two or three subjects, it will become absolutely unpredictable. It has always been a worrisome thing to see that confusion of a mob and they

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpt from the letter of Pedro Fajardo to count Monteagudo, b. m. post 10 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 74: *Finalmente señor hemos perdido el negocio a lo que tengo entendido por falta de caudal para ganar votos a estos, y anlo ganado los franceses por tenerlo*. Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Viena 25 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 160; Archduke Maksymilian to Philip II, Viena 2 IX 1587, EFE t. XV, no 138; Pedro Rodriguez to Juan de Idiaquez, Prague 30 VI 1587, EFE t. XV, no 179; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 18 IX 1587, EFE t. XV, no 201; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 13 XII 1588, EFE t. XVI, no 117.

<sup>31</sup> Philip II to count Monteagudo, Escorial 2 I 1573, CODOIN t. CXI, p. 91: *y entiendo que la mas principal, y de mas fuerza y eficacia para con los de aquella nacion, ha de ser util, y el ir ganando con dádivas a los que conviene*; Pedro Rodriguez to Philip II, Prague 25 VIII 1587, EFE t. XV, no 195: *con todo esto ni confio ni desespero del successo que esto terna, porque Polacos son codiciosos de dinero y creo que al llegar en aquel Reyno el que Vuestra Magestad ha mandado proveer, havra cada uno sacado lo que havra podido de los pretendores y aun tambien lo havran gastado y con la nueva voz de dinero espero mejorara el partido desta Serenissima Casa*.

have usually been calmed down by the use of this remedy [force] rather than by reasoning, which, however, is truly necessary in these elections<sup>32</sup>.

Fajardo was afraid of the nobility. While waiting in Łowicz for the election, he heard the news of an enraged crowd of noblemen threatening to kill anyone supporting archduke Ernest. As he mentioned, it had been a crowd of armed people who hated the Habsburg Empire because of the neighbor affairs, but above all feared limiting their rights and freedom. Fajardo reported that foreign envoys were ordered to leave just before the election. Civil war was his prediction. He also mentioned illegal detention of the imperial envoy John Cyrus as well as the secretary of the emperor's legacy who suspiciously vanished<sup>33</sup>. During the second election even more frightening information reached Madrid. It was said that more than two hundred people had been killed, three bishops had been poisoned and the chancellor bishop Jerome Rozdrażewski had lost his life. Guillen de San Clemente portrayed the third election similarly – he reported being threatened with death and insulted. He feared assassination<sup>34</sup>.

What is more, during the interregnum, the arbitrariness of the nobility took on unprecedented dimensions. The country was in chaos and brute force was all that mattered. At that time the courts did not function, the murderers were not put on trial, the diplomatic immunity did not guarantee any safety at all, the rights of the imperial envoy were violated, as in the case of already mentioned clergyman, John Cyrus. Spanish diplomats did not know or did not understand the reason why

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<sup>32</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, s.l. ante 6 IV 1573, EFE t. XII no 129: *aviendo de yr el negocio por esta via aunque en tal caso avra entre ellos quien resista por donde es verisimil que no se hara sin sangre hallandose tenta gente armada en campo, si la election viniere a suertes (que Dios no quiera) entre dos o tres sujetos quedara la dicha election a la ventura; esto se ha temido siempre viendo que la confusión de tanto vulgo que aqui ha de aver se suele aquietar con este medio mas que con el discurso de la razon que en tal elección es necesaria.*

<sup>33</sup> Pedro Fajardo to count Monetagudo, Łowicz 8 V 1573, EFE t. XI, no 83; Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Łowicz 5 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 151; Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Viena 25 V 1573, EFE t. XII no 160.

<sup>34</sup> Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 18 IX 1587, EFE t. XV, no 201: *El tratamiento que en Poloña se ha hecho a mi persona ha sido causado de los desordenes que han nascido de no haver cabeza ni quien governase las cosas, por lo qual todos hemos estado en mucho peligro de la vida muchas vezes pues hera licitto a matar a quien quiera sin que huviese ni respecto a nadie ni diferencia de personas.*

this imperial agent was temporally imprisoned by the castellan Jan Kostka from Gdańsk. Neither did they notice the fact that he was soon freed after the electoral diet. They neglected the fact or were badly informed by imperial diplomacy, that he had been acting against the law and matched this event to their way of interpretation: that nobles showed respect to no one and nothing, they were able to violate the immunity and authority of the imperial envoy<sup>35</sup>.

The diets were postponed and the election transformed into a demonstration of strength. The event attracted 40,000 to 100,000 armed nobility<sup>36</sup>. Spanish diagnosis was very simple: there was no state system, only the rule of anarchy.

The thing most astonishing to Spaniards was the position of the king, the hallowed leader, the cornerstone of the Spanish Monarchy. The fact that the king was not free in his actions but was bound by the law, just like any other citizen, was interpreted by Spaniards as a lack of statehood or a state of anarchy. According to Fajardo, the custom of exercising the rights and law during the electoral diet had precisely the aim of binding the hands of the future king, whom the nobility would prefer to be like a Venetian prince<sup>37</sup>. As in previous examples, they came

<sup>35</sup> BUES, Almut, „Stosunki Habsburgów z Polską i ich starania o polski tron w latach 1572-1573”, in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 2 (1995), pp. 3-14; WIERZBOWSKI, Teodor, „Zabiegi cesarza Maksymiliana II o koronę polską”, in *Ateneum* 3 (1879), pp. 407-446.

<sup>36</sup> Count Monteagudo to Pedro Fajardo, n. d. 20 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 12: *Entrados en aquel reyno mandara Vuestra Señoría dexar siempre muy pagados y contentos a los huespedes en las posadas, no obstante que parezca exçeso pues por poco que sea se suele contentar la gente semejnates, y aun se escusan pesadumbres y questiones de las quales se deve huyr maximamente en este tiempo y en aquel reyno, donde con estar interegnum deve aver tanta falta de gobierno y provision para las cosas que sera muy neçesaria la observancia d'este cabo por menudo que pareze*; Guillén de San Clemente to Juan de Idiaquez, Warsaw 31 VII 1587, EFE t. XV, no 192: *es porque ellas estan tan confussas y rebueltas que no podria dezir cosa que de aqui a dos oras no haya mudanca en ella*; Archduke Ernest to Guillén de San Clemente, Vienna 2 X 1588, CIDGSA, c. LXVIII: *Todo es tan variable, y los polacos tan inconstantes, que hasta ver el fin no creen nada, ni aun entonces se si podremos assegurarlos*; Count Monteagudo to Juan de Zúñiga, Viena 5 V 1576, IVDJ E. 5, t. I, f. 105: *pues fundamento no le hay, ny por conjetura acertara nadie a discurrir de cosas que tanta yncertitud nos prometen como es la flemma desta nación, y la inconstancia y variedad con que suelen tratar los Polacos*.

<sup>37</sup> Pedro Fajardo to Philip II, Łowicz 5 V 1573, EFE t. XII, no 151: *...que primero que la elección se haga se corrijan las leyes y estatuos que no es otra cosa esto que dexar tan*



to such conclusions right after the first election, when the rivalry for the precedence took place. The Spanish envoy, Pedro Fajardo, wanted to deliver his speech in favor of the archduke Ernest just after the imperial envoys and before the French ones<sup>38</sup>. The parliament declined his request, because the custom was that envoys presented their candidates in the order of arrival. As the French came before Pedro Fajardo, they had the right to present their candidate first. Pedro Fajardo took it as an insult to the Catholic King, his prestige, as well as his international position<sup>39</sup>.

The perception of events, following the outcome of the battle of Byczyna (24th January 1588), when chancellor Zamoyski's troops defeated the archduke Maximilian and took him captive, was similar. The long negotiations of the release of the archduke were, in their eyes, was a serious offence for the Habsburgs<sup>40</sup>. The Spanish envoy, San Clemente was ensuring in his reports that Polish nobility would take any opportunity to humiliate the emperor, especially that they knew there would be no decisive, military action from the emperor's side. From the Spanish perspective, the negotiations with Poles were useless. Only the

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*atadas las manos al Rey que huviere de ser, que si ellos pueden, del al Duque de Venecia no havra diferencia;* Diego de Zúñiga to Philip II, Paris 31 III 1573, AGS K. 1531 B 35, f. 77.

<sup>38</sup> Philip II to count Monteagudo, Escorial 2 I 1573, EFE t. XII, no 9; Count Monteagudo to Pedro Fajardo, n. d. 20 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 13; Count Monteagudo to baron Pernstein and Pedro Fajardo, n. d. 20 XII 1572, EFE t. XI, no 9; *y pues a un tiempo vienen a concurrir el señor don Pedro que lo es por España, y los que ay estan por Francia, importa sumamente, (sin que se nos eche de ver), que la precedencia y valor de Vuestra Señoria si pudieramos ganar tiempo con los françeses, lo hagamos y si no a lo menos no lo perdamos y para esto he platicado largo con el señor don Pedro y assi mismo entiendo que Sus Magestades Cesareas escriven a Vuestra Señoria çerca d' este cabo, por lo qual no tendré yo que tratar en el, sino suplicalle que los españoles nos preçiamos de tenerle por señor.*

<sup>39</sup> Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Vien 12 V 1573, CODOIN t. CXI, p. 213: *Háse habido D. Pedro con el valor y prudencia que siempre, guardando el servicio de Vuestra Magestad y su real autoridad como conviene;* Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Viena 1 III 1576, EFE t. XII, no 35; Philip II to count Monteagudo, Madrid 10 II 1573, CODOIN t. CXI, p. 137; Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Viena 10 I 1573, CODOIN t. CXI, p. 117; Philip II to count Monteagudo, Escorial 17 III 1573, CODOIN t. CXI, p. 179.

<sup>40</sup> Summary of the letters from Annibale di Capua to Guillén de San Clemente, post 20 II 1588, EFE t. XVI, no 74: *Que por averse ensobervecido los Polacos con esta victoria;* Guillén de San Clemente do Juan de Idiaquez, Prague 7 IX 1588, EFE t. XVI, no 24: *execucion por mas infamis condiciones que los Polacos pidan;* Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 12 VII 1588, EFE t. XVI, no 14: *que fuese posible vengar esta insolencia de los Polacos.*

military actions seemed appropriate<sup>41</sup>.

The Spanish interpretation of the escape of Henry Valois can act as the best commentary to the image of the position of the king in the Polish-Lithuanian State. His escape was totally understandable to Spaniards. They stressed that nobles did not hesitate to insult him. At the same time they demanded from him to discharge his obligations, respect their privileges and rights, including religious freedom. In addition, the circumstances of his escape were unbelievable: under the cover of the night, the king secretly jumped from the window of the Wawel Royal Castle and ran away chased by a group of noblemen<sup>42</sup>. Luis de Requesens, governor of Milan said that he would not exchange his encomienda for four kingdoms like the Polish one, not because the king was elected, but because of the mistreatment he received<sup>43</sup>.

Furthermore, Spaniards came to believe that the nobility had the innate hatred for the Habsburg and desired to show their superiority in the international theater. Spaniards believed that this hatred towards the empire referred to the whole House of Habsburgs. Probably that was the reason why Philip II did not send his representative for the second election. He wanted to manifest the resentment for the insult showed to

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<sup>41</sup> Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague 7 VI 1588, EFE t. XVI no 88: *assi en lo que toca a libertad de la persona del Rey Maximiliano, y a la conservacion de su derecho, como tambien el reparo de la reputacion que se ha perdido por la desverguencia y poco respeto que el Canciller ha tenido a Su Magestad Cesarea*; Guillen de San Clemente to Juan de Idiaquez, Prague 15 XI 1588, EFE XVI no 1: *sera con toda la yndignidad del Emperador que los Polacos quisieren y quieren que sea con mucha por que saben que al Emperador ni a su enconsejo se les da un quarto por quanto pueden dezir dellos el mundo el uno a treque de que no se haya de ocupar en cosas fuere de su gusto y los otros por no meterse en dificultades nie tenerle cansado para sus disinios [...]yo le asseguro que no rompen[Emperador] la guerra con los Polacos aun que les saquen los ojos que ni aun es posible persuadillos (tanto la aborrecen) que se preparen para la defensiva con amenazarlo los Polacos*;

<sup>42</sup> Pedro Fajardo to count Sessa, Viena 26 VI 1574, IVDJ E. 5, t. III, f. 189; Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Prague 31 V 1575, EFE t. XI, no 185: *los polacos descompusieron en el Senado al rey de Francia de la corona de Polonia, con infames y ignominiosas palabras y demostraciones; cosa que a toda manera de gente ha offendido*; secretar Azagra to N. N., post 21 VI 1574, EFE t. XI, no 142.

<sup>43</sup> Luis de Requesens, comendador de Castilla to Guzman de Silva, Antwerp 23 XII 1574, AGS, Estado, leg. 1512, f. 196: *yo no trocaria mi encomienda si pudiesse vivir en ella por quatro Reynos de Polonia, segun la vida que aquellos dan a los Reyes que eligen*.

him and his deputy, Pedro Fajardo<sup>44</sup>. Further experiences and a way of perception would confirm that belief.

### 3. DISTORTED REFLECTION

During almost twenty years the Spaniards did not extend their network of allies in the territories of Rzeczpospolita. All attempts aimed at the finest families ended almost immediately with a fiasco. The mutual signs and code of conduct were not comprehensible. As a consequence, instead of a better understanding of Rzeczpospolita's reality, election after election, they were 'reconfirming' their diagnosis of Rzeczpospolita. So, when the opportunity of the alliance arose, Spain did not take it seriously. During king Batory's reign (1575-1586), a plan to buy grain straight from the Gdansk harbor was drafted, allowing to cut out the Dutch middlemen. It would deprive the Netherlands of considerable income and play a crucial role in the conflict between Spain and the Netherlands. Nevertheless, since Spaniards were convinced that greed and anarchical inclinations of the nobility were the driving force of the country, no serious attempt at arranging an agreement was made<sup>45</sup>. By analogy, Spaniards were convinced that the Habsburg were losing elections exactly because of procrastination and bargaining with the nobility. In terms of 'viable' policies, Spanish recommendations included applying decisive actions such as putting negotiations aside and the use of force<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Viena 26 VI 1574, EFE t. XI no 139: *anticipadamente me ha perescido dezir que no conuerna embiar a aquel reyno personage alguno en el real nombre de Vuestra Magestad ni el Emperador lo querra, ni es razon que lo quiera, haviendose havido con Don Pedro los polacos la otra vez como se huvieron.*

<sup>45</sup> Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Viena 29 III 1583, EFE t. XV, no 118; PAZZIS PI CORRALES, Magdalena, op. cit.; GOMEZ-CENTURION JIMENEZ, Carlos, "Las relaciones hispano-hanzeaticas durante el reinado de Felipe II", in *Revista de Historia Naval*, 15 (1986), pp. 65-83; BORATYŃSKI, Ludwik, "Esteban Batory, la Hansa y la sublevación de los Países Bajos", in *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 127 (1954), pp. 451-500; RUIZ MARTÍN, Felipe, op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Count Monteagudo to Philip II, Prague 7 VII 1575, EFE t. XII, no 178; Guillén de San Clemente to Juan de Idiaquez, Prague 3 III 1587, EFE t. XV, no 151; Pedro Fajardo to count Monteagudo, Łowicz 8 V 1573, EFE t. XI, no 141; The report of the Habsburg envoys from the election in the Commonwealth, presented to the emperor Rudolf II by Guillén de San Clemente, Piotrków 28 VIII 1587, EFE t. XV, no 158.

Perhaps the person who managed to diagnose the problem of Spanish-Polish relations was Nicolas Sękowski, one of the diplomats involved in the affairs of *the Neapolitan sums*, who spent more than fifteen years in Naples and in Madrid. He published the *Description of Poland* by Martin Cromer in the Spanish Monarchy. Even though this basic set of facts about Poland had been accessible in Europe since 1577, he reedited it twice: the Latin version in Naples in 1582 and the Spanish, shorter edition in Madrid in 1588<sup>47</sup>. His motives are not known but possibly, he realized that without the knowledge of basic rights and values of Rzeczpospolita no dialogue would ever be possible.

## CONCLUSIONS

Spanish perception did not focus on just one aspect, it was not limited merely by the optics of political propaganda. Spanish attempt at successful reconnaissance in Poland is rather an effort to grasp Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's completely different reality. Yet in this part of the world it proved futile. It seems that the lack of hierarchical order and decentralization of power structure, proved to be the major obstacle for effective analyses. Signals sent by Spaniards were not legible to the citizens of Rzeczpospolita. It must be also mentioned, that Rzeczpospolita was not directly interlinked with the Western world; apart from the Baltic trade, the links were rather loose. Its world rested on the Baltic sea-Black Sea axis. As a result, Spanish methods did not work; no potential mutual exchange of benefits or a partner relationship was discovered.

It is not known when and if this image of Rzeczpospolita changed in the eyes of Spanish elites in the decades to come. Even in XVII century, during the Thirty Years War, when the political projects between Polish Vasa and Spanish monarchs were being discussed, almost every Spanish envoy to Rzeczpospolita stressed the same obstacle for entering an alliance – the lack of center of power and well-ordered socio-political structure (an excessive influence of nobility on politics, constant fights

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<sup>47</sup> URJASZ-RACZKO, Matylda, “Centros y periferias de la Monarquía Hispánica a finales del siglo XVI. Mikołaj Sękowski, un diplomático polaco en Nápoles y Madrid”, in CIECHANOWSKI, Jan Stanisław, GONZÁLEZ CAIZÁN, Cristina, (eds.), *Spain-India-Russia. Centres, Borderlands, and Peripheries of Civilisations. Anniversary Book Dedicated to Professor Jan Kieniewicz on His 80th Birthday*, Warsaw, Sub Lupa, 2018, pp. 283-292.

between the king and his subjects, as well as lack of king's sovereignty')<sup>48</sup>. The Spaniards could not find a 'serious partner' for negotiations. Maybe that conviction was the reason why none of joint political projects of the modern era ever came true. It is still to be investigated.

In a wider perspective, this image of Rzeczpospolita may not be so different from the one projected by the French<sup>49</sup>. Such an analysis of the image of the Republic should also be carried out from the perspective of other diplomacies and courts. It would enable the identification of issues that most affected the perception of dissimilarities with Western European state models. The special status of the Republic as a country outside (or between) the Eastern and Western civilizations does not raise doubts amongst researchers. However, they differ in their assessment of the extent to which it differed and the assumed criteria.

The characteristics provided by Spanish diplomats would be closer to those who strongly emphasize Rzeczpospolita's separateness from Latin civilization, stressing the non-Latin aspects, describing it as a borderland of the Eastern and Western worlds; a "Euro-Sarmatian" civilization or the project of 'Europe in the East'<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> SKOWRON, Ryszard, „Polska i Polacy w korespondencji dyplomacji hiszpańskiej w okresie XVI i XVII wieku”, KAPIŃSKI, Andrzej, *Spoleczeństwo staropolskie. Seria nowa*, vol. I, Warsaw, DiG, 2008, pp. 223-240.

<sup>49</sup> PÓŁCWIARTEK-DREMIERRE, Dorota, „Pierwsze polsko-francuskie rendez-vous kultur. Polski epizod Henryka Walezego”, in *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 1 (2015), pp. 205-223; PÓŁCWIARTEK-DREMIERRE, Dorota, „Humanizm i reformacja. Dialog wartości w polsko-francuskich stosunkach literackich i kulturalnych od XV do końca XVI wieku”, HANUSIEWICZ-LAVALLEE, Mirosława (ed.), *W przestrzeni Południa. Kultura Pierwszej Rzeczpospolitej wobec narodów romańskich: estetyka, prądy i style, konteksty kulturowe*, Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016, pp. 200-257.

<sup>50</sup> MAŁOWIST, Marian, *Wschód a Zachód Europy w XIII-XVI wieku. Konfrontacja struktur społeczno-gospodarczych*, Warsaw, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973; MANIKOWSKI, Adam, „Czy siedemnastowieczna Rzeczpospolita była anomalią wśród innych państwa europejskich?”, in *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, 37 (1993), pp. 79-87; PELC, Janusz, „Europa środkowa i wschodnia jako teren przenikania i wzajemnego oddziaływania różnych kultur”, in PELC, Janusz, MROWCEWICZ, Krzysztof (eds.), *Barok w Polsce i w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej. Drogi przemian i osmozy kultur*, Warsaw 2000, pp.13-35; KIENIEWICZ, Jan, „Eurosarmacja. O Europie Środkowej z perspektywy cywilizacyjnej”, in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 4 (2013), pp. 817-823.

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