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## The so-called “council of eight” in the summer campaign of 1410

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The question of the functioning in the Middle Ages of councils set in a monarch's circles, of an advisory but also decisive nature, is one of the most important research problems of medieval studies these days. Advisors were a constant element in the political landscape of the medieval state monarchy in the times of both peace and war, evidently indicating its consensual character<sup>1</sup>.

Military campaigns are distinctive and unusual circumstances, in which the functioning of advisory bodies in war conditions of the Middle Ages was manifested. It was not, however, a matter of a notorious participation in campaigns of individual secular councillors as warriors who were in this fashion fulfilling a state obligation, inherent in knight-hood and nobility. The matter concerns a significantly less proven activity based on assisting a monarch and co-deciding with him on individual manoeuvres and, as a consequence, on a fate of the campaign, which was carried out within a group referred to as a royal council.

Taking into consideration the realities of Polish Middle Ages, the exceptional in many respects account of Jan Długosz on the Grunwald

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<sup>1</sup> W. Uruszczak, *Respublica bene constituta. Ustrojowy kształt polskiej monarchii Jagiellonów* [in:] *Historia vero testis temporum. Księga jubileuszowa poświęcona Profesorowi Krzysztofowi Baczkowskiemu w 70. rocznicę urodzin*, red. J. Smółucha et al., Kraków 2008, pp. 140–142.

campaign in 1410 offers a unique mixture of information regarding the functioning of the king's council during the military campaign. I refer here to the so-called "council of eight", which so far has not been given sufficient attention in historiography<sup>2</sup>. The main purpose of this article is to analyse the phenomenon of the council in terms of the circumstances of its appointment, composition, competence, and representativeness, as well as the role which its members played during the abovementioned campaign.

Details on the functioning of the Grunwald-campaign specifically separate and narrow council group are contained only in the work of Canonist of Cracow<sup>3</sup>. The credibility of the fragment of the *Annales* from 1410 is generally highly evaluated in modern historiography, although so far no separate critical analysis of the entire relation between the conflict of 1409–1411 has been carried out<sup>4</sup>. The objections

<sup>2</sup> See: Ł. Golebiowski, *Dzieje Polski za Władysława Jagielly i Władysława III*, t. 1, Warszawa 1846, p. 143; K. Szajnocha, *Jadwiga i Jagiello 1374–1413. Opowiadanie historyczne*, t. 4, Lwów 1861, p. 79; J. Szujski, *Dzieje Polski podług ostatnich badań*, t. 2, Lwów 1862, p. 31; A. Prochaska, *Król Władysław Jagiello*, t. 1, Kraków 1908, p. 247; *idem*, *Dzieje Witolda, wielkiego księcia Litwy*, Kraków 2008, p. 134; S. Kujot, *Rok 1410. Wojna*, RTNT 1910, R. 17, pp. 107–108; O. Laskowski, *Grunwald*, Warszawa 1926, pp. 65–68; K. Piotrowicz, rec.: O. Laskowski, *Grunwald*, Warszawa 1926; KH 1930, R. 44, p. 237; H. Łowmiański, *Polska Jagiellonów*, red. K. Pietkiewicz, Poznań 1995, p. 110; J. Krzyżaniakowa, J. Ochmański, *Władysław II Jagiello*, Wrocław 2006, p. 208. A broader analysis of the place of the "council of eight" in the structure of commanding the Polish–Lithuanian army in 1410 was conducted only by Stefan M. Kuczyński (*Wielka wojna z zakonem krzyżackim w latach 1409–1411*, Warszawa 1987, pp. 199, 211–214, 232–236, 362–363); additionally, see: A. Nadolski, *Grunwald. Problemy wybrane*, Malbork 2010, pp. 128–130; J. Sperka, *Szafraniecowie herbu Stary Koń. Z dziejów kariery i awansu w średniowiecznej Polsce*, Katowice 2001, p. 87; K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia 1410 roku* [in:] S. Józwiak, K. Kwiatkowski, A. Szweda, S. Szybkowski, *Wojna Polski i Litwy z zakonem krzyżackim w latach 1409–1411*, Malbork 2010, p. 361; D. Wróbel, *Elity polityczne Królestwa Polskiego wobec problemu krzyżackiego w czasach Władysława Jagielly*, Lublin 2016, pp. 253–254.

<sup>3</sup> In the description of the so-called Luck campaign from 1431, the chronicler also noted the fact that a narrower group of advisers were appointed "in solidum curam et onus gerendi belli et providendi, que necessitas exposceret" – Długosz, lib. 11/12, p. 37; see: S. Polechow, S. Szybkowski, *Królewski dokument rozjemcy ze Świdrygielką z 20 VIII 1431 roku*, RH 2017, t. 83, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> A. Prochaska, *Długosz a Cronica conflictus*, KH 1910, R. 24, pp. 407–421; S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, pp. 38–47; *Rozbiór krytyczny Annalium Poloniae Jana Długosza z lat 1385–1480*, red. J. Dąbrowski, t. 1: 1385–1444, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1961, pp. XXVIII–XXX, 94–134; A. Nadolski, *Rozważania o Grunwaldzie*, KH 1980, R. 87, nr 4, pp. 448–449; S. Józwiak, K. Kwiatkowski, A. Szweda, S. Szybkowski, *Wojna Polski i Litwy...*, *passim*, i.a. pp. 17, 239, 259–260, 266, 273, 276, 284–285, 353, 354, 356, 360–361, 370, 373, 376–378, 383, 451, 456–457, 498–400, 504,

reported by Sven Ekdahl to this source do not concern the topic of the Council<sup>5</sup>. In the story about the Grunwald campaign, we are dealing with a qualitative information leap, especially visible after the quarter of 1384–1409<sup>6</sup>. Despite of the critical comments<sup>7</sup>, it is basically rightly related to the use by the chronicler of materials coming from the circles of the Royal Chancery, produced by Mikołaj Trąba, optionally under his auspices<sup>8</sup>. Regardless, Długosz also had an oral tradition at his

609, 550 (so far the most comprehensive critical commentary); J. Rajman, *Czy duchowni kronikarze potrafili opisać „wielkie starcie”? Uwagi o bitwie, liczebności i stratach obu armii w świetle źródeł i nowszej historiografii polskiej* [in:] *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem w historii i tradycji Polski i Litwy*, red. *idem* (“Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae. Cracoviensis. Studia Historica”, t. 11), Kraków 2011, pp. 26–73; M.A. Janicki, *O pewnych dogmatach i kontrowersjach historiografii grunwaldzkiej. Miejsce postoju Władysława Jagiełły przed bitwą pod Grunwaldem a miejsce obozowania po niej w świetle „Cronica conflictus” i „Annales” Jana Długosza*, “Średniowiecze Polskie i Powszechnie” 2014, t. 6, pp. 202–256; and recently: D. Heckmann, *Beeinflussung von öffentlicher Meinung an Hand von Beispielen aus den „Chroniken” von Andreas Santberg und von Jan Długosz* [in:] *Jan Długosz – 600-lecie urodzin. Region-Polska-Europa w jego twórczości*, red. J. Maciejewski *et al.*, Bydgoszcz–Toruń 2016, pp. 121–129; J. Ptak, *Bitwy w „Rocznikach” Jana Długosza* [in:] *Jan Długosz – w kregu badań historyków i literaturoznawców*, red. T. Giergiel, Sandomierz 2017, pp. 141–165. Summary of the latest source studies: K. Kwiatkowski, *Memoria continentem historiam denotat. Bitwa pod Grunwaldem/Tannenbergiem/Žalgirisem 1410 w najnowszych badaniach*, Toruń 2015, pp. 93–136, *passim*; H. Rajfura, *Nowe badania nad życiem i twórczością Jana Długosza. Osiągnięcia i potrzeby*, *SŻ* 2018, t. 56, pp. 193–199, esp. pp. 198–199; see also: K. Ozóg, *Nowa edycja „Roczników” Jana Długosza – próba bilansu* [in:] *Jan Długosz (1415–1480). Życie i dzieła*, red. L. Korczak, M.D. Kowalski, P. Węcowski, Kraków 2016, pp. 251–259.

<sup>5</sup> S. Ekdahl, *Grunwald 1410. Studia nad tradycją i źródłami*, tłum. M. Dorna, Kraków 2010, pp. 142–151, 246–257; cf. M. Biskup, *Nowa praca Svena Ekdahla o źródłach do bitwy pod Grunwaldem*, *ZH* 1984, t. 49, z. 4, pp. 137–149.

<sup>6</sup> J. Dąbrowski, *Źródła do X księgi „Dziejów” Długosza (Les sources du livre X de l’„Histoire” de Długosz)*, “Bulletin international de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences et des Lettres. Classe de philologie, Classe de histoire et de philosophie” 1930, nos. 7–10, pp. 156–160; *Rozbiór krytyczny...*, pp. 3–87.

<sup>7</sup> J.S. Matuszewski, *Uwagi do „Rozbioru krytycznego Annalium Poloniae Jana Długosza”*, *SŻ* 1981, t. 26, pp. 44–45, 49–51; see also: S. Gawlas, *Astrolog przyjacielem historyka? Diariusz Zbigniewa Oleśnickiego w genzie „Roczników” Jana Długosza* [in:] *Kultura średniowieczna i staropolska. Studia ofiarowane Aleksandrowi Gieysztorowi w pięćdziesięciolecie pracy naukowej*, red. D. Gawinowa *et al.*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 465–468.

<sup>8</sup> S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, s. 38–47; K. Pieradzka, *Przedmowa do tomu pierwszego* [in:] *Rozbiór krytyczny...*, pp. XXIV–XXIX; A. Gašiorowski, *Długoszowe itineraria królewskie*, *RH* 1970, R. 35, pp. 109–126, esp. pp. 113–114, 116–117; J. Krzyżaniakowa, *Kancelaria królewska Władysława Jagiełły jako ośrodek kultury historycznej* [in:] *eadem*, „Nie ma historii bez człowieka”. *Studia z dziejów średniowiecza*, Poznań 2011, pp. 396–398, 403–405, 417; S. Gawlas, *Astrolog przyjacielem...*, pp. 455–469;

disposal, i.e. reports from campaigners and their immediate descendants<sup>9</sup>. The credibility of the topic studied here is also convincing by the well-proven in this epoch practice of the emergence of narrow bodies from among all advisors<sup>10</sup>.

Let us begin with the circumstances of appointing the "council of eight". It appears that initially there was no plan for its establishment, since the matter was taken into consideration neither in Walbórz, where the mobilised armed forces from the territories of the Crown had gathered, nor in Czerwińsk, where the Crown army had joined the units of the Masovian dukes and the Lithuanian–Ruthenian–Tartar army<sup>11</sup>. It also did not emerge during the following days of the march of the joined armies towards the borders of Prussia (3<sup>rd</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> of July) or immediately after crossing them<sup>12</sup>.

At dawn on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, the Polish–Lithuanian forces left the camp at Bądryń in the regions of Zawkrze Land and entered the territories of the State of the Teutonic Order, briefly stopping on a plain situated south of Lidzbark Welski (German: Lautenburg), where a ceremonial hoisting of war signs (banners) took place<sup>13</sup>. At the same time – after the refusal of the Bohemian and Moravian mercenaries – the "commander of the army" (*princeps milicie*) was eventually appointed, Zyndram of Maszkowice, of Słońce (the Sun) coat of arms, a sword-bearer (*gladifer*) of Cracow<sup>14</sup>.

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W. Polak, *Aprobata i spór. Zakon krzyżacki jako instytucja kościelna w dziełach Jana Długosza*, Lublin 1999, pp. 60–61, 68–69, 87–89, 102–104.

<sup>9</sup> K. Pieradzka, *Przedmowa...*, pp. LVIII–LIX; W. Polak, *Aprobata i spór...*, pp. 35–36, 38, 40–41; D. Wróbel, *Elity polityczne Królestwa...*, pp. 241–243; J. Sperka, *Jan Długosz o doradcach króla Władysława Jagiełły* [in:] *Jan Długosz – w kręgu badań historyków...*, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> See: P. Węcowski, *Działalność publiczna możnowładztwa małopolskiego w późnym średniowieczu. Itineraria kasztelanów i wojewodów krakowskich w czasach panowania Władysława Jagiełły (1386–1434)*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 92–94; A. Szweda, *Organizacja i technika dyplomacji polskiej w stosunkach z zakonem krzyżackim w Prusach w latach 1386–1454*, Toruń 2009, pp. 376–377, 392, 409–410; D. Wróbel, *Uwagi o negocjatorach traktatów pokojowych z zakonem krzyżackim w czasach Władysława Jagiełły* [in:] *Od traktatu kaliskiego do pokoju oliwskiego. Polsko-krzyżacko-pruskie stosunki dyplomatyczne w latach 1343–1660*, red. A. Bues et al., Warszawa 2012, pp. 80, 84–85, 89, 95.

<sup>11</sup> K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia...*, pp. 267–300, 303–310.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 337–344, 349–357.

<sup>13</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 71; see also: K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia...*, pp. 351–354 (this work contains interesting comments on the symbolic and ritual dimension of this act).

<sup>14</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 71. According to the chronicler's words, he was granted: "curam et ordinationem exercitus regii et ducatum suscipere et principis milicie officium

The next day, i.e. the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the Polish–Lithuanian army camped already near the Drwęca River, in the line of Kurzętnik (German: Kauernick)<sup>15</sup>, most assuredly with the intention of storming it and entering the territories of Chełmno Land. It was only here that they realised the enemy’s army was stationed on the other side of the river. Piotr Korczbok of Trzebawie, the later chamberlain of Poznań (1426–1438)<sup>16</sup>, was sent to the camp of the Teutonic Order and confirmed that the Grand Master had managed to seize the Kurzętnik crossing as well as other local fords in the middle section of the Drwęca River<sup>17</sup>.

The king and his advisors realised that there was no possibility to continue the original plan of the march in this new situation and it was probably due to this circumstance that the king convened an *ad-hoc* meeting of the more significant dignitaries. It was by no means an extraordinary step. Numerous advisors, mainly laymen, but also clergymen (Mikołaj Trąba, Wojciech Jastrzębiec), accompanied the monarch from the beginning of the campaign, since they had already gathered at his order in Wolbórz where they were meant to debate together for three days. Długosz mentioned them a few more times in the narrative on the march of the Polish–Lithuanian army to the borders of Prussia<sup>18</sup>. There should be no doubt that in these days

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gerere”. Interpretation of these words became the subject of a lively debate in historiography in connection with the discussion on the issue of commanding the allied forces during the summer campaign and, in particular, the battle of Grunwald, see: W. Semkowicz, *Zyndram z Maszkowic*, PH 1910, t. 11, z. 3, pp. 272–279; J. Dąbrowski, *Grunwald*, “Małopolskie Studia Historyczne” 1960, t. 3, pp. 10–11; S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, pp. 193–206; A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, pp. 109, 473, 110, 172; K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia...*, p. 354; M. Bartnicki, *Kwestia dowodzenia w bitwie grunwaldzkiej* [in:] *600-lecie bitwy pod Grunwaldem i jej tradycje*, red. G. Jakimińska, Z. Nasalski, R. Szczygiel, Lublin 2012, pp. 77–80.

<sup>15</sup> K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia...*, p. 358; cf. Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 73 (“ad lacum magnum Rubkowo”).

<sup>16</sup> A. Gašiorowski, *Korczbok Piotr* [in:] PSB, t. 14, Wrocław 1969, pp. 159–160; UW, pp. 147, 148, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 73; S. Kujot, *Rok 1410...*, p. 112; S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, pp. 352–355; A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, p. 117; cf. K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia...*, pp. 359–360, 366–367, n. 650.

<sup>18</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 63 (three-day consultations in Wolbórz); cf. *Cronica conflictus Wladislaw regis Polonie cum Cruciferis anno Christi 1410*, red. Z. Celichowski, Poznań 1911, p. 15; Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 68 (session with Vytautas and the advisors on the proposal of the Hungarian mediators on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July at Jeżewo); *ibidem*, p. 70 (intervention of prelates and Polish magnates concerning the atrocities committed by Lithuanians and Tartars in the territories of Zawkrze Land); *ibidem*, p. 72 (noblemen

Jagiello also consulted and used the advice of Duke Vytautas and Polish dignitaries, as it was a universal norm of conduct for the monarch and commander. The core of the precedence is, however, the fact that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July Władysław Jagiello, having summoned more important noblemen, selected only eight dignitaries from this group<sup>19</sup>. Their responsibilities were outlined by the chronicler quite broadly ("qui de progressu tocius belli [...] se continentibus consulant, provideant, statuunt et ordinent summa quoque belli et muneris eius apud illos consistat")<sup>20</sup>. Due to the fact that the appointment of the "war council", as it was often referred to in the literature on the subject<sup>21</sup>, took place at the king's meeting with a larger group of *primoribus consiliariis*, it is possible to assume that its establishment happened as a result of a consensus between the monarch and this larger group of advisors.

The most striking in the analysed account is the notion of reducing the number of people who, as advisors, had an important role to play in making further decisions regarding the ongoing campaign. It seems that the intention which accompanied the act of setting apart a strict "war council" was correctly interpreted by Stefan M. Kuczyński<sup>22</sup>. The matter simply concerned the improvement in the decision-making process by concentrating it in the hands of the least numerous group of people, but of those who were simultaneously enjoying the highest authority. Following the overtone of Długosz's narrative, it is also important to take into account the aspiration to minimise the risks of revealing confidential intentions of the allied armies' leaders<sup>23</sup>.

In view of the above it is reasonable to pose the question why the improvement of the decision-making process was considered only on

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and Polish knights intervene in the case of the desecration and pillage of churches by the Tartars).

<sup>19</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 73: "convocatis Wladislaus Polonie rex primoribus consiliariis octo tantummodo ex eis legit [or: ex illis elegit]". Later on the chronicler once again mentioned the appointment and nomination ("Nominat itaque eligit").

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73. Also in the description of the first session of the closed group the chronicler stated that from now on the chosen advisors "de omnibus deliberabant et concluderent agendis".

<sup>21</sup> I.a. J. Szujski, *Dzieje Polski...*, t. 2, p. 27; A. Prochaska, *Władysław II Jagiello...*, p. 247.

<sup>22</sup> S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, p. 234. Kuczyński's conjecture that the "council of eight" was to function only until the moment of obtaining a decisive result of the battle is unconvincing.

<sup>23</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 73. The chronicler emphasised a few times the confidentiality of the closed council's sessions and the vigilance in not letting the issues raised at the sessions fall into the wrong hands, see: *ibidem*, pp. 79–80.

the 10<sup>th</sup> of July and what triggered the direct impulse for accepting such a solution. It is difficult to consider Kuczyński's assertion on a gradual formation organising the command "in accordance with the emergence of additional military needs" as satisfactory<sup>24</sup>. The fact of distinguishing a narrow group of advisors only ten days after the moment of encountering the allied forces at Czerwińsk, and the circumstances which accompanied it, encourages to view the king's decision in terms of a corrective action. What exactly was required for this action?

*Cronica conflictus* – an account created in the circles of the royal chancellery, gives information on some of the participants of the expedition who were captured and severely punished for the robbery of churches right after entering the enemies' territories<sup>25</sup>. Długosz, who also informed about the devastation of Zawkrze Land on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of July, identified the perpetrators as Lithuanians and Tatars, and added that the Polish noblemen, and amongst them in particular Wojciech Jastrzębiec, bishop of Poznań, were loudly protesting against such doings. The protests resulted in a severe reaction from Duke Vytautas and a decisive curtailing of his subordinates' lawlessness<sup>26</sup>.

The incident involving the desecration of the host, identified with the burning of the frontier area of Lidzbark Welski and the plundering of a local church, took place the day before the "council of eight" was appointed<sup>27</sup>. Indignation amongst the Polish (and Masovian) knights recorded in the account of Długosz might be a reminiscence of a difficult co-operation between Christian and pagan warriors who were divided by religious, but also linguistic and cultural barriers. The sermon given by the bishop of Płock on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July in Czerwińsk<sup>28</sup>, had it mentioned this subject at all, could not dispel doubts expressed by the participants of the expedition. In order to assuage the moods and elevate the morale, a spectacular execution of the Lithuanians accused of violating holiness was carried out. It is possible that the incidents from the 9<sup>th</sup> of July were addressed at the meeting that took place the next day in the evening since, in accordance with the mentality of that time, they explained very well the current failure in terms of God's punishment for violating holiness.

<sup>24</sup> S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, p. 237.

<sup>25</sup> *Cronica conflictus...*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, pp. 70, 72.

<sup>27</sup> *Cronica conflictus...*, p. 18; Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 72; *Rozbiór krytyczny...*, p. 97.

<sup>28</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 65.

The lack of discipline in the army applied not only to the Lithuanians and Tartars. A significant problem which required a decisive reaction was also the lack of discipline in the ranks of the Polish units of mass mobilisation, indicated by lawless raids organised by the knights to the Prussian border which had taken place even before they left the territories of Masovia<sup>29</sup>. This is also indirectly demonstrated by disciplinary directives adopted at the first meeting of the "council of eight" on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July<sup>30</sup>. The sources also mention the glows of fires set by the troops preceding the army<sup>31</sup>, which was a sign for the enemy about the direction of its march, the fact that was made clear in Kurzętnik.

The situation in which the army of allies found itself on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July tends to be considered – in a somewhat exaggerated way – as a moment of crisis<sup>32</sup>. The necessity of an expeditious withdrawal from the Drwęca River and of a strenuous marching in a south-east direction towards Działdowo (German: Soldau) could have been regarded by the knights as dishonourable, all the more so because no attempt was made to confront the enemy<sup>33</sup>. The situation was to cause a temporary weakening of Jagiełło's authority and, as a consequence, to openly force him to appoint a collegiate body of advisors which would take shared responsibility for making further decisions during the campaign<sup>34</sup>. This argument assumes that so far the monarch had been making important

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 68: "multi tamen de regio exercitu disciplina militari neglecta, iniussu regis et principium sua sponte se in terras hostium clandestinis itineribus conferebant et eas spoliis, cede et igne vastantes optima spolia et predas in castra noctu, cum interdiu castigationem veriti non auderent referebant"; cf. A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 74.

<sup>31</sup> *Cronica conflictus...*, p. 17; cf. recently on this fragment: S. Ekdahl, "In crastino sancti Procopii". Überlegungen zu einer falsch interpretierten Datumsangabe in der *Cronica conflictus* [in:] *In tempore belli et pacis. Ludzie – Miejsca – Przedmioty. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana prof. dr. hab. Janowi Szymczakowi w 65-lecie urodzin i 40-lecie pracy naukowo-dydaktycznej*, red. T. Grabarczyk, A. Kowalska-Pietrzak, T. Nowak, Warszawa 2011, pp. 561–568.

<sup>32</sup> O. Laskowski, *Grunwald...*, pp. 117–122; S. Herbst, *W sporze o Grunwald* [in:] *idem, Potrzeba historii, czyli o polskim stylu życia*, t. 2, Warszawa 1978, p. 181; W. Majewski, *Wokół Grunwaldu (o preliminarzach i pierwszej fazie bitwy, o odwróceniu Litwinów)*, KMW 1967, nr 4, p. 550; A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, pp. 126–130. S.M. Kuczyński (*Wielka wojna...*, p. 361) stated differently, downplaying the seriousness of the situation.

<sup>33</sup> *Cronica conflictus...*, p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, pp. 128–130.

decisions individually, without the involvement of Duke Vytautas and Polish advisors, which is unconvincing and thoroughly improbable.

In the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, the king's circle drew conclusions from the deficiencies concerning the decision-making centre, military discipline, and the organisation of marching which became apparent in the last days and allowed the opponent to respond accordingly. It was probably acknowledged that the reason for the existing situation were leaks in their own ranks, inadequate discernment of the opponent's manoeuvres and, simultaneously, too "visible" movements of their own.

The "council of eight" consisted of the following: the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas, vice-chancellor of the Crown and, at the same time, archbishop-elect of Halicz, Mikołaj Trąba, of Trąby coats of arms, as well as secular noblemen: castellan of Cracow, Krystyn of Ostrów, of Rawa coat of arms, voivodes of Cracow (Jan of Tarnów, of Leliwa coat of arms), of Sandomierz (Mikołaj of Michałów, of Poraj/Róża coat of arms; at the same time starost of Sieradz), and of Poznań (Sędziwój of Ostroróg, of Nałęcz coat of arms), but also marshal of the Kingdom, Zbigniew of Brzezie (of Zadora coat of arms; at the same time starost of Cracow) and chamberlain of Cracow, Piotr Szafranec (at the same time starost of Łęczycza)<sup>35</sup>. The list of the chosen man given by Jan Długosz was in fact not seen in the historiography as controversial<sup>36</sup>; at most, the supporters of the prominent role of a leader played by Zyndram of Maszkowice were either deductively "adding" him to the discussed group or were surprised to notice that he was not included in the close circle of these policymakers<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 73. A. Prochaska, *Dzieje Witolda...*, p. 134; J. Wyrozumski, *Ostrowski Krystyn* [in:] PSB, t. 24, Wrocław 1979, p. 565; W. Dworzaczek, *Leliwici Tarnowscy. Z dziejów możnowładztwa małopolskiego, wiek XIV–XV*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 182–183; B. Nowak, *Ród Porajów w Małopolsce w średniowieczu*, Kraków 2009, p. 231; A. Gašiorowski, *Ostroróg Sędziwój* [in:] PSB, t. 24, Wrocław 1979, p. 520; S. Cynarski, *Dzieje rodu Lanckorońskich z Brzezia od XIV do XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 67–68; J. Sperka, *Szafranowie herbu Stary Koń...*, p. 87; T. Silnicki, *Arcybiskup Mikołaj Trąba*, Warszawa 1954, pp. 77–78.

<sup>36</sup> The view of Karol Szajnocha, who in the place of Vytautas added to the council the Mazovian duke, Alexander Siemowitowic, should be regarded as a historiographical oddity (K. Szajnocha, *Jadwiga i Jagiello...*, t. 4, p. 277).

<sup>37</sup> Łukasz Gołębiowski stated on the basis of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century chronicle of Marcin Kromer that the council had two directors – Vytautas and Zyndram of Maszkowice (Ł. Gołębiowski, *Dzieje...*, t. 1, p. 143; cf. S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, p. 198); cf. W. Semkowicz, *Zyndram...*, p. 273; J. Dąbrowski, *Grunwald...*, pp. 10–11.

It is not easy to answer the question regarding the grounds and criteria which guided the monarch while choosing these eight dignitaries to the "war council". Also without answer will remain the question of why there were eight men and not, i.a., four, six, or ten. Amongst the criteria which have been previously taken under consideration by historiography it is possible to name the following: a) social position and influences which accompanied them, as well as prestige and authority held amongst the masses who constituted the mobilisation of armed forces; b) experience in politics, military matters, and organisational efficiency of those appointed to the council; c) offices and eminence held by the council members; d) their relationship with the monarch, their previous state career, and position on the political scene of the Crown; e) their territorial origins and family connections.

Excluding from the further discussion the unique persona of the Grand Duke of Lithuania whose emphasised position in the council is understandable and raises no doubts, I will focus on the Crown dignitaries who were its members. Their authority and prestige had various roots. In the case of the castellan of Cracow and the provincial governors (voivodes), it is possible to speak of the importance of the offices they held. Possessors of the most important land registries in the Kingdom were undoubtedly respected amongst the noblemen most of all because of the land offices they held; for that very reason they were the proper commanders of individual territorial communities<sup>38</sup>. It should be noted, however, that in the case of Jan of Tarnów, his placement in the local government of Cracow was too short in order to talk about his personal authority. Nevertheless, it is possible that Jan, the voivode, was initially supporting his position in the local region through the undoubted paternal authority.

The three men from Lesser Poland distinguished themselves also due to their family background – they originated from influential families of well-established, dignitary-driven traditions; this refers most of all to Krystyn, who descended from a powerful line of the family of Rawicz, descendents of Warsz and Grot ("Warszowice-Grotowice")<sup>39</sup>, Jan, the descendant of Tarnowscy of Leliwa coat of arms

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<sup>38</sup> On this issue see: S. Szybkowski, *Szlacheckie elity urzędnicze we wspólnocie terytorialnej w późnym średniowieczu (na przykładzie środkowopolskim)* [in:] *Człowiek w średniowieczu. Między biologią a historią*, red. A. Szymczakowa, Łódź 2009, pp. 103–124.

<sup>39</sup> J. Wroniszewski, *Ród Rawiczów. Warszowice i Grotowice*, Toruń 1992, p. 27.

(genealogical line of descendants of Spycimir (“Spycimirowice”)<sup>40</sup>, and Mikołaj, so-called Białucha, the descendant of the powerful family of Kurozwęccy<sup>41</sup>. This matter referred to a lesser extent also to Sędziwój, the representative of the Nałęcz family of Ostroróg, Zbigniew of the Zadora family from Brzezie and Piotr of the Szafraniec family (of Stary Koń coat of arms), who were also the sons of officials, but of a slightly smaller importance than those mentioned above<sup>42</sup>. The authority of the three last men came from an otherwise well-known military experience and talent, the proof of which they gave during the war in 1410–1411<sup>43</sup>. The same, on the other hand, could not be said about Jan of Tarnów (a clergyman until 1409) and it is difficult to verify the case of Mikołaj of Michałów, while Krystyn of Ostrów had a rather unfortunate episode of confronting the Teutonic Knights’ troops when he was a starost of Dobrzyń<sup>44</sup>.

It should also be noted that the majority of the dignitaries from the “council of eight” – once again with the exception of Jan of Tarnów and Mikołaj Trąba, the clergyman – held, at present or in the recent past, or in the near future, an important office of starost of a stronghold<sup>45</sup>. This is a premise which could speak in favour of their probable organisational skills.

The abovementioned remarks to a lesser extent refer to Mikołaj Trąba, who visibly stands out from other members of the “council of

<sup>40</sup> W. Dworzaczek, *Leliwici Tarnowscy...*, pp. 132, 182.

<sup>41</sup> R. Bubczyk, *Kariera rodziny Kurozwęckich w XIV wieku. Studium z dziejów powiazań polskiej elity politycznej z Andegawenami*, Warszawa 2002, p. 25; B. Nowak, *Ród Porajów...*, p. 227.

<sup>42</sup> Sędziwój of Ostroróg was the son of the castellan of Santok, Dzierśław Grochola (W. Brzeziński, *Koligacje małżeńskie możnowładztwa wielkopolskiego w drugiej połowie XIV i pierwszej połowie XV wieku*, Wrocław 2012, pp. 339–340); Zbigniew of Brzezie was the son of Przedbór, Cracow’s master of the pantry and marshal of the Kingdom (S. Cynarski, *Dzieje rodu Lanckorońskich...*, pp. 66–67); Piotr Szafraniec was the son of Cracow’s master of the pantry, also Piotr (J. Sperka, *Szafraniecowie herbu Stary Koń...*, p. 68).

<sup>43</sup> D. Wróbel, *Elity polityczne...*, pp. 526, 527, 531, 547, 548, 551.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>45</sup> Krystyn of Ostrów, i.e. starost of Sandomierz (1407–1408) and Cracow (1411–1418); Mikołaj of Michałów, i.e. starost of Sieradz (1406–1418) and Cracow (1418–1431, 1432–1438), Sędziwój of Ostroróg, general starost of Greater Poland (1411–1434 with intervals) and Kujawy (1427–1432), Zbigniew of Brzezie, starost of Cracow (1409–1410) and Dobrzyń (1410–1414), Piotr Szafraniec, starost of Podole (1404–1406), Łęczyca (1406–1418), Sieradz (1418–1436), and Cracow (1431–1432), see: UW, pp. 172, 173; UM, pp. 288, 301; UKD, pp. 214, 294, 295; UŁS, pp. 37, 137; UP, p. 116.

eight” not only due to his priesthood, but also because of a humble family background. As a clergyman, Mikołaj had obviously no military experience, but all these deficits were compensated by the fact that for the past few years he had been the king’s favourite, an inseparable companion and confidant<sup>46</sup>. At least from 1406 he was being prepared for assuming the office and dignity of a bishop which was supposed to provide him with a pass to the group of leading royal advisors<sup>47</sup>. Being a high-ranked clergyman, i.e. a parish priest of collegiate church of Saint Florian in Cracow, a member of a few chapters, and a royal postulant for the archbishopric of Halicz, he could theoretically be esteemed by the noblemen, but it was the patronage of the king which safeguarded his entry to the council. It can be assumed that in this case Władysław Jagiełło probably made his most “authorial” choice.

All the members of the “council of eight”, including Vytautas, were the appointees of Władysław Jagiełło, but four dignitaries from a group of eight had received their offices just before the summer campaign (castellan of Cracow, voivode of Cracow and Sandomierz)<sup>48</sup>, or – as Mikołaj Trąba, the archbishop-elect of Halicz – during the campaign<sup>49</sup>. Another condition shared by all the members of the council (Polish dignitaries) is the fact of bringing their own cavalry to fight in war<sup>50</sup>. It was a significant element of building an importance and prestige not only in the eyes of the monarch, but also amongst other dignitaries and the remaining nobility.

Kuczyński presumed that in the council Vytautas represented Lithuania, Zbigniew of Brzezie and Mikołaj Trąba the “central authorities of Poland”, Krystyn of Ostrów, Jan (II) of Tarnów and Mikołaj of Michałów the magnates of Lesser Poland, Piotr (II) Szafraniec the noblemen of Lesser Poland, while Sędziwój of Ostroróg Greater

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<sup>46</sup> J. Sperka, *Faworycy Władysława Jagiełły* [in:] *Faworycy i opozycjoniści w Polsce XV–XVIII wieku*, red. R. Skowron, Kraków 2006, pp. 44–45.

<sup>47</sup> See: D. Wróbel, *Stanowisko Mikołaja Trąby wobec pokoju toruńskiego z 1411 roku i układu z Zygmuntem Luksemburskim z 1412 roku* [in:] *Mikołaj Trąba. Mąż stanu i prymas Polski*, red. F. Kiryk, Kraków 2009, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> UM, pp. 67, 128, 129, 226.

<sup>49</sup> BP, t. 3, nr 1261. Papal decision from the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1410 concerning the archiepiscopal nomination of Mikołaj Trąba could be known on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July neither to the king, nor to the nominee himself, but – knowing the realities of appointing episcopal dignitaries – there were probably no doubts in the king’s circles as to who was being anointed as the successor of archbishop Jakub Strepa, who died in 1409.

<sup>50</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, p. 90–91.

Poland<sup>51</sup>. We are dealing here with a mixture of various criteria, i.e. territorial background, the offices held and, probably, financial status (distinction made between the representatives of magnates and middle-ranked nobility), which is not convincing. In the first decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century central offices did not constitute a separate centre of power which had to be represented. Sędziwój of Ostroróg could not be a representative of Greater Poland, seen together with the territories of central Poland and Dobrzyń Land, since the process of consolidating these areas took place much later. Jerzy Sperka suggested that territory-wise, the council was not very representative as it did not include, i.a., lands of Ruthenia and Podolia<sup>52</sup>. Taking into consideration territorial criteria, it would be necessary to explain a distinct over-representation in the council of men from Lesser Poland. The foregoing objections raise doubts about the realism of the territorial criterion in the process of appointing the council's members.

Sperka identified five dignitaries as members of the court party who were close to the king (Mikołaj Trąba, Sędziwój of Ostroróg, Zbigniew of Brzezie, and Piotr Szafraniec) while the other two were considered representatives of the "former" faction of Cracow's magnates (Jan of Tarnów, Mikołaj of Michałów)<sup>53</sup>. Without denying the legitimacy of the assumption that Jagiełło appointed to the closed council the dignitaries who were close to him and whom he simultaneously trusted, I nevertheless doubt that the political parity, reflecting the allegedly dichotomous balance of power on the then political scene of the Crown, was applied in this case. In fact, I believe that the king did not have to use it because in 1410 the division of the political scene into the camp of Cracow's magnates and the court's faction already belonged to the past. After the appointments to offices in spring 1410 it is possible to speak of a thorough domination of the king's faction in the Crown<sup>54</sup>.

Let us, however, look more closely into the alleged representatives of the faction of Cracow's magnates in the council. It was already

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<sup>51</sup> S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, pp. 232–233.

<sup>52</sup> J. Sperka, *Szafraniec herbu Stary Koń...*, p. 87.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87, 288; similarly: S. Szybkowski, *Polscy starostowie w Prusach po Grunwaldzie* [in:] *Conflictus magnus apud Grunwald. Między historią a tradycją*, red. K. Ożóg, J. Trupinda, Malbork 2013, p. 144.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. J. Kurtyka, *Tęczyńscy. Studium z dziejów polskiej elity możnowładczej w średniowieczu*, Kraków 1997, pp. 277–278.

Sperka who doubted whether it was possible to include Mikołaj of Michałów, the voivode, in this group at that time (in 1410)<sup>55</sup>. The history of his personal career which began in 1399 attests rather to his presence in the circles closer to the court<sup>56</sup>. However, the position of the voivode, Jan of Tarnów, on the political scene of the Crown at the time of the "great war" is by no means obvious. His family reasons were meant to prove his connections with the magnates of Cracow. The voivode Jan was the son of the castellan of Cracow, Jan (Jasiek) of Tarnów, who died in 1409<sup>57</sup>. The father intended him to have a clergyman career and obtained for him the office of a provost of the chapter in the capital. Brother of Jan – Spytek of Tarnów and Jarosław, was to become an actual heir and head of the family<sup>58</sup>. With a spectacular nomination in spring 1410, the king shattered the previous strategy of the Tarnowski family by averting the prospect of promoting Spytek in favour of his older brother, who turned out to be the greatest beneficiary of this situation<sup>59</sup>. It can be assumed that this manoeuvre at least for some time provided the king with gratitude and loyalty of the voivode of Cracow.

The political criterion was also related to previous experience and relevant activity of those appointed to the council. In this case, Jan of Tarnów should be mentioned as the one having relatively the smallest political experience, while his colleagues from the council generally operated in politics for many years. However, Jan's experience gained during his tenure at the chapter of Cracow from 1398 should not be underestimated.

The hierarchy within the "council of eight" is not thoroughly clear, similarly to the hierarchy of the then council as such, but the matter of an honorary priority given in the discussed group to the Grand Duke of Lithuania is beyond doubt. The account of Jan Długosz states that the proceedings were taking place under the Duke's leadership, unless Władysław Jagiełło himself was participating in them<sup>60</sup>. However, one should not jump to far-reaching conclusions regarding the leading role

<sup>55</sup> J. Sperka, *Szafraniec herbu Stary Koń*..., p. 87.

<sup>56</sup> A. Kamiński, *Mikołaj z Michałowa i Kurozwek zw. Białucha* [in:] PSB, t. 21, Wrocław 1976, pp. 123–126; B. Nowak, *Ród Porajów*..., pp. 227–239.

<sup>57</sup> W. Dworzaczek, *Leliwici Tarnowscy*..., p. 182.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 227.

<sup>59</sup> Spytek received his first land registry only in 1433, towards the end of his life (UM, p. 227).

<sup>60</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, pp. 73, 76.

of the Grand Duke and his impact on the course of the campaign<sup>61</sup>. It is important to note that the voices of individual members of the council were not equal and the weight of each one of them depended on, i.a., the rank of the office they held. A customary precedence gave privileges to the archbishop of Halicz and the castellan of Cracow.

In the light of the abovementioned statement made by Jan Długosz that the responsibilities of the “council of eight” included *summa et muneris belli*, it is not possible to agree with the opinions on the limiting of its competence to the tasks associated with the organisation of the army’s marching and stopping, that is, to fulfilling the functions which are nowadays referred to as belonging to a quartermaster<sup>62</sup>. Following the words of the chronicler, it should be rather assumed that their responsibilities included the entirety of military as well as political matters linked to the campaign<sup>63</sup>.

Kuczyński, excessively emphasising in his works the persona of king Władysław Jagiełło and his individual achievements in 1409–1411, suggested that the discussed body was only of an advisory nature and the opinions of its members did not constrain the monarch’s will<sup>64</sup>. Nevertheless, in the light of the overtone of the cited excerpts from “Roczniki” (“The Annals”) which refer to the council, and in accordance with the present knowledge on the relationship between Jagiełło and Vytautas as well as between the kind and royal magnates of Poland, this opinion cannot be regarded as justified.

It is impossible to notice an imposition of any temporary or special restrictions on the ruler during the appointment of the “council of eight” because the restrictions on the monarchical power existed for the whole time and they were an inherent feature of the political system at that time<sup>65</sup>. On the other hand, no special competences should be attributed to this body as they were in no way extended in relation to those customarily granted to the advisors and appurtenant to them. The representatives of the council had no special entitlements, but the

<sup>61</sup> The hugely exaggerated power of Vytautas in 1410 was depicted in the past by Stanisław Smolka, who was convinced of the Duke’s genius (S. Smolka, *Witold pod Grunwaldem* [in:] *idem, Szkice historyczne*, t. 1, Warszawa 1882, pp. 36–38).

<sup>62</sup> O. Łaskowski, *Grunwald...*, p. 68; S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, p. 352.

<sup>63</sup> S. Kujot, *Rok 1410...*, p. 108.

<sup>64</sup> S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna...*, pp. 351–352.

<sup>65</sup> See: J. Wroniszewski, *Grupy decyzyjne w Polsce średniowiecznej – elita władzy* [in:] *Genealogia. Polska elita polityczna w wiekach średnich na tle porównawczym*, red. *idem*, Toruń 1993, p. 179.

specificity of their functioning in the conditions of the war campaign was based mainly on the accumulation of tasks and competences which were of a military nature.

The chronicler's statements in the narrative on the appointment of the council can be verified through further fragments of the "Annales" where the council and its individual members are discussed. From the moment of the council's appointment (10<sup>th</sup> of July) to the end of the summer campaign (24<sup>th</sup> of September) the following episodes are present: a) further operational direction was determined at the first meeting of the council in which guides deriving from the local people participated; b) the council accepted the monarch's plan to withdraw from Drwęca and march towards the region where the river sprang; c) Hungarian envoy who had brought a letter-ultimatum to Jagiełło from his monarch was received at a secret meeting and the content of his message was known only to the members of the closed council; together with the king, this group decided not to make the document public amongst other participants of the expedition; d) before the battle of Grunwald the advisors had agreed that after arranging the troops the king would retreat to the rear of the army, or would eventually remain with his personal guards in an immediate vicinity of the battlefield; e) after the battle a part of the council supported the call for staying in the area of the battlefield for the next three days; f) after the battle two members of the closed council received oaths from the prisoners; g) the king's negotiations near Malbork with a commander of Świecie, Heinrich von Plauen, were assisted by the advisors to whom the proposals of the Teutonic Knights were presented in order to be considered; their opinion resulted in the rejection of the proposals, expressed by the member of the closed council, marshal Zbigniew of Brzezie; h) the closed council did not agree to the talks with the Teutonic Knights' mercenaries on the repurchase of Malbork; i) the majority of the (closed?) council, apart from the vice-chancellor Mikołaj Trąba, argued in favour of ceasing the siege of Malbork Castle and ending the campaign<sup>66</sup>.

As was already noted by Andrzej Nadolski, the "council of eight" as a whole – apart from a distinctive persona of Vytautas – played practically no role during the battle of Grunwald as its individual (secular) members fought personally at the head of their cavalries while the

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<sup>66</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, pp. 73–74, 78, 79–80, 100, 104, 119, 123, 125, 137, 142, 144–146.

archbishop Mikołaj Trąba was sent away with other clergymen to the rear of the army<sup>67</sup>.

In the light of the sources known nowadays, four out of seven representatives of the Crown's dignitaries from the "council of eight" were entrusted by the king with the custody of the conquered Teutonic Knights' castles. Zbigniew of Brzezie was granted Dzierżoń (German: Christburg) and, slightly later, Toruń (German: Thorn), Jan (II) of Tarnów – Elbląg (German: Elbing), Mikołaj of Michałów – Brodnica (German: Strasburg), and Mikołaj Trąba – Kowalewo (German: Schönsee)<sup>68</sup>. There is no analogous confirmation in the case of Krystyn of Ostrów, Sędziwój of Ostroróg, and Piotr Szafraniec, a fact that should be, however, put down to the imperfections of source information as the basis of the "Annales" account<sup>69</sup>.

Juxtaposing the abovementioned information allows to distinguish two major areas in which the "council of eight" marked its activity – military and political, in accordance with the overtone of the chronicle of Jan Długosz. Apart from the ongoing organisation of the march of the Polish–Lithuanian army and directing it on the 11<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> of July, and most likely also later on (that is, on the 17<sup>th</sup>–26<sup>th</sup> of July and the 19<sup>th</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> of September), the advisors took part in the planning of the scenario of the battle of Grunwald and, after the battle, they supervised the inventory of captives, among other things. The role of the council should be emphasised particularly during its involvement in the negotiations with the opposite party (the talks with the commander of Świecie, Heinrich von Plauen) and in the making of decisions which were significant for the future of the expedition (resignation from the siege of Malbork and withdrawal from Prussia).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100; A. Nadolski, *Grunwald...*, p. 119.

<sup>68</sup> Długosz, lib. 10/11, pp. 133–135; M. Biskup, *Z badań nad „Wielką Wojną” z zakonem krzyżackim*, KH 1959, R. 66, nr 3, p. 701 ff.; S. Szybkowski, *Polscy starostowie w Prusach...*, pp. 136–137, 143.

<sup>69</sup> According to the estimates of Kuczyński (*Wielka wojna...*, p. 463), the preserved sources provide information referring only to the third part of the financial substance of the Teutonic Knights corporation in Prussia, taken over by the Poles in 1410. Therefore, it seems that regardless of the sources Jan Długosz could have used while compiling a list of those who received emoluments in Prussia from the king (cf. S. Szybkowski, *Polscy starostowie w Prusach...*, p. 138), his information was very incomplete. Jerzy Sperka (*Szafrańcowie herbu Stary Koń...*, p. 87) noticed that in Elbląg the Teutonic Knights took as prisoners, i.a., the knights sent there by Piotr Szafraniec, the chamberlain of Cracow and starost of Łęczyca (see: M. Biskup, *Z badań...*, p. 700; T. Nowak, *Kopia rycerska Stefana Puczka z Nędzierzewa*, "Studia z dziejów Średniowiecza" 2002, t. 8, pp. 87–97).

In view of the cited excerpts from the work of Długosz, it appears that in the vast majority of cases the monarch acted favourably upon the advisors' opinions, which contradicts the thesis of Kuczyński, who suggested that Władysław Jagiełło individually and single-handedly decided about everything during the campaign<sup>70</sup>. The "council of eight" had a significant influence on the decisions made throughout the summer campaign, but the role played by the monarch was by no means diminished.

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The „council of eight” was appointed as a response to the necessity of improving the decision-making process and command. Its composition was determined by the importance and authority of the advisors amongst the remaining dignitaries and masses of nobility. It was comprised of the king's nominees who brought their own cavalry. They represented neither specific territories nor social groups, nor political circles. They were the delegates of the king's plenary council. Their competences, broadly but also vaguely outlined, included military and political matters which were associated with the needs and the future of the war campaign. They did not differ from the customary competences of the council at that time, demonstrating, however, a specificity resulting from operating in war conditions. The issue of the participation of advisory bodies in military campaigns requires further and detailed studies.

### Abstract

The so-called "council of eight" in the summer campaign of 1410

The paper presents the issue of the functioning of a narrow group of royal advisors – the so-called "council of eight" during the summer campaign of 1410, about which Jan Długosz wrote in his chronicle. Several days after entering the Prussian territory, the king chose from among all his advisors eight trusted people led by Vytautas the Great. The circumstances in which this group was selected allow to perceive the king's decision

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<sup>70</sup> It is possible to notice in one case some frictions between the king and his advisors (an idea, put forward before the battle, regarding the king's withdrawal to the camp area), but it is known that in the end the monarch proved his point, see: Długosz, lib. 10/11, pp. 100, 104, 112.

as a remedial measure against the difficulties in the realisation of the campaign plan. These people were chosen due to their influence with the nobility and their importance in the king's environment. Other criteria – political allegiance, territorial origin – played a secondary role. The main idea of selecting this narrow group of advisors was to improve the efficiency of the decision-making process in the time of war. Its functioning was visible in the key moments of the campaign (councils before and after the Battle of Grunwald, talks with Heinrich von Plauen, decision to stop the siege of Marienburg). Most of the members were given management over the castles won in Prussia from the king. This exclusive group was dissolved with the end of the summer campaign.