

## SUMMARY

REIGNED OVER BY AN ABSENTEE MONARCH. THE KINGDOM OF POLAND 1370–1382

The ascension of Louis I of Hungary to the throne of Poland in November 1370 and his twelve-year reign constitutes a profoundly important period in the history of Polish statehood. The last monograph on the aforementioned topic was prepared by Jan Dąbrowski one hundred years ago (*The Last Years of Louis the Great 1370–1382*, Kraków 1918). Since then a number of topics and problems connected to the reign of the House of Anjou in Poland have been revised and new research has been conducted, whose findings and methodology enable us to look anew at this period of the history of Poland. In addition, in the era of the intensification of studies into the Jagiellonian Era in recent years, it appears to be necessary to expand our knowledge pertaining to the events preceding that epoch.

A comprehensive approach to the Polish reign of Louis the Great (called Louis of Hungary in Poland) forces us to consider a number of issues surrounding both the system of government in the Kingdom of Poland and, above all, the functioning of the contemporary state. With reference to the second issue, knowledge concerning the nobility and knighthood, whose representatives dominated the political and ecclesiastical elites, is crucial. A hitherto prevailing interpretation of the Polish political scene during the reign of Casimir the Great and his successor rested on the firm assumption that forasmuch as the idea of knighthood was based on the family structure, often having a broad social and territorial extent, so too were political sympathies and the implementation of the political plans and conceptions of the clerical elites. For this reason, following the monograph by Jan Dąbrowski we can observe a problem of factions, which divided the political scene of the Kingdom of Poland. The above-mentioned factions functioned following a particular vision and political project at the level of the highest dignitaries, who either cooperated or competed with each other. Later, they consolidated support for particular conceptions via family structure. Therefore, we can assume that family affiliation automatically determined sympathies with certain factions. For years it has been postulated in historiography that in the decades preceding the reign of Vladislaus Jagiełło in the Kingdom of Poland there was a relatively stable division into two fundamental political options separating elites and nobility: the Anjou faction and the Legitimist faction (also called a pro-Luxembourg faction). The aforementioned division was a result of differing visions of the future of the Kingdom of Poland, which were created by dignitaries in the era of Casimir the Great. In the absence of a male heir the future of the Kingdom after the death of King Casimir was seen either as a close alliance with the Hungarian House of Anjou, or as a close relationship with the Roman emperor and Bohemian King Charles IV of Luxembourg. In light of the research undertaken by Tomasz Nowakowski and Janusz Kurtyka the aforementioned division is known to have existed since at least the 1340s. I have already presented a critical approach to such an interpretation of the political reality in the monograph pertaining to the relations of the officials of Lesser Poland with King Vladislaus the Elbow-high and Casimir the Great (*The Officials of Lesser Poland in the Milieu of Vladislaus the Elbow-high and Casimir the Great (1305-1370)*, Kraków 2006). Ergo, a need arises to look anew

at the period of the reign of the successor of Casimir the Great — Louis of Hungary, for his reign was to result from the clash of the political visions of the two factions competing for influence with the previous king.

The following monograph commences with an analysis of the arrival of Louis of Hungary to Krakow and his coronation. A detailed account of the events and the whole period of the Angevin reign has been preserved in the Chronicle by Jan of Czarnków, archdeacon of Gniezno and vice-chancellor of the court of Casimir the Great. A principal aim of this monograph is to present the relations between the subjects and the monarch and to outline the evolution of the attitudes of the elite of the Kingdom of Poland, which were consequent upon events taking place in Poland during the interregnum after the death of Louis. Hence, we start with the events which occurred in Krakow directly after the death of Casimir the Great. It was at this time that Louis decided to change the will of the deceased king, or more specifically, the part of the will concerning the bestowal given to the royal grandchild Duke Casimir of Słupsk. The successful completion of the above-mentioned process showed a lack of determination among the Polish dignitaries, who were unable to take a firm stand giving the initiative to the monarch. Ergo, we can assume that at the time of death of the last representative of the Piast dynasty there were no clear divisions among the elite officials, which resulted from competing political factions. The above-mentioned assumption has become a starting point for the analysis of the actions of the political elites against other matters. Above all, their actions pertained to the succession of the House of Anjou in Poland, including the importance of Ruthenia, which was to become a bargaining counter between Poland and Hungary. Finally, existing findings referring to the Moldovan expedition of Casimir the Great have been revised. Whether and when the expedition took place is, in fact, unknown. Therefore, we shall circumspectly treat the event (i.e. a defeat for the Polish knighthood) as a starting point for a discussion on the condition of the political elites at the time of the ascension of Louis of Hungary to the throne.

The result of these analyses is to present anew the circumstances which led to the granting of the Privilege of Košice by King Louis in September 1374. The most important part of this study is not only to trace the facts, which do not raise any doubts, but, above all, to explicate why specific concessions on the part of the king are found in the discussed Privilege with respect to the Polish subjects. All the agreements signed by Louis with the representatives of the Polish state known from the sources have been compared, namely the events of 1351: when Casimir the Great was taken seriously ill during the expedition against Lithuania and when the King of Hungary demanded homage from the Polish knighthood, the Privilege of Buda of 1355 and Privilege of Košice. Also the events which took place in the Kingdom of Poland after the coronation of Louis and before the Convention in Košice have been thoroughly discussed. These were fiefs granted by the new king: the Duchy of Wieluń given to Vladislaus of Opole, the palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary, and, principally, the bestowal of Ruthenia upon the aforementioned duke in 1372, disturbances caused by Duke Vladislaus the White in Kuyavia, homage paid by the knighthood of Greater Poland to the Silesian Piast — Konrad II of Oleśnica, or the case of Jan of Czarnków who was accused of stealing regalia from the grave of Casimir the Great. Ergo, a picture is formed from the above-mentioned facts showing that the elites of the Kingdom of Poland had just started to build their political horizon, and in the face of the considerable dynamics of events; which ensued after the ascension of the Angevin to the throne, started to perceive the necessity to take their own position in the country. This allows us to assume that Louis took power in a country in which the prestige of royal majesty was immense and gave him enormous power to act autonomously, without the need to face his subjects. The nature of the actions undertaken by the king, the chaos caused by the new monarch, as well as the anarchistic actions of less powerful players of the political game led the elites to seize their chances. With reference to the Privilege of Košice itself, attention has been focused on records pertaining to matters other than

tax issues, since these have recently been discussed by Jacek Matuszewski. Particularly important was a record regarding the restrictions on the appointment of *capitanei* and burgraves, and the enumeration of the twenty-five most important castles and towns of the Kingdom, which seated courts and which the king could not hand to foreigners or dukes, but exclusively to the nobility of the Kingdom of Poland. The above-mentioned fact testifies to the reaction of the nobility to the decisions of the new king, made definitely without particular care for the opinion of his subjects. It is also the oldest and a truly remarkable attempt to secure the inviolability of the structure of the Kingdom of Poland, and what is more, an attempt made by the subjects, rather than their monarch.

Further comments refer to the final years of the reign of King Louis the Great, who concentrated on securing power for his daughters in all his dominions. In the case of the Kingdom of Poland this involved the necessity of winning the acceptance of the Polish subjects for the ascension of Princess Mary to the Polish throne in 1378. This happened after the death of Catherine who had been meant to reign over the Kingdom. Following the course of action of King Louis, we can notice how he maintained supremacy over dignitaries in the Kingdom of Poland and how effective he was in controlling the situation. First, he prepared a subtle constellation of cross-dynastic arrangements with the House of Luxembourg, the House of Valois and the House of Habsburg, and the most reliable Polish associates (Sędziwój of Szubin and Bartosz Wezenborg). When Catherine died, the Poles were just presented with a *fait accompli* and required to pay homage to the second daughter, which was effectuated in Košice in 1379 by strong blackmail. The gates of the town were closed and the archbishop of Gniezno and the magnates of Greater Poland were forced to make concessions. In the years preceding the aforementioned event and despite the anti-Hungarian riots (which took place in Krakow in December 1376) or perhaps owing to them — in order to calm the situation, the king appointed his confidantes as officials in the offices of *capitanei*. Hence, he nurtured the ambitions of some of his followers, and at the same time forced them to defy the frustrations of the magnates. In 1378 Louis reclaimed the Duchy of Halych from the Duke of Opole and took control of it, adding it to the group of dominions intended for his daughters. In spite of this, Duke Vladislaus remained a loyal ally of the House of Anjou and took control of the lands which were governed by Duke Casimir of Słupsk, who died in January 1377. The weakest link in the system of the Angevin rule in Poland was the office of a direct representative of the permanently absent king. So long as Elizabeth of Poland, mother of Louis, lived, she represented her son rather successfully, and was treated as the Queen of Poland. However, at the end of her life the problem became more and more pressing. In 1378 the king made an attempt to promote Duke Vladislaus of Opole as his representative. Nonetheless, this idea was met with outright hostility by the knighthood of Greater Poland, although with an at least neutral stance by the elites of Lesser Poland. The death of Princess Catherine and the necessity to reconstruct the succession rights to the Polish throne ended the chances of the Duke of Opole to serve the function of governor. This role was for the last time fulfilled by the Queen Mother. Her death at the end of 1380 forced Louis once again to attempt to appoint a governor in Poland. This time he decided to create a collegiate body, called in literature a group of *magni procuratores* or vicars of the Kingdom of Poland. It was composed of the most loyal associates of the monarch, which may indicate that he did not rule based on wide circles of political factions, but rather on the notables possessing great dignity (the bishop of Krakow, the voivod of Krakow, the *capitanei* of Greater Poland and Krakow and the Krakow chancellor). They were entitled to impose sentences, nominate officials and administer the Polish majestic seal of Louis. Nevertheless, even this system did not work, it generated tension and hostility towards royal governors, the more so as the most important of them — the Krakow bishop Zawisza of Kurozwęki — died as early as at the beginning of 1382. The end was brought to these problems by the death of Louis on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1382, which radically changed the situation in the Kingdom of Poland.

The death of the king constituted an entirely new challenge for the participants of public life. Louis assuredly strived to make Mary and her future husband Sigismund of Luxembourg, who in 1382 attained maturity (15 years old), ascend the Polish throne. A few weeks before his death Louis managed to assemble the Polish *capitanei* in Zwoleń, who paid homage to Sigismund, after which they set off for Poland where Sigismund led the military expedition against the insurgent Bartosz Wezenborg of Odolanów. After the death of Louis all these matters began to get complicated. Sigismund had a great opportunity to gain the acceptance of the Polish knighthood on the condition that the king resided in Poland permanently, which he did not wish to do. In addition, the matters were even more complicated by widow Queen Elisabeth of Bosnia, who refused to support Sigismund as a candidate for the Polish throne and demanded loyalty exclusively towards her daughters; and this loyalty was offered by the Polish elites. In the Kingdom of Poland two fundamental problems began to emerge. The first of these was an escalating civil war in Greater Poland, which was resultant upon a permanent conflict between the *capitaneus* of this land — Domarat of Pierzchno — and other powerful people of the Poznań and Kalisz lands. The second one was linked to the claims to the Polish throne by the young Duke Siemowit IV of Mazovia, who was gaining popularity especially in the northern parts of the Kingdom. The highest elite circles of the Kingdom of Poland, including all the dignitaries of Lesser Poland and the *capitanei*, remained truly loyal to the widow Queen. All this was taking place despite the fact that the Queen did not fulfil the further promise of sending her younger daughter Hedwig to Poland. The candidacy of Mary declined after she was crowned the Queen of Hungary, as early as September 1382 and immediately after the death of Louis. The Polish magnates remained loyal to the Hungarian throne while awaiting the arrival of Hedwig up until the last months of 1383. Not before the next envoy to Elisabeth led by Sędziwój of Szubin and Jan of Melsztyn, which ended in the arrest of the former, did the leading representatives of the political elites in Poland redefine their stance. In March 1384 at a convention of noblemen in Radomsko a decision was made to create an independent, collegiate system of administration of the lands and castles of the Kingdom until the end of the interregnum and an ultimatum was issued to the Queen concerning the arrival of Hedwig in Poland. It was assuredly at the time that the issue of a husband for the future queen was raised. This was the beginning of the Jagiellonian Era in the Kingdom of Poland.

The 12-year reign of Louis the Great constitutes a critical time for the evolution of the political elites of the Kingdom of Poland. First of all, we shall draw our attention to the very rapid process of the empowerment of the elites. They began to develop a clearly defined vision of their place on the political scene and shape their own image of the Kingdom. Nonetheless, until the king's death, and even a year after his demise, they presented an attitude of strong dependency upon the royal court and located their political hopes therein. Secondly, the above-mentioned fact explicates another, very significant trend. The monarchy of the last Piasts caused the strengthening of the royalty, who thoroughly dominated their subjects. The king faced this state of affairs and commenced his rule with the skilful use of the instruments available created by his predecessors. Not before the uncertainty pertaining to the succession to the throne after the king of the House of Anjou and perhaps due to the disrespectful attitude to the Polish country did this result in a spirit of self-dependence of the local elites and initiate a fast process of the solidification of their political stance. A number of variables characterizing a dynamically developing country against the permanence of a well-organised royal apparatus, which was exercised by a man of strong personality, gave Louis a constant advantage throughout his reign. The last important conclusion that can be reached is the necessity of preparing a monograph on the Polish nobility and knighthood in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which would explicate how this community changed in the era of the integration and rebirth of the Kingdom of Poland and during the time preceding the advent of the Jagiellonian Era.