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Historia Slavorum Occidentis 2(9), 15-35

2015

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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MID-TWELFTH-CENTURY POLAND BETWEEN EAST AND WEST – CONFLICTS, ALLIANCES, MARRIAGES

Słowa kluczowe: Wschód, Zachód, Polska w XII w., rozbitcie dzielnicowe, Papiestwo

Keywords: East, West, Poland in the twelfth century, fragmentation of Poland, papacy

Abstract: The paper offers a portrayal of the Polish state poised in the mid-twelfth century between the East and the West, i.e., Rus, fragmented into principalities, and two mighty powers of medieval Europe, the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, respectively.

This paper was partly delivered at the Fourth Congress of Polish Medievalists in 2011. The text has never been published as a research paper, yet some statements first appeared in my book *Bolesław IV Kędzierzawy – książę Mazowsza i princeps* [Bolesław IV the Curly – Duke of Mazovia and High Duke of Poland]¹.

Commonly employed by historians and other scholar, the expression ‘Poland between East and West’ carries a period-specific meaning in a given context. Poland of the sons of Bolesław III Wrymouth was a state of separate, yet cooperating principalities, often standing shoulder to shoulder against the powers of the East and the West. At the time, the East stood for Rus, long-fragmented into principalities, while the West saw the dominance of two most important powers of medieval Europe – the Holy Roman

¹ M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Bolesław IV Kędzierzawy – książę Mazowsza i princeps*, Poznań 2009; cf. the revised edition of the book, *Bolesław Kędzierzawy*, Poznań 2014, particularly chapters on Bolesław’s foreign policy.

Empire and the Papacy. Split by a schism later in century, the latter called for a straightforward declaration of positions. The Prussian tribes and the Polabian Slavs can hardly be considered major-league political, economic or cultural entities of the mid-twelfth century, and as such will be excluded from our deliberations on the relations of the Polish Dukes with the East and the West². The paper focuses on the period starting with the death of Bolesław Wrymouth (1138), when the fragmentation of Poland into principalities³ was ushered in, until the death of one of his sons, Bolesław the Curly, in 1172, when Poland was plunged into galloping disintegration.

Bolesław Wrymouth bequeathed a stabilised situation in the country to his sons. Most importantly, the Polish ruler had settled the conflict with the Holy Roman Empire at the congress of Mersenburg in 1135 and managed to establish ties between the High Duke he assigned and both Western powers. Władysław II's marriage with Agnes, the daughter of the Margrave Leopold III of Austria and half-sister of Conrad III of Hohenstaufen, gave him a close connection with the royal family. Also the Pope gave his blessing to the new ruler⁴. Bolesław's sons enjoyed also peaceful relations with the East, namely Rus. The High Duke closely cooperated with the then Prince of Kiev, assisted by Piotr Włostowic, one of the greatest magnates of the time. As early as in 1137, one of the younger sons of Bolesław III, Bolesław the Curly, married Viacheslava, the daughter of Vsevolod, Prince of Novgorod.

Upon his father's death in 1138, Władysław II finally took over the supreme authority in Poland. Whether or when he pledged fealty to the

² Some historians believe that military expeditions against Prussia and Polabian Slavs led by Bolesław Wrymouth and Bolesław the Curly were regarded as holy wars, inspired by the crusade movement widespread in the West, cf. recently D. von Güttner-Sporzyński, *Poland, Holy War and the Piast Monarchy, 1100-1230*, Turnhout 2014, and a comprehensive bibliography on the issue cited therein.

³ For a summary of the discussion on the hereditariness of the Polish lands during the period of the fragmentation of the realm see J. Bieniak, *Polska elita polityczna w XII wieku*, (part I, *Tło działalności*), [in:] *Spółczesność Polski średniowiecznej, Zbiór studiów*, vol. II, S. K. Kuczyński (ed.), Warszawa 1982, pp 33-50; for the recent summary of the discussion on the testament of Bolesław Wrymouth see J. Osiński, *Statut Bolesława Krzywoustego*, Kraków 2014.

⁴ *Mistrza Wincentego zwanego Kadłubkiem Kronika Polska*, ed. by M. Plezia, MPH s.n. [a new series], vol. XI, Kraków 1994, book III, chapter 26; Polish Translation: *Mistrz Wincenty (tzw. Kadłubek), Kronika polska*, translated by B. Kürbis, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1996, book III, chapter 26, pp 118-119.

German king is shrouded in uncertainty. There is no information in the extant written sources whether the Duke did it at the beginning of his reign, or perhaps during the 1146 assembly in Kaina. Nevertheless, long-term diplomatic and military interventions on his behalf, first of German king Conrad III and then Emperor Frederic, amply testify to the fact that the High Duke of Poland took over the feudal liabilities of his father, either already during Bolesław's lifetime, or hastened to paid homage shortly after he came to power⁵. In 1146, Władysław was expelled by his younger brothers, and the Kraków throne was taken over by Bolesław the Curly. To put it another way, the supreme power in Poland was now in the hands of an adversary of the German ruler – the man who deprived the king's vassal of patrimony.

Conrad III's military campaign against the Junior Dukes intended to assist the legal High Duke in regaining power was mounted the same year⁶. The Junior Dukes organised an effective and quick defence; given that the king's troops stopped on the line of the Odra River, it is reasonable to conjecture that they were not numerous. The king quickly came up with a proposal of negotiations, to which Bolesław and brothers willingly consented. *The Annals of Magdeburg* reported that the sons of Salome returned the hostages to the invader, and promised to pay the king a certain amount of money. On hearing that, Conrad left them undisturbed and retreated⁷. Somewhat later, Vincent from Prague added that Bolesław promised to arrive to an assembly scheduled by the King and remain under his command (*et ad curiam eis indicatam se venturos et in eius stare mandato se promittunt*). Interestingly, Vincent himself was aware of the transience of these promises.

⁵ *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, MGH SS, vol. XVI, Hannoverae 1859, p 187; also *Annales Pegavienses et Bosovienses*, MGH SS, vol. XVI, ed. by G.H. Pertz, Leipzig 1925, p 258; cf. M. Dworsatschek, *Władysław II Wygnaniec*, Wrocław 1998, pp 104–105; M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Bolesław Kędzierzawy*, pp 234–236, and a comprehensive bibliography cited therein.

⁶ *Annales Magdeburgenses*, pp 187–188. T. Grudziński, *O akcie sukcesyjnym z czasów Bolesława Krzywoustego*, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 24 (1972), part 1, p 55, saw Conrad III's onslaught on Poland in 1146 as a simple result of his earlier acknowledgement of Bolesław Wrymouth's testament, and later acceptance of a homage from Władysław II. G. Labuda argued against such views, *O stosunkach prawnopublicznych między Polską a Niemcami w połowie XII wieku*, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 25 (1973), pp 46ff

⁷ *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p 188.

‘What harm is there in making a promise?’ (*nam quid promittere ledit?*)⁸, he asks himself rhetorically.

Having scrutinised *The Magdeburg Annals*, contemporary to the events, Gerard Labuda pointed to the fact that the source did not mention the tribute supposedly paid by the Junior Dukes, headed by Bolesław the Curly. According to the scholar, an evident defeat inflicted upon Conrad III does not encourage such speculations⁹. Furthermore, if the hypothesis about Władysław II’s earlier homage to Conrad III is true, the German King, despite his temporary inability to assist his vassal, could not receive a new homage from the prince, who forced his predecessor into exile, in which case the ruler intervened¹⁰.

At that time, in cooperation with Mieszko, Bolesław established also closer links with Saxon margraves, which proved to be very helpful in their relations with the Holy Roman Empire, and most likely yielded positive results already in 1146¹¹. It is worth noting that the above situation reveals the weakness of the then ruler of the Empire, who was unable to satisfactorily press his demands. The position of Poland with High Duke Bolesław at the forefront proved to be strong enough to stand up the onslaught from the West.

The year 1149 brings another information regarding further attempts by Conrad III to intervene in Poland. In an epistle to Wibald of Stavelot, a royal notary Henry reported that his ruler wanted to consult the abbot on the next military expedition to Italy and the issue of the restoration of his sister, the Polish Duchess, to the throne¹². This shows that the Polish exiles, Władysław and his wife Agnes, resumed their pressure on Conrad III upon his return from the Crusades. Supposedly impotent, the king endeavoured

⁸ Vincentii Pragensis, *Annales*, ed. by W. Wattenbach, *MGH SS*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, vol. XVII, Leipzig 1925, p 664, information mistakenly written under the year 1149.

⁹ G. Labuda, *O stosunkach prawnopublicznych*, pp 46–47, added that while concluding an agreement, the German king and Junior Dukes were on an equal footing, as evidenced by the exchange of the hostages, and the only thing the brothers promised the king, i.e., the money, was a customary tribute paid by Poland to the Empire; M. Dworsatschek, *Władysław II*, p. 123, is of a similar opinion.

¹⁰ It has been already suggested by M. Dworsatschek, *Władysław II*, p 123.

¹¹ For the 1148 Kruszwica assembly with Saxon margraves and the concluded alliance see *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p. 190.

¹² *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Śląska*, ed. by K. Maleczyński, vol. I (971–1204), Wrocław 1956, no 23, p 57 (henceforth referred to as *KdŚl*, vol. I).

to weasel out of the whole affair, seeking advice and playing for time. This is also confirmed by earlier, several-month long attempts to devolve a responsibility for enforcing the return of the rightful High Duke on the pope¹³.

Circa 1150, it was evident that both powers of medieval Europe were powerless against the illegal, yet widely supported young ruler. After the abortive 1146 military expedition, Conrad III endeavoured to fight with Bolesław the Curly with idle threats of an invasion, and by the hands of the Pope. On the other hand, through the mouth of his legate Guido, Eugene III acknowledged that all conceivable levers that the Church could use against the faithful had already been applied in the case of the Polish Dukes, and that it only remains for Conrad to make an armed intervention on Władysław's behalf¹⁴. That did not happen during Conrad's reign; preoccupied with more serious conflicts in the Empire, the king forsook Władysław and Agnes' cause. It seems that the years 1146–1152 witnessed the West's helplessness against Poland.

The situation changed in 1152, with Frederick Barbarossa's election as the King of Germany. Already on 18 June 1155, he was crowned Roman Emperor. Written sources (i.e., the German chronicles of Rahewin and Polish master Vincent) have it that the Roman ruler first sent an epistle to the Polish Duke, which urged him to accept his exiled brother back¹⁵. When Bolesław had defied imperial request for his brother's restoration, Frederick Barbarossa decided to mount a full-scale onslaught against Poland. Only then did this prompt the Polish Duke to send 'a great legation' to the emperor residing at the time in Halle (*quod magni legat Polonorum in Halla ad nos venerunt*)¹⁶. The envoys attained nothing, and in early August 1157, Frederick set out for an expedition against Poland. It turned out, however, that despite his anxiety over the imperial invasion, Bolesław was ready to fight for his

¹³ E.g. T. Grudziński, *O akcie sukcesyjnym*, pp 56–59.

¹⁴ *List legata papieskiego Gwidona do króla Konrada III*, *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 28, p 75.

¹⁵ Ottone et Ragewino, *Gesta Friderici I imperatoris*, ed. by R. Wilmans, *MGH SS*, vol. XX, G.H. Pertz, Leipzig 1925, p 418, cf. Mistrz Wincenty, book III, chapter 30, p 124.

¹⁶ The Polish legation that arrived to Halle on the eve of the expedition was mentioned by in one the Emperor's own letters to Wibald, the abbot of Corvey, cf. *Fryderyk I cesarz donosi Wibaldowi o wielkim od Polaków poselstwie i o postanowionej wyprawie swojej do Polski* [Frederick I the Emperor notifies Wibald of a great Polish legation and of his decided expedition to Poland] cf. A. Bielowski, [in:] *MPH*, vol. II, Lwów 1878, p 21, (cf. *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 39, pp 104ff).

rights to the throne of Kraków in order to maintain his superior authority. Presumably already at a time when the legation were still in Halle, Bolesław the Curly massed Russian, Prussian and Pomeranian reinforcements, which were to fight on the Polish side in the conflict with the Empire¹⁷.

Generally, the course of events was as follows: when the emperor crossed the Oder, the Junior Dukes began to retreat, burning their strongholds as they went. When the Emperor laid siege to Poznań, Bolesław, through a person in his entourage, begged for the opportunity to return under imperial dominion. Frederick gave his assent and brought the suppliant Polish Duke back into favour. Yet the High Duke of Poland had to oblige to fulfil certain conditions: a declaration was extracted from him that the expulsion of his older brother had not been directed against the Holy Roman Empire; in addition, he had to promise to pay an indemnity to Frederick (2000 grzywnas), the German dukes (1000 grzywnas), the empress (20 grzywnas in gold) and courtiers (200 grzywnas). The tribute was supposed to be the punishment for the Duke's negligence and failure to swear an oath of fealty. Bolesław also promised to participate in the forthcoming expedition to Italy planned by the Emperor. Last but not least, Bolesław had to assure Frederick that he would appear at his court in Magdeburg at Christmas to respond to the allegations of his exiled brother¹⁸. It seems that the Emperor's military expedition to Poland ended in only limited success. Bolesław the Curly made a solemn oath that forcing Władysław to exile was not directed against the Empire; he nevertheless did not admit his brother back nor returned the throne to him. It is a known fact that the High Duke did not fulfil any of his promises whatsoever¹⁹.

What happened at Krzyszkowo? The discrepancies between historiographical views on the issue are thought-provoking. In the first place, we should reject Henryk Łomiański's supposition, recently supported by M. Dworsatschek, that Bolesław was declared a vassal of the emperor at Krzyszkowo near Poznań in 1157²⁰. Both historians believe that the land mentioned by a source

¹⁷ Cf. *Fryderyk I cesarz donosi Wibaldowi o zwycięstwie odniesionym nad Polakami*, ed. by A. Bielowski, [in:] *MPH*, vol. II, Lwów 1878, p 22, (cf. *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 39, pp 105–108), also Ottone et Ragewino, p 418.

¹⁸ Ottone et Ragewino, pp 418–419.

¹⁹ *Ibid* p 419.

²⁰ H. Łowmiański, *Początki Polski. Polityczne i społeczne procesy kształtowania się narodu do początku XIV w.*, vol. VI, part 1, Warszawa 1985, p 154, footnote. 286; M. Dworsatschek,

provides the conclusive proof of the investiture. Nonetheless, the sentence reading: *Quod ad curiam nostram non venerat, nec de terra debitam nobis facerat fidelitatem*²¹, does not pertain directly to the relationship concluded at Krzyszkowo between Barbarossa and Bolesław the Curly, but mentions the possible arrears that the Polish Duke had to pay as he had hitherto promised. The above information can be interpreted only with regard to the past. The question to address is whether Bolesław had previously paid homage *de terra*. Nothing of the kind has been mentioned by any extant sources. The passage quoted above cannot be applied to the relation established in 1157, referred to by the source as *fidelitas*²². G. Labuda's view, supported by Jerzy Hauziński, that no-one has pledged reverence and submission to anyone at Krzyszkowo seems a much more plausible option²³.

It is worth noting that despite some differences, the analyses of the two authors are in fact largely complementary. Events at Krzyszkowo were presumably not as irreparable a disaster for the Polish Duke, as German sources complacently reported. This is best evidenced by the fact that having presumably rebuffed Bolesław's proposition put forward by the Duke's envoys prior to the Polish invasion, the emperor quit Poland with vain promises and, perhaps, indemnity. Even though the foregoing is, admittedly, a mere speculation, Frederick received in fact little more than Bolesław the Curly had previously offered him in Halle. On the other hand, the postponement of the decision of his elder brother's return and the clemency shown by the Emperor, which can be read – after Zbigniew Dalewski – as an acceptance of Bolesław the Curly's rule in Poland, were indisputably a great diplomatic victory of the Duke of Poland²⁴.

Władysław II, pp 135–137; I have expressed my disagreement with the idea of the 1157 homage in Bolesław the Curly's biography, see M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Bolesława IV Kędzierzawy*, pp 240–248, 266–267.

²¹ Fryderyk I cesarz donosi Wiboldowi o zwycięstwie, p 22.

²² Ottone et Ragewino, p 419.

²³ G. Labuda, *Zagadnienie suwerenności Polski wczesnofeudalnej w X–XII wieku*, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 67 (1960), part 4, p 1063; idem, *O stosunkach prawnopublicznych*, p 54; J. Hauziński, *Polska a królestwo niemieckie w II połowie XII wieku*, [in:] *Niemcy – Polska w średniowieczu. Materiały z konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Instytut Historii UAM w dniach 14–16 XI 1983 roku*, J. Strzelczyk (ed.), Poznań 1986, p 145; for a comprehensive analysis of the issue see M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Bolesław Kędzierzawy*, pp 244–245.

²⁴ Z. Dalewski, *Między Krzyszkowem a Mediolanem*, [in:] *Kościół, kultura, społeczeństwo. Studia z dziejów średniowiecza i czasów nowożytnych*, ed. by S. Bylina et al., Warszawa

The Duke's winning streak continued for the next several years, during which he managed to successfully circumvent confrontation with the Emperor. In the early 1160s, Frederick instigated diplomatic overtures to restore the Silesian district to the descendants of Władysław the Exile. Whispering in Emperor's ear was apparently Bolesław I the Tall, the son of late Władysław (who had died in 1159)²⁵.

It was probably upon the Emperor's intervention that the Duke of Poland agreed to accept the return of his nephews to Silesia. Why this sudden concession from the High Duke of Poland? Having contesting the return of a legitimate High Duke for fourteen years, Bolesław could now resolve to return only the hereditary principality to the descendants of Władysław. That did not affect his power. The Duke supposedly reckoned that once he admitted his nephews, his somewhat forced reunions with the Emperor and the on-going threat of Frederick's eye on Polish affairs would ultimately cease to exist. This is further confirmed by the fact that it was actually the High Duke of Poland, not the Emperor, who dictated the terms of the agreement. His nephews were restored in Silesia, yet Bolesław at first retained control over all major strongholds in the principality²⁶.

For two consecutive years following the return of Władysław's son, the intra-dynastic conflict was wiped out from the international arena. And yet, the uncle could not come to terms with the presence of his nephews. In 1170, somehow assisted by the Duke of Kraków, he forced Bolesław the Tall into exile. In consequence, the emperor decided to mount a major military campaign to settle the eldest Władysław the Exile's son back on the Silesian throne. A large number of massed troops amply attest to the fact that Frederick was determined to defeat the rebellious Polish Senior, who reneged

2000, p 133; for a similar argumentation regarding oaths of allegiance cf. idem, *Zjazd w Merseburgu w 1135 roku*, [in:] *Ludzie, Kościół, wierzenia, Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa Europy Środkowej (średniowiecze - wczesna epoka nowożytna)*, Warszawa 2001, p 438 The ideological elements of ceremonies during Polish-German assemblies has been hitherto discussed by B. Nowacki, *Symbolika prawna w ceremoniale zjazdów monarchów polskich z władcami niemieckimi od X do połowy XII wieku*, *Roczniki Historyczne* 43 (1977), pp 1-28.

²⁵ An overview of sources suggestive of a close cooperation between Bolesław the Tall and the Emperor has been prepared by B. Zientara, *Bolesław Wysoki. Tułacz, repatriant, malkontent. Przyczynek do dziejów Polski XII wieku*, *Przegląd Historyczny* 62 (1971), part 3, pp 370-371.

²⁶ *Mistrz Wincenty*, book III, chapter 30, p 125.

on their agreement. According to *Cronica Reinhardsbrunnensis*, the Emperor, who intended to invade Poland (*volens intrare Poloniam*) was approached by Mieszko the Old, who offered him a large sum of money, to which the Emperor consented²⁷. The information that Barbarossa set off for Poland, and retreated without any effect, is confirmed by *Annales Palidenses*²⁸. The sources are vague in this respect and it is unknown whether the German army ever crossed the Polish boundaries, and if it did, how far into the Polish lands it advanced. What is known is that this imperial intervention in the Polish territory once again culminated in an agreement. It is noteworthy that besides the above-mentioned payment offered by Mieszko to Frederick, the sources do not mention any other forms of an imposed tributary dependency. The military expedition was most likely undertaken with the sole purpose of restoring Bolesław the Tall as a rightful ruler in Silesia. When Frederick Barbarossa attained his objective, he retreated from Poland in no time. The described Barbarossa's expedition marked the last episode of the Polish-German relations in the analysed period.

The details of the relations between Poland and the papacy in the mid-twelfth century remain more obscure. The underlying reasons for that are to be sought in specific circumstances in the relations between the two greatest powers of medieval Europe. The rule of the elder sons of Bolesław Wrymouth coincided with the reign of two emperors, Conrad III and Frederick Barbarossa. The reign of the former run concurrently with a short period of Władysław's rule and the early years of Bolesław the Curly's principate. At that time, the relations between the Empire and the papacy were more or less neutral. In the initial period, during Władysław's struggle with the Junior Dukes, Pope Lucius II espoused the latter²⁹.

Most likely in 1146, his emissary legate Humboldt supported the Junior Dukes' bestowals for the monastery of Canons Regular in Trzemeszno, an act directed against the deeds of the High Duke. In the same year, the

²⁷ *Cronica Reinhardsbrunnensis*, ed. by O Holder-Egger, *MGH SS*, vol. XXX/1, Leipzig 1925, p 539.

²⁸ *Imperator Poloniam peciit, sed inacte rediit – Annales Palidenses*, ed. by G. H. Pertz, *MGH SS*, vol. XVI, Hannoverae 1859, p 94.

²⁹ J. Wenta, *Zewnętrzne warunki sprzyjające zamachowi stanu w Polsce w latach 1145-1146*, [in:] *Personae, Colligationes, Facta*, Toruń 1991, pp 216–217, suggested that Lucius II's support for the Junior Dukes stemmed from the fact that he was in camp that stood against Conrad III, who endorsed Władysław.

archbishop of Gniezno, Jakub, excommunicated Władysław II³⁰. This information was presumably sent to Eugene III, the successor of Lucius II. At first, the Bishop of Rome proceeded to declare him excommunicate, thereby taking the Junior Dukes' side³¹. In 1147, Bolesław and Mieszko actively responded to the crusade postulate of the Pope. They undertook two major expeditions: the Duke of Wielkopolska set off against the Polabian Slavs, while the High Duke of Poland sent a military expedition to Prussia. Their engagement was nonetheless purposeless, since sometime between October 1148 and July 1150³², the Pope changed his opinion and agreed to endorse the excommunication sentenced on the Junior Dukes by another legate. The legation was probably instigated by a diplomatic offensive of the High Duke in exile, and above all, his wife Agnes³³. Guido came to Poland with the papal order for the new High Duke to return the throne to its rightful ruler. When the Duke refused, the envoy of the Holy See declared the ban over Poland, which was subsequently confirmed by Eugene III³⁴. In view of the fact that his recommendations were not implemented by the Polish clergy, the

³⁰ *Kronika Wielkopolska*, ed. by B. Kürbis, [in:] *MPH*, vol. VIII s.n., Warszawa 1970, chapter 32, p 51, which tells a story of how the archbishop, in his final years, entered Władysław's camp in a wheelchair and tried to persuade him to change his position; when Władysław refused, James excommunicated him.

³¹ The information that Eugene III endorsed the excommunication is contained in a letter by Henry, the son of the German king, who addresses the issue of his excommunicated aunt Agnes in a letter to the Pope, see *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 19, pp 49–50, cf. T. Grudziński, *O akcie sukcesyjnym*, p 51, footnote 47 is probably right when he speculates that the information refers to the interdict applied also to Władysław.

³² The date of the legation was determined by Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, *Repertorium polskich dokumentów doby piastowskiej*, part 1, *Do końca XII wieku*, Kraków 1937, no 50, p 56.

³³ The fact that she was the driving force behind the diplomatic offensive against the Junior Dukes is evidenced, for example, by the fact that Conrad III's son, Henry, mentioned only her name while he submitted the matter of the Polish exiles to the Pope, cf. *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 19, pp 49–50.

³⁴ The course of the legation is known from the already mentioned account of Guido contained in a letter to Wibald of Stablo dated to May/June 1149 (*KdŚl*, vol. I, no 24, pp 58–59) and in a letter to Conrad III (*KdŚl*, vol. I, no 28, pp 74–76), cf. T. Grudziński, *O akcie sukcesyjnym*, pp 50–54; J. Dobosz, *Arcybiskup Janik i jego następcy. Przygotowanie do reformy Henryka Kietlicza*, [in:] *1000 lat Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej*, J. Strzelczyk, J. Górny (eds.), Gniezno 2000, pp 85–86; idem, *Monarcha i możni wobec kościoła w Polsce do początku XIII wieku*, Poznań 2002, p 298; B. Wojciechowska, *Kary kościelne w Polsce wczesnośredniowiecznej (X–XIII wiek)*, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 57 (2005), part 2, pp 273–274.

Pope confirmed the excommunication again in 1150³⁵. Apparently looking upon the case of the interdict with disdain, the Duke of Kraków did not give in to the threats, as evidenced by the already mentioned letter of Cardinal Guido addressed to Conrad presumably in January 1150. The former legate wrote that the papacy had already exhausted all known means of leverage over the Polish Dukes as regards the case of the king's kinswoman, and now this the king that should enforce the ordinances of the Church³⁶. An earlier unsuccessful expedition of Conrad III, then probably a partly successful 1147 campaign against Prussia, as well as promising relationships with Saxon margraves and the full endorsement from the Polish clergy helped the High Duke evade a serious confrontation with the Pope. It is possible that a Polish delegation attended the Synod of Reims in 1148. Historians have speculated that the delegation was headed by Werner, the Duke's close associate³⁷. A protective papal bull for Włocławek³⁸ was supposedly issued at the time, which strongly suggests that notwithstanding excommunications, some elements of the cooperation of the Polish Church and the papacy were still retained. The position of the papacy to the Junior Dukes' rule in Poland seems to have barely changed during the pontificate of Pope Honorius IV³⁹, who issued two subsequent papal bullas, this time for the bishopric of Wrocław (23 April 1155)⁴⁰ and the monastery of Canons Regular of the Lateran in Czerwińsk (18 April 1155)⁴¹. The High Duke of Poland subsidizing both, he almost certainly supported the bishops' entreaties for the documents in question.

³⁵ *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 29, pp 76–77.

³⁶ *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 28, p 75.

³⁷ Z. Kozłowska-Budkowa, *Repertorium*, no 47, p 53; in a similar vein C. Deptuła, *Niektóre aspekty stosunków Polski z Cesarstwem w wieku XII*, [in:] *Polska w Europie. Studia historyczne*, H. Zins (ed.), Lublin 1968, pp 47–48.

³⁸ *Eugeniusz III papież zatwierdza granice diecezjalne biskupstwa władysławskiego w Kujawach*, ed. by A. Bielowski, *MPH*, vol. II, Lwów 1872, p 13.

³⁹ When exactly the excommunication was removed is unknown. T. Grudziński, *O akcie sukcesyjnym*, p 54 surmised that this could have taken place already in the times of Hadrian IV, the successor of Eugene III. In view of the lack of relevant sources, the historian supposed that Poland could have been excommunicated until Władysław II's death in 1159.

⁴⁰ *KdŚl*, vol. I, no 35, pp 84–102.

⁴¹ *Zbiór ogólny przywilejów i spominków mazowieckich*, ed. by J. K. Kochanowski, vol. I, Warszawa 1919, no 78, pp 74–78.

The situation somehow changed when Frederick Barbarossa and Alexander III instigated open struggle for *dominion mundi*. Frederick finally resolved to elect an antipope and Victor IV was elected as such. These events exacerbated the conflict, which also completely transformed the Polish relations with the papacy. Between 1156 and 1178 we know of no papal document issued for Poland. Neither is there any comparable document issued by any of three antipopes in office at the time. There is no record of the presence of legates of any side in Poland at the time. Whether this dearth of relations with the Pope or antipope can be assessed as stemming from the High Dukes' reluctance to initiate relationships with the Church is unknown. It is reasonable to conjecture that the Duke of Kraków was uninterested in contacting these two powers of medieval Europe. He did not have to seek their support for his rule. In fact, all contacts with the papacy or the Empire were entangled in his struggle against the rightful High Duke, and after his death – against his nephews. The High Duke of Poland sought neither contact with the Emperor nor with the Pope. Any contacts with the Duke were recurrently Frederick's initiative. As to the Pope, he was Barbarossa's natural enemy, and Bolesław was definitely reluctant to become personally involved into conflicts between the two. This situation reveals a *modus operandi* typical of the Duke of Kraków. When two popes were elected in 1159, Bolesław was careful not to take sides. Hard-pressed by the Emperor, he ultimately endorsed the antipope⁴². Upon the death of Victor IV in 1164, Frederick decided on the election of another antipope. Voted as Victor IV's successor, Guido Cremensis went down by the name of Paschal III. The Duke of Kraków adopted a pro-imperial stance and pledged obedience to the antipope, probably again merely in order to be left in peace⁴³.

The relations between mid-twelfth century Poland and the East were markedly different⁴⁴. The fragmentation of Rus instigated earlier, and the

⁴² For the Synod of Pavia and the participation of the Polish legacy see M. Smoliński, *Negocjacje polsko-niemieckie w latach 1160–1163. Kwestia datacji początków*, [in:] idem, *Caesar et duces Poloniae, Szkice z dziejów stosunków polsko-niemieckich w drugiej połowie XII wieku (1146–1191)*, Gdańsk 2006, pp 92–93, and a comprehensive bibliography on the issue therein.

⁴³ *Ex aliis miraculis sancti Henrici*, ed. by G.H. Pertz, *MGH SS*, vol. IV, Leipzig 1925, p 815; for a comprehensive discussion of the issue see M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Bolesław IV Kędzierzawy*, pp 263–264.

⁴⁴ S.M. Kuczyński, *Stosunki polsko-ruskie do schyłku wieku XII*, [in:] tenże, *Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej X–XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1965, pp 7–24; B. Włodarski, *Ruś w planach politycznych Bolesława Krzywoustego*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. M. Kopernika.

mid-1140s saw frequent changes on the throne of Kiev. This is to say, when the struggle for supreme power had barely been beginning in Poland, it was already a long-established political practice in Rus. One of the elements of Bolesław Wrymouth's Russian policy to have undoubtedly influenced the relations of the Polish Dukes with Poland was the decision of his father about Bolesław the Curly's his first marriage. Probably as early as in 1136 or in 1137, he was married to a Russian Princess Viacheslava, the daughter of Vsevolod, Prince of Novgorod⁴⁵. This coalition was a harbinger of good alliance for the young Duke.

Upon Bolesław Wrymouth's death, the oldest brother, Władysław very soon began to look for new allies. Presumably at the turn of 1140, he supported Vsevolod Olgovich, the Grand Prince of Kiev in his fight against Iziaslav Mstislavich, Prince of Vladimir, organising a direct attack on the lands of the latter⁴⁶. Sensing the possibility of a rapid alliance of the two High Dukes, the Dowager Duchess Salome, started her own search – along with the Junior Dukes – for another candidate for an ally from the East. The actions undertaken by both parties to the nascent conflict attest to the fact that relations with the East were all-important for the Polish Dukes at the time. Salome's plans were clearly anti-High Duke, as evidenced by the fact that Władysław was not invited to a national meeting of the Junior Dukes

Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne 20 (1966), Historia II, pp 37ff and idem, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, [in:] *Europa – Słowiańszczyzna – Polska, Studia ku uczczeniu prof. Kazimierza Tymienieckiego*, Poznań 1970, pp 345ff.; see also the most recent publication by M. Bartnicki, *Władca i poddani w historiografii ruskiej XI-XIII wieku*, Lublin 2015 for a comprehensive summary review of Polish and Russian literature. Russian influence in culture, diplomacy and chancery is a whole subject unto itself which I shall not address in this paper. Cf M. Biniś-Szkopek, *Wpływ polityki ruskiej książąt piastowskich na przemiany dokumentu w Polsce doby dzielnicowej*, [w:] *Belliculum Diplomaticum V Lublinense. Dokumenty, kancelarie i archiwa między wschodem i zachodem Europy*, red. A. Górak, M. Szabaciuk, Lublin 2014, pp. 335–350.

⁴⁵ The quotes come from the edition: *Ипатьевская летопись* [in:] *Полные собрание русских летописей*, Том второй, Москва 1998, column 300, (henceforth referred to as *Latopis hipatiewski*) – information under the year 1137; discussion about Viacheslava and the date of marriage: D. Dąbrowski, *Genealogia Mściśławowiczów. Pierwsze pokolenia (do początku XIV wieku)*, Kraków 2008, pp. 192–207, see a comprehensive summary review of Polish and Russian literature, pp. 749–771.

⁴⁶ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 306.

she held in Łęczyca⁴⁷. One of the objectives of the Junior Dukes' mother was to find a husband in Rus for their younger sister, presumably Agnes. The marriage was intended to conclude *foederis* – an alliance⁴⁸. Mentioning vaguely 'the son of the king of Rus', the source does not provide this king's name. To whom exactly was Salome's daughter married is unknown, yet we may assume that the Junior Dukes would not have sought a coalition with the prince already allied with the High Duke. They most likely turned their interest towards Iziaslav – not only was he the chief Vsevolod's competitor, but had fought with their enemy, High Duke Władysław merely a few months earlier. That Mstislav was in 1141 chosen to be Agnes' husband is further indicated by their subsequent marriage⁴⁹. However Salome's negotiations concluded in 1141, the alliance forged in Rus by the High Duke proved to be more effective. In response to the Łęczyca meeting, Władysław cemented the alliance with the Grand Prince of Kiev, Vsevolod, by his son Bolesław the Tall's marriage with Zvenislava, the daughter of the Prince of Kiev⁵⁰. The High Duke's additional advantage lay in his good relationship with Piotr Włostowic, married to a daughter of Prince of Chernigov and apparently highly influential in Rus, rightly suspected by historians of an active assistance in the High Duke's Russian policy⁵¹.

An open conflict in the Piast dynasty and the movements of forces began shortly. In 1142, at the request of Władysław, Vsevolod sent reinforcements against his younger brothers. *Latopis kijowski* [The Kiev Chronicle], enlist the members of that military expedition: Svyatoslav, son of Vsevolod,

⁴⁷ The intentions behind the Duchess's actions were interpreted as such by G. Labuda, *Zabiegi o utrzymanie jedności państwa polskiego 1138–1146*, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 66 (1959), part 4, pp 1154–1155; M. Dworsatschek, *Władysław II*, pp 67–68.

⁴⁸ Ortleib, *Zwifaltensis chronicon*, (excerpt from lib. II), ed. by A. Bielowski, *MPH*, vol. II, Lwów 1872, pp 4–5.

⁴⁹ For the summary of the discussion on the date of the wedding, see K. Jasiński, *Rodów pierwszych Piastów*, Warszawa 1992, p 262, or B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 351, footnote 24; Agnes was mother of Roman Mstislavich; D. Dąbrowski, *Genealogia Mściśławowiczów*, pp. 216–227, idem, *Daniel Romanowicz, król Rusi (ok. 1201–1264). Biografia polityczna*, Kraków 2012, p. 23.

⁵⁰ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 308.

⁵¹ For the recent discussion on the issue see J. Bieniak, *Polska elita polityczna XII wieku*, (part III B, *Arbitrzy książąt – trudne początki*), *Spółeczeństwo Polski średniowiecznej. Zbiór studiów*, S.K. Kuczyński (ed.), vol. VII, Warszawa 1996, pp 15–16, and a comprehensive bibliography on the subject cited therein.

Iziaslav Davidovich, Prince of Chernigov, and Volodymyrko, Prince of Halych. It was probably during this expedition that a stronghold of Czersk was burnt down⁵², and the Rusians took prisoners – largely settled, not armed population⁵³. In the following year Władysław, and perhaps also Bolesław the Tall⁵⁴, participated in the wedding celebration, which took place at the court of Vsevolod, who married his son Sviatoslav to a daughter of Vasilko, the Prince of Polotsk⁵⁵. In 1144, Vsevolod called for the assistance of the High Duke of Poland against Volodymyrko⁵⁶, the Prince of Halych. The intervention proved fruitful, as Vsevolod remained on the throne of Kiev. In 1145, Władysław asked for his help. This time, however, the expedition was to have a much wider reach, and Vsevolod, being in ill health, sent to Poland his brother Igor, his son Sviatoslav, Vladimir Davidovich, as well as Iziaslav Mstislavich. Having been related to Bolesław the Curly through Viacheslava, his niece, the latter fell suddenly ill while he was on his way, or more probably pretended to be ill, and retreated, thereby avoiding the confrontation with Salome's sons⁵⁷. If this hypothesis turns out to be accurate, the mid-1140s witnessed a split among the Russian Princes, with at least one of them unwilling to officially go against the Young Polish Dukes. It is noteworthy that Iziaslav was at that time one of the greatest opponents of Vsevolod to the throne of Kiev. His lands were ravaged by Władysław at the turn of 1140. Despite the temporary reconciliation between the two Russian Princes, Iziaslav could presumably seek a much welcome support among the Young Dukes of Poland. Some indecision among Russian Princes becomes even more evident, when we take into consideration the epilogue of the entire expedition. *Latopis Kijowski* reports that upon an encounter with the Russian troops in the middle of the Łąd land, the brothers – without a fight – surrendered

⁵² The Ruthenian 'Čьръньск'. has been recently commonly interpreted as Czersk, see G. Labuda, *Zabiegi o*, s. 1155; H. Łowmiański, *Początki Polski*, vol. VI, p 1, pp 148–149; M. Dworsatschek, *Władysław II*, p 80, and the archaeological evidence of the hypothesis: J. Rauhutowa, *Czersk we wczesnym średniowieczu od VII do XII wieku*, Wrocław 1976, pp 163ff.

⁵³ *Latopis hipatievski*, p 313.

⁵⁴ The participation of Bolesław the Tall in the event has been hypothesised by B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 352.

⁵⁵ *Latopis hipatievski*, column 313.

⁵⁶ For the reasons and the course of the conflict between Vsevolod and Volodymyrko as well the participation of the High Duke of Poland see. *ibid*, column 314–315.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, column 318.

four stronghold to the Duke of Kraków and the young Mazovian ruler ceded its most easternmost stronghold of Wizna to the Rusians. The chronicle mentions also that the Rusian Princes took captives⁵⁸. It is noteworthy that for the first time Bolesław and Mieszko were an utterly independent party in talks with the Rusian Princes⁵⁹. In fact, the decisions on the retreat of the reinforcements of the most significant ally of the High Duke and the handover of the strongholds were made between Bolesław, Mieszko and Władysław's allies. Given the Władysław's plans against his brothers in 1145, the relinquishment of merely four strongholds in exchange for the withdrawal of the largest and basically the only major ally of the High Duke was not so much a concession on the part of Bolesław and Mieszko. But when in mid-August 1146 Iziaslav Mstislavich took the throne, summoned by the Kyiv residents, Władysław's most important ally in Rus was replaced by a ruler that had long been sympathetic towards the Junior Dukes.

There is no information in written sources to substantiate the claim that Iziaslav entered into an alliance with Bolesław the Curly, who, having banished his brother, took power in Kraków. That is nevertheless almost certain, if we consider that the Rusian Princes lent their assistance to the High Duke of Poland as early as 1147 during his Prussian military campaign. The alliance of the High Dukes continued notwithstanding the change of rulers⁶⁰. More powerful following Conrad III's withdrawal from Poland and encouraged by additional support from the Saxon Margraves, the High Duke turned naturally toward the eastern borders of his district.

Conflicts regarding the right of succession to the Kievan throne persisted. As early as 1149, having been dethroned by Iurii Dolgorukii, Iziaslav requested the endorsement of the Polish Dukes⁶¹. Bolesław and Henryk set out on an expedition, while Mieszko remained in the country to defend its

⁵⁸ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 318, that Bolesław surrendered Wizna is mentioned also in *Лаврентьевская летопись* [in:] *Полное собрание русских летописей*, Том первый, Москва 1962, (henceforth referred to: as *Latopis iawrientiewski*), column 312; more on the issue see M. Biniaś-Szkopek, *Bolesław IV Kędzierzawy*, pp 294–300, and the comprehensive bibliography on the issue cited therein.

⁵⁹ R. Grodecki, *Dzieje Polski średniowiecznej*, vol. I, until 1333, Kraków 1995, p 163; S.M. Kuczyński, *Stosunki polsko-ruskie*, p 25.

⁶⁰ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 357.

⁶¹ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 384. For a struggle for a Kievan throne between 1146 and 1149 and the reasons behind Iziaslav's disempowerment see *ibid*, column 328–383.

borders against the Prussians⁶². A major expedition, it was reinforced by the troops sent by the Hungarian king, Iziaslav's brother in law. The army met at Volodymyr and therefrom set off for Lutsk. During his stay, Bolesław the Curly is believed to have knighted a large number of boyar sons⁶³. According to B. Włodarski, this is a mark that the Rusian Princes held the Polish Duke in high esteem⁶⁴. This hypothesis is further corroborated by the fact that the Polish Duke was appointed as a mediator in the negotiations between Iziaslav and Jurii, which concluded in the treaty between the Rusian Princes, whereby Jurii was acknowledged as the Grand Duke of Kiev and Iziaslav was to rule in the Principality of Vladimir. The peace talks were rushed, inter alia, in view of the information about a Prussian invasion approaching Bolesław's principality⁶⁵. The issue of succession to the Kievan throne remained nevertheless unresolved. It is believed that some 'guests' participated in the on-going struggle, hypothetically identified by B. Włodarski as knights left behind Bolesław in 1149⁶⁶. *The Kiev chronicle* is silent on further Polish support for Iziaslav, whose position was under constant threat from his opponents. On the other hand, while recounting the expedition of the Kievan Prince to the Principality of Halych, *The Laurentian Codex* notices the failure of the Poles to come for help, as they were allegedly requested⁶⁷. Considering a small number of extant sources, this information is hardly verifiable. However, the silence of the typically extremely informative *Kiev chronicle* about the possible request from Iziaslav addressed to the Polish Dukes coupled with the lack of any foreign threat in 1152 (to the best of our knowledge), raises doubts about the reliability of the information⁶⁸. In any case, after the continuing struggle, Iziaslav was eventually restored to the throne.

With a view to strengthening the Polish-Rusian alliance, the widowed Mieszko the Old married Eudoxia, the daughter of Iziaslav⁶⁹. The alliance

⁶² *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 385.

⁶³ *Ibid*, column 386.

⁶⁴ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 359.

⁶⁵ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 388.

⁶⁶ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 360.

⁶⁷ *Latopis lawrentiewski*, column 336.

⁶⁸ B. Włodarski agrees with that opinion, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 360, footnote 66.

⁶⁹ The date of the wedding is placed at 1151–1154, cf. K. Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych*, pp 240–242; M. Bartnicki, *Władca i poddani*, pp. 247–248.

did not last long, and after the death of Iziaslav, the struggle for the throne of Kiev broke again in Rus. Not much can be said about the Polish-Russian relations at that time, as the chronicles recorded primarily infighting of the Russian Princes, to the neglect of the contacts with Poland. B. Włodarski has deduced that Bolesław the Curly made a diplomatic intervention on behalf of his brother-in-law Mstislav, when the latter's position was threatened by the invasion of Yaroslav Osmomysl, the Prince of Halych⁷⁰. S.M. Kuczyński has shown that between 1153 and 1157, Odon, the son of Mieszko III, was married to the daughter of that Prince, most probably Viacheslava; the marriage was supposed to cement the alliance⁷¹. An interesting piece of information about the Polish-Russian contacts is contained in one of the above-mentioned epistles written by Frederick Barbarossa to Wibald, the abbot. Among the Bolesław's henchmen, he enumerated Russian troops⁷², further mentioned in the history of the Emperor⁷³. As B. Włodarski rightfully noted, the reinforcements could have been sent to the Polish Duke either by Mstislav or Yaroslav of Halych, because he was related to both of them⁷⁴. In 1158, Yaroslav asked Bolesław for his support on account of the then ruler of Kiev's refusal to return Yaroslav's cousin Ivan Berladnik. Next to the representatives of the King of Hungary, Iziaslav was supposedly approached by the envoys sent by the Polish Dukes. Yaroslav's request was finally granted⁷⁵. In the years to follow, Yaroslav supposedly obtained Bolesław's consent to form military units in the area of Poland for the sum of three thousand grzywnas⁷⁶. Circa 1168, Bolesław backed also his brother-in-law Mstislav⁷⁷, thereby opening for him the door to the throne of Kiev for a few months. I am inclined to date a marriage of a daughter of Bolesław the Curly of unknown name to Vasilko Yaropolkovic, the brother of Mstislav, to that period. In the following years, the former was helped by Leszek, the son

⁷⁰ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, pp 361ff.

⁷¹ S.M. Kuczyński, *Stosunki polsko-ruskie*, p 26, footnote 127, cf. the genealogical plate attached to the book, p 316.

⁷² *Fryderyk I cesarz donosi Wibaldowi o zwycięstwie*, p 22.

⁷³ Ottone et Ragewino, p 419.

⁷⁴ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, pp 361–362.

⁷⁵ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 489.

⁷⁶ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 496–497.

⁷⁷ *Latopis hipatiewski*, column 532–533.

of the High Duke of Poland⁷⁸. Soon Kiev lost its significance, a fact forcefully confirmed by its total destruction by Andrey Bogolyubsky in 1169⁷⁹. It seems that these events ended a certain period in the history of Polish-Russian relations, and Rus entered the phase of the deepest fragmentation. The alliance of two High Dukes was no longer possible.

Hampering a detailed portrait of mid-twelfth Poland poised between the East and West is the lack of sufficient sources. Nonetheless, the depicted international situation is most interesting.

This period saw actively pursued Russian policy, with the Polish side as the seemingly dominant party. In the early years of his reign following the expulsion of Władysław, Bolesław the Curly cooperated closely with the Prince of Kiev, just like his older brother. After the Kievan Prince's death, the Junior Dukes of Poland continued to maintain good relations with the Russian Princes to their mutual benefit. This gave rise to an exceptionally large number of marriages with the house of Rurik. Reluctant to maintain contacts with the Empire, the High Duke exhibited extreme activity in his eastern policy, as manifested in reinforcements he lent to the Russian Princes, the above-mentioned marriages, envoys he sent, new allies he sought or diplomatic missions in which he participated. By engaging in the Russian affairs, he assured peace on his eastern border and necessary military assistance during warfare.

On the other hand, a brief look at relations between mid-twelfth Poland and the West reveals that the rulers of the Empire feel obliged to intervene in Poland and to uphold there certain order and dependency. Nevertheless, having forced his older brother – apparently the Emperor's vassal – into exile, Bolesław the Curly introduced new rules into the relations. A meticulous analysis of sources has shown that the then ruler of Kraków fearlessly faced both a diplomatic dispute with the papacy, which ended in his obvious political victory, and an armed conflict with the Emperor. Until 1157, the self-proclaimed High Duke successfully stood up to two powers of medieval Western Europe, which had to admit that the Polish ruler had not fear of them. The situation changed fundamentally when the new

⁷⁸ Cf. the missing *Latopis połocki*, see W. Tatiszczew, *Istorija rossijskaja*, pp 127ff. For the above excerpt cf. A. Bielowski, [in:] *MPH*, vol. II, pp 397–398, footnote 1; M. Bartnicki, *Władca i poddani*, s. 245–247.

⁷⁹ B. Włodarski, *Sojusz dwóch seniorów*, p 363.

German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa unsuccessfully appealed for the restoration of the throne to Władysław and decided to lead his army against Poland. The 1157 expedition, which culminated in the homage at Krzyszkowo, had long been regarded as the fall of the Polish ruler. Nowadays, the perception of the events unfolding at Krzyszkowo has considerably changed in historiography. It turns out that the ceremony, humiliating for Bolesław at first glance, could have in fact been an elevation of the Prince, the Emperor's kiss actually showing the acceptance of Bolesław's rule in the Polish state. It seems that Bolesław gained more than he lost in 1157. Importantly, upon the new ruler's accession to the throne, the Empire-papacy relations changed, thereby altering the face of the West. Somewhat out of necessity, Bolesław got involved with the side advocated by the Emperor, and thus promulgated his obedience to successive antipopes. It seems that during the reign of Bolesław the Curly, Poland was cut off from the policy of the West as much as it was possible. Given that both the Emperor and the Pope called for the restoration of Władysław the Exile to the throne of Kraków, encounters with them brought no benefits to Bolesław. He, expectedly, endeavoured to avoid any further meetings with them at all costs: Bolesław was notorious for not making an appearance at the imperial court, and did not send the promised reinforcements. Legations were sent to the Emperor only when Poland faced a direct threat⁸⁰. Interestingly, it seems that Bolesław made huge political gains from his cautious policy. Owing to its powerful ruler, Poland was strong and did not have to worry about any of the powers of the West, or seek their support.

The mid-twelfth century was a very interesting period for Poland. It gradually became an organism made up of smaller principalities, often individually establishing their own relations with the East and the West. At the same time, however, it was still a strong state that successfully stood up to Western powers and easily forged alliances with its eastern neighbour, frequently playing a dominant role in the relations. Situated between the East and the West, the twelfth-century Poland was first and foremost an important country in Central and Eastern Europe and a major player in the unfolding political clashes. Depressed by internal conflicts, both medieval European powers remained somewhat powerless against the country located

⁸⁰ G. Labuda, *O stosunkach prawnopublicznych*, p 54 referred to the activity of Bolesław the Curly as 'the policy of mere obstruction'.

a little off the beaten track of their immediate interests, which ruler successfully applied a policy of avoiding open conflicts and – under threat – stood up to diplomatic interventions, and even direct imperial invasions.

Mid-twelfth-century Poland between East and West – conflicts, alliances, marriages

Mid-twelfth century was a unique period in the history of Poland. A powerful state, which successfully stood up to the western powers and easily forged alliances with its eastern neighbour, Poland was increasingly riven by internal conflicts. It is worth noting that poised between the East and the West, Poland was a major state in twelfth-century Europe. Throughout this period, both Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, depressed by internal conflicts, remained somewhat powerless against Poland, which successfully applied a policy of avoiding open conflicts and – under threat – stood up to diplomatic interventions, and even direct invasions. On the other hand, this specific period saw strong and fruitful alliances with Rus, continuously more weakened by internal conflicts. The Polish-Rusian coalitions were successfully reinforced by marriages.

Translated by: Agnieszka Tokarczuk