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In the Circle of Power: Friends of King Vladislav IV Vasa¹

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Any early modern ruler had to have devoted supporters. Most of them gathered around the king in order to obtain specific official and financial benefits, sometimes they had similar political views to the monarch. However, this issue looked a bit different in relation to Vladislav IV Vasa, who was considered by the nobility as a sympathetic and easy-going ruler (as opposed to his more secretive father, Sigismund III). Vladislav was a king who made friendships easily, and people close to him were very clearly at the centre of influence and thus political power. One of the main objectives of the article will be to indicate when and how the magnates established private contacts with Vasa. A separate issue discussed in the article will be categories related to the understanding of friendship as an element of privacy in the Old Polish era. Through an in-depth analysis of the letters and memoirs left by the elite of the Polish-Lithuanian state from the period, case studies of such royal friendships emerge, including the King's close relationships with Adam Kazanowski, Jan Stanisław Sapieha, Gerard Denhoff, Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł, Krzysztof Radziwiłł and several others.

¹ The article was made as a result of research conducted as part of SONATA 17 project titled 'Social and economic clientele of Jan Stanisław Sapieha. A study of the history of factions in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania' (project no. 2021/43/D/HS3/01419) financed by the National Science Centre in Kraków.

The rulers of pre-modern states, in order to govern efficiently, had to have devoted factions around them. Some supporters gathered in the court party because it gave them concrete and real benefits in the form of offices and land. That is, they wanted to gain influence, material goods and money. Some presented political opinions similar to those favoured by the court, while others had been associated with the dynasty ruling for generations and, as it were, traditionally supported their aspirations. Building a dedicated faction required a lot of involvement from early modern kings, especially in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the monarch was elected by a parliament, the Sejm. This had the effect that they could not build up their party in their youth while growing up in the court of their father the king, and so had to gain supporters during the interregnum that followed each monarch's death. In the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the exceptions here were the sons of the Polish king Sigismund III Vasa (r. 1587-1632), Vladislav Sigismund (from 1632, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania as Vladislav IV) and John Casimir (who would later succeed his brother as John II Casimir in 1648), who did have the opportunity to gain supporters at the royal court of their father. This article will analyse the life and rule of the elder of these brothers, Vladislav IV Vasa, who was considered by the nobility as a sympathetic and approachable ruler (in contrast to the secretive Sigismund III). He was a king who often made friendships and it was people close to him who were in the circles of power, and thus gained great political influence. In the context of the analysed issues, it will be important to indicate who, why and in what circumstances one could become a friend of the ruler. Were such people characterised by specific character traits or did they have to come from a specific noble circle? When were the circumstances in which Prince Vladislav Sigismund met his friends, and did they have to be approved by his father, Sigismund III?

These are just a few questions that should be answered when analysing the issue of privacy in the modern era.

Many people in the circle of Vladislav IV had a greater or lesser influence on the decisions made by the monarch. We could define some of them as friends of the king, and some acquired surprising political importance. Below, I will present profiles of selected representatives of the Polish-Lithuanian elite and indicate when they established friendly relations with Vasa, describing the most important moments of their relationships and how these developed.

This study analyses the correspondence exchanged between Vladislav Sigismund and his friends. Letters as direct sources describing the relationship between Vasa and the nobility are extremely valuable in the context of privacy, to which only the Prince's closest companions were admitted. In this context, it is necessary to mention correspondence by young Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha from the 1620s, an ideal example to indicate their relations.² A congruous sample of sources that directly testify the Prince's affairs with his immediate surroundings are his letters to the Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Duke of Birże.³ These materials written to both Lithuanian noblemen over the years show how the contacts between them and Vasa advanced. The journal of the Great Chancellor of Lithuania, Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, is exceptionally helpful in this aspect, as he was extremely observant regarding the characteristics of relations prevailing at the royal court amongst the nobility. In addition, this efficient politician was well versed in the political situation, meaning that the

² This correspondence is stored in both the Ossoliński National Institute in Wrocław (Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich), 2219/II [*hereafter* Oss.] and the Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow (Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności i Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie) [*hereafter* B.PAUPAN], 362.

³ Antoni Muchliński (ed.), *Listy Władysława IV do Krzysztofa Radziwiłła hetmana polnego W. X. Litewskiego pisane 1612-1632 z autografów Biblioteki Cesarskiej w Petersburgu* (Cracow, 1867).

diary he left behind is seen as seminal research material for historians dealing with the reign of the Vasas in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Within this source, we find Radziwiłł's remarks, extremely rich in private observations, about the contacts between Prince Vladislav Sigismund and the elites—both magnates and nobles—of the Polish-Lithuanian state.⁴ A similar role will be played by the memoirs left by the Great Chancellor of the Crown Jerzy Ossoliński. On its pages, the nobleman left numerous opinions in particular on the Prince's relationship with members of the noble Kazanowski family.⁵

The biggest problem in the correspondence analysis is the baroque language formulas used at the time, which can obscure emotions that are transmitted in private messages. It will be important in this case to analyse both channels of communication in terms of their formal characteristics (rhetoric, writing, language), as well as social and cultural context (the political game as an expression of socio-political system, personal relationships, for example: friendship, narrowly construed cultural codes). As a result, the correspondence can be treated as extremely rich in content transmission and provides a variety of research opportunities. Letters constitute a substitute for the sequel to a conversation that took place in a specific time and place. A letter served (and still serves), as a means of transferring and exchanging views, and through a careful analysis of its content, we will be able to see what the true intentions of its sender were.. The persuasive dimension of the correspondence makes the message an extremely capacious structure, and for the writer could perform a number of functions (transfer requests, apologies, gratitude, congratulations, but also orders, complaints, rebukes). Of course, the effectiveness of communication was conditioned by using skilfully selected and constructed enclosure language of the letter, which appears to be particularly strong in

⁴ Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, Vol. 1, Adam Przyboś and Roman Żelewski (eds) (Warsaw, 1980).

⁵ Jerzy Ossoliński, *Pamiętnik*, Jan Kolasa and Jarema Maciszewski (eds) (Wrocław, 2004).

traditional Polish correspondence.⁶ Therefore, as far as possible, it will be important to compare the relationships resulting from the content of the letters with the descriptions of contacts that were described in diary cards left by external observers.

It seems necessary at first to answer the question of what friendship is (in the context of privacy) and in what categories we should consider it. According to social psychology, friendship is the sharing of successes and failures in life, its features being trust, loyalty, kindness and honesty. It is also generally accepted that a friend is the 'other me', according to which we are friends with people that are similar (in terms of senses and physicality), and the very act of establishing friendship is related to the so-called first impression and frequency of contacts — the more often we meet a certain person, the more likely we will like them.⁷ At this point, it seems important to analyse the biographies of the magnates and Vladislav Sigismund in terms of the possibility of establishing first contact points between them, exploring their common interests, the possibility of spending time together and cooperation in the political arena. An important aspect will also be examining how friends presented 'higher' feelings towards each other, such as trust, kindness and honesty. Of course, this will be directly related to the issue of privacy, as distinct from friendship, to which only the closest people could be admitted. It seems that it will be appropriate to understand privacy in this context as sharing personal experiences, emotions, intimacy, which was possible, for example, through handwritten letters that were to be delivered directly to friends (meaning no

⁶ Marcelli Olma, 'Językowe ekwiwalenty gestów w korespondencji małżeńskiej Heleny Pawlikowskiej', *LingVaria*, 4, 1 (7), (2009), pp. 193-4; Aleksandra Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego wobec elekcji Władysława IV Wazy i Michała Korybuta Wiśniowieckiego* (Krakow, 2020), pp. 155-6; Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti, 'Letters and Letters Writing in Early Modern Culture: An Introduction', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 3 (2014), p. 24; Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity. Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark, 2005), pp. 22-28; Jakub Rogulski, 'Memory of Social Elites. What Should Not Be Forgotten: The Case of the Lithuanian Princes in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', *The Court Historian*, 22 (2017), pp. 189-210.

⁷ B. Wojciszke, *Psychologia społeczna* (Warsaw, 2011), p. 312.

one else had access to them). It will also be characteristic that friends try to take care of each other's well-being and security, including political or financial, which was extremely important if we are talking about the nobility. Certainly, privacy in this context will be seen in the opportunity for princes and noble favourites to spend time together, whether trying to settle political matters, but also resting and relaxing, for example during hunting or entertainment. An important element of privacy will also be staying in the ruler's personal space, including his chamber. This is the essence of closeness, because the conditions in which the prince was staying were available only to the closest and most trusted.⁸

An important issue to consider, however, is the question of where these points of contact that are usually identified in the seventeenth century as patron-client relationships transform into more private contacts, something that we can call friendship? Taking into account the hierarchical society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and intricate relations in social stratification, even amongst the nobility, it is very difficult to answer this question, and the analysis of source materials requires exceptional perceptiveness from the historian, but also objectivity in research. It is difficult to say when in the process of establishing a relationship, the patron's acts of courtesy or the wish to persuade a client to support political activities, or the client's desire to obtain purely measurable benefits from the relationship ends, and where a genuine desire to help due to feelings that bind both sides together, begins. Referring to Urszula Augustyniak's research, it can be concluded that

⁸ For this conceptualisation of 'friendship' in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, see: Urszula Augustyniak, 'O przyjaźni. Przyczynek do badań stosunków klientarnych', in Barbara Otwinowska, Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, Jerzy Kowalczyk and Adam Karpiński (eds) *Necessitas et ars. Studia staropolskie dedykowane Profesorowi Januszowi Pelcowi*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1993), p. 128; Aleksandra Jakóbczyk-Gola, 'Jan Zamoyski i Bernardo Morando przyjaźń i inspiracja', in Agnieszka Czechowicz and Małgorzata Trębska, *Przyjaźń w epoce staropolskiej* (Lublin, 2013), p. 139; and Tomasz Ślęczka, 'Amicitia et Mars. Staropolscy pamiętnikarze o przyjaźni podczas wojny', in Agnieszka Czechowicz and Małgorzata Trębska, *Przyjaźń w epoce staropolskiej*, p. 179.

relationships classified as ‘friendship’ between princes and nobles in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth existed as late as the first half of the seventeenth century. The subsequent progressively hierarchical elite society, and the political and economic dependence of the nobility on the magnates, became so strict that establishing closer relations was no longer possible.⁹

King Vladislav IV as a young man

Prince Vladislav Sigismund Vasa was born on 9 June 1589 in Łobzów, a village north of Krakow. He was the eldest son of the Polish and Swedish king Sigismund III (who formally ruled the latter only in the years 1592-1599, but retained the title until his death in 1632; whereas he ruled the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the years 1587–1632) and Archduchess Anna of Austria.¹⁰ From an early age, the Prince participated alongside his father in the most important state ceremonies and some governmental practices and decisions. In 1602, he took part in the oath-taking ceremonies to establish peace with Moscow with his father, and a few years later he was a guest at a feast on the occasion of the wedding of so-called tsar, Dmitri I (the ‘False Dmitri’) and his Polish consort, Marina Mniszech. At that time, Vladislav Sigismund was already perceived by the elites of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as the natural successor to his father. Over the years, he was prepared for the performance of the most important functions in the Polish-Lithuanian state, and the decision-makers of the Crown of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became so used to him that there was no protest against him sitting at his father’s side, even during senate councils

⁹ Augustyniak, *O przyjaźni. Przyczynek*, p. 128.

¹⁰ Władysław Czapliński, *Władysław IV i jego czasy* (Warsaw, 1972), p. 9.

(meetings of the king with senators, which were convened in the periods between sessions of the Sejm).¹¹

In adolescence, Vladislav Sigismund received his own household (from 1602), but little is known about its structures. On the orders of King Sigismund III, the castellan of Gdańsk, Michał Konarski, and the *starost* or administrator of Kokenhausen Zygmunt Kazanowski, were appointed to watch over him.¹² This was probably with the aim of preparing the Prince to take on a leadership role within the state, as well as developing certain personality traits necessary for a future king.¹³ To a large extent, it was persons coming from the circle of state and court officials who would eventually form the group that supported the Prince's efforts to obtain the throne, and became the basis of his court party. Those from amongst the Lithuanian magnate elite his early household indeed included Jan Stanisław Sapieha (marshal of the court of Lithuania from 1617 to 1621), Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł (Lithuanian pantler, or head of the royal food stores, from 1626 to 1630) and Stefan Pac (for several months of 1630 the Lithuanian court treasurer).¹⁴ Amongst the nobles of lesser wealth and status were Adam Kazanowski and Jerzy Ossoliński, both prominent later in the reign.

An important aspect concerning the prince's education, and also important in the context of this analysis, was his journey through the countries of Western Europe, to which he departed from Warsaw on 17 May 1624. Some of the people who accompanied Vladislav Sigismund at that time were in the future to remain in his closest circles, both political and private. The expedition was attended by, amongst others: Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł (his

¹¹ Henryk Wisner, *Władysław IV Waza* (Wrocław, 2009), p. 11.

¹² Stanisław Kobierzycki, *Historia Władysława, królewicza polskiego i szwedzkiego*, in Janusz Byliński and Włodzimierz Kaczorowski (eds) (Wrocław, 2015), p. 20.

¹³ Władysław Czapliński, *Na dworze króla Władysława* (Warsaw, 1959), pp. 55-6.

¹⁴ Henryk Lulewicz and Andrzej Rachuba (eds), *Urzednicy centralni i dostojnicy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI-XVIII wieku. Spisy* (Kórnik, 1994), nos 444, 1253, 1507.

preceptor), Stefan Pac, Łukasz Żółkiewski, Gerard Denhoff, Adam Kazanowski and Samuel Rylski. Interestingly, at first, Sigismund III asked Jan Stanisław Sapieha (then a friend of the Prince) to take the role of the guide of the expedition, but the latter excused himself from this obligation. During the trip, Vladislav Sigismund visited, among other places, Vienna, Bologna, Rome and many German cities. He also had meetings with European rulers: Emperor Ferdinand III, Bavarian rulers Wilhelm V and Maximilian, Pope Urban VIII, various Italian princes and the Infanta Isabella in Brussels. The prince returned to the country in May 1625.¹⁵

Vladislav IV Vasa was elected king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania on 18 November 1632. He held this position until his death on 20 May 1648. He was buried in Wawel Cathedral and his heart was placed in Vilnius Cathedral.¹⁶

Friendship from Youth: the Case of Jan Stanisław Sapieha

The first magnate that must be mentioned is Jan Stanisław Sapieha, born on 25 October 1589 in Mołodeczno (now Molodechno, Belarus). Six years older than Prince Vasa, he was the eldest son of the Grand Chancellor, and later Grand Hetman of Lithuania, Lew Sapieha, and his first wife, Dorota Zbaraska.¹⁷ The Sapieha family were one of the great magnate families

¹⁵ Adam Przyboś (ed.), *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy do krajów Europy Zachodniej w latach 1624–1625* (Kraków, 1977), p. 17; Wisner, *Władysław IV Waza*, p. 45; Czapliński, *Na dworze króla*, pp. 36-49; Władysław Czapliński, *Władysław IV i jego czasy* (Warsaw, 1972), pp. 69-74; Artur Śliwiński, *Król Władysław IV* (Warsaw, 1925), pp. 29-33. For more information about the European trip: Dariusz Wajs, 'Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy z lat 1624-1625. Próba systematyzacji celów podróży i ich realizacja', in Anna Łysiak-Łątkowska and Magdalena Nowak (eds), *Niezwykła podróż* (Gdańsk, 2021), pp. 203-15; Jacek Żukowski, 'Listy Władysława Wazy i inne nieznane źródła do jego europejskiej peregrynacji z archiwów szwedzkich i niemieckich', *Kronika Zamkowa*, 2, 68, (2015), pp. 59-121; Przemysław Deles, 'Polityczne uwarunkowania podróży królewicza Władysława Zygmunta Wazy po Europie', *Kronika Zamkowa*, 2, 42, (2001), pp. 87-106.

¹⁶ Czapliński, *Władysław IV i jego czasy*, p. 376.

¹⁷ Henryk Lulewicz, 'Sapieha Jan Stanisław', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 34, 5 (1992–1993), p. 624.

of the Grand Duchy, recognised as princes since 1572. After several years of education abroad, Jan Stanisław, most likely at the beginning of 1609, appeared at the royal court, where he became a servant of Sigismund III (in Polish 'pokojoy'), where he had the opportunity to establish closer contacts with the Prince. It is possible that they had the opportunity to meet earlier due to the frequent presence at the royal court of Lew Sapieha, who might have taken his son with him. Jan Stanisław also accompanied Sigismund III on an expedition to capture Smolensk from Muscovy in 1609, and apparently enjoyed the King's trust, on whose behalf he was then sent to various European princes and rulers in the years 1612–13. From 1613, he spent most of his time at the royal court in Krakow. As we have seen, he was asked to become the director of Vladislav Sigismund's travels in Western Europe, but he excused himself from this task, claiming that he had already visited those countries. This decision was probably more associated with the need for Sapieha to spend huge amounts of his own money for the journey. This position was instead taken by the later Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, representative of one of the most important and richest families in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a devoted supporter of Sigismund III Vasa. In 1617, Jan Stanisław hoped to participate in an expedition planned by the Polish prince to conquer the throne of Muscovy, promised to him during Russia's 'Time of Troubles'. His participation was ultimately prevented because he was appointed to the office of Marshal of the Court of Lithuania, and due to the duties associated with that post, was compelled to stay in the country. The crowning achievement of Sapieha's official career was the nomination to post of the Grand Marshal of Lithuania, which he received in November 1621. In both offices, Sapieha's candidacy was supported by the Prince himself.¹⁸

¹⁸ Lulewicz, *Sapieha Jan Stanisław*, pp. 624–6; Oss., 2219/II, fol. 24.

Regarding the above-mentioned important correspondence exchanged between Jan Stanisław Sapieha and Vladislav Sigismund Vasa, the first interesting fact that should be mentioned is the specific cipher that these young men used in their letters. It is worth emphasising that the most private and intimate content, not the entire message, of the correspondence was prepared using it. In one of the letters we find encrypted information about the Prince's thoughts related to his pursuits of sexual pleasure during the Moscow expedition. He even stated directly that war was not conducive to love. Yet he assured Jan Stanisław that, despite the difficulties, he tried to meet his needs in this aspect, complaining that winter was not the best time to indulge in bodily ecstasy. He also promised that he would inform his friend, now Marshal of the Court, about his further plans related to this otherwise very private matter.¹⁹

Referring to the cipher itself, it was not a generally used code that used a combination of numbers, but comprised instead various types of symbols resembling circles, triangles, crosses and other figures configured in different ways, for example by crossing out. Even in the eighteenth-century work of Kazimierz Kognowicki we find references to a specific code: 'And thus, separated from each other, the prince and his friend Sapieha decided, arranged, and invented a way of using familiar signs unknown to anyone, secret numbers to correspond between themselves. Such letters of the prince in secret, using signs known only to them, written or understood by no one else, are hidden in the Archive in Różany.'²⁰ The use of this

¹⁹ Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, July 1618, B.PAUPAN, 362, fol. 3. Artur Goszczyński, Szyfrowana wiadomość Władysława Zygmunta Wazy do Jana Stanisława Sapiehy z lipca 1618 r. Wokół relacji prywatnych królewicza z przedstawicielami młodego pokolenia magnacko-szlacheckiej elity w czasie wyprawy moskiewskiej z lat 1617–1618, article provided by the author.

²⁰ 'A tak rozdzielając się z sobą Królewic z miłym sobie Sapiehą postanowili, ułożyli, i wynaleźli sposób poufałej w nieznanym nikomu znakach, czyli sekretnych między sobą cyfrach, korespondencji. Takowe listy Królewica pod tajemnicą, przez znaki im samym wiadome, pisane od nikogo wyrozumiane chowają się w Archiwum Różańskim'; Kazimierz Kognowicki, *Życia Sapiehów i listy od monarchów książąt i różnych*

type of combination cypher certainly suggests that the correspondents had confidential matters to share between themselves, known only to them, about issues unknown to others, which they did not want to disclose. The code has been decoded recently by Artur Goszczyński.²¹

In the aforementioned letters, the Prince raised very private issues. Those written from the period of the expedition to Moscow in 1617–18 seem particularly intimate. Their contents suggest that there were strong ties of friendship between the correspondents: Vladislav Sigismund complains about the court's decisions and asks his friend to remember him and to regret the situation in which he found himself. Through letters, the prince expressed sadness, regret, anger and fatigue, which he could reveal only to a very close person, because he could not allow himself to express such emotions in correspondence to a person whom he did not trust. The young Vasa shared his failures and problems with Jan Stanisław.²² It is worth quoting at least a few fragments of these letters. At the end of 1618, the prince wrote to Sapieha: 'I believe that Your Grace misses me at court, but I am also here without Your Grace [longing], for *non habeo Dominium* you do not have a sincere friend here, but I do not want to spend time *lamentam*'.²³ Another letter from Vladislav Sigismund, this time written in 1619 from Smolensk, seems interesting. He complains that he had recently received only one or two letters from Jan Stanisław: 'I cannot see that until then only one or two letters has come

panujących do tychże pisane, vol. 5, *Życie Jana Stanisława Sapiehy, marszałka wielkiego litewskiego, starosty słonimskiego, sąłowskiego, błudnieńskiego, mścikowskiego*, no date and place, Oss., nr 2219/II, fols 23-4.

²¹ Goszczyński, *Szyfrowana wiadomość*, article provided by the author.

²² On the correspondence between Jan Stanisław Sapieha and Vladislav Sigismund Vasa: Aleksandra Ziober, 'Jan Stanisław Sapieha – przyjaciel i faworyt Władysława Wazy', in Stanisław Achremczyk and Jerzy Kiełbik (eds), *Między Barokiem i Oświeceniem. Parlamentaryzm* (Olsztyn, 2016), pp. 70-82.

²³ 'iż WMCi tęszno beze mnie u dworu wierzę, ale i mnie niemniej tu bez WMCi albowiem *non habeo Dominium* zgoła szczyrego przyjaciela niemasz, ale czasu *lamentam* bawić nie chcę WM'; BN, BOZ, 1220, Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, camp near Moscow, 1 November 1618, fol. 56v.

to me from you, aren't you angry about something at me, I don't feel [guilty for] anything, so please tell me what's going on in this.'²⁴ Vasa's letter to Sapieha of 20 July 1620 also has a special overtone: 'I did not want to omit these few words to haunt you and announce that I often remember you while hunting here, because I would like to rejoice it with you.'²⁵

Letters to Jan Stanisław, however, lost their former form in the 1630s, their character becoming more formal, and the documents not handwritten by the Prince as before. But it should be said that by this point Vladislav IV had become king, so could not spend time personally editing letters that were already prepared by the royal chancellery. The most important thing in the context of established relationships and the change that had taken place here is that Vasa no longer shares private problems in the pages of the correspondence, but only reports on the most important issues relating to the functioning of the country. He also does not use phrases that could suggest any particularly close ties with Sapieha.²⁶ What could have resulted in the monarch's change of attitude towards his old friend? There may be several reasons, though only one is known for certain. At the end of the 1620s, certain peers of Jan Stanisław Sapieha noticed strange behaviour in the Marshal. For example, it was noted in the diary of the Great Chancellor of Lithuania Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł that Sapieha

²⁴ 'Widziwić się nie mogę, iż do tego czasu jeno dwa albo jeden list doszedł mię od WMCi, czy nie frasujesz się o co na mnie, ja się w niczym nie czuję, przeto proszę oznajmić mi co się w tym dzieje'; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, Smolensk, 16 February 1619, National Library of Poland (Biblioteka Narodowa) [*hereafter* BN], The Library of the Zamoyski Estate (Biblioteka Orydancji Zamoyskich) [*hereafter* BOZ], 1220, fol. 56.

²⁵ 'Nie chciałem zaniechać tę kilka słów Waszmości nawiedzić i oznajmić, iż tu na łowach będąc często ja na Waszmość wspominał, gdyż życzyłbym się z Waszmością cieszyć'; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, Sokolec 20 July 1620, Oss., rkps 2219/II, fol. 77.

²⁶ Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, Błóń 7 December 1634, Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені В. Стефаника [*hereafter* LNNBU], fond 103, Teki Prochaski, teka 156, vol. VI, no 18, fol. 19-19v; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, Warsaw 28 July 1634, LNNBU, fond 103, Teki Prochaski, teka 156, vol. VI, nr 18, nr 14, fol. 14.

was 'sick in his mind', which suggests a mental illness.²⁷ It is worth emphasizing at this point that this was not a malicious opinion, but rather an objective description of the situation. Besides, information about Jan Stanisław's poor health had been spread around the country for many years. In 1628–29, Sapieha travelled to Bohemia and Italy to improve his health, with little effect. In 1631 he burned at the stake in Nowogrodek the noblewoman Raina Hromyczyna, whom he accused of casting spells on him, and this allegedly caused him mental illness.²⁸ The magnate's condition continued to deteriorate, most likely reaching its apogee after the death of his second wife, Anna née Chodkiewicz, in 1633.²⁹

In the monarch's behaviour, however, we can see some remnants of the affectionate relationship that once connected him with Sapieha, as related by Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł: 'About four o'clock the king arrived in the suburbs, preceded by Marshal Sapieha, who was a bit sick in his mind, splashed with mud when a horse had stumbled, and led a messy conversation with the King who, out of compassion, pretended not to notice anything.'³⁰ Radziwiłł also describes another situation related to the occupation by Sapieha of an inn during a meeting of the Parliament, which belonged to the Bishop of Vilnius, Abraham Woyna. The latter complained to the King, and the monarch decided to talk to the Marshal about it; however, fearing for his own life, remembering the attack by Piekarski³¹ on

²⁷ Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, vol. 1, Adam Przyboś and Roman Żelewski (eds) (Warsaw, 1980), p. 311.

²⁸ Lulewicz, *Sapieha Jan Stanisław*, p. 627.

²⁹ Lulewicz, *Sapieha Jan Stanisław*, p. 627.

³⁰ 'Około czwartej król przybył na przedmieście, poprzedzany przez marszałka Sapiehę, który trochę chory na umyśle, przy potknięciu konia zbryzgany błotem, prowadził z udającym, że niczego nie spostrzega, i współczującym królem nieskładną rozmowę'; Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 311.

³¹ The attempt on the life of Sigismund III Vasa took place on November 15, 1620 in Warsaw. Michał Piekarski, struggling with mental problems, attacked the King with an ice ax and struck two blows. However, the ruler was defended by his entourage. Piekarski was sentenced to death by the Parliament court; Piotr Lewandowski, *Zabić króla! Zamach Michała Piekarskiego na Zygmunta III Wazę* (Warsaw, 2012), pp. 27-36.

Sigismund III, he asked several people to be present at the audience. The conversation brought results, and 'having calmed down the sick mind with words, he persuaded Sapieha to return the Bishop's house'.³² Until the end of his life, Sapieha trusted Vladislav Sigismund and was a loyal servant of the court.

The relationship that arose between Vladislav IV and Jan Stanisław Sapieha can certainly be defined as a friendship. Looking at the above-mentioned anecdotes, the principles of qualifying this interpersonal relationship as friendship, defined by social psychology, were met. So there was trust, interest in the private life of the other person, similar interests — military or hunting — sharing of happiness, failure and emotions, high frequency of contact — in person and by correspondence — and longing or willingness to spend free time together. Jan Stanisław was also certainly a supporter and favourite of the Prince, who consulted with him on most of the matters related to the assemblies of Lithuanian provinces and supported his efforts to serve in royal offices and other positions of dignity. Their friendship, however, most likely had to end at the end of the 1620s, probably due to the mental illness that affected the Lithuanian marshal. This could be related to the perception of a mentally ill person as possessed by spirits. Regardless, any deviations from the norms of conduct were treated as dangerous and were not accepted or tolerated. The desire to eliminate such people from the public sphere was also common, which in the case of a wealthy and influential nobleman could not be fully afforded. It seems that for these reasons, in order not to lose his own authority, the Prince tried to limit contacts with Jan Stanisław.³³

³² 'Uspokoiwszy słowy chory umysł, skłonił [Jana Stanisława] Sapiehę, do zwrotu biskupiej kamienicy'; Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 418.

³³ Anna Grzywa, 'Jak powstało napiętnowanie i błędne rozumienie chorób psychicznych?', *Psychiatria*, 18, 4 (2018), pp. 212-17; Tomasz Wiślicz, 'Dziwne, przypadkowe, nadzwyczajne. Zbiory miraculów z XVII i XVIII wieku jako źródło do badań kulturowych', in Iwona M. Dacka-Górzyńska and Joanna Partyka (eds), *Staropolska literatura dewocyjna. Gatunki, tematy, funkcje* (Warsaw, 2015), p. 225.

It seems that Vasa had kindly relations with the entire Sapieha family, and his rule was generally characterised by good contacts with representatives of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This may be evidenced by the fact that during the interregnum, Kazimierz Leon Sapieha (Jan Stanisław's younger brother) was included in his legation to the deputies gathered at election Parliament, and Vladislav Sigismund himself also maintained close contacts with Lew Sapieha.³⁴ However, it is difficult to say whether they were political contacts or close, private relations between them. The very fact of frequenting the company of three Sapiehas may prove the existence of friendly relations (and is analogous to with the Kazanowski family, as discussed below). With time, however, this had to change, a state of affairs which certainly influenced by the death of Lew in 1633 and two years later that of Jan Stanisław. Despite the fact that Kazimierz Leon was probably the most powerful magnate in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, if not the entire Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Vladislav Sigismund, after being elected king, did not grant him too much favour and trust; however, he had to take him into account due to his strong political position.³⁵

The King's Greatest Friend: Adam Kazanowski and his family

Adam Kazanowski was the son of a tutor of Prince Vladislav Sigismund, Zygmunt, and from an early age he lived in the vicinity of the Vasa prince. During this time, a friendship developed between them that lasted until death of the King, and thanks to the intercession of his royal friend and patron he managed to accumulate a considerable fortune.³⁶ It should be emphasised, however, that it was Adam Kazanowski's father who played an enormous role, as the prince's teacher in the art of war, and at the same time an advisor, earning his trust and

³⁴ Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego*, p. 107.

³⁵ Andrzej Rachuba, 'Sapieha Kazimierz Leon', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 35, 1 (1994), p. 31-33.

³⁶ Czaplński, *Na dworze Władysława IV*, p. 217; Wisner, *Władysław IV Waza*, p. 9.

gained enormous influence. This later translated into the position of his sons. While the relationship with the teacher could also be considered intimate, it should rather be treated in the context of a mentor's contact with a pupil.³⁷

Initially, Adam's older brother Stanisław was favoured by the Prince, but lost that sympathy during the expedition to Moscow in 1617–18. Sigismund III was aware of the intimacy between the young men and felt sure that the Kazanowski family had a negative influence on his son. Therefore, he tried to break these contacts, which met with fierce resistance from the young prince.³⁸ A situation which illustrates this took place during the expedition to Moscow, during which the Kazanowski brothers wanted to remove Konstanty Plichta from commanding the army (he was temporarily standing in for the Grand Hetman of Lithuania, Jan Karol Chodkiewicz), and replace him with a relative, Marcin Kazanowski. In connection with the whole conflict, there was even a skirmish between the noble units. However, the King learned about the situation quickly and somewhat offended by the behavior of the Kazanowski family, ordered their removal from Vladislav Sigismund's entourage. Confused by the whole situation they turned to the prince with a request to intervene. Ultimately, Vladislav Sigismund decided to go to Ujazdów under the pretext of wanting to meet with his father. The young Vasa tried to protect his friends, though at the very sight of Zygmunt Kazanowski, the King assumed a prejudiced attitude, and when Kazanowski wanted to greet him, 'he pulled back and his face turned away'. The Prince had to solicit many people at court so that his father's order could be revoked. Ultimately, the King did agree that the Kazanowski family could continue their journey with his son.³⁹

³⁷ Adam Przyboś, 'Kazanowski Zygmunt', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 12, 3 (1966–1967), p. 259.

³⁸ Przyboś, *Kazanowski Adam*, 251.

³⁹ Ossoliński, *Pamiętnik*, pp. 54-6; Czapliński, *Władysław IV i jego czasy*, pp. 40-41; Goszczyński, *Szyfrowana wiadomość Władysława Zygmunta*.

However, it was not only Adam who earned the friendship of Vladislav Sigismund, and it is worth mentioning here another representative of the Kazanowski family – the eldest son of the Starost of Kokenhausen. Stanisław was to have a particularly strong position amongst the young Vasa's entourage, which impressed the rest of the nobility, although it did not arouse general sympathy. Contrarily, he was considered a capricious person, not representing higher ambitions and loving glamour. Despite this, Kazanowski showed great loyalty to the prince, probably realising that only he could guarantee him a prosperous life. Their contacts intensified additionally during the expedition to Moscow, and Prince Vasa even negotiated with his father that Kazanowski would share a room with him during the trip.⁴⁰ Jerzy Ossoliński wrote about this situation: '[...] Stanisław Kazanowski, son of the starost of Kokenhaus, in whom the prince had long been very fond, on this occasion transferred him to the bedroom'.⁴¹ During the journey, when stopping at the bishop's palace in Lutsk, Vladislav Sigismund allowed only Kazanowski and the previously mentioned Ossoliński to enter his room. However, rumours were raised by the location of the chamber, from which it was very easy to sneak out of the building. Some claimed that the prince indulged in debauchery with the accompanying youth. When Ossoliński found out about it, he decided not to meet in private with the prince and Kazanowski, which offended Vasa. Kazanowski decided to use this fact to remove his rival. It was mainly his actions that led to the removal of Ossoliński from the group of Vladislav Sigismund's closest associates.⁴² The intimacy between Stanisław and the Prince was even commented on quite bluntly by Jan

⁴⁰ Ludwik Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1974), p. 11; Goszczyński, *Szyfrowana wiadomość Władysława Zygmunta*.

⁴¹ '[...] Stanisław Kazanowski, syn starosty kokenhauskiego, w którym iż królewic z dawna miał wielkie upodobanie, za tą okazyją przeniósł do łożnicy swojej'; Ossoliński, *Pamiętnik*, p. 46.

⁴² 'Królewicz przyjaciela swego w czasie tej plugawej choroby sam pilnował, po całych dniach i nocach przy nim siedział w nieznośnym fetorze, za zdrowie jego do Loretu wota posyłał, i w szarej sukni zarówno z nim samym chodził'; Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, p. 12.

Karol Chodkiewicz, accusing him of far more: 'only now do I see what everyone tells me, that the prince and his lover drink vodka'.⁴³

However, unexpectedly, Stanisław Kazanowski lost the prince's favour, which was probably caused by an illness of syphilis in the fall of 1618. It became so severe that many doubted that the nobleman could be healed. Initially, Vladislav Sigismund was concerned about his friend's fate and spent a lot of time at his bedside, watching over his condition: 'During this filthy illness, the prince watched over his friend himself, sat with him all day and night in an unbearable stench, sent votive offerings to Loretto for his health, and walked with him in a grey outfit.'⁴⁴

At that time, Zygmunt Kazanowski asked his eldest son to put his younger brother Adam in his place. This idea, however, did not end successfully, because the Prince at that time hated the younger brother. Finally, Stanisław recovered, but was nevertheless removed from his surroundings by Vasa, probably due to clear signs of the venereal disease. After some time, the Prince became convinced to accept into his circle the youngest Kazanowski son.⁴⁵ Stanisław's exclusion bears similarities to the relationship between the Prince and Jan Stanisław Sapieha. Both of them, due to physical and mental difficulties, were pushed away by the Prince, which may indicate the insincerity of his feelings towards his companions. However, it should be remembered that the Prince's official role, functioning in a public space and always conscious of the possibility of taking the throne in near future, required many sacrifices of him, including those relating to his private life. The Vasa prince and heir

⁴³ 'Dopiero teraz widzę co mi wszyscy powiadają, że królewicz z kochankiem swoim gorzałkę popija'; quote from Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, p. 22.

⁴⁵ Ossoliński, *Pamiętnik*, pp. 48-83; Artur Goszczyński, Szyfrowana wiadomość Władysława Zygmunta.

could not afford to be among people who could negatively affect how he was perceived by the elites of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

At this point the Prince's close connection to Stanislaw was ending, and his affections were shifting to the younger brother, Adam. Nobleman began his career as a courtier of Vladislav Sigismund, and he received his first court offices immediately after the Prince's coronation as Vladislav IV in 1632. In quick succession, he received such positions as the Crown Steward (1633), the Crown Pantler (1633), and the Crown Court Chamberlain (1634). Later, in 1637, he was appointed to the office of Castellan of Sandomierz, which gave him a seat in the Senate. He achieved his highest office in 1642 when he was appointed Crown Marshal of the Court.⁴⁶ Kazanowski received all these positions from Vladislav IV. Many contemporaries considered him the main confidant of the ruler and a devoted friend, as well as the 'grey eminence' at the royal court. He was also to have enormous influence in the distribution of goods and offices by the new king, which made him the most influential nobleman in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For his faithfulness, Vladislav IV repaid him not only with offices, but also with lucrative estates, which contributed to the growth of Kazanowski's fortune.⁴⁷ Recently, Stanisław Kobierzycki has written about the intimate relations between the King and Kazanowski: 'He [Kazanowski] dealt with court matters well and was characterised by exemplary obedience — he followed the Prince's orders, flattering him in words and deeds, carefully observing his interests, character and disposition to satisfy

⁴⁶ Antoni Gąsiorowski (ed.), *Urzednicy centralni i nadworni Polski XIV–XVIII wieku. Spisy* (Kórnik, 1992), nos 461, 710, 825, 974; Antoni Gąsiorowski (ed.), *Urzednicy województwa sandomierskiego XVI–XVIII wieku. Spisy* (Kórnik, 1993), no 640; Marcin Broniarczyk, 'Adama Kazanowskiego, marszałka koronnego, lata młodzięcze i peregrynacje', *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 54 (2017), p. 11.

⁴⁷ Broniarczyk, 'Adama Kaznowskiego', p.12.

them well. He winning the favour of the prince [...]. He had full power over Vladislav IV's affairs for a long time and received plenty in return.'⁴⁸

Bystanders also described Adam Kazanowski's close relationship with the King. We find numerous mentions in the diary of Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, who wrote that the magnate was 'the King's favourite'.⁴⁹ Describing the situation in 1634, when the position of starost of Solec was vacant, the diarist mentions various candidates for the office. Jerzy Ossoliński, Adam Kazanowski, and even the King's brother, Prince Aleksander, attempted to obtain the post and the monarch could not decide to whom to offer it: 'The King was attracted either by brotherly blood, or by a very passionate feeling towards the other candidates, causing a delay in the decision. In the end, love for Kazanowski, who received this award, won out'.⁵⁰ Thus, it seems that Vladislav IV's feelings for Kazanowski were stronger than any other relationship he had managed to establish, and he tried to reward his friend at every turn. This is also seen a few years earlier, in 1631, when, despite the numerous debts that the Prince had, Kazanowski nevertheless received more than half of the 15,000 *złoty*s that were supposed to flow into the Vasa prince's coffer.⁵¹ Again, Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł expressed his opinion on this relationship in 1634: 'The King was always kind to Kazanowski.'⁵² Interestingly, the King also entrusted his friend to the case of other magnates, including

⁴⁸ 'Dobrze zajmował się sprawami dworskimi i odznaczał się wzorowym posłuszeństwem — wykonywał rozkazy królewicza, schlebiał mu w słowach i czynach, uważnie obserwował jego zainteresowania, charakter i usposobienie, aby dobrze się do nich dopasować. Wślizgnął się w łaski królewicza [...]. Długo miał w sprawach Władysława pełnię władzy i opływał w dostatek'; Kobierzycki, *Historia Władysława*, pp. 404-05.

⁴⁹ Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 238.

⁵⁰ 'Pociągała króla już to krew braterska, już to bardzo gorący afekt względem pozostałych kandydatów, powodując zwłokę w decyzji. W końcu zwyciężyła miłość do Kazanowskiego, który otrzymał tę nagrodę'; Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 390.

⁵¹ Artur Goszczyński, 'Przybytek Pana Adama, czyli o krótkiej świetności pałacu Kazanowskich w Warszawie', *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ. Nauki Społeczne*, 9, 2 (2014), p. 215.

⁵² Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 381.

Krzysztof Radziwiłł. In a letter from 1631, he asked the Lithuanian to take care of Kazanowski during his absence from the country and to believe everything he said, as he was his most trusted and 'kind servant'.⁵³

Krzysztof Radziwiłł: Genuine Friendship or a Political Game?

Krzysztof Radziwiłł, the Field Hetman of Lithuania, representative of an influential Lithuanian family, is considered one of Prince Vladislav Sigismund's main supporters in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Some (both his contemporaries and historians) considered him as a close friend of the Vasa prince, which, however, sometimes raises contradictory opinions, taking into account the confusion with the figure of the Prince and Radziwiłł's participation in the so-called Orléans Conspiracy of 1626-28, or his contacts with King Gustav II Adolf of Sweden during the interregnum of 1632.⁵⁴ However, no one has any doubts that Krzysztof Radziwiłł contributed significantly to the Prince's Vasa victory in the election contest.

⁵³ Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Tarczyn, 16 April 1631, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 61, p. 114.

⁵⁴ The so-called Orléans Conspiracy was an attempt to choose a foreign ruler, Gaston of France, Duke of Orléans, as king-in-waiting in the years leading up to the death of Sigismund III. Krzysztof Radziwiłł was heavily involved in the affair, and for this reason remained in the King's Sigismund III disfavour. Accusations against him came from the circle of his political enemy, Lew Sapieha, who gave the Vasa letters that had been delivered to him by his sons, Kazimierz Leon and Krzysztof Mikołaj, staying at the University in Louvain. These proved the guilt of Radziwiłł. According to Henryk Wisner, Radziwiłł did not really want to support Gaston in the contest for the throne, –giving as evidence the Radziwiłł family's connection with the Habsburgs, or the suspected religious intolerance of the Orléans candidate. Krzysztof Radziwiłł's numerous attempts to convince the King of his innocence came to nothing, and the King did not even want to accept an apology. After many attempts to regain favour, Radziwiłł managed to obtain permission to greet Sigismund III in 1629, for which the Field Hetman had to wait several hours alone in the room. See Henryk Wisner, *Zygmunt III Waza* (Wrocław-Warsaw-Cracow, 1991), pp. 195, 209-10; Czaplinski, *Na dworze króla Władysława*, pp. 51-2; Rachuba, *Sapieha Kazimierz Leon*, p. 31; Janusz Dorobisz, 'Biskup i książę. Jakub Zadzik i Krzysztof II Radziwiłł w elicie władzy pierwszych Wazów', in Ewa Dubas-Urwanowicz and Jerzy Urwanowicz, *Patron i dwór. Magnateria Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII wieku* (Warsaw, 2006), pp. 353-4. More details about the Orléans Conspiracy can be found in Urszula Augustyniak and Wojciech Sokołowski (eds), *'Spisek orleański' w latach 1626–1628* (Warsaw, 1990).

However, it is not entirely clear what relationship prevailed between them and whether we could call it friendship, as was the case with the previously discussed noblemen.⁵⁵ They certainly maintained close contacts before the interregnum of 1632, and even from the beginning of the 1620s.⁵⁶ In the period before the election, they met few times with each other, and conclusion from the conversation was reported to the King by the young Vasa prince and gained his approval. Among other things, it was decided that the Lithuanian Field Hetman will support the Prince's efforts during the upcoming election, which was expected due to the King's deteriorating health..⁵⁷

At this point, it is necessary to briefly describe the correspondence between Vladislav Sigismund and Radziwiłł from the second and third decades of the seventeenth century, in which the evolution of the relationship between them is perfectly visible. Initially, we are dealing with standard letters in which Vasa signs mainly as 'kind'.⁵⁸ With time, however, more personal information begins to appear in the last sentences of correspondence, as well as the Prince's concerns for Radziwiłł's current whereabouts and his activities: 'Therefore, we will ask that, due to your old desire for us, you do not neglect to inform us also of things beyond and about your success, which is the happiest thing we wish for'⁵⁹ or 'We have no doubt that you will want to declare your willingness to do so and send us frequent letters. And

⁵⁵ Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, p. 120.

⁵⁶ This was one of the reasons why the King forgave Radziwiłł shortly before his death on 5 April 1632: Henryk Wisner, 'Radziwiłł Krzysztof', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 30, 2 (1987), p. 279; Rachuba, *Sapieha Kazimierz Leon*, p. 31; Andrzej Rachuba, 'Sapieha Krzysztof Mikołaj', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 35, 1 (1994), p. 70.

⁵⁷ Wisner, *Zygmunt III Waza*, pp. 209-10; Henryk Wisner, 'Litwa i projekt reformy elekcji 1629-1631', *Przegląd Historyczny*, 62, 2 (1973), pp. 259-60; Wisner, *Radziwiłł Krzysztof*, p. 279.

⁵⁸ Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Warsaw, 22 March 1617, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 7, pp. 12-14.

⁵⁹ 'Ządamy tedy W M. abyś z dawnej ku nam chęci nie zaniedbywał nam też o rzeczach tamecznych i o powodzeniu swym, którego W M. jako najszczęśliwszego życzymy'; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Grodno, 28 August 1622, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 21, pp. 38-9.

we will not be lazy in giving back and writing back'.⁶⁰ Of course, these are not the only comments of this kind in Vasa's correspondence, and we can find them in every letter from the 1620s.

By 1631, it seems that Vladislav Sigismund already has great trust and friendship for Radziwiłł. During a trip to Prague, the Prince sent him a handwritten letter in which he informed him that he did not want to leave the country without saying goodbye: 'I did not want to leave, even for a short time, without speaking to my friend, I urgently and earnestly begged you to be such a friend to me during my absence, whose kindness and love I have never been disappointed in, in which the desire and love of yours for me I have experienced every time, and to your person and to your family, I will also give my willingness and kindness'.⁶¹ In these letters, we quite often find mentions of the need to meet in person and talk face-to-face, as well as the sadness of Vladislav Sigismund resulting from the lack of personal contact for a long time.⁶² This correspondence is similar to letters Vasa wrote to Jan Stanisław Sapieha, referring to the poor treatment of the prince in a military camp during his expedition to Moscow.⁶³ We see that Vladislav Sigismund used very comparable phrases in

⁶⁰ 'Nie wątpimy że W M. będziesz nam chciał chęć swoją w tym oświadczyć i z nami się listami częstemi zsyłać. A my w oddaniu wzajem chęci i odpisowaniu niezechcemy być leniwi'; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Grodno, 28 August 1622, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 21, pp. 38-9.

⁶¹ 'nie chciałem, lubo na krótki czas odjechać bez odezwania się WM przyjacielowi swemu, pilnie i gorąco prosić, abys WM podczas ten absencji mej był mi takim przyjacielem, na którego życzliwość i miłość nigdym się nie zawiódł, w czym doznana chęć i miłość WM przeciwko sobie każdego czasu, i osobie WM, i domowi WM. chęcią też moją i uprzejmością oddawać będę'; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Tarczyn, 16 April 1631, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 61, p. 114.

⁶² Among others: Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Grodno, 19 December 1622, in: Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, p. 47; Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, Grodno, 6 February 1623, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 27, p. 52.

⁶³ A letter written by the Prince himself: Vladislav Sigismund Vasa to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, camp near Nów, 16 September 1626, in Antoni Muchliński (ed.) *Listy Władysława IV*, no 36, pp. 72-3.

his letters to Jan Stanisław Sapieha as to Krzysztof Radziwiłł, so it can be concluded that the relations between him and the two Lithuanian noblemen were analogous.

At this point, it is worth quoting the situation from 1633, which perfectly illustrates the attitude of Vladislav IV towards Radziwiłł. In return for help during the interregnum, now that Sigismund III had died, the new king promised him the office of Voivode (governor) of Vilnius. However, a few months after the election, Vladislav IV handed over the vacant office to Janusz Skumin Tyszkiewicz, which caused a strong and decisive reaction from the Radziwiłł family, who eventually forced Tyszkiewicz to resign from the voivodeship. The monarch, who understood the situation relatively quickly, allegedly told his doctor that he had 'lost a friend' due to his overly hasty behaviour — at least this is the version of events mentioned in the journal of Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł.⁶⁴ The whole situation illustrates how complicated and ambiguous the mutual relations between Vladislav IV and the Lithuanian Field Hetman were. Nevertheless, throughout his reign, Krzysztof Radziwiłł received the most important offices, such as the Vilnius voivodeship and the office of Great Hetman of Lithuania. This could mean that, despite everything, Vladislav IV wanted to compensate Radziwiłł for the harm previously done to him.

Travel Partners: Friends from travels around Europe

It is worth mentioning at least briefly a few other representatives of the Polish-Lithuanian state elite who maintained good contacts with Prince Vladislav Sigismund Vasa. A group of nobles set off with him in his teenage years on a journey through the countries of Europe (1624–25). Among them were: the Great Chancellor of Lithuania Albrycht Stanisław

⁶⁴ Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik*, p. 317; Henryk Wisner, 'Litwa wobec elekcji Władysława Wazy', *Rocznik Białostocki*, 17 (1991), p. 23; Ziober, *Postawy elit Wielkiego Księstwa*, p. 120.

Radziwiłł (the expedition's preceptor), the Great Notary of Lithuania Stefan Pac, the Starost of Kałusz Łukasz Żółkiewski, Gerard Denhoff (supposedly a friend of Adam Kaznowski), the Castellan of Sandomierz and the Crown Marshal of the Court Samuel Rylski.⁶⁵ A short while later (20 December 1624), Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł joined the retinue in Rome.⁶⁶ Not all of them were of course among the Prince's friends, but some of them certainly were.

In this context, it is worth mentioning Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł (a relative of Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł), whose close contacts with the Prince were known of even by Sigismund III Vasa. Some believe that it was precisely because of this friendship that the king did not bestow the Lithuanian with honours, despite his great merits and sacrifices. He didn't want rumours to circulate in the state that Vladislav Sigismund was helping his friends in gaining important offices and property, and if we look at the examples above, that was indeed the case. Relations between Vasa and Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł worsened when the latter opposed the plans for a war with Turkey, which the monarch was particularly interested in. In April 1646, together with Jakub Sobieski, Radziwiłł tried to pressure Vladislav IV to withdraw from these plans. Thereafter, both nobles fell into royal disgrace. Once again, this shows that Vasa's friendship was not unconditional; despite everything, it was possible to fall out of favour. It also follows that for the king his political plans were also the most important, and with age he began to approach his friendships more rationally than it was, for example, during the trip to Moscow in earlier decades. Ultimately, Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł did remain close to the King until his death.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Adam Przyboś, 'Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy do Europy Zachodniej w 1624 i 1625 r.', *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny. Prace Historyczne*, 8, 59 (1977), pp. 95-6.

⁶⁶ Jan Jaroszuk, 'Radziwiłł Aleksander Ludwik', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 30, 1 (1987), p. 151.

⁶⁷ Jaroszuk, Radziwiłł Aleksander Ludwik, pp. 151-3.

The young Vasa prince also had good contacts with Stefan Pac, who, as mentioned above, participated with him on the trip around Europe, and after this journey, the Lithuanian nobleman left a diary in which he reminisces about the numerous adventures he had alongside Vladislav Sigismund.⁶⁸ At that time, Pac was also a devoted supporter of Sigismund III and enjoyed great favour with him. After Vladislav IV was elected king, Pac's relations with the new monarch were favourable, and immediately after his coronation, he hosted him in Lithuania. However, their political plans were not always aligned, as exemplified by Pac's opposition to the King's plans to marry a Calvinist, Princess Elizabeth of the Palatinate, daughter of the exiled 'Winter King', Frederick of Bohemia, and niece of King Charles I of England.⁶⁹

One of the people in the above-mentioned retinue who had particular affection for the Prince was Gerard Denhoff, for whom the election of Vladislav IV as king opened the door to a great career.⁷⁰ He had accompanied the Prince also on the Moscow expedition in the years 1617–18 and there too had maintained very good relations with the Prince.⁷¹ During the interregnum in 1632, Vasa commissioned him for important missions: for example, immediately after taking the throne, he sent him to Copenhagen to meet with the Danish king Christian IV in order to establish contacts. Denhoff became the King's chief adviser on Baltic affairs, and from 1635 he became a member of the Royal Ships Commission. He also took part in plans to draw the Danish king into a war with Sweden. With time, Denhoff began to play a very important role at the royal court, and the monarch gave him more and more

⁶⁸ Przyboś, *Podróż królewicza Władysława Wazy*.

⁶⁹ Władysław Czapliński, 'Pac Stefan', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 24, 4 (1979), p. 748.

⁷⁰ Władysław Czapliński, 'Denhoff Gerard (1589–1648)', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 5, 2 (1939–1946), p. 109.

⁷¹ Czapliński, *Władysław IV i jego czasy*, p. 38.

offices (for example, the Malbork estate in 1636, six years later the Gdańsk Castellany, which secured him a place in the senate, and in 1643 the Voivodeship of Pomerania). Denhoff also negotiated with France regarding a new marriage for Vladislav IV after the death of his first wife Cecilia Renata in 1644. In gratitude, the King appointed him to the post of Marshal of the Court of the new queen, Louise-Marie (Ludwika Maria) Gonzaga. He died shortly after the King on 23 December 1648.⁷² It seems characteristic of Vasa's behavior that he rewarded his closest friends with numerous dignities. Denhoff is not the only example of a man whose strong personal connections with the ruler earned him a large fortune and enormous influence in the state. Certainly, Vasa trusted him immensely by commissioning him to perform important missions, which suggests that their relationship was close. More than any monarch-courtier relationship, this was trust based on personal connections and shared past experience, so we can rightly consider it a 'friendship'.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned noblemen can be considered friends, some closer, others more distant of King Vladislav IV. These relationships in most cases were established already in adolescence and sometimes stood the test of time and lasted until death. Of course, each of these friendships was different, some more or less intense, and some shorter or longer. Most of the Vasa prince's friends were of a similar age to him, which demonstrates the strength of the sociological theory about establishing close relationships. They also had similar interests and personalities. It is also characteristic that Vasa's friendships in his youth were very passionate, and that the Prince sometimes sacrificed his authority to maintain good relations with his friends, as was in the case with the Kazanowski family, when Vladislav Sigismund

⁷² Czapliński, 'Denhoff Gerard', pp. 109-10.

went against his father's will. However, in other situations, the Prince had to remove some friends from his immediate surroundings (Stanisław Kazanowski, Jan Stanisław Sapieha), despite the feelings he probably still had for them. As he got older, Vasa approached his friendships more rationally, and if one of his closest ones challenged his political plans, he lost favour, as seen in the example of Aleksander Ludwik Radziwiłł.

However, in all examples of these friends of Vladislav Sigismund, because of their relations with the Prince and later King, they obtained influential offices and lucrative economies, which may indicate that he wanted to care for the well-being of his loved ones by guaranteeing their financial stability. Certainly, their friendships with Vasa had a significant impact on their political achievements, probably the best example being Adam Kaznowski, who basically rose from a mid-rank nobleman into an influential official. Vladislav IV certainly inherited some of his friends from his father, as was the case with Stefan Pac, Gerard Denhoff or the Sapieha family. This is related to the fact that the sons of the most influential politicians of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of that period were sent to the royal court, an important stage in the education of the young nobility. This was the case with Jan Stanisław Sapieha and representatives of the Kazanowski family. It is also connected with the issue of the inheritance of clients, which was common in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the beginning of the seventeenth century. It is also worth mentioning that the circle of the King's friends were in contact with each other.⁷³

The friendships made by Vladislav IV also show how we should perceive 'privacy' in the past centuries. Certainly, privacy in this context can be seen in the opportunity to spend time together, whether trying to settle political matters, but also resting and relaxing, for example during hunting or entertainment. An interesting example in understanding privacy, to

⁷³ Czapliński, 'Pac Stefan', p. 748.

which only the closest ones had access, is the moment when, during the stay in Lutsk noted above, the Prince allowed only Kazanowski and Ossoliński to enter his chamber. This is the essence of closeness, because the conditions in which the Prince was staying were made available only to the closest and most trusted. Letters to Jan Stanisław Sapieha are also particularly interesting, wherein the Prince shares in detail the events of his life, pains and hardships, and uses a special code to encrypt certain information. Certainly, these sorts of emotion were only shared with close friends. That Vladislav IV Vasa made friendships was, of course, no exception among Polish rulers, but the relationships that he established should be considered exceptionally rich due to the particular disposition of this ruler, whom the nobility considered an easy-going and kind prince.

Biography

Aleksandra Ziober is an assistant professor at the Institute of History at the University of Wrocław. Her research focuses mainly on the issues related to party fights in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth mainly during free elections, political attitudes of nobility and means of exerting political and social influence (communication strategies) in 17th century. She was the head of two research projects financed by National Science Center in Cracow and over a dozen science and didactic scholarships (London, Würzburg, Sankt Petersburg, Minsk, Banska Bystrica, Madrid). In 2019, she received a scholarship from the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education for outstanding young scientists.