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The Issue of Military Requisitions in the Parliamentary Debate during the November Uprising of 1830–1831

Sprawa rekwizycji wojskowych w debacie parlamentarnej w okresie powstania listopadowego 1830–1831 roku

• Abstract •

The present analysis concerns military requisitions used during the second Polish national uprising in chronological order. The institution of military requisitions was usually caused by shortages in supplying the army with items essential, from its point of view, for carrying out military operations (foodstuffs, means of transport, equipment for soldiers). These shortages were compensated by legal or illegal seizures of private property. The civil and military authorities, if necessary, decided on the compulsory supply of the indicated products and items for the population by means of generally binding regulations. The author bases his discussion on materials from the legislative process and selected archival sources concerning the implementation of the requisitioning provisions of the insurgent parliament.

Keywords: parliament; wartime burdens; military administration; provisioning the army

• Abstrakt •

Niniejsza analiza dotyczy rekwizycji wojskowych stosowanych podczas drugiego w kolejności chronologicznej polskiego powstania narodowego. Instytucja rekwizycji wojskowych spowodowana była zazwyczaj brakami w zaopatrzeniu wojska w istotne z jego punktu widzenia przedmioty niezbędne do prowadzenia militarnych działań operacyjnych (żywność, środki transportu, środki oporządzenia żołnierza). Uzupełnianie tych braków odbywało się drogą legalnego bądź nielegalnego zaboru własności prywatnej. Władze cywilne i wojskowe w razie potrzeby stanowiły w drodze przepisów powszechnie obowiązujących o przymusowych dostawach wskazanych produktów i przedmiotów przez ludność. Autor swoje rozważania przeprowadza w oparciu o materiały pochodzące z procesu legislacyjnego i wybrane źródła archiwalne dotyczące wprowadzania w życie postanowień rekwizycyjnych parlamentu powstańczego.

Słowa kluczowe: parlament; obciążenia wojenne; administracja wojskowa; zaopatrzenie wojska

Introduction

The issues which are the subject of the present analysis are related to the normative aspects of provisioning the army. The requisitions of products and items necessary for the army to conduct military operations and maintain efficiency of effective operational activity during military conflicts took place both before the outbreak of the November Uprising and later (Przygodzki, 2001, pp. 125–140; Konarski, 2020, pp. 8–37, 2021, pp. 81–101). They are an inseparable element of the wartime economy understood as a way of acquiring resources necessary for military operations.

The present analysis primarily addresses the normative aspects related to requisitions. This means that the primary research aim is to analyse the legislative process and its results in the form of specific legal solutions in the field of requisitions. The main focus of the analysis will therefore be the parliamentary debates, which primarily revolved around draft resolutions of the Sejm concerning the requisitioning of foodstuffs, horses, church silver (liturgical items) and the requisitioning of oxen. However, before I move on to a proper analysis, it is necessary to present issues related to the organisation and powers of the insurgent authorities with regard to the provisioning of the army. The research material consists mainly of the protocols of parliamentary sessions, selected archival sources and, to a limited extent, the literature on the subject.

The organisation and powers of the insurgent authorities as regards requisitions

The Sejm of the Kingdom of Poland during the November Uprising (which broke out on the night of November 29/30, 1830), also referred to as the Insurrectionary Sejm, after its sessions were convened by the Provisional Government (Gołba, 1971, pp. 44–47), began its sittings on December 18, 1830.¹ Its continuous sessions,² as the supreme authority of the Kingdom of Poland (Mażewski, 2014, pp. 277–293), began on January 19, 1831. From that moment on, the most important political, administrative and economic decisions concerning the Kingdom of Poland, as well

¹ The session of the Senate took place on the same day an hour earlier, at 5 p.m. As early as the second session – on December 20 – the senators passed a resolution to donate their private substantial sums of money and in-kind resources as donations to the Uprising, see: Askenazy, 1909, pp. 6–7.

² The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, Central Authorities of the November Uprising [*Władze Centralne Powstania Listopadowego*] 1830–1831, fonds no. 200, file no. 64b, card 31–32 (henceforth cited as: CAHR, CANU).

as the military leadership of the November Uprising, were inextricably linked to the resolutions passed by the Sejm (Ziółek, 2007, pp. 5, 67–81).

During the November Uprising, the Executive Department of the Administrative Council,³ which in the initial period of the Uprising remained to be the principal State body as the insurgents' failed to establish their own centre of power, had the broadest competence to perform the task of supplying the army. Then, on December 4, 1830, the Executive Department resigned in favour of the Provisional Government (Ajnenkiel, 1989, p. 52). Apart from that, the Food Commission was established on December 3, 1830 (Gołba, 1971, p. 169), and then army food committees at voivodship councils (Mencel, 1962, pp. 114–115). These committees were to be composed of three trustworthy citizens, and the same committees were to be elected at the provincial level by the regional civic councils.⁴ They were to take care of the proper selection of warehousemen, payment of dues for deliveries, supervision of the quality of delivered products, and control of food dispensed from the warehouses.⁵

Simultaneously with the creation of the Food Commission, on the same day, the office of the Commissary General was established, who began to perform his role on December 7, 1830. His responsibilities included overseeing, with the help of subordinate officials, the provision of food for the army in the right quantity and quality and indicating the needs of the army and the best way to deliver food and forage from military warehouses (Eile, 1930, pp. 71–73). It should be remembered that the person performing the function of the Commissary General was at the same time a Government Commissioner to the Commander-in-Chief, dependent on the Government's orders and instructions, in the matter in which he was to communicate with the Commander-in-Chief.⁶

³ For more on the scope of the Administrative Council's activities in the period leading up to the November Uprising, see: Izdebski, 1978, pp. 70–126.

⁴ The State Archives in Lublin, The Commission of the Lublin Voivodship [*Komisja Województwa Lubelskiego*], fonds no. 115, file no. 517, cards 1–10 (henceforth cited as: SAL and CLV, respectively); SAL, CLV, file no. 564, cards 30–31; 34–39. See: *Źródła do dziejów wojny polsko-rosyjskiej 1830–1831*, Vol. 1: *From 30 November do 4 March 1831*. Published by Bronisław Pawłowski, Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne, Warszawa 1931, pp. 90–93 (henceforth cited as: ZDW).

⁵ SAL, CLV, file no. 517, cards 13–18.

⁶ At first, from December 5, 1830 onwards, the Supreme Command was in the hands of the Uprising's Dictator, General Józef Chłopicki. After his resignation on January 17, 1831, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces was chosen through deputies and senators by vote from among the candidates presented by generals and senior officers. For more on the genesis of the first dictatorship and its economic and social background, see: Rostocki, 1955, pp. 11–54; Tarczyński, 1980, pp. 335–352.

Unfortunately, already on January 10, as a result of numerous administrative acts of negligence, theft, economic carelessness and abuse of quartermasters and unit commanders, the office of the General Commissary was abolished, and its responsibilities were transferred to the Army Needs Commission, which was to establish warehouses, supply them and manage the supply of products to the army.⁷ This Commission was represented in the field by the Commissioners of Army Needs.⁸ As a result of the fact that it had acted honestly but inefficiently, this Commission was dissolved by order of the National Government on March 10 (Gołba, 1971, p. 170), and its responsibilities were again vested to the Commissary General, the office of which was vested in Count Aleksander Bniński.

It should be added that each division appointed a war commissioner.⁹ His task was to constantly supply the division's subunits with food, forage and firewood and other necessary products.¹⁰ In urgent cases, the war commissioners could use the measure of paid requisitions (Eile, 1930, p. 80).¹¹

Obviously, the first task of this new, unknown in peacetime,¹² apparatus of military administration aimed at supplying the army, was to create food warehouses.¹³ As Tadeusz Korzon stressed, "the most important department of military administration

⁷ See: ZDW 1, pp. 169–170; Tokarz, 1930, p. 115; Gołba, 1971, p. 169.

⁸ SAL, CLW file no. 530, cards 1–3. The activity of this official for General Józef Dwernicki's corps stationed near Zamość is analysed in more detail by Dariusz Taźbirek. This role was held by the former secretary of the economic section of the Commission of the Lublin Voivodeship, Ignacy Ścisłowski. Cf. Taźbirek, 2011, p. 97.

⁹ SAL, CLW, file no. 564, card 5.

¹⁰ See: ZDW 1, pp. 446–447.

¹¹ It is also important to emphasise the role of the square commandants (*komendanci placu*), whose tasks included providing food and comfortable accommodation for stationed and passing troops. In these matters, as well as in carrying out requisitions, the commandants cooperated with the municipal and regional authorities. They also supervised the food warehouses of the army's intendant's offices, ensuring the quality of incoming products and their proper distribution, as well as inspecting receipts. Security guards were used to protect the warehouses against theft, see: Ziółek, 1973, pp. 347–348. The security guards were divided into dismounted and horse guards. The organisation of these guards belonged to provincial Voivodeship Commissions. All those who refused to participate in the security guards were threatened with court martial, SAL, KWL, file no. 521, cards 11–12; SAL, KWL, file no. 526, card 7. Cf. Mencil, 1962, p. 108; Augustyniak, 2013, pp. 75–88.

¹² Before the outbreak of the Uprising, the Russian troops in the Kingdom of Poland were supplied by provisioning boards, which operated under four army corps. The creation of the provisioning units freed military units from the necessity of transporting provisions and forage by their own means. The supply of products for the army was passed on to the commissariat and the above-mentioned provisioning units, which operated at each corps (1 brigade consisting of 4 battalions), see: Kulik, 2019, pp. 154–155.

¹³ After the defeat of the Uprising, the Kingdom of Poland was part of the food district of the

was the active army's commissariat, which duly fulfilled its task" (Korzon, 1912, p. 405). The supply of troops during the November Uprising was based on a system of requisitioning and storage. This was done in such a way that people called *furażer* travelled around the villages to buy the necessary products, which were then sent to military warehouses supplying the entire army centrally (Eile, 1930, p. 121).¹⁴ Food and fodder from the warehouses were delivered to the army by units of the Corps of Trains (Sikorski, 1975, p. 503).¹⁵ It should be remembered, however, that there was a method of compulsory delivery of food and forage, whereby they were not handed over to the warehouses, but the troops were supplied on the spot, on their own, and as the need arose, by means of direct requisitioning, i.e., war seizure (Eile, 1930, pp. 130–132).

Requisitions of food and fodder

At the outset of the analysis of issues related to military requisitions during the November Uprising, attention should first be drawn to a resolution of the Senators' and Deputies' Chambers, known as the Law of February 7, 1831, which stated that in those parts of the country occupied or threatened by the enemy (Russians), the National Government was authorised to use all means to destroy roads, bridges, crossings, depots and buildings which would facilitate the enemy's advance or retreat. At the same time, the National Government was authorised to seize in such areas all supplies of food, property and equipment and to remove the population to places indicated for that purpose. In doing so, it was emphasised that at all times such action could not be restrained by any law in respect of property and personal liberty. In turn, any loss suffered by the inhabitants as a result of such action by the Government was to be compensated, and the manner of investigation and

Active Army. In each guberniya there were military warehouses where provisions for stationed troops were kept, see: Kulik, 2019, p. 155.

¹⁴ For more on the location of these warehouses, see: the National Archives in Kraków, The Archive and Cartographic Collection of General Józef Chłopiccki [*Archiwum i zbiór kartograficzny generała Józefa Chłopicckiego*], fonds no. 646, file no. 11, cards 11–12 (henceforth cited as: AChł).

¹⁵ The Corps of Trains, dedicated to the transportation of ammunition, food, and war materials, was created in 1822. The modern transport service was first established by decrees of Napoleon Bonaparte of March 26 and of April 6 and 9, 1809. These decrees established battalions of military transport trains, gradually replacing all other transport companies with them, see: Lechartier, 2013, pp. 66–76. Cf. ZDW 1, pp. 368–371. Let us remember, however, that during the Uprising the army used the paid *podvodas* provided to it at all times, SAL, KWL, file no. 540, all cards.

compensation was to be determined by a separate resolution.¹⁶ The above resolution was adopted unanimously after a short discussion and sent to the Senate. It was an extremely important first step in restricting military requisitions by renouncing the principle of simple requisitioning, i.e., requisitioning by force without reward. The seizure of property was to be carried out only against remuneration, and its primary purpose was to be considerations related to the bearing of war burdens by the inhabitants for the benefit of the insurgent army.¹⁷

It should be mentioned that at that time there were often situations of abuse on the part of the army, which were so troublesome that they often became, as we will see later, the subject of parliamentary debates. In fact, as we noted earlier, already at the beginning of February, the highest military authorities were informed about numerous irregularities related mainly to the supply of food for the army. Despite frequent negligence at the beginning of the campaign, the army received all products regularly.¹⁸ Not until March did the situation become difficult, because from now on half the country was to feed the army. Considerable food supplies were lost, product prices rose, and the population began to hide them.¹⁹ Later, predictions were that the division commanders would receive certain amounts of money for purchases on their own, but this system failed, as these amounts did not reach them in the end, with tragic consequences. This meant that soldiers of lower rank began to leave the ranks of the army due to the lack of food (Tokarz, 1930, pp. 166–177).

¹⁶ CAHR, CANU, file no. 64b, cards 22–23; *Dziennik Sejmowy z r. 1830–1831*. Vol. 1: *Od 18 grudnia do 8 lutego 1831 r.* Published by Michał Rostworowski, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1907, pp. 507–508, 515.

¹⁷ During this period of the Uprising, problems with provisions for the army were already noticeable. For example, on February 16, General Dwernicki wrote to General Klicki complaining about the lack of food warehouses, which meant that “the inhabitants are oppressed and the army suffers from hunger, especially when it comes to bread, which people have not had for several days already”, ZDW 1, pp. 345.

¹⁸ During February, the supply situation was particularly difficult when a 50,000-strong active army was standing on the fields of Warsaw’s Grochów, with an additional 20,000 reserves in Warsaw and its vicinity, see: file no. 11, card 113. Cf. Chojnecki & Mikuła, 1989, pp. 93–96. The great demand for rations of bread, which had to be delivered from the distant environs for the numerous cavalry in the absence of means of transport, posed a difficult challenge which the Army Needs Committee was able to meet. The people of Warsaw also helped by bringing whole transports of food and drink to the fields of Grochów, see: Tokarz, 1930, pp. 116.

¹⁹ Nevertheless, the supply situation in March was not difficult everywhere. Despite many problems with the supply of products, there was plenty of food for General J. Dwernicki’s corps near Zamość. It should be noted, however, that the soldiers complained about poor quality of some products and often, having some money saved, they fed themselves at their own expense, see: Taźbirek, 2011, p. 104.

The problem of supplying the insurgent army and the directly related issues of military requisitions appeared in the parliamentary debate again during a session of the Chamber of Deputies on April 21, 1831. On that day, the issue of allowance (credit) for smallholders was debated as they, because of the crop failures which affected some parts of the Kingdom of Poland and the war disasters which some parts of the country suffered as a result of the enemy's incursion, needed funds to sow and to provide until the new harvest. I will not summarise the details of this discussion here. Let us just note that in addition to the draft loan assistance project, there was mention of an instruction from the Commission for Internal Affairs and Police to the Citizens' Councils, which provided for the principle of simple requisitioning. This rule meant a direct intrusion by violence into the right to property, as raised by Szczepan Swiniarski, deputy from the Powiat District of Stanisławów.

According to the provisions of the instruction, the Citizens' Councils, through execution-administrative authorities, had the right to seize in all dominions and private storehouses the surplus of spring grain from the previous sowing. The seized grain was used to grant allowances. The grain was to be released by the owner against an assignat signed by citizens appointed in each department, and the release of grain was to be confirmed with a receipt.²⁰ These receipts, issued by the Citizens' Councils according to the average prices of the voivodeship and regional towns calculated over the previous month, were to be delivered to the Voivodeship Commissions, which, through their treasury departments, were to calculate the amounts due and authorize the voivodeship general coffers to make the appropriate payments, which were to be made in bills of exchange or cash (in the case of amounts smaller than 200 zloty).

During a meeting of the Chamber of Deputies on April 22, Franciszek Wołowski, a deputy from the Warsaw district, pointed out that the Citizens' Councils could not force citizens to give up their grain or impose prices for products needed by the army.²¹ Similar opinions were expressed by Wiktor Rembowski, a deputy from the 2nd Kalisz precinct, who emphasised that the method of simple requisitioning – without remuneration – “is against all justice, so much so that even the last government never used it”.²² At the same time, he pointed out that in special cases,

²⁰ Between February and March 1831, receipts for the delivery of grain, hay, bread, salt, vodka, oxen, etc., were issued by individual division and subdivision commanders and regional commissars, see: *Kwity (dowody) dotyczące zaopatrzenia w żywność i furaz korpusu gen. Dwernickiego*, SAL, CLV, file no. 2078, all cards.

²¹ *Dziennik Sejmowy z r. 1830–1831*. Vol. 3: *Od 19 kwietnia do 25 maja 1831 r.* Published by Michał Rostworowski, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1909, p. 69 (henceforth cited as: DS, 3).

²² DS, 3, p. 75.

private property could be seized for public use, but only against remuneration, which was the goal of the National Government.

In response, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Police indicated that Citizens' Councils could purchase grain in their own or other voivodeships, but due to lack of time, sowing was to be ensured in each province. He emphasised that this was not equivalent to requisitioning because grain was to be paid for according to market prices. He also added that seizing spring grain and keeping it until sowing was a kind of coercion, but given the difficult circumstances at that time, food security was the first priority, it was necessary to establish a warrant sowing, so as to prevent speculation.²³

During the same session, Andrzej Walchnowski, a deputy from the powiat district of Szydłów concurring with the opinion of deputy Franciszek Wołowski, admitted that requisitions should not be used, and pointed out that the Government could not take any property for public use, "this applies only to immovable property, but never to movable property".²⁴

In the continuation of the debate, the above-mentioned deputy Franciszek Wołowski pointed out the need to purchase grain, as this was the only way to prevent requisitions. He proposed that the Government Commission on Internal Affairs and the Police be granted an additional loan, partly in mortgage bonds and partly in cash, for the purchase of grain in order to support the inhabitants of the voivodeships who needed allowances for food and sowing.²⁵

The Minister of Internal Affairs emphasized that in this situation there could be no question of requisitioning, but only of temporary seizure, so that the grain, which was sold to one owner and needed by others, would not be taken away and would not become an object of speculation. However, the minister pointed out that a similar practice had already been used before, because the Commissary General had the right to seize grain for the army's use and to pay for it according to the current prices in a given area.²⁶

The discussion of the day was closed by the Speaker, who submitted two issues to the consideration of the House: (1) whether the Government was to be authorised to requisition grain; (2) whether the mortgage bonds by which the grain was to be paid were to have a compulsory course, or depended on voluntary arrangements? In spite of the remark of the Minister of the Interior and Police that this was not

²³ DS, 3, p. 81.

²⁴ DS, 3, p. 84.

²⁵ DS, 3, pp. 88–89.

²⁶ DS, 3, p. 92.

a requisition, but a temporary seizure, a large majority declared themselves against requisition, considering that there was no difference between a temporary seizure and a requisition.²⁷

Finally, the Senators' Chamber and the Deputies' Chamber, on a motion put forward by the National Government and presented by the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Police and after hearing the Sejm's Commissions, passed a resolution in which allowances were granted, particularly to peasants and owners of smaller estates who needed allowances to make sowing possible and to ensure food until the new harvest. This was argued on the grounds that the crop failures which affected some parts of the Kingdom of Poland, as well as the war disasters suffered in part by enemy incursions and the gathering of a considerable national armed force in various parts of the country, had exhausted the reserves which had been the fruit of the previous harvest (Ziółek, 1980, pp. 39–41).

The resolution stipulated that the National Government was authorised to open an additional credit to the Government Commission for Internal Affairs and the Police in the total amount of 1,000,000 zloty, of which 900,000 zloty were in mortgage bonds and 100,000 zloty were in cash. These sums were to be used for the purchase of grain and ultimately to support people in the voivodeships in need of food and sowing.²⁸ The issue of requisitioning arose again at the sitting of the Chamber of Deputies on May 25, 1831. This time, the first to raise the issue was a deputy from Sandomierz, Franciszek Chomentowski. He pointed out that respect for private property had always been the first principle of state life, while military requisitions, e.g., of grain, contradicted this principle. In the further part of his speech, he referred to cases of abuses by military authorities as regards requisitioning. Among these irregularities, referring to the case of the seizure of grain by the Commissary General, he mentioned formal shortcomings of the requisitioning documents used at that time (e.g., lack of the requisitioner's signature or official stamp). Moreover, he recalled the case of the deputy of the 3rd precinct of Warsaw, Jakub Piotrowski, whose grain was requisitioned in violation, in his opinion, of the requisitioning procedure in force.²⁹ I will return to this case in a moment.

The next speaker to comment on F. Chomentowski's remarks was Jakub Klimontowicz, a deputy from the Augustów district, who first of all drew attention to the negligence of the food administration service, which he accused of failing to supervise the seized food, which sometimes led to situations in which it spoiled. Secondly, he

²⁷ DS, 3, p. 94.

²⁸ DS, 3, p. 98; SAL, CLV, file no. 557, cards 1–16.

²⁹ DS, 3, pp. 673–674.

argued that a significant defect in the operations of the commissariat was its activity, which was limited to Warsaw itself. It is worth recalling, at this point, his speech in which he said: "If the Commissary used agents in the provinces, who would deal with the purchase of grain and openly talk with the citizens, there would be no need for requisitions; he [the Commissary General] would have everything cheap, good and on time. But it is unfortunate that those who surround the Commissary seek their own benefits; hence the public purse is wasted".³⁰ As we can see, the accusations against the service of the commissariat were serious. The accusation of the lack of professionalism towards the authorities of the military administration is always among those of the highest calibre. The Commissary General, Count Aleksander Bniński, who was present at the meeting, was not indifferent to this statement. He pointed out that the requisitioning of the grain owned by the above-mentioned Jakub Piotrowski was carried out legally. Moreover, this requisition was not made against Jakub Piotrowski as a deputy, but as a citizen of Warsaw. At the same time, the Commissary General referred to the Order of the National Government sent to the Commission for Army Needs (No. 1778/1831), which authorised this Commission to apply requisitioning measures in the areas occupied by the army.³¹

The Commissary emphasised that requisitions similar to those applied to Deputy Piotrowski had been carried out in relation to other Warsaw citizens, who had not, however, lodged complaints. Besides, the Commissary General pointed out that Warsaw, being under siege and martial law, was not able to sustain itself without requisitions. "We are under martial law", said the Commissary General, "where not only property but civil rights are suspended, we should all be strongly concerned about the public cause. It frightens me that a citizen, and moreover a deputy, should make such a fuss about what can only be called a trifle".³² The reply of Commissary General was certainly accurate, as the subsequent vote on his case confirmed. The Commissary then went on to explain the irregularities alleged against the Commissary.³³ There is no space here to recount his arguments in detail. Finally, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies submitted to the Chamber for determination the question of whether there had been an abuse on the part of the Commissary General. The Chamber by a majority held that there had been no such abuse.³⁴

³⁰ DS, 3, p. 677.

³¹ DS, 3, pp. 677–678.

³² DS, 3, p. 678.

³³ DS, 3, pp. 678–687.

³⁴ DS, 3 p. 688.

The issue of requisitioning came up again in the Chamber of Deputies as early as on June 1, 1831, where a draft resolution on requisitioning for the needs of the national (insurgent) army was presented, the aim of which was to save expenses of Treasury and quickly supply the army with food.³⁵ The draft resolution submitted contained 10 editing units (articles). It provided, *inter alia*, that for the seized products the owners would immediately receive certificates, in which the estimate of the seized items would be indicated according to the prices of the month of May from the voivodeship and regional cities in each voivodeship.

The draft of the submitted resolution contained 10 editing units (articles). It stipulated, among other things, that for the seized products the owners would receive immediate certificates, in which the prices of the seized items would be indicated according to the prices of the month of May from the provincial and regional towns in each province. In addition, the draft provided that the Government Commission of Revenue and Treasury would, by September 1, 1831 at the latest, issue to the owners holding the certificates, after deduction of the taxes owed, in exchange for treasury bonds, which were to yield to the owners a daily interest of 6% per annum from the date of issue of the certificates (Articles 3 and 4). In addition, the draft provided for penalties for concealment of items to be requisitioned. The basic penalty was to be confiscation of the concealed items, and if the seized products were destroyed, the person committing such an act was to be regarded as violating public property and punished accordingly.³⁶

The draft caused a lively debate among the deputies,³⁷ who stressed that every requisition is an abuse, violence, but in the given circumstances it should be justified, which was argued by deputy of the 2nd Kalisz precinct, Antoni Rembowski.³⁸ In turn, deputy from the Szydłowiec Powiat District Gustaw count Małachowski said: “I will not praise this project, because there is nothing to praise in it; I will not reprove it, because it is necessary”.³⁹ And a deputy from the Kalwaria Powiat District, Wincenty Gawroński, argued: “This law is bad, but we must pass it because the army needs food”.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Dziennik Sejmowy z r. 1830–1831*. Vol. 4: *Od 26 maja do 18 czerwca 1831 r.* Published by Michał Rostworowski, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1910, pp. 118–120 (henceforth cited as: DS, 4).

³⁶ Every ten days the commissioners were to submit to the Government Commission for Internal Affairs and the Police lists of products seized by requisitioning, see: SAL, CLV, file no. 560, cards 2, 23 and 81. For more on the implementation of this Sejm resolution, see: Skarbek, 2013, pp. 246–255.

³⁷ DS, 4, pp. 120–153.

³⁸ DS, 4, p. 123.

³⁹ DS, 4, p. 127.

⁴⁰ DS, 4, p. 147.

The draft was referred to the Senate Chamber, which upheld the position of the Chamber of Deputies on the need to take products by requisition, but significantly reduced the draft submitted to it.⁴¹ The Chamber of Deputies finally adopted it at its sitting on June 3 without discussion. The provisions on revenue bonds and the criminal provisions were dropped. The means and manner of payment for the requisitioned products were to be determined by a later parliamentary resolution, which will be discussed below.

The most important provision of the enacted requisition law stipulated that the National Government was authorised to seize the following produce for military purposes – wheat or rye: 47,770 *korzecs* (bushels); *legumina*: 20,702 *korzecs*; oats: 258,564 *korzecs* or, in the event it was not available, rye in a proportion of 6 to 11; vodka: 74,000 *garniecs*; hay: 107,000 *cetnars* (hundredweight); straight straw: 54,000 *cetnars* (Mencel, 1962, p. 138; Skarbek, 2013, pp. 230–232, 265–271). At the same time, the National Government was authorised to change, if necessary, any kind of grain from one to another, whether mentioned or not in this article. The last sentence of this Article stressed that the National Government would take into account the needs of the land and of the owners of the products to be requisitioned.⁴²

The passing of the law on requisitions for the needs of the insurgent army was so momentous that Raymond Durand, who was the French consul in Warsaw, informed the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs about it, writing in one of his dispatches: “The exhaustion of the treasury has forced the Sejm to the harmful decision of requisitioning food so that the army can be supplied. I am sending you [the Foreign Minister] a translation of the decree which the Sejm has issued on this matter. It promises, as far as possible, the subsequent repayment of these requisitions” (Durand, 1980, p. 184).⁴³

The aforementioned issue of how to compensate for products seized through requisition returned to the Chamber of Deputies on June 17. After a relatively short debate,⁴⁴ a draft was unanimously adopted, which provided that for the seized products the owners would immediately receive the certificates already mentioned in the draft of June 1. What was only added was that hay and grain from a new harvest could not be seized. In addition, the above-mentioned provisions were also adopted with regard to treasury bonds, which were deemed to be a national debt (Article 4). These were to be paid by the Treasury within four years in semi-annual

⁴¹ DS, 4, p. 201.

⁴² CAHR, CANU, file no. 64b, cards 59–60.

⁴³ For more on France’s attitude to the November Uprising, see: Dutkiewicz, 1950, pp. 32–66.

⁴⁴ DS, 4, pp. 577–597.

instalments (in December and June each year). They were to be paid out by drawing lots, which were to take place twice a year (in May and November). Payment was to be made through the Bank of Poland under the supervision of the Redemption Commission, which was to destroy the redeemed bonds.⁴⁵

Difficulties with supplies became evident as early as at the end of May, during the so-called expedition beyond the Bug River to attack the Imperial Guards, i.e., select, elite Russian regiments (Sokołowski, 1907, pp. 187–197; Tokarz, 1930, pp. 333–385; Kukiel, 1949, pp. 199–202; Zajewski, 2006, p. 217), while in July – due to the depleting supplies in the country – they became a serious problem as there was a shortage of oats, barley, and hay.⁴⁶ At the same time, Warsaw needed to be supplied with food. In the second half of August, the food supply situation of the army and the capital was already dramatic. In spite of that, the supply from Modlin made up for the shortage of food before the assault on Warsaw (Tokarz, 1930, p. 117).

Requisitions of horses

Until then, as can be seen from the above analysis, the main subject of parliamentary debate during the November Uprising was the issue of requisitioning of foodstuffs. Now – in June 1831 – with the intensification of military operations, due to the significant losses of horses during the operations of cavalry and artillery units and the difficulties in purchasing them in sufficient quantities abroad, the issue of their requisitioning had to be considered (Skarbek, 2013, pp. 271–273). It should be remembered that in the first period of the Uprising and the Polish-Russian war, the cavalry suffered very few casualties, but lost a lot of horses, as did the artillery units

⁴⁵ AGAD, CANU, file no. 64b, cards 77–78. See: *Wykaz sum wypłaconych przez Bank Polski na potrzeby wojska i z polecenia Intendenta Generalnego od 6 grudnia 1830 r. do 17 stycznia 1831 r.*, NAK, AChł, file no. 11, cards 67, 71–75. Cf. Ziółek, 1980, pp. 36–37. For more on the activities of the Bank of Poland during the November Uprising, see: Radziszewski, 1919, pp. 86–119.

⁴⁶ In fact, problems with the supply of fodder occurred already in the spring. The problems of General J. Dwernicki's corps stationed near Zamość in March and April may serve as an example here. The depletion of the stores of forage in the garrison warehouses of the Zamość fortress forced its commanding officer, General Jan Krysiński, to summon the Chairman of the Lublin Voivodship Commission to carry out an additional distribution of fodder, which was done by way of a requisition against remuneration – SAL, CLV, file no. 558, cards 8–9. Cf. Taźbirek, 2011, pp. 105–106. It should be remembered, however, that already in December 1830 it was decided that both the Zamość and Modlin fortresses were to be supplied with food and fodder for 6 months for a garrison of 4,000 soldiers, NAK, AChł, file no. 11, card 50. Cf. Taźbirek, 2009, pp. 104–106.

and trains.⁴⁷ The second period of the Uprising, on the other hand, was the time of the most important military deeds, which unfortunately exhausted human and resources and horses (Tokarz, 1930, p. 102).

The matter was discussed at a meeting of the joint chambers (of deputies and senators) on June 25, 1831. On that day, the draft was read and the law on seizure horses for requisitioning was unanimously adopted.⁴⁸ According to this law, all horses suitable for the army were to be seized in the whole country as public property, which was explained as a necessary condition for the success of the Uprising (Article 1). At the same time, the National Government ordered an immediate compilation of a general list of horses in the country, with a precise indication of the characteristics of the horses and whether they were suitable for cavalry, artillery or trains. Horses which could be used were to be immediately branded, assessed and, if necessary, put down at the call of the National Government. Horses unfit for use were also to be branded in order to distinguish them (Article 3). All horses arriving from abroad were to be marked with a separate brand (Article 6). Only stallions and mares that were pregnant or nursing young stock were to be exempt from seizure for the use of the owner. The compensation for the seized horses was to be carried out in the same way as for the requisitioning of grain.⁴⁹

During this debate, Feliks Gumowski, a deputy from the Łuków District, pointed out that in the light of the draft resolution, horses would in fact be taken away from the poorest residents, while wealthier citizens, like counts, dukes, etc., would avoid requisitioning, as – as presented by the Minister of Revenue and Treasury – the government was mainly interested in the forced purchase of cheap horses worth up to 600 zloty and considered it a waste to pay 4–6 thousand zloty for racehorses.⁵⁰

The enactment of the requisition of horses was to solve the urgent need to replenish the number of horses in the army through the introduction of a system of their requisition based on the same principles that applied to the requisition of foodstuffs.⁵¹ Unfortunately, the enacted requisitioning of horses suitable for the army turned out to be a delayed measure, the execution of which also left much to

⁴⁷ On the supply of horses to these military formations, see: SAL, CLV, file no. 526, cards 9–10, 13–15.

⁴⁸ See: *Dyaryusz Sejmu z r. 1830–1831*. Vol. 5: *Od 20 czerwca do 21 lipca 1831 r.* Published by Michał Rostworowski, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1911, pp. 85–106 (henceforth cited as: DS, 5).

⁴⁹ See: *Wzór kwitu na odbiór koni dla wojska*, SAL, CLV, file no. 545, cards 6–8; SAL, CLV, file no. 526, card 22.

⁵⁰ DS, 5, pp. 90–91.

⁵¹ See: *Lista koni dostarczonych do Twierdzy Zamość*, SAL, CLV, file no. 526, cards 25–28; *Lista koni dostarczonych do Góry Kalwarii*, SAL, CLV, file no. 526, cards 32–40, 51–59, 60–68, 69–102.

be desired. The requisitioned horses strengthened the reserve squadrons too late, which were additionally commanded by disastrous organisers. It was at that time that the number of combat squadrons decreased and their efficiency and advantage over the enemy's cavalry finally collapsed (Tokarz, 1930, p. 102).

Requisitions of church silver

In addition to the above-mentioned regulations on the requisitioning of grain and horses for the needs of the insurgent army, no less important was the satisfaction of the needs of the State Treasury.⁵² One of the ways was the requisitioning of church silver. As a result of public pressure, the insurrectionary government decided that the clergy should also serve the national cause with all possible means. The matter of enacting appropriate legislation for the requisitioning of liturgical items was the subject of a lively debate during a meeting of the joint Chambers on June 20, 1831. Despite the general approval of these requisitions, there were also voices condemning the project among the participants in the meeting. One of these came from a deputy from Precinct V of the City of Warsaw, Józef Brinken, who, threatening the participants with divine punishment, thundered: "Let's reject this project, this monster that nature abhors, let's reject it, or rather throw it away, so that no trace of even such a dark thought remains".⁵³ However, this was an extreme and rather isolated opinion. In the end, despite the lack of unanimity, the draft law on the requisitioning of gold and church silver was passed in the Chamber of Deputies by a majority of 23 votes against 17, and in the Senate by a majority of 6 votes against 5.⁵⁴

In the light of the provisions of this law, all the gold and silver in the churches and houses of prayer of all denominations in the entire Kingdom of Poland were to be seized for the use of the country, while the superiors of churches were given the possibility to replace the seizure with the equivalent of a clanging coin (Article 1). The members elected by the Citizens' Councils in each voivodeship, under the leadership of the bishop or, in his absence, of the competent suffragan or deputy, and in the case of non-Catholic denominations, of the competent superior, were

⁵² See: *Projekt do budżetu ogólnego kraju na rok 1831*, CAHR, WCPL, files no. 64b, card 19. It should be noted that from the beginning of January to mid-July 1831, the Sejm granted the government subsidies in the total amount of 137,127,642 and 5 gr, of which 102,000,000 zloty were allocated for the maintenance of the Polish Army, see: Studnicka-Mariańczyk & Trąbski, 2020, p. 36.

⁵³ DS, 5, p. 12.

⁵⁴ DS, 5, p. 41.

obliged to check the lists of silver and gold in individual churches, monasteries and houses of prayer, and to send them, after carefully checking their weight, to the state mint. It was also ordered that receipts be issued for the surrender of valuables, which were to be deposited in a bank and for which payment was to be made in the form of 6% treasury bonds, which amounted, for every *grzywna* – a monetary unit of weight (about 210 grams) – to 86 zloty of pure silver (Article 3). This percentage was to be used for depreciation in order to increase the capital and to be used in the future to purchase the same silver as that requisitioned.⁵⁵ It is estimated that by the end of July 1831, liturgical vessels and other objects had been collected in the areas of the Kingdom of Poland under the authority of the insurgents for a total amount equivalent of 311,851 zloty. This sum, however, did not radically improve the financial situation of the insurgent government, as treasury needs were much greater, reaching several dozen million zloty.⁵⁶

Requisitions of oxen

In addition to the requisitions mentioned so far, the requisition of oxen should also be mentioned. The draft of these requisitions was discussed at a sitting of the Chamber of Deputies on August 1 and aroused keen interest.⁵⁷ The issue of the requisitioning of oxen was connected with the approach of the Russian army to Warsaw, as the need to ensure the inhabitants and the army a supply of fresh meat in case of the siege of the capital became crucial, which eventually happened (Kukiel, 1949, pp. 202–203).⁵⁸

The draft resolution finally adopted stated that the National Government was authorised to seize from 6,000 to 12,000 healthy oxen or other cattle in the amount

⁵⁵ CAHR, WCPL, file no. 64b, cards 81–82; file no. 351, cards 69–71.

⁵⁶ It should be remembered that the clergy was also burdened with other duties for the benefit of the army: accommodation, delivery of crops and animals. In addition, useless church bells were taken by way of requisition, which were seized by military authorities and intended to be melted down to obtain raw material for new cannons, see: Karbownik, 1998, pp. 238–244. The requisitioning of church bells was dictated by the shortage of artillery, so a decision was taken to cast one hundred new bronze cannons. The requisition was to be carried out by special committees appointed for this purpose in consultation with the local authorities. It was assumed that 225 bells weighing 2,000 *cetnars* each would be delivered, with Warsaw being expected to supply a third, see: ZDŹ, 1, pp. 138–139; Skarbek, 2011, pp. 371–381; Zyglewski, 2015, pp. 81–96.

⁵⁷ *Dyaryusz Sejmu z r. 1830–1831*. Vol. 6: *Od 22 lipca do 23 września 1831 r.* Published by Michał Rostworowski, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1912, pp. 161–188 (henceforth cited as: DS, 6).

⁵⁸ DS, 6, pp. 189–206.

of 24,000 *cetnars* of meat for the capital city of Warsaw (Article 1). The provision of cattle was the responsibility of the districts, with villages with neither cattle nor sheep being exempted. It was the responsibility of the district commissioner to ensure that the cattle were healthy. The cattle were collected by the commissar in conjunction with a committee of citizens by issuing a receipt indicating the weight of the cattle and its value assessed by two experts.

For the value of the estimated cattle, the Municipal Council of Warsaw (Gołba, 1971, pp. 35–37) was to issue bearer municipal bonds. These bonds, after consuming the cattle from the fund for the sale of harvested meat, were to be redeemed by December 1 at the latest. In addition, the resolution legalised the actual requisitioning of oxen, which had already taken place, on the basis of an order of the National Government of July 16 (Article 7).⁵⁹ It should be added that in September 1831, in order to protect the population from food overpricing and hunger, the Warsaw city authorities set fixed prices for beef, mutton and bread (Kraushar, 1910, pp. 139; Skowronek & Tessaro-Kosimowa, 1980, p. 178).

Conclusions

In summarizing the above discussion, some significant research conclusions should be pointed out as a result of the above analysis:

1. The Sejm, which consisted of the existing Senate and Chamber of Deputies, with the omission of its third element, i.e., the King, had little power to act in military matters in view of the Commander-in-Chief's broad attributes. In spite of this, however, it was the resolutions adopted by the Sejm that largely determined the interference of the insurgent authorities in private property through a broad system of military requisitions. The attitude of deputies and senators to requisitions was usually favourable to this method of acquiring material resources for the army, but its extraordinary nature dictated by the circumstances of war necessity was repeatedly stressed;

2. During the November Uprising the organisation of the general military administration, as well as the administration directly responsible for supplying the army, including carrying out requisitions, was based on models derived from the Napoleonic wars and the Duchy of Warsaw. It was organised in a practical manner, which was supposed to serve the purpose of efficiently supplying the army with

⁵⁹ DS, 6, pp. 193–194.

necessary products and items. In spite of that, however, there were often numerous abuses by the army against the population (Mencel, 1962, pp. 138–139);

3. The greatest military burdens during the November Uprising were borne by the middle landed gentry and the less affluent part of the urban population. These were both voluntary donations in kind (Radziszewski, 1919, pp. 94–99; Mencel, 1962, pp. 99, 115–116; Ziółek, 1980, pp. 37–38) and forced donations (requisitions) (Tokarz, 1930, p. 78). It should additionally be emphasised that after the fall of the Uprising, repressions on the part of the Russians in the form of numerous confiscations of landed property affected mainly the Polish landed gentry (Kaczkowski, 1918, pp. 345–352; Suligowski, 1928, pp. 11–17). Nevertheless, during the Uprising it was the peasant population that suffered most from hunger caused by requisitions for the army. Often it was this social group in the insurgent army that did not receive food even for a few days, and later on, the peasants received spoiled products, meat from dead cattle or stale bread. Neglect in this respect was in fact the main reason for their desertion (Meloch, 1948, pp. 75);

4. It should be remembered that apart from the above-mentioned requisitions of foodstuffs, forage, horses, liturgical items and oxen, numerous items of military equipment were requisitioned, such as: cloth, canvas, leather, sheet metal, footwear, saddles, etc.⁶⁰ Due to the frequent lack of many of these items, often some infantry units marched barefoot, while the cavalry without saddles (Tokarz, 1930, pp. 112–113). This obviously lowered both the combat value of the army and its morale;

5. Finally, it should be emphasised that despite the final failure of the Uprising, the role of the Sejm in ensuring legal requisitions for the army was exceptionally significant. During its sessions, the scope of interference in private property by way of requisitioning was determined, sometimes protecting this property even at the expense of the success of military operations. It must be concluded that deputies and senators in the period of the November Uprising responsibly fulfilled their role, ensuring a balance between private and national interests in the difficult period of the Polish-Russian war.

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⁶⁰ SAL, CLV, file no. 526, card 1.

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