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The Commission of National Education and its transformation in the years 1773—1794

Summary: The unexpected news about the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Pope Clement XIV arrived in Warsaw in September 1773 during the Sejm summoned for the purpose of ratifying the First Partition of the territory of the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth. The pope decided to subordinate the schools and the estate owned by the Jesuits to the secular clergy. Despite the pope's recommendation, the parliamentarians decided to nationalise post-Jesuit schools and their estate. A central state office, the Commission of National Education (KEN), was established to supervise those schools. The post-Jesuit estate, converted into an educational fund under the authority of the Commission, would be used solely for the operations of schools and teachers, as well as for a profound educational reform. The Commission was instituted on 14 October 1773 and took charge of education and public schools without exceptions. In 1776, despite many obstacles, it assumed full control over its educational fund and commenced work immediately. Despite the generally held belief today, in its 20 years of existence, the Commission of National Education was significantly transformed on several occasions and did not operate without stopping. What was invariable were the concept and objective of the Commission and its schools: to raise an enlightened, public-oriented and happy man, a good citizen and patriot, capable of building a happy and wealthy society and a strong state. In 1795, Poland lost its independence for 123 years, but owing to the Commission's activity, a new nation was born that was prepared to fight for its freedom.

Keywords: Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth, Partitions of Poland, suppression of the Jesuit Order, Commission of National Education, school reform in 17th-century Poland

The Commission of National Education (KEN) and the education reform it implemented exerted an impact on so many areas of the political, social, economic and religious life in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as on many generations of Polish people in the 19th and 20th centuries, that the creation, development, accomplishments and legacy of the KEN have been analysed by historians for more than 200 years now. The causes of and the circumstances in which the KEN was created on 14 October 1773 in Warsaw, during the Sejm (Polish parliament) summoned with a view to ratifying the First Partition of the Commonwealth, are well known. The state was weak and helpless due to the drawbacks of its political system and its demoralised politicians. King Stanislaus II Augustus was powerless in the face of the imperious advances of Prussia and Russia. Russia's ambassador, Otto Magnus von Stackelberg (1736—1800), was omnipotent and ruthless in presiding over parliamentary debates and dictating decisions made by the Sejm. The unexpected news about the suppression of the Society of Jesus by Pope Clement XIV and about his decision to hand the Order's schools and all estates over to the secular clergy arrived in July 1773. Unaware that it was coming, the Sejm was suddenly put in a position where it had to determine the fate of the Jesuits' legacy in the Commonwealth. Despite the pope's order to do otherwise, the parliamentarians decided to nationalise that legacy. The orphaned schools were to be supervised by the newly established "commission to oversee noble youth", soon to be named Commission of National Education or Commission of Education. The post-Jesuit estate, converted into an educational fund, was subjected to the Commission's authority, with a caveat that the fund would be used solely both for the purpose of schools and teachers' operation and for a profound education reform. This kind of a central state authority intended to govern education, appointed by parliament and responsible only to parliament, in possession of an independent, irrevocable and sizable budget, was an institution that was novel to the Commonwealth and the whole of Europe.

It is worth reverting from time to time to issues that have already been examined, even those considered to be certain. A growing knowledge about the Age of Enlightenment helps in research into the history of the KEN. It helps understand better the intricacies of the development of the Commission as an institution, reactions of the Commonwealth's public to the modernisation of the education system and its impact in the national, political and cultural perspectives in the late 1700s and in the subsequent centuries. Those earlier findings ought to be confronted with their sources, which in many cases is, however, impossible. Over the 250 years since the KEN's establishment, during wars

and political transformations, particularly in our part of Europe, archives and libraries have been moved from place to place, dispersed or destroyed. A large part of source materials that were the basis for earlier research has ceased to exist. This is confirmed by bibliographical information in publications from before the First World War, the interwar period and post-1945¹.

¹ The Commission of National Education's Archives were partly transported out to Russia during the First World War. Reclaimed early into the interwar period, they burnt down along with the Public Education Archives of which they were a part, on 26 September 1939, during the siege of Warsaw by the Nazi German army. A number of the Commission's original printed materials have been preserved. Aside from materials published before the Second World War, sources related to the Commission, its schools, teachers and employees are, however, stored in the archives of the scientific institutions and university libraries in Vilnius, Kraków (Jagiellonian Library, Czartoryskis Library, Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Learning and the Polish Academy of Sciences), Wrocław (Ossolineum), Warsaw (National Library, Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Central Archives of Historical Records) and in Church archives. Valuable manuscripts are stored in regional libraries and Church archives in Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine, as well as Vatican archives, and perhaps in France.

Bibliographical information about source materials and publications concerning the KEN available before the First World War was explored by Teodor Wierzbowski (*Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794. Monografia historyczna*, Warsaw, 1911). In the years 1901—1915, Wierzbowski printed 21 volumes of sources which prior to the First World War were stored in Warsaw's Archives of Historical Records (series *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej i jej szkoły w Koronie*). A valuable bibliography of printed materials from the days of the KEN was prepared and issued before the First World War by Józef Lewicki (*Bibliografia druków odnoszących się do Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Lviv—Warsaw, 1908).

Extensive materials stored in the interwar period in Warsaw's Archives of Historical Records, in the burnt KEN Archives (e.g. *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*), were used by Ambroise Jobert, author of the monograph *La Commission d'éducation nationale en Pologne (1773—1794). Son œuvre d'instruction civique* (Paris, 1941). What was left of the materials available to Jobert was in the late 1970s reported by Mirosława Chamcówna in the Polish translation of this work titled *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej w Polsce (1773—1794). Jej dzieło wychowania obywatelskiego* (transl. M. Chamcówna, pref. H. Barycz, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1979). Chamcówna supplemented the bibliography by information about some source materials and scholarly works from the years 1938—1978.

In the Toruń-based University Library, Krystyna Podlaszewska and her colleagues prepared *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Bibliografia przedmiotowa* (Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1979), which contains source and scholarly materials from the period of 1773—1975 and some publications from the years 1976 and 1977.

Krzysztof Ratajczak and Michał Nowicki compiled a bibliography of the major sources and studies used by the scholars implementing the grant provided by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in the framework of the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities titled *Komisji Edukacji Narodowej model szkoły i obywatela. Koncepcje, doświadczenia i inspiracje* [*The Commission of National Education's model of the school and the citizen: Concepts, experiences and inspirations*]. The result of the project is a 14-volume series titled *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794* (in print). Its last volume is the *Bibliography*.

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In the days of King Stanislaus II Augustus, the internal and political situation of the Commonwealth was unsteady. The ambassadors of Russia, Austria and Prussia imposed their political decisions by force or enforced them overtly through their bribed Polish deputies. Sometimes, however, decisions, especially in internal affairs, were agreed by way of compromise during scarcely documented or undocumented covert negotiations between representatives of different interest groups. Traces of such decisions can be tracked down through random mentions in some memoirs and private correspondence or in political commentary of the epoch. Facts which once were left unnoticed or considered insignificant are now shedding new light on the course of those historical events. They allow verifying and correcting facts and their assessment. The circumstances of the establishment of the Commission of National Education is an example of such a situation.

In the spring 1773, the parliament was summoned to Warsaw under the supervision of the ambassadors of Austria (Karl Reviczky), Prussia (Gédéon Benoît) and Russia (Otto Magnus von Stackelberg) for the purpose of ratifying the pillage of the lands that had taken place in 1772, i.e. the First Partition of the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth². In order to prevent protests against the partition, a group of obedient members of the Sejm and the Senate was selected, the so-called Delegation. During breaks between plenary sessions, the Delegation was preparing the texts of the resolutions that went on to be adopted by the Sejm's assembly.

Pope Clement XIV (Lorenzo Ganganelli, 1705—1774) decided on the Jesuit Order suppression under the pressure of the royal courts of Portugal, Spain and France³. The papal brief on the suppression (sometimes called papal bull) *Dominus ac Redemptor noster* was prepared in complete secrecy and printed in two parts (on 21 July and 13 August). The consolidated text was announced on 18 August. The official information on the suppression of the Society of Jesus reached Warsaw about the 10 September. The papal nuncio in Poland,

² The Commonwealth lost 211,000 km² (30% of its territory) and four to five million of its inhabitants (about 1/5 of its population). A particular role in exerting pressure on the king and the deputies, in political games in the Sejm's lobby and its plenary room, in corrupting influential political individuals, senators and ministers and steering and supervising the parliamentary sessions was played by ruthless Otto Stackelberg.

³ The papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor noster*, printed on 21 July 1773 in Rome, was on 13 August complemented with an instruction on the mode of the suppression execution and with information on the appointment of the Church officials responsible for strict execution of the suppression decisions. On 18 August, the consolidated text was handed in to the diplomats accredited to the Holy See and to the nuncios, with a request that the pope's decision be brought into effect without delay.

Giuseppe Garampi, handed it in to the king and informed the Roman Curia that the king had received this message very calmly. It cannot be ruled out that he had received some information earlier, when a circle of the pope's trusted associates had discussed the mode of enforcement of the papal decision. Some information about this had permeated the Bronze Doors and reached the ears of King Stanislaus II Augustus.

Disheartened by the state their country had found itself in, the partition and the forceful ratification of it in a parliament surrounded by enemy troops, the deputies, the nobles and the clergy of the Commonwealth were not concerned with Jesuits' problems and had not anticipated the Order's dissolution. In the Commonwealth, the suppression was to be conducted in individual dioceses. Once the king had received the papal brief, the consolidated text was to be read out publicly by the bishops in their dioceses. In that moment, they were automatically taking over the power over and care for post-Jesuit schools and their estate within their dioceses, as well as for the maintenance, lodging and clothing of the friars⁴.

In Warsaw, due to summer holidays, plenary sessions were suspended until mid-September. Only the Delegation was working, preparing border treaties with the invading countries regarding the suppression act and on request that it be carried out as an internal matter of the Church. The papal decisions were considered by the Delegation and then the entire Sejm as an insult to the king and the Commonwealth, as the pope had not consulted Stanislaus II Augustus, even though he had done so regarding Jesuit matters with Maria Theresa, the Empress of Austria.

The deputies were outraged that Pope Clement XIV requested that the post-Jesuit estate be taken over by the secular clergy. The nobles believed that legacies and donations given to the Order were intended to serve the needs of education and schools rather than to enrich the Church. The idea about state supervision over the education system and educating and raising the youth in civic and patriotic ways had been deeply rooted in the society of the nobles, political commentary and parliamentary debates in the second half of the 18th century, long before the Jesuit suppression. Those voices and proposals were far from precise and had a theorising nature, however, as there were no forces or funds available to implement them.

⁴ W. Konopczyński, *Dzieje Polski nowożytnej*, ed. M. Nagielski, 2, Warsaw, 1986, 176—254; A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 3—20; J. Lewicki, *Geneza Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Studium historyczne*, Warsaw, 1923, 18—51 (a photocopy of an extract from *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* 4, 1922 and 1, 1923); Ł. Kurdybacha, *Kuria rzymska wobec Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w latach 1773—1783*, Kraków, 1949; K. Bartnicka, K. Dormus, A. Wąłęga, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794. Wprowadzenie* (in print).

The secular clergy did not possess the human resources that would be sufficient to take over post-Jesuit schools. It created conditions for the state to take up that supervision. Therefore, it was believed that the post-Jesuit estate should be nationalised or returned to the donors and funders or their successors⁵. There were voices in defence of the dissolved order. Proposals were made to demand that the Holy See provide explanations, to negotiate with the pope, or even, following the example of Russia and Prussia, to turn down the papal brief at all. Attempts to mitigate those combative feelings were made by representatives of the Episcopate and Nuncio Garampi warning against disobedience to the pope as the head of the Church. The issue was extremely serious and required prompt decisions owing to the powerful position the Jesuit Order held in the Commonwealth's society and education system. Generously backed by donations and legacies, the Order was extremely wealthy. The Jesuits and their schools were popular with the majority of the nobles. The enforcement of the Jesuit suppression in line with the pope's request to bring the secularised friars, estate and schools under the authority of secular bishops threatened the closing down of about a half of the Commonwealth's secondary schools. It was nobody's secret what effects resulted from the removal of the Jesuit Order in the years 1759—1768 from Portugal, France, Spain, Parma or Malta. After the Jesuits were expelled from France in 1762, France's secondary education system collapsed⁶. A lot of French Jesuit teachers arrived then in Poland.

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Prior to the First Partition, the Commonwealth included four Jesuit provinces (Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Mazovia and Lithuania). The Order owned or ran more than 100 various school facilities, including 18 to 20 residences, more than 60 mission houses, 56 to 66 colleges (among them 23 "higher" colleges with courses in philosophy and theology), 15 *convictus* dormitories, two priest seminaries and two academies⁷. The Jesuits ran more than a half of the Commonwealth's secondary schools for the male nobility youth. There were more than 2,360 friars; after the First Partition, some 1,000 of them found themselves outside the Commonwealth.

⁵ Since the 15th century, the nobles had defied the Church's efforts to take over their properties. That was why they protested the intent to hand the post-Jesuit estate over to the secular clergy.

⁶ H. Pohoska, *Rewolucja szkolna we Francji, 1762—1772*, Warsaw, 1933.

⁷ The data is not strict. Various authors provide different numbers. This might result from the disruption following the partition. See: S. Bednarski, *Upadek i odrodzenie szkół jezuitkich w Polsce. Studium z dziejów kultury i szkolnictwa polskiego*, Kraków, 1933, tables 4—8; J. Poplatek, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Udział byłych jezuitów w pracach Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, ed. J. Paszenda, Kraków, 1974, 31.

The text of the papal brief was known to the public in the Commonwealth in mid-September 1773. It was also known to the Jesuits. They knew that once secularised, they would be deprived of everything the Order had until then provided them with, so some of them made their way to Belarus, where thanks to Catherine II the Jesuit suppression had not come into effect. Former Jesuits were quite quarrelsome and not particularly popular, so they were not so keen to come under the supervision of secular bishops. They had been involved in disputes with other orders, as well as many officials of the secular clergy. They preferred to be brought under the state supervision, especially that King Stanislaus II Augustus did not conceal his affection for members of the dissolved order. In parliamentary debates, speakers emphasised that the secularised monks should be provided with maintenance from post-Jesuit funds, especially those who had fallen ill, had retired or could not be supported by their families. A lot of them persisted in teaching at the schools where they had worked until then.

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Stanisław Antoni Poniatowski (1732—1798) after ascending the throne accepted the name of Stanislaus II Augustus and was a significantly more adept politician than his opponents would have claimed. Intelligent, educated, interested in education and convinced of the importance of education for the well-being of his subjects, he was aware of the dark clouds looming over the Jesuits, but was supportive of the Order. He had noticed the level of teaching had started to rise in Jesuit schools, and for that reason, as he wrote in his memoirs, he intended to carry out his educational reform in the Commonwealth even with the help of the Jesuit Order. He did not oppose the pope's decision on the suppression of the Society of Jesus because he discerned an opportunity of the state taking over the authority over the education system and transforming the post-Jesuit property into an educational fund to maintain schools. At one of the Thursday dinners (it could have been 16 or 23 September 1773), he presented an idea to create a state institution that after taking over the post-Jesuit schools and property would carry out the education reform⁸. The idea was taken up by a circle of the king's associates who without heeding the pope's orders had found that the state should take over the post-Jesuit schools and properties. In secrecy (in order not to vex the nuncio and ambassadors of the invading countries), they began work on the concept of such an institution and the content of a suitable law⁹.

⁸ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*, ed. D. Triarie, transl. W. Brzozowski, pref. A. Grzeškowiak-Krwawicz, Warsaw, 2013, 406—413.

⁹ The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Learning and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków (2220/I, *Education Nationale*, 1) stores preserved texts of the schemes prepared in the

According to Łukasz Kurdybacha, who explored the Roman Curia's attitude to the KEN, at the turn of September and October 1773, Nuncio Garampi found out from some royal courtier about the works that were under way in the king's surroundings. He attempted to impede the secular authority from taking over the post-Jesuit schools and funds. He passed the message he received on to the Roman Curia and the ambassadors of Russia and Prussia. In his private talks, he threatened deputies that the king was seeking reinforcement of his position and absolutism, and that his plans were menacing the good of education and the Catholic faith. Stackelberg promised the nuncio that he would not let the king's plans take effect. Reminding that "all must be done to secure the Church's influence on administration of the post-Jesuit estates and on education", the Roman Curia recommended, however, caution in order to avoid suspicions that the nuncio "was working in tandem with the invading countries against Poland"¹⁰. Down in Rome, the efforts by Primate Gabriel Podoski collaborating with Nikolai Repnin in the late 1760s were known concerning his intention to sever the dependence of the Church in the Commonwealth on the papal power, block the payment of the levy to Rome (Peter's Pence), institute a patriarch (following Russia's example), bring an end to the jurisdiction of the nuncios and transfer their powers to the primate, establish the Perpetual National Synod that would be entitled to "issue disciplinary and doctrinal decisions to the entire clergy" and give it the power to enter judgments in canon proceedings (e.g. in divorce cases), which could not be appealed in Rome. Synod's membership was to be divided equally between bishops and secular dignitaries¹¹.

In his correspondence with the Curia, Garampi discouraged the dissolution of the Order in Poland until the atmosphere in Warsaw settled down. He failed to realise that the idea of nationalisation of Jesuit schools and property did not meet with any opposition in parliament or even among members of the Church hierarchy. As early as in the mid-16th century, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski wrote that "the school was a seminary of the Commonwealth", that education of the youth ought to have a civic character, that it was necessary for the state to exercise supervision and that an institution should be created to manage the educa-

king's surrounding. Some of them have been explored and published by J. Lewicki in *Geneza...*, 19—25, 60—79.

¹⁰ Ł. Kurdybacha researched the nuncio's correspondence with the curia, stored in the Vatican Archive (*Archivio della nuntiatura di Varsavia*, 58). See: Ł. Kurdybacha, *Kuria...*, 478—480.

¹¹ Gabriel Podoski (1719—1777), the archbishop of Gniezno and the primate of Poland. In cooperation with Nikolai Repnin, he devised schemes of restricting or severing the ties of the Polish Church with the Holy Sec. See: E. Rostworowski, "Gabriel Jan Podoski h. Junosza", iPSB <ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/gabriel-jan-podoski-h-junosza-prymas-polski> (seen: 6 August 2017).

tion system¹². Political and educational literature would have often raised that point. That idea was revived in the 18th century by Piarist Stanisław Konarski, who established an exclusive boarding school in Warsaw, Collegium Nobilium, oversaw the reform of Piarist public schools in the Crown and modernised teacher training, curricula and textbooks. Such an idea also inspired the intentions and educational activity of Stanislaus II Augustus, who founded the Knights' School of the Cadet Corps in Warsaw and the Cadet Corps in Vilnius and undertook to establish the Commission of Education in 1773.

Shocked by the partition and by their inability to effectively resist the violence of the invading countries, the nation of the nobles was, to a greater or lesser extent, seeking a solution for the political collapse in education. In those circumstances, the Jesuit Order's suppression validated the idea of granting the authority over the education system to a central state body designed for that particular purpose. A hope was rising that reformed schools would educate and shape prudent and responsible citizens and patriots who would understand the needs of the state, work for its good and rebuild the Commonwealth's wellbeing and power.

In an undeveloped agricultural country, magnates, owners of large estates, shared a great interest in the ideas of so-called "economists", i.e. physiocrats who believed that the source of wealth was the land, its cultivating it, its natural resources and their processing, and that the economic development depended on the development of agriculture. They also believed that science allowed people to discover better methods of managing and processing natural resources. They espoused the ideas of personal freedom and providing every member of the society the necessary education, in accordance with one's social status. They believed that it was the obligation of the head of the state to provide all of his subjects with that freedom. The idea to utilise the suppression of the Jesuit Order for state power to take over the authority over the education system gained support of some magnates because it was their vested interest. Bishops accepted the nationalisation of post-Jesuit estates because they feared that the Church taking over post-Jesuit property might reinforce anticlerical sentiment and lead to a complete loss of their influence on the education system.

¹² Ł. Kurdybacha, *Ideologia Frycza Modrzewskiego*, Warsaw, 1953. That idea was expressed in the 16th century by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski in his work *O poprawie Rzeczypospolitej* [*On reform of the Commonwealth*], consisting of five volumes: on moral conduct, on laws, on war, on the Church, on school. The original was printed in Latin in Kraków in 1551 and in Basel in 1554, titled *Commentatorium de republica emendanda libri quinque*, but without the books *On the Church* (*De Ecclesia*) and *On school* (*De schola*). The Polish edition, titled *O poprawie Rzeczypospolitej*, translated by Cyprian Bazylik, was published in 1577, but without the volume *On the Church*. The views espoused by Modrzewski on education, civic upbringing, financing of the education system — were astonishingly congruent with the Enlightenment philosophy.

It was intriguing that Otto Magnus von Stackelberg gave his consent to the establishment of a central body supervising schools of the Commonwealth despite the promise he had made to Garampi¹³. In a letter to the Russian minister of foreign affairs Nikita Panin, he explained it with his fondness for the Poles, writing hypocritically: “humanity orders me to contribute to the development of education in Poland”¹⁴.

It is hard to trust Stackelberg’s statements given his ruthless actions in Poland and his harsh treatment of Stanislaus II Augustus. It is more likely that he underestimated the situation and miscalculated the king’s initiative, as he did not realise how deep the faith was in the healing power of education and civic upbringing, as well as the conviction that the supervision over schools should be vested in the state. It is very likely he never assumed that an intimidated, corrupt and obedient Sejm would be capable of establishing an institution with a capacity to carry out school reform. He was probably convinced that the greed of deputies and the clergy would not allow converting the post-Jesuit estate into a state-owned educational fund and that the reform of the education system would not come into effect due to the lack of financial resources. In the light of the source data compiled by Józef Lewicki, Ambroise Jobert, Łukasz Kurdybacha and Władysław Maria Grabski¹⁵, it appears that Grabski was right saying that the decisions on the future of the post-Jesuit estate and creation of a central state body to take charge of the Commonwealth’s education system resulted from a complex compromise reached by many parties in the course of secret negotiations between Stanislaus II Augustus, the ambassadors of Russia and Prussia, the nuncio and representatives of the Sejm’s Delegation working on ratification of the partition treaties. In that game of interests, the part of intermediaries was played by bishops: Vilnius Bishop Ignacy Massalski and Poznań Bishop, Chancellor Andrzej Młodziejowski.

The protracted procedure of ratification by the Sejm of the post-partition borders led the Russian and Prussian governments to press their Polish proxies in Warsaw to accelerate the works. That urged them to start negotiating with

¹³ W. Konopczyński believed that by showing the king his support, Stackelberg would win his concessions regarding the Perpetual Council.

¹⁴ O. Stackelberg to N. Panin, 13 October 1773. Cited by: A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 13, 33. The original was cited by: W. Konopczyński, *Geneza i ustanowienie Rady Nieustającej*, Kraków, 1917, 2, 252.

¹⁵ W.M. Grabski, “Polityka finansowa Komisji Edukacji Narodowej”, in *W kręgu wielkiej reformy. Scholarly session at the Jagiellonian University on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Commission of National Education*, ed. K. Mrozowska, R. Dutkowska, Warsaw—Kraków, 1977, 50—51. Perhaps more information could be obtained through further research in the files of the Warsaw nuncio at the Vatican Archives in Rome or in the ambassadors’ correspondence with their superiors in Petersburg, Vienna or Berlin.

the king and representatives of the Senate. In return for the completion of the treaty negotiations, the ambassadors of Russia and Prussia were eager to admit that education was an internal issue of the Commonwealth, gave their consent to the creation of a secular central body to oversee the education system and approved of the state taking over the post-Jesuit estate and converting it into an educational fund. They surely expected that they would be able to pay for the services of their proxies using the fund. The king understood that was the price for their consent for the creation of the Commission of Education. Informed by Nuncio Garampi of the sentiment among the deputies and taking into account the Russian and Prussian cases, the pope feared that the parliament might adopt motions to repeal the papal brief on suppression. It seemed all the more menacing that the king was treating the deputies' outrage with fondness. That was why Clement XIV agreed for the announcement of the papal brief in Poland to be delayed and was inclined to give his consent to a part of the post-Jesuit estate to be taken over by the state on condition the Jesuit suppression was accepted by the king and the Sejm¹⁶. The events now all proceeded swiftly. The far distance and communication problems between Rome and Warsaw and the time pressure impeded the negotiations with Rome. Incapable of receiving Rome's official consent for such a solution, Nuncio Giuseppe Garampi had to take a decision on his own responsibility, which was accepted, but he received the official communication only after the Commission was instituted by the Sejm. Inside the country, there was no power that would be capable of defying that agreement.

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On 18 September, the Delegation signed the partition treaties, and on 19 September, the Sejm resumed its sessions. According to Lewicki's findings, on 21 September, during a plenary session, bearing in mind the state taking over the post-Jesuit estate, Feliks Oraczewski said that the situation might turn out to be beneficial for the Polish education because "funds are being returned to the Commonwealth of the Jesuit Order" and "if they cease being Jesuits, may they become citizens". Many of them may now be employed as teachers. That was the spirit in which also others speakers were talking (Rafał Gurowski, August Sułkowski and Ignacy Kurzeniecki among others). The Sejm requested that the Delegation deal with post-Jesuit schools and the estate. Various schemes began flowing in, with some of them being discussed. Pinsk deputy Ignacy Kurzeniecki was first to use the term *Educational Commission*¹⁷. Taken in the Sejm lobby,

¹⁶ W.M. Grabski, "Polityka...", 74—75.

¹⁷ J. Lewicki (*Geneza...*, 26—27) reports that *Gazette de Cologne* of 15 October published a correspondence from Warsaw, revealing that since the announcement about the Jesuit suppression, more than

the decision to set up the Commission of Education was taken on 24 September 1773, and the Delegation's work picked up speed in early October, once the Sejm had ratified the partition treaties on 30 September 1773. The Commission of National Education was instituted on 14 October 1773¹⁸. The text of the constitution or Sejm law (these two terms were used interchangeably) on the Commission was based on a scheme devised in the king's surrounding, edited by Joachim Chreptowicz, who read it out at the Delegation's sitting on 7 October¹⁹.

Three other draft laws were discussed at the Delegation's sessions: those by Crown Chancellor Andrzej Młodziejowski, Vilnius Bishop Ignacy Massalski and Crown's Confederation Marshal Adam Poniński. Consisting of a dozen or so Sejm and Senate members, the committee devised a compromise text, adopted on 14 October and signed by Ignacy Massalski and Confederation Marshals Adam Poniński (of the Crown) and Michał Radziwiłł (of Lithuania)²⁰. The entire process was overseen by Stackelberg²¹.

The king appointed Bishop Massalski head of the Commission on 9 October, and on 14 October, Massalski announced from a slip of paper handed in to him at the last moment the names of other KEN members²². According to Lewicki, the entire discussion indicates that "someone else was devising the creation of a separate body to take charge of the schools and estate of the suppressed order, someone other than the Sejm, most likely the king and ministers

a thousand (!) educational schemes had been submitted to the king, senators and Sejm members. Emphasising their selflessness and patriotism, the authors, however, requested being compensated with a part of the post-Jesuit estate. Lewicki says that he familiarised himself with about 100 schemes, but the number of schemes provided by the Warsaw correspondent was greatly exaggerated. He simply pointed to the need that press accounts ought to be treated with caution. It just proves that, like it is these days, 245 years ago newspapers were driven by the need to seek sensation.

¹⁸ "Ustanowienie Kommissyji nad edukacją młodzi narodowej szlacheckiej dozor mającej", in *Volumina legum*, 8, Petersburg, 1860, 268—277. The text of the KEN instituting constitution of 14 October was published in *Volumina legum*, Volume 8, among the Sejm's 1773—1775 acts. That is why some of the older studies reported on the year of the Commission's establishment as 1775. See: *Volumina...*, 266—268.

¹⁹ Some scholars found on this basis that Chreptowicz was the author of the draft law.

²⁰ J. Lewicki, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej w świetle ustawodawstwa szkolnego. Szkic historyczny*, Warsaw, 1923, 9. The author discusses in detail the course of the debate in his essay *Geneza...*, 49, 59.

²¹ J. Lewicki, *Geneza...*, 41—42. According to the session minutes of 9 October, Marshal Adam Poniński informed the Russian deputy that the discussion concerned only three schemes. Leaving before the session ended, Stackelberg requested that no decision be taken (without him present).

²² The first announcement about the founding of the Commission was the Universal of 24 October 1773. We have used Lewicki's reprint (*Ustawodawstwo szkolne za czasów Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Rozporządzenia, ustawy pedagogiczne i organizacyjne (1773—1793)*, ed. J. Lewicki, Kraków—Warsaw, 1925, 1—5, without "Rozrządzenie dobrami Iezuickimi").

with senators”²³. The Commission’s composition for the six-year term (eight members) was adopted by the Sejm with no debate.

2.

The Commission commenced work right away. The first session was held on 17 October²⁴, and on 24 October, the Commission announced its first proclamation. It explained that since the pope “suppressed the Jesuit Order with a view to preventing the Commonwealth from suffering harm in its education of young people and with regard to its estate and property”, under the king’s guidance, “a commission in Warsaw is being established to take charge of education of the nobility youth”. The Commission consisted of the following Senate members: Vilnius Bishop Ignacy Massalski, Prince Michał Poniatowski, Płock Bishop, Gniezno Province Governor August Sulkowski, Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor Joachim Chreptowicz and the following Sejm members: Lithuanian Great Notary Ignacy Potocki, Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, Podolia General Andrzej Zamoyski, respectable ex-chancellor and recipient of the Order of the White Eagle, and Kopanica County Governor Antoni Poniński²⁵. The Commission took charge of the schools, called on its principals to continue work, provide information on the schools in their charge and provided suggestions on what should be improved in education.

The Commission took charge of “academies, gymnasia, academic colonies, public schools without exceptions, including all facilities that could be utilised for education and exercises of the young nobles”²⁶. It was recommended to the Commission that it formulate its own internal statutes and submit them to the Delegation for examination. Moreover, the constitution ordered inspection of the post-Jesuit estate (moveable and immovable) to be carried out by teams of sworn inspectors (civilians appointed by confederation marshals and priests appointed by the Gniezno archbishop and other bishops). During their proceedings, they were obliged to provide teachers remaining at the Jesuit schools with maintenance, so that the schools did not cease their operations. The sum of 300,000 zloty was allocated for the KEN to cater to the priests who had lost

²³ J. Lewicki, *Komisja...*, 26—29.

²⁴ Minutes of the session were reported in the Commission of National Education minutes: *Raporty Szkół Podwydziałowych Toruńskiej, Trzemeszeńskiej i Wschowskiej składane Szkole Głównej Koronnej w latach 1777—1790*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1910, 1—2; *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785*, ed. M. Mitera-Dobrowolska, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1973, 3—5.

²⁵ *Ustawodawstwo...*, 1—2.

²⁶ *Ustawodawstwo...*, 2. In reality, that decision, though quite excessive at first, went on to be brought into effect by the Commission gradually.

their means of livelihood, temporarily, for two months²⁷. Those commissioners who had signed the proclamation and resided in Warsaw (without Czartoryski and Poniński) added to it an order that the inspectors submit post-inspection reports within six weeks for the attention of the KEN, which would hand it in to the Delegation. The Delegation was expected to take measures to make sure that schools continued work without stopping. The work of the inspection committees began overt looting of the Jesuit property. They were soon joined by distribution committees appointed by the Sejm in March 1774. They consisted of the bishops mediating in the negotiations (including Massalski), who had made sure that the decisions on the fate of the post-Jesuit estate would benefit their families' wealth.

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The establishment of the Commission of National Education as a state and secular institution taking charge of the Commonwealth's education system and the creation of an educational fund based on the post-Jesuit estate was contrary to the will of Pope Clement XIV. Moreover, that decision had been taken before the suppression of the Jesuit Order was formally accepted and announced by the king and the Sejm. The establishment of the Commission (taking charge of the schools run by the Jesuits and of the teachers working there, making decisions on the educational fund and inspecting post-Jesuit estates) took place even though the Order formally continued to exist, as the suppression was being announced in successive dioceses in the Crown in early November and in Lithuania in December.

3.

Even though no such state institution existed either at home or abroad that would be in charge of the education system, appointed by parliament and accountable only to that parliament, and possessing an independent fund, the Commission of National Education organised itself quickly and efficiently. It was not, however, until the Sejm adopted a new law on education in 1776 that the Educational Commission assumed full control over its educational fund and thus financial independence (in the organisational, administrative and legal sense). That allowed the Commission to embark on the proper work on the reform of education and to fulfil its financial liabilities connected with taking charge and maintenance of the post-Jesuit schools, developing offices and organising administrative staff. Performing its powers in terms of management of and supervision over post-Jesuit funds, asserting its claims, often by juridical means,

²⁷ *Ustawodawstwo...*, 2—4.

for post-Jesuit estates that had been unfairly obtained or squandered by distribution committees, required hard work and was time-consuming. Therefore, changes had to be introduced in the Commission's organisation and activity²⁸. The number of the commissioners was expanded by the Sejm to 12 members, as the king instructed. They came mainly from Stanislaus II Augustus's family or his close associates: his brother-in-law, general and politician Andrzej Mokronowski, nephew Stanisław Poniatowski (son of Kazimierz), Crown's Secretary Jacek (Hiacynt) Małachowski, Czersk County Governor Franciszek Bieliński and Michał Jerzy Mniszech in place of Antoni Poniński (resigned from the post of Commissioner in 1777).

The members of the Commission formed a very efficient team and shared a sense of a mission: educated, loyal to one another and showing solidarity. They worked selflessly *pro publico bono*. They would not gain personal benefits from their work (except Bishop Massalski, the Commission's president, who, according to Jobert, was "less delicate in those matters"). They were able to keep secret the sessions and background of the decisions. The Sejm extended their term to eight years with an option for another extension.

Formally, between the passing of the National Education constitution by the Sejm in 1776 and the ordinances issued by the king in the subsequent years, the legal situation of the Commission would not change until 1791. It had been reinforced as an institution governing the education system and as a state office. In fact, in the formal sense, the Commission underwent profound transformation in the years 1781—1783. In the period between 1774 and 1777, the Commission issued a series of regulations and instructions for schools, their supervisors ("rectors" and "prorectors"), prefects, teachers and directors. In March 1775, the Commission founded a very important body, the Society for Elementary Books. Experienced teachers and educationalists went on to become its members. They served the Commission with their knowledge, methodological experience and familiarity with school problems. They made the curricula "more realistic" and put in order regulations issued by the Commission for schools. The society was set up with a view to preparing and publishing textbooks and methodological guides for teachers, but the scope of its activities was in reality far more extensive. Its members prepared regulations on organi-

²⁸ *Edukacja narodowa (Prawo sejmowe)* (1776); *Konstytucje Sejmu Ordynaryjnego Warszawskiego* [...], Warsaw, 1776, 25—27; *Volumina...*, 8, 537—538. We used J. Lewicki's reprint (*Komisja...*, 96—99). See: "Ordynacja Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w egzekucji Konstytucji sejmu ordynaryjnego w r. 1776 sporządzona", in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 100—107. The law was amended several times and printed with the amendments in the years 1778, 1783, 1786. See: RGADA (Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents), F.106, 1, 91, which contains 17 copies of the prints of the law of 1783.

sational and economic supervision over the reformed schools, evaluated school documentation and school inspectors' reports and provided their opinions on regulations and schemes submitted to the Commission. That was an important preparatory job for a code of the Commission's educational law.

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In the history of the KEN and its education reform, the period between the mid-1770s and the mid-1780s has been quite thoroughly explored for the factual part, but not been examined sufficiently for the interpretational part. Formally, it was a period of calm work, marked by some quite important achievements. The school network was put in order and a new consolidated, hierarchical school system was put in place (in geographical, administrative and structural terms). A secular profession of a teacher was created, the "academic estate", i.e. a legally secured professional organisation which went on to embrace all teachers working at the Commission's schools. The Polish language was introduced as the official language at all tiers of teaching, as were also consolidated curricula of general education. More than 30 textbooks, methodological manuals and other school books were published. The system of management of education funds was ever more efficient²⁹.

In the late 1770s, they were put in order, formulated and collected, and in 1783, published in one official set of school laws: *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla stanu akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane* [The Commission of National Education's Acts for the academic estate and the schools of the Commonwealth]. The new law covered the entire education system, syllabi and organisation of school life of students and the teaching personnel. The Acts essentially closed the period of creation of the school network, syllabi, a hierarchical school system and the secular profession of teacher — the academic estate [*stan akademicki*]³⁰. They introduced the key concepts for the KEN's education reform of "school hierarchy" and "academic estate", as well as new names of school territories (*wydział* [department] — a new region in the school administration, which did not cover the state administrative division in provinces) and both higher and lower secondary schools (*szkoła wydziałowa* [department school] in place of *szkoła wojewódzka* [province school] and *szkoła podwydziałowa* [sub-department school] in place of *szkoła powiatowa* [county school]).

²⁹ In order not to fill the text with excessive details, the reader is advised to refer to Jobert's monograph and the bibliography of the relevant issues.

³⁰ First, in 1781 the Draft Acts were published as a preliminary law and introduced into schools as an experiment. The school inspectors sent to schools in 1782 checked the working of the project in practice and garnered comments to be used in the formulation of the final text of the Acts in 1783.

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Converting the Kraków and Vilnius Academies into modern schools of a university type in the years 1780—1781 was a huge achievement by the Commission of National Education. According to Hugo Kołłątaj's concept³¹, the reform involved their structure, organisation and the courses they offered. The reform was initiated because introducing new subjects into the secondary schools' curricula required hiring properly educated teachers possessing higher education qualifications. For the old academies to live up to that new task, it was necessary to expand and modernise their scientific resources, introduce new subjects and employ well qualified professorial staff. The KEN funded the modernising of the Kraków and Vilnius Academies and brought them under its supervision in return, imposed on them the obligation to run teacher training seminaries and perform the functions of school administration.

The Kraków and Vilnius academies were now referred to as *Szkoła Główna Koronna* [Crown's Main School] and *Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego* [Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania]. They were incorporated into the reformed education system not only as superior schools of a university type but also as ultimate instances of school administration under the direct authority of the Commission of National Education, with the Kraków-based Main School exercising authority over school departments in the Crown and the Vilnius-based Main School — over school departments in Lithuania. In order to become a teacher at KEN schools, it was prerequisite for the candidate to join the academic estate and put in the so-called *submisja*, a declaration of submission to the supervision of the KEN and of commitment to comply with the provisions of the Acts.

What followed was an unprecedented turning point in the KEN's history as a body of educational authority and in the history of the Polish education system. Entrusting universities with the function of the highest tier of school administration to supervise school provinces and teachers and the fact that general school inspectors were to exercise regular methodological and educational supervision over schools led to consequences that the Commission at the time still failed to realise. It weakened its direct link with the secondary school system and the teaching community. That became a source of multiple conflicts between the KEN and the Main Schools. The above-mentioned issues of terminology, organisational structure, administrative division, "academic estate", "academic hierarchy", and teacher "submission" did not change substantially until the turn of the 1780s and 1790s. One can say that this way of introducing

³¹ The KEN reform had predated by 20 years Humboldt's concept of university in Berlin.

provisions of the educational law in the years 1781—1783 closed the first phase of the Commission of National Education's activity.

The scientific level had been raised of the universities that were incorporated into the Commission's education system as governing bodies of the school administration. Secondary and higher school teachers were organised in one professional estate called "academic estate", this way forming a secular profession of teachers. University-based teacher training was organised by establishment of seminaries for the "candidates for the academic estate". The school network and a hierarchical structure of the education system was put in order.

4.

From the turn of the years 1776—1777 until 1792 (with a two-year break between 1789—1791), the Commission and its funds was governed quite prudently and very skilfully by the king's brother, Płock Bishop Michał Poniatowski. He became a member of the KEN in 1773, and his Church career proceeded very quickly. In 1775, he became coadjutor bishop of the Kraków Diocese, its administrator in 1782 and the archbishop of Gniezno and the primate of Poland in 1784³². Historians are mainly interested in Michał Poniatowski's political activity as the king's advisor and one of the leaders of the king's party. However, his greatest accomplishments and contribution for the Commonwealth were connected with his work in the field of education, managing the Commission of National Education and its educational fund. Also, it was the education system that he associated his greatest hopes with for the revival of the Commonwealth. He always paid attention to the schools of higher education, contributing hugely to the university reform. He supported the main schools also from his own private source³³. He was an excellent and sensible organiser and host. His educational activity, especially in the years 1789—1794 and outside the Commission, requires more extensive research.

³² As a bishop and the head of the clergy, Michał Poniatowski was busy raising the intellectual and professional levels of the clergy at the parish and diocese levels, modernising seminaries, improving the state of parochial schools and engaging in charity work. He sought to engage at that level of the education system religious orders and the parochial clergy (in the reformed education system, parochial schools were under the educational authority of the KEN, but were not maintained by the educational fund).

³³ Poniatowski's biography and contribution was presented by Zofia Zielińska in the entry "Poniatowski Michał Jerzy" (*Polski słownik biograficzny*, ed. E. Rostworowski, 27, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1983, 455—470). The author reaches outside opinions in the political commentary of the epoch and unverified opinions shared by the opponents of the king's party (e.g. Jędrzej Kitowicz and Jan Kiliński). The biographical note contains an extensive biography and information about archives containing source materials concerning Poniatowski.

Michał Poniatowski put into effect multiple times the Commission's informal requests to his royal brother. It cannot be ruled out that also the king used that informal way of communicating through his brother with some of the Commission members. As early as in 1773—1777, Michał Poniatowski substituted Bishop Massalski, who was often absent from the meetings of the Commission of National Education. When his dishonest management of educational funds in Lithuania was revealed, Massalski formally did not cease acting as the president of the Commission, but ceased participating in its sessions, and Michał Poniatowski took over his function. Although he had filled that position from 1777, he was not formally appointed by the Sejm to the post of president of the Commission of Education until 1786. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 stipulated that the primate was KEN president *ex officio*. That provision was retained by the last law on the KEN adopted in Grodno in 1793³⁴.

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Over a number of years, from 1773 to the mid-1780s, the attitude of the Commonwealth's society to the Commission and its schools underwent a serious transformation. Even though the school reform was successful and the Commission was genuinely reinforced in the state structure, the public mounted a wave of criticism against the KEN. The causes for those developments may be found in the political situation and the transformation of the Commonwealth's society after 1773, which requires research and a detailed analysis. The first years after the Commission was established had a really novel and creative character. It was the noble society's will — as a result of a coincidence which allowed that experience to occur based on theoretical assumptions, the contemporary educational knowledge and the concepts of physiocrats — to implement a rather utopian concept of the Polish Renaissance thinker (Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski) that linked education with the state's development and power, and the wellbeing of its citizens. In the late 1770s, it had become apparent that it was possible to create in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth (by combining politicians' determination, educational knowledge and sufficient funding) a state body in charge of education and science and to implement an organisational and educational reform of an entire country. By awe-inspiring efforts a cohesive (even if not lacking errors) and consolidated state educational system was implemented. In the years 1778—1781, new textbooks were printed in grammar, arithmetic, morals, geometry, international history for first classes of the reformed secondary schools first and for older classes later on, as well as

³⁴ “Komisja Edukacyjna Obojga Narodów na sejmie grodzieńskim roku 1793 w formie rządu opisana”. Cited by: *Ustawodawstwo...*, 368: “1-mo. Komisja Edukacyjna zawsze pod prezydencją najprzewielebniejszego Księcia Prymasa zostawać ma”.

textbooks in algebra, physics, zoology and botany in Polish, introducing this way the Polish terminology, and lastly, introducing an elementary book for parochial schools³⁵. A collection of provisions of the school law was put in order and published in the form of *Ustawy dla stanu akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane* (1783). First secular graduates of teacher training seminaries were directed to the so-called academic schools (department and sub-department schools). It cannot be forgotten that the collection, before it became law, was as a draft act verified in schools. However, it was not until the reform was brought into effect that its imperfections were revealed. Obstacles and first differences in opinions among various groups of the public began surfacing. It turned out that the way to universal happiness, about which philosophers and politicians had dreamt, was a difficult and long one.

Serious problems started with the teachers responsible for reform implementation. Teachers-former Jesuits had started retiring, who had not signed the submission, did not want to teach or did not possess the necessary qualifications, and the implementation of the new curricula caused them big difficulties. That group of teachers felt threatened and was hostile to the KEN. The years 1779—1780 saw a big number of requests submitted by former Jesuits asking to be relieved of the teaching work and allowed to take up the “generous bread” guaranteed by the Commission for those who were ill or fatigued³⁶. The Basilians and Piarists were rather loyal, but other monastic and clerical teachers running the schools by the Commission’s authority felt threatened by and hostile towards the KEN.

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Over the several years following the enactment of the Commission of National Education’s Acts for the academic estate and the schools of the Commonwealth of 1783, after the Main Schools assumed direct supervision over the school departments and during school visitations by general school inspectors in the Crown and Lithuania, first imperfections of the education system began surfacing, as did loopholes in the Acts. Managing the secondary educa-

³⁵ Details concerning the publication of textbooks, manuals for teachers and other school books: C. Majorek, *Książki szkolne Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Warsaw, 1975, 70—72, 154—155.

³⁶ See: RGADA, F.1603, 1, 102 (a lot of letters to the Commission from 1779—1780 with requests to be enrolled in the list for the ex-Jesuits’ fund). In *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1785* (448—457), Mitera-Dobrowolska published a table of retired Jesuits compensated from the Crown’s educational fund, signed by the KEN on 5 December 1785 (“Tabela eksjezuitów emerytów koronnych z funduszu edukacji płatnych”). That amount constituted a huge expense for the Commission, which allocated 172,950 zloty to maintain 15 academic schools in the Crown that year.

tion system, methodological and educational supervision, visitation duties and the reporting work were all a great burden for the Main Schools. Not always compliant with the provisions of the Acts, the Commission interfered with the Main Schools' decisions concerning teachers' training and work, as well as the schools' internal matters which, according to the Acts, fell within the schools' own competencies. That impeded the Main Schools' work and decreased their prestige as the highest instance of school administration in the departments they oversaw. Good examples for this can be the case of general school inspectors selected by the Commission in 1786 for the Crown's schools and disputes between the Main School and Feliks Szczęsny Oraczewski, the rector of the Kraków University, appointed after Kollątaj stepped down.

Finishing his term as the rector in Kraków, on 8 February 1786, Kollątaj presented an official letter to Poniatowski, in which he wrote about the KEN breaching the provisions of the Acts³⁷. Despite the opinion of the Crown's Main School and the provisions of the Acts, the Commission decided to appoint Priest Truskulawski³⁸, who was unknown to the Main School, one of the Crown's general school inspectors (in Volhynia and Ukraine) to replace Priest Popławski, who had relinquished his duties of a school inspector. "I keep discerning flaws in our Acts almost every moment, but what makes me so sad is that it is easier to keep disobeying the Acts than repair those flaws", Kollątaj wrote in his letter. Kollątaj admits that the Acts were less perfect than what was theoretically anticipated. He says that he worked on the Acts for many years, identified in practice nearly all their faults and knows how to repair them. In his view, it is more important to improve the provisions of the Acts than breach them only to overcome a momentary problem. Breaking the Acts is harmful because it destroys the hierarchy of the academic estate, especially that such practice can reinforce itself. The Main School knows the teachers it has educated and the schools that are to be visited. It also knows the persons it entrusts with the position of school inspector and who have the necessary experience. The school trusts them that they will overcome the flaws of the law. Whereas someone from outside, unacquainted with the issues of the teachers and supe-

³⁷ RGADA, F.1603, 1, 106, 1—3v.

³⁸ The person in question was probably Priest Edmund Truskulaski vel Truskolaski, former Jesuit, connected with Ruthenia Province Governor Stanisław Szczęsny Potocki (KEN member in the years 1783—1792) and the Potocki regiment in Tulchyn. In the years 1784, 1785 and 1786, he delivered sermons in Tulchyn on St Stanislaus's Day. In 1786, he dedicated the sermon to Szczęsny Potocki. In 1801, he published in Warsaw two books that he translated from French: *Xsiążki o edukacji dzieci* (two editions). It turns out from the information contained in Kollątaj's letter that he did not belong to the academic estate. See: H. Pohoska, *Wizytatorowie generalni Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Monografia z dziejów administracji szkolnej Komisji Edukacji Narodowej*, Lublin, 1957, 109—113).

riors of the visited schools, will not conduct the visitation properly. Eventually, two professors of the Main School, of Roman law (Priest Bonifacy Garycki) and canon law (Priest Walerian Bogdanowicz), were appointed as the Crown's general school inspectors.

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The conflict between Kraków professors and Rector Feliks Szczęsny Oraczewski (1739—1799) proved to be of great importance³⁹. The dispute broke out in the years 1786—1789 between the rector and the relentless, self-assured Kraków professors led by Jan Śniadecki (in a personal conflict with Oraczewski). The growing disagreement made any cooperation impossible. In 1786, Oraczewski became a member of the Society for Elementary Books, a member of the Commission of Education (1786—1792) and the Kraków school's inspector and rector, taking over from Kołłątaj. Confident in the KEN's support, he probably did not realise how much the mentality of the professors' community had changed, or he did not appreciate the Kraków professors' dignity and respect for the rule of law. On several occasions, the Commission imposed its decisions in school and personal matters against the Main School's opinion. Poniatowski did not always take into account the provisions of the Acts or the Main Schools' opinions⁴⁰. That hurt the professors, who were exasperated by the Commission's condescendence in its attitude to the university. Educating teachers, cooperating with the schools, sending general school inspectors, preparing reports etc., they were increasingly convinced that the Commission was interfering with matters it was less familiar with than the Main School that was nearer the realities of school life.

Despite his haughtiness, caution, even calculation and careful avoidance of conflicts with the nobles, Michał Poniatowski was able to reach agreements with professors and was considered an authority within that community owing to his contribution to the reform of the Kraków Academy as a brother of

³⁹ M. Skorzeplianka, *Feliks Oraczewski. Rektor krakowskiej Szkoły Głównej*, Kraków, 1935; M. Chamcówna, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński w dobie Komisji Edukacji Narodowej. Szkoła Główna Koronna w latach 1786—1795*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1959.

⁴⁰ See the circumstances of removal by the Commission from the academic estate of Priest Szczęsny Łojowski, teacher of law at the Sandomierz sub-department school, as a result of false allegations made by the prorector, Priest Józef Potoczyński, and against the opinion of the Crown's Main School. Likewise, in the case of Franciszek Salezy Jasiński, a reputable rector of the Lesser Poland Department and a professor of the history of the Church. As a result of the complaint lodged by Łęczycza nobles who were discontent with the criticism made during the visitation to the school, the Commission deprived Jasiński, against the Main School's opinion, of his visitation functions. The Main School was in a conflict with the KEN and Oraczewski over the concept of how Priest Popławski at first and Priest Andrzej Trzeciński later on ran the teacher training seminary.

the king and as the primate. Oraczewski's autocracy, impetuosity, obstinacy and lack of tact led to such exacerbation of the dispute with the professors that they lodged a complaint on the rector with the Commission alleging that he was in contempt of the academics' tradition and rights⁴¹. Poniatowski first sided with Oraczewski, but soon left, whereas the professors, even under threat of losing their salaries, did not stand back, and Oraczewski was soon called back to Warsaw⁴².

It had become clear to the Commission that the Acts of 1783 required amendments and clarification regarding the rights of the Main School and compliance with the Acts. The issue was resolved at the turn of 1789 and 1790, after the primate went abroad and before the Constitution of 3 May was passed. On 10 November 1789, the Commission of Education selected a delegation out of its ranks: Joachim Chreptowicz, Ignacy Potocki and Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. Professors of both of the Main Schools were invited to the debate on how the Acts should be amended. Aside from its rector, the Kraków school was represented by Jan Śniadecki and Józef Szabel, while Rector Marcin Poczubutt-Odlanicki and Professors Hieronim Stroynowski and Dawid Pilchowski represented the Vilnius school. All of them together corrected the text of the Acts. In comparison with the 1783 edition, significant amendments were made in Chapter 2 (Main Schools) and Chapter 3 (Recruitment for Main School Faculties). They concerned the election and rights of the rector, the functioning of the university, appointments to faculty posts, jurisdiction and administrative issues. The amended text was read at the KEN sessions in January 1790 and was adopted on 2 February. It was signed by Chełm and Bełz Bishop Maciej Grzegorz Garnysz (1740—1790), Crown Deputy Chancellor (signed it as president (!), perhaps as deputy to Primate Poniatowski, who on 9 September 1789, by his brother's advice, using the excuse of his good health, set off incognito on a private journey abroad)⁴³.

⁴¹ AGAD, Metr. Lit., IX, 98, 282—284: Complaint by 11 professors against Oraczewski, lodged in August 1789 with the KEN. Extensive fragments of the manuscript: *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Pisma Komisji i o Komisji*, ed. S. Tync, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1954, 125—135.

⁴² A lot of information on the professors' disputes with the Commission of National Education is contained in *Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1780—1787*, ed. L. Kamykowski, Kraków, 1932; *Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1787—1807*, ed. M. Chamcówna, S. Tync, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1954.

⁴³ The date of his departure is not confirmed. According to Jobert (*Komisja...*, 220), the primate left the country in June 1789. The date provided by Zofia Zielińska in Michał Poniatowski's biographical note in the *Polish biographical dictionary* appears to be closer to the truth. According to *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794* (ed. T. Mizia, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 1969, 200—201), at the session of 21 September, the KEN members were making arrangements to offer their greetings to the primate (29 September — Michał's nameday) as their president.

The enactment of the Acts meant that new curricula had now to be inevitably introduced, school work was to be more disciplined, and teachers were required to express a clear declaration about subjecting themselves to the authority of the Commission of National Education, enter the academic estate and accept the school hierarchy⁴⁴. Once the Acts were introduced to schools, the school reform carried out by the KEN faced criticism mounted by the conservative part of the public, the clergy and the magnates who were hostile towards the king and the reforms. It must be noted, though, that the time had been chosen correctly and that not all former Jesuits and priests were hostile to the Commission and the reform.

The letter by Priest Adam Jakukiewicz, the sitting prefect of the Warsaw schools, of 2 March 1781, to Michał Poniąkowski was a characteristic one. Jakukiewicz knew that the Acts put in more concrete order the school hierarchy, its network and structure. In applying for the position of Warsaw schools rector, he made references to his achievements: multiple visitations and the king's praise. He wrote about his introducing of drawing lessons recommended by Bishop Poniąkowski and calligraphy recommended by Czartoryski. Jakukiewicz also wrote about the big number of students, that he had won the parents' trust and cooperated with private instructors of students in lower classes. He requested that a prefect be appointed in order to assist him⁴⁵. The Commission was criticised not only by opponents of the reforms but also by progressive politicians, activists and representatives of the teachers' community. The latter, without heeding the conservatism of provincial nobles, sought to reinforce the prestige of teachers' work, the importance of education and the legal and political significance of school certificates, as well as democratisation of the education system. Perhaps they did so prematurely, without proper foundations.

They did not seem to realise that Poniąkowski had left for longer. When Potocki presented the primate's letter of 15 September to them, they "decided to His Royal Highness (Stanislaus II Poniąkowski) to request that he endorse the Commission's demands contained in the letter from all of its members to the primate (the content of the letter was not revealed in the minutes).

⁴⁴ K. Bartnicka, "Wprowadzenie", in *Ustawy Komisji Edukacji Narodowej dla Stanu Akademickiego i na szkoły w krajach Rzeczypospolitej przepisane*, ed. K. Bartnicka, Warsaw, 2015, 38–49. In order to test how useful it could be, a preliminary text was printed in 1781 as Draft Acts. The text that was applicable as the school law was published in 1783.

⁴⁵ RGADA, F.1603, 1, 103, 25. Jakukiewicz, member of the Society since 1775, was very well informed about the work on the Acts. He knew that the rector of department school would supervise all the schools and teachers in his department and that in a six-class school with full teaching staff, the prefect would "be an actual deputy of the rector, especially in matters concerning education, discipline, order and supervision over teachers". See: *Projekt...* (1781) and *Ustawy...* (1783), Chapter 13: "Prefekt szkół".

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Since the mid-1780s, and the in political commentary from the days of the Four-Year Sejm (1788—1792), differences had begun aggravating in how the public perceived the KEN and its education reform, and changes accelerated in public sentiment. The conservative camp attacked the Commission's educational ideology and curricula as incongruent with the interests of the noble society and the tradition and as neglectful of religious education and the teaching of Latin. Young secular teachers were accused of too relaxed a lifestyle or even of godlessness. The Commission as an institution and its reforms were attacked as being too costly. A lot of critics did not like the independence of the educational fund. Those allegations were attractive for the public and arose from the critics' desire to get hold of the educational fund. Proposals were put forward that instead of imposing new taxes, the educational fund should be allocated for the expansion of the army and the management of schools should be vested in religious orders which would teach free of charge because it was their duty. Hopes revived among the Jesuits for a reinstatement of the Order⁴⁶. Appeals were voiced to the king to call on the pope on that issue.

However, a large part of the public defended the Commission, especially politicians from the reform camp, professors of the Main Schools, teachers of academic schools, graduates and students. There was no shortage of critical voices, however, on that side either. There was no unanimity in opinions even among the Commission members, which was disclosed in the dispute between the Kraków professors and Feliks Oraczewski. Nevertheless, professors in Kraków and Vilnius defended the Commission, its educational reforms and the integrity of the educational fund. They sought confirmation of and guarantee in official documents for old privileges granted by the king (e.g. ennoblement of non-noble teachers) and expansion of the autonomy of the Main Schools and the academic estate. They believed that all levels and types of schools should be brought under the authority of the Commission and its jurisdiction: secular and monastic, regardless of the denomination; their teachers, curricula, students and public libraries. They proposed that instead of the person's noble status, it should be his educational level confirmed by his certificates from a department school, the Main School or the Commission that should determine appointments in state positions. The level and scope of the required education should rise in accordance with the rising importance of the position to be filled, regardless of the candidate's social status. The tenure of a 10-year job as a teacher in a department or sub-department school should be considered equal to

⁴⁶ S. Łuskina, *Ofiara ex-Jezuitów z własnych swych osób dla Rzeczypospolitey uczyniona*, Warsaw, 1790.

and provide the same privileges and rights as the jobs of county officials to fill the same positions. The superiors of the department or province schools should have the same rights as province officials, and Main School rectors should be considered legally equal to the highest state officials. A teacher's job was supposed to open the way "any privileges available in the country"⁴⁷.

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The situation in the country was tense. The Great Sejm's sessions were dominated by debates about the political system. The opposition against the king was on the rise, whereas the popularity of the primate, who always participated in the implementation of the king's plans and was one of the leaders of the king's party, was decreasing. In the years 1788—1789, under the influence of a very strong opposition, the king's party in the Sejm fell apart. The KEN had not since the beginning worked at full speed. Despite their serious involvement in political work, e.g. in the delegation intended to reform the government set up on 7 September 1789, Ignacy Potocki, Joachim Chreptowicz and Michał Poniatowski participated in KEN sessions, but they only dealt with current events. If matters connected with the Commission were raised, it usually happened in the context of other problems. The Commission's position was weakened by the journey abroad of Michał Poniatowski (on the advice of Stanislaus II Augustus)⁴⁸, and in the years 1789—1792, the situation was worsened by several changes in the position of president, as well as by the turnover of the Commission members because the terms of some of them had come to a close. The primate's two-year absence from the country was not without an impact on the Commission's work (he did not return home until summoned by the king in September 1791). During his absence, a new version of the KEN Acts was amended at the turn of 1789—1790 and adopted on 2 February 1790; the Government's Act was passed by the Sejm on 3 May 1791. Michał Poniatowski had no influence on either of those two important events for the operation of the Commission. It is not clear who governed the Commission during Poniatowski's journey abroad. The Commission members found out

⁴⁷ J. Ender, "Sprawy oświatowe w okresie Sejmu Czteroletniego", *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 4, 1961, 35—86. The author reports on views and polemics of KEN supporters and opponents, not only attacks but also proposals for change. See: A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 222—249; A. Woltanowski, R.W. Wołoszyński, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794*, Warsaw, 1973, 291—315.

⁴⁸ Kollątaj (*Prawo polityczne narodu polskiego*, 1790) wrote that "there are three professions on which a government's excellence and its durability most depend": the academic estate, religious estate and military estate (cited by: J. Ender, "Sprawy...", 49).

⁴⁸ The data and circumstances of Primate Poniatowski's departure are not utterly clear. Perhaps some disagreements occurred between the brothers?

about his departure post factum. It is assumed that Oraczewski was supposed to replace him, but in November 1790, he was appointed as deputy to Paris and departed there. After he left, according to Jobert, the Commission was led for a very short period by Chełm Bishop Maciej Grzegorz Garnysz (he died on 2 October 1790) and Kyiv Bishop Kacper (Gaspar) Cieciszowski (1745—1831), who in the years 1791—1792 was a KEN member⁴⁹, from 5 March 1791. The provisions on the Commission of Education in the Constitution of 3 May were never concluded. In 1791, Chreptowicz and Potocki left the Commission, as acting ministers, pursuant to the Government's Act, were not allowed to be KEN members.

All those events were not conducive to the strengthening of the KEN. When, summoned by the king, Michał Poniatowski returned to Poland in September 1791, one might have thought that the bad luck had spared the KEN. The president joined in the work, e.g. on the law on the Commission of Education⁵⁰. Perhaps he was even one of the authors of the schemes titled *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej*, published in 1791 (reprinted by Lewicki)⁵¹. It is confirmed that the Commission debated on that draft. The Targowica Confederation, the short war with Russia in 1792 and the Targowica terror — all impeded the formation of the KEN and the passing of the new law on the KEN.

⁴⁹ A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 220—221. The dates and names provided by Jobert in the PSB and *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej* vary and require a thorough examination.

⁵⁰ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794* from the period from 1791 to 10 April 1794 (250—383) contain several fragments of minutes that have not been fully preserved. The minutes of 30 November 1791 (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 269—272) contain information that the king, as the superior of the Guardians of the Laws, ordered the Commission to provide detailed reports on all schools, from the Main Schools to parochial schools, on their expenses, the educational fund and ongoing court proceedings. The minutes of 28 February 1792 noted: “An order has arrived from His Royal Highness for the Commission to provide advice it deems useful to improve those laws and resolutions of this Sejm, which may appear useless, unclear, or contradictory” (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 291).

⁵¹ “Komisja Edukacji Narodowej”, in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 414—431. An undated draft of the law on the Commission consisting of 69 paragraphs. The text indicates that it was drawn up after the May Constitution was passed. The law, which covered the new by-laws of the KEN and provisions of the Acts, and the school code regulating the functioning of schools were prepared, among others, by Kollątaj and Poniatowski. The work had been nearly finished, which is confirmed by the note of 14 April 1792: “His Highness the Primate read some of the general comments concerning the Draft Acts of the Commission of Education and left those comments along with the draft to his colleagues to amend or replace what they deem necessary” (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 307).

5.

The passing of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 took the form of nearly a coup d'état. The concept and the text of the Constitution were drafted owing to Stanislaus II Augustus's cooperation with the patriotic party, Potocki, Kołłątaj and Piattoli. The Commission of Education was characterised in the Government's Act in the part specifying the executive power⁵². It was immediately attacked by the magnate party, opposing the reform of the political system.

The authors of the Constitution drafted a new structure and internal hierarchy of the bodies of executive power, headed by the king and the council under his authority — the Guardians of the Laws. The Guardians consisted of: the king as its president, the primate (and president of the KEN), and five ministers: of the police, stamp, war, treasury and foreign and internal affairs. As a state body, the power of the KEN was weakened, as it was stripped of its independence. Like in the laws on education of 1773 and 1776, the Commission of National Education was to be instituted by the Sejm, to whom the KEN submitted a report on finance and on its operation as an educational authority every two years. Additionally, the new constitution introduced a direct supervision by the Guardians of the Laws, to whom the Commission was subject in the structure of central state bodies (the king acted as the head of the Guardians, which ensured he exercised permanent and strict supervision over the Commission). In that scheme of dependencies, the role of president of the Commission of Education and his membership in the KEN was unclear.

The primate was ex officio appointed president of the Commission (permanent, unelected). It is not obvious whether he was a member of the KEN (pursuant to the provisions on the Guardians of the Laws, he should not; perhaps that was why he was not indicated as a Commission member elected by the Sejm?). He was ex officio a permanent member of the Guardians, to whom the KEN was directly subject!

The legislative initiative and power were vested in the king and the Sejm. At the same time, as the head of the Guardians, the highest executive power, the king held the decisive voice in the case of a discrepancy in the voting. The Guardians could not "pass or interpret the laws, impose or collect taxes, take public loans or amend the budget"; "each resolution of the Guardians must be signed by the king's name". Each document was to be countersigned by one of the ministers who was a Guardian. The Guardians of the Laws consisted of ministers from each division of the state administration. The ministers were appointed by the king (separately for the Crown and Lithuania); five of them

⁵² "Król. Władza wykonawcza", in *Konstytucja 3 Maja 1791*, ed. J. Kowecki, Warsaw, 1991, 102—108.

were appointed for two years (with a right to extend that period). They were ministers of the police (i.e., broadly speaking, internal affairs), the stamp (chancellor), war, treasury and foreign affairs. There was no minister or ministry of education. The Sejm also instituted four committees that may be referred to as “great”: on Education, Police, Army and Treasury, “for suitable performance of the executive power, to cooperate with the Guardians and be obliged to be obedient to those Guardians.” The Education Committee was obliged to submit reports to the Guardians (every three months in some matters, every year in others), but the ministers being the Guardians could not be members of that Committee (!)⁵³.

The Constitution of 3 May was a “collection of political rights” that was to be supplemented by separately adopted “economic constitution” and “moral constitution”⁵⁴. The law on the KEN was prepared prior to and after the May constitution was adopted. Different drafts were prepared, and some of them were published⁵⁵. Right away, in May 1791, Hugo Kołłątaj started work on the

⁵³ An exception was made for the primate who was one of the Guardians ex officio as the head of the clergy and the president of the KEN. That confused his situation in the KEN even more!

⁵⁴ Kołłątaj expressed such an opinion in a Sejm speech in June 1791 as a newly elected deputy chancellor. I refer to Kowecki’s essay “Dla ocalenia Ojczyzny naszej i jej granic”: the “moral constitution” referred to the Commission of Education (*Konstytucja...*, 50—51).

⁵⁵ Reprints: “Komisja Edukacji Narodowej”, in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 392—413. Undated print, probably from 1791, consists of 11 chapters. That was probably what Kołłątaj was working on after the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May. Jobert suggests that the draft was referred to as “Description of the Commission of Education” (*Komisja...*, 221). Śniadecki writes about Kołłątaj’s work on the law on the Commission in a letter to Kołłątaj (*Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1787—1807*, 73—77).

“Komisja Edukacji Narodowej”, in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 414—431. An undated draft of the law on the Commission, published after the adoption of the Constitution of 3 May. It consists of 69 numbered paragraphs. It specifies the KEN’s objectives and decisions regulating the scope of its powers regarding schools (including monastic schools, denominational schools and seminaries), curricula, teachers, students, discipline, the educational fund, finance management, relations between the Commission of Education and the Church authorities, secular and monastic, Catholic and of other denominations. The draft confirmed the powers of the Main Schools in their direct educational, administrative and organisational supervision over the schools and teachers in the Crown and in Lithuania. It outlined the scope of the KEN’s authority in managing the education system and in supervision over the entirety of educational issues.

“Plan instrukcji i edukacji przepisany od Komisji dla szkół głównych i innych w krajach Rzeczypospolitej”, in *Ustawodawstwo...*, 335—362. Lewicki reprinted a collection of comments and decisions that ought to be included in the law on the KEN, published in 1791 or 1792. It is divided into two parts. Part 1 (“Studies”) contains numbered paragraphs or units concerning subjects of teaching, education and teachers at the Main Schools and province schools and selected entries concerning such things as differences in the scope of teaching in schools and at universities. It emphasised utilitarian values of school subjects and branches of science that need expanding or introducing into

laws on the Commission of Education. Before his journey abroad, Michał Poniatowski had opposed the concept of a new constitution, but after his return, he endorsed the Constitution of 3 May as the KEN president and the primate. It is confirmed that he dealt with the Sejm law on the Commission. The work on the “moral constitution” was interrupted by political developments.

6.

On 14 May 1792, a general defence confederation was proclaimed in Targowica, a small private town situated in Podolia (Ukraine), owned by Stanisław Szcześnie Potocki, with the aim of overthrowing the Constitution of 3 May. As a matter of fact, it was a camouflage of a confederation established several weeks earlier, on 27—28 April 1792 in Petersburg, perhaps on the initiative of Catherine II. 13 magnates called on Catherine, as the guarantor of the unchangeability and persistence of the Commonwealth’s political system, to restore the system existing prior to the Great Sejm, e.g. free election and *liberum veto*. The group was led by Szcześnie Potocki, Ruthenia Province Governor, who was a member of the KEN from February to May 1783, Grand Crown Hetman Franciszek Ksawery Branicki and Field Crown Hetman Seweryn Rzewuski. The deed of the Confederation was drawn up by General Vasili Stepanovich Popov⁵⁶. On the Empress’ orders, on 18—19 May, battle-hardened Russian troops, nearly 100,000 strong, crossed the borders, entering the Crown and Lithuania. Opposite them stood the underarmed and inexperienced Polish army, more than 60,000 strong, under the command of Prince Józef Poniatowski on the Ukrainian front and under the command of Duke Louis of Württemberg, a Prussian, son-in-law of Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, in Lithuania; Württemberg committed treachery and was replaced by Michał Zabiełło and Józef Judycki on 7 June. The Russian army in Lithuania was three times as strong as the Polish army. In mid-June, the Russians captured Vilnius; on 6 July, Grodno.

universities (medical and veterinary sciences, studies in commerce, domestic economics, military architecture, cartography, law etc). Worthy of note is the proposal to set up public libraries in capital cities in order to allow embracing knowledge to all those willing, irrespective of school education. Part 2 (“The teachers’ estate”) discusses various professional groups dealing with education (from candidates for teachers and secondary school teachers to professors of the Main Schools and administrative staff), as well as issues of internal organisation of schools and their self-government. The plan indicates the issues of parochial schools, monastic schools, fund-supported *convictus* dormitories, visitations, physical education etc.

⁵⁶ The Confederation in Lithuania was established separately on 25 June 1792 with the aim of “restoring the Lithuanian state within the borders prior to the partitions”. It was headed by Bishops Józef and Szymon Kossakowski. See: J. Staszewski, “1696—1795”, in *Polska na przestrzeni wieków*, ed. H. Samsonowicz et al., Warsaw, 2006, 365; W. Konopczyński, *Dzieje...*, 30; T. Rawski, “Polsko-rosyjska wojna w obronie konstytucji”, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* 13, 2012, 7—20.

On 25 June, the general confederation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was proclaimed in Vilnius⁵⁷.

In comparison to the situation in the 1770s, in the early 1790s, the attitude of the public to representatives of foreign invading powers bossing around and to the slogans voiced by the opponents of the Constitution of 3 May about the Commission of Education allegedly infecting the school youth with ideas that are harmful to a “free government” and convenient for monarchist concepts⁵⁸, had changed. The Targowica supporters disgraced themselves calling for help to Catherine II and the Russian army, which entered the territory of the Commonwealth in May 1792 and started a two-month Polish—Russian war (from 6 May to 26 July 1792). On 25 October 1792, Frederick William II of Prussia demanded that Greater Poland be incorporated in Prussia, and on 23 January, Russia and Prussia made an agreement regarding further division of the Commonwealth’s territory. In late March 1793, the Prussian troops entered Greater Poland, while the Russians marched into the eastern regions of the Commonwealth. On 25 March 1793, Frederick William II issued an incorporation decree, forcing the population of the annexed lands to pledge allegiance to Prussia. The final disgrace was caused by Catherine II’s order to summon the Sejm in Grodno for 17 June 1793 to ratify the partition. Not even many of the members of the Confederation leadership turned up at the Sejm (they relinquished their positions and went abroad). The resistance by the Sejm against the decisions imposed forcefully by representatives of the invading powers was much stronger than in 1773, and the Russians would put it down more brutally and with greater force. On 22 July, a delegation of the Grodno Sejm signed a treaty with Russia, and on the night of 23—24 September, after many hours of silence meant to express its protest, the Sejm had to accept the news of incorporation by Prussia of the previously annexed lands. On 15 September 1793, the Targowica Confederation was dissolved. A so-called Grodno confederation was established at the Sejm, and work started on the formulation of the legal framework for the Commonwealth lands following the Second Partition. A combative atmosphere started rising among the youth, teachers, the progressive public and professors of the Main Schools.

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In the Polish—Prussian alliance agreement made in March 1790, Prussia committed itself to providing the Commonwealth with military support in

⁵⁷ Both confederations merged on 11 September 1792 in Brest, as a general crown confederation, which was transferred to Grodno, where it established its headquarters, lacking the courage to settle in Warsaw, on 27 September.

⁵⁸ A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 257.

case it was attacked. In 1792, Prussia refused to provide that support. Given the Russian ascendancy, Stanislaus II Augustus ineffectively attempted to negotiate with Catherine, who demanded that the king accede to the Confederation and cease military actions. On 22 July, at the Warsaw Castle, the king brought together a small circle of close associates in order to present to them Catherine's demands and discuss the issue of potential accession to the Confederation. Aside from Stanislaus II Augustus, 13 people were present, of whom seven endorsed the king's accession to the Confederation. Along with Primate Michał Poniatowski, they included Lithuanian Deputy Chancellor Joachim Chreptowicz, Lithuanian Deputy Treasurer of the Court Antoni Dziekoński, Crown Chancellor Jacek Małachowski, Great Crown Marshal Michał Mniszech and Great Deputy Treasurer Ludwik Tyszkiewicz, most likely, the king's brother, Kazimierz Poniatowski, was also present (but held no official position). On 23 July, Crown Deputy Chancellor Hugo Kołłątaj joined their ranks⁵⁹. The proposal to continue negotiations with Catherine but without stopping the military action was endorsed by Deputy Treasurer of the Court Tomasz Ostrowski, Grand Marshal of Lithuania Ignacy Potocki, Sejm Marshals Stanisław Małachowski and Kazimierz Nestor Sapieha and Court Marshal of Lithuania Stanisław Sołtan. On 23 July, the king acceded to the Confederation, and on 24 July, he ordered military operations to stop. The king's decision caused universal outrage. After the king acceded to the Targowica Confederation, mass applications started to join the Confederation, but many of those who acceded to Targowica "to avoid the effects of 'the fire and the sword' — did not accept that order, which is reflected in the small number of candidates to run for the Sejm", which was due to assemble in 1793 on the Empress' order in Grodno. "The patriotic public considered as traitors the Confederation founders, the senior priests and the Commonwealth officials who acceded to it as some of the first, as well as those active participants of the Partition Sejm of 1793 that debated in Grodno"⁶⁰. The army and the society wanted to defend national independence. Fearing revenge of the Russians and Targowica supporters, Potocki, Kołłątaj, Małachowski and many members of the patriotic party fled abroad.

⁵⁹ Kołłątaj signed (just in case!) his accession to the Confederation, but fled abroad like many other associates of the king, fearing revenge of Targowica supporters for their work on the Constitution of 3 May, as well as of the patriotic milieu for their accession to the Confederation. The public rebelled against the fact no fight was mounted in defence of national independence and began conspiring against Russia and the Targowica party, and braced themselves up to continue the fight for independence.

⁶⁰ K. Zienkowska, *Stanisław August Poniatowski*, Wrocław—Warsaw—Kraków, 2004, 391.

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In late September 1792, the Crown's General Confederation was united with the Lithuanian Confederation. The leadership of Targowica took up fight not only against the creators, supporters and provisions of the Constitution of 3 May "in defence of the faith and republican liberties" and not so much against the Commission itself as against the ideas underlying the education reform, new curricula and directions of education. The KEN members and their associates, administrative staff and teachers were required by the leadership of Targowica to accede to the Confederation and make a pledge that they would denounce the KEN educational ideology. The Targowica leadership also demanded reports on the *convictus* dormitories of poor nobles, financial settlements, as well as a table of expenditures on the Crown's academic schools for the school year 1792—1793.

The Targowica activists: Piotr Ożarowski, Kazimierz Konstanty Plater, Wojciech August Świątosławski, Dominik Kamieniecki, Rafał Chołoniewski were appointed as general delegates to examine the work of the previous government. On 3 September 1792, they signed KEN reports, the Crown's Main School's decrees and reports from general visitations for the past two years, presented to them by the KEN⁶¹. An investigation was conducted and detailed explanations were demanded about the Commission's activity, financial policy and educational fund⁶².

In the summer 1792, Michał Poniatowski relinquished the post of the KEN president to the king. Until April 1793 and the time the Commission of Education was divided by the Targowica leadership in Lithuanian Commission of Education and the Crown's Commission of Education, he was replaced by Vilnius Province Governor Michał Radziwiłł, who made the pledge required by the Targowica party, but his conduct was a decent one. He provided protection, as it seems, to KEN officials and members (perhaps even the primate himself). In the spring 1793, after the KEN was divided into the Lithuanian and Crown's Commissions of Education, Chełm Bishop Wojciech Leszczycki Skrzyszewski was appointed president of the Crown's Commission of Education and Józef Kossakowski as president of the Lithuanian Commission of Education. The archives concerning the activity and funds in the

⁶¹ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 321—341. This contains "Instrukcja konfederacji koronnej" of 9 August 1792, signed by Stanisław Szczepanowski Potocki in Dubno, the text of the pledge required of the Commission members and KEN junior staff, two sets of questions from Targowica leadership about the KEN's activity and finance and the KEN's responses.

⁶² Por. *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 318—319, 321—341.

Grand Duchy of Lithuania were separated and taken to Vilnius⁶³. Primate Poniatowski returned to the KEN and to his position of president after a consolidated Commission of Education for the Crown and Lithuania was reinstated in November 1793.

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The Targowica propaganda initially resonated in the milieu of conservative and provincial nobles, as well as landless nobles, deprived by the Constitution of 3 May of the right to vote. The fact of “inviting” Russian troops to help in fighting the Constitution, the bossing around by the Russians and the Targowica terror expressed in personal dealings and looting of the estates of Constitution of 3 May supporters eventually discredited the Confederation. Even among the groups opposed to the political transformation introduced by the Four-Year Sejm and, what today appears improbable, trusting Catherine II as the guarantor of the political system and integrity of the territory of the Commonwealth, once they understood her genuine motifs of capturing Poland, a fighting spirit was awakened to preserve national independence. Still during the military campaign, Stanislaus II Augustus was seeking a settlement with Catherine II. Like most of the society of nobles (even those forced to join Targowica), he hoped that the integrity of the Commonwealth’s territory would be preserved under the guidance of the Tsarina. He emphasised, even in relations with Russian diplomats, that he did not accept a new partition. That was why he resisted summoning the Sejm in Grodno, because he realised that it would be a partition Sejm.

Those resisting the Russian demands and refusing to participate in the Sejm included senators, even members of the Targowica Confederation, the primate and many deputies, especially a group of young deputies from Mazovia. That resistance was very strong but hopeless. The treaty on the division of the Commonwealth’s lands had already been ratified by Russia and Prussia on 23 January 1793. Frederick William II had captured Greater Poland and forced its inhabitants to pledge allegiance to the Prussian ruler. Catherine cared about legitimacy of the partition and wanted it to be ratified by the Sejm, which was summoned for 21 June 1793⁶⁴. The decision on the forthcoming partition was not announced until early April 1793. Since the king was needed to summon

⁶³ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 342. After the Lithuanian and Crown’s Commissions of Education were reunited, the archives concerning the Lithuanian educational funds were brought back to Warsaw.

⁶⁴ “Targowica did a lot to make it look like it was the Great Sejm, not themselves, that was guilty of the country’s catastrophe. The bigwigs fled abroad, their underlings, one after another, stepped down from their positions only to be replaced by others, known for their allegiance to Russia” (W. Konopczyński, *Dzieje...*, 2, 243—244).

the Sejm, he was forced to leave Warsaw for Grodno. “He agreed to play that tragic role in return for some concessions, e.g. for retaining the Commission of National Education, considered as one of the key fruits of the unfortunate reform undertaking.”⁶⁵

Jacob von Sievers, appointed as Minister Plenipotentiary⁶⁶ by the king, used “threats, violence, even arrests or cash donations, little and big”⁶⁷, during Sejm sessions. The deputies’ resistance was boisterous but ineffective. On 22 July 1793, the Sejm’s delegation signed the treaty with Russia; on 17 August, it was ratified by Sievers. Since it was of no more use for Catherine, the Targowica Confederation was dissolved on 15 September 1793. That same day, a new confederation, in Grodno, was established under the staff of Marshal Stanisław Kostka Bieliński. Under its auspices, the second phase was held of the 1793 Sejm, referred to as “Partition Sejm”. That Sejm, however, gave no consent to an agreement with Prussia. The Prussian demands were endorsed by Sievers, using the power of Russian troops and harassing the deputies. It was not until a month later, on the night of 23—24 September 1793, in the early hours, after the silence lasting a dozen or so hours, that the deputies received the news of the cession by Prussia of the lands of Greater Poland, parts of Mazovia and Lesser Poland, that Frederick William II had captured (Marshal Bieliński suggested that the deputies’ silence be considered as approval). The Grodno Sejm embarked now on reinstating the Commonwealth’s political system in its form prior to 1788, which was no easy task. Following the Second Partition, the territory and population of the state had decreased to the level of one third of the pre-partition Commonwealth. Attempts were made at reinstating the political, legal and administrative structure of pre-1788, and pressure was mounted by Petersburg to close the Sejm as soon as possible. The executive power was once again vested in the Permanent Council, which was also entitled to a legislative initiative. Some rights had been retained for townsmen, *liberum veto* was practically abolished, but free election was reinstated, as well as full franchise for landless nobles. Procedural changes were, however, put in place. Broadly speaking, disruption was in full swing; changes were being introduced in a hurry.

It is evident in the text of the act on the Commission of Education⁶⁸, after its division into the Crown’s Commission and the Lithuanian Commission, passed on 23 November, was abolished. Of priceless value for investigation into

⁶⁵ J. Staszewski, “1696—1795”, 366.

⁶⁶ K. Zienkowska, *Stanisław...*, 397.

⁶⁷ K. Zienkowska, *Stanisław...*, 398.

⁶⁸ “Komisja...”. Jan Śniadecki was the main author. The text was actually adopted on 23 November and amended by the KEN’s opponents during the print.

the behind the scenes action at the Grodno Sejm in 1793, both during the reign of the Targowica Confederation and after it was dissolved, is the correspondence of Jan Śniadecki, who was delegated by the Crown's Main School to attend the Grodno Sejm in 1793 to defend the interests of the Kraków Academy and the KEN. In his letters sent to Kraków from Warsaw and Grodno, from 17 June to 27 November 1793, he reported continuously on the efforts he made along with Priest Marcin Poczobutt⁶⁹, the rector of the Lithuanian Main School, who came to join him in his efforts. Ambassador Sievers left the selection of the Commission members to the king to decide⁷⁰. Aside from the primate, KEN president ex officio, the king nominated Ignacy Massalski, Wojciech Skarszewski, Michał Radziwiłł, Joachim Chreptowicz, Prince Stanisław Poniatowski, Franciszek Ksawery Woyna, Mikołaj Wolski, Dawid Pilchowski, Hieronim Stroynowski and Andrzej Gawroński.

7.

A new law on the Commission was passed on 23 November 1793, reinstating one Commission of Education for the Crown and Lithuania. It confirmed the laws on the Commission of 1773 and 1776 and the old royal privileges for the academies in Kraków and Vilnius, along with the capacity to give teachers and professors nobility titles after a sufficient period of employment as teachers at schools and academies. The Commission assumed the rights of the bishops in Vilnius and Kraków as university chancellors and *konserwators*. The Sejm was put in charge of selecting 10 Commission members out of the 20 candidates proposed by the king (apart from the ex officio president, i.e. the primate). The Commission members could not obtain compensation for their work in the Commission⁷¹, but they were allowed to fill other positions in the Commonwealth. The Commission elected four assessors (one of whom was “secretary

⁶⁹ *Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1787—1807*, 167—254; K. Lewicki, “Jan Śniadecki obrońcą spraw Szkoły Głównej Koronnej na sejmie grodzieńskim 1793 r.,” *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 1, 1958, 99—181; J. Kamińska, “Sprawa Szkoły Głównej Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego na Sejmie Grodzieńskim w 1793 roku,” *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty* 46, 2009, 5—24.

⁷⁰ *Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1787—1807*, 248—249.

⁷¹ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 348. Excerpt from the minutes of Session 4, in early January 1794 (no date). The Commission of Education requested the Warsaw General Fund to remunerate Józef Ankwicz, Antoni Raczyński and Kazimierz Mieczkowski (they were members of the Crown's Commission of Education from 31 May to 9 November 1793) with the amount of 5,000 zloty, i.e. a half of a quarterly (!) salary for the period from 1 August until the end of 1793, as “Commission Members of the previous Sejm who were due to receive that payment. That the other half of that amount of 5,000 zloty would be paid to the best of the Fund's ability, the Commission affirms”. That means that members of the Targowica Commissions of Education obtained salaries from the education fund!

for foreign correspondence with academies”). The assessors and rectors of the Main Schools had the right to attend the Commission’s sessions with a right to contribute with an informational and advisory opinion. For economic and juridical matters, the Commission had the right to employ senior and junior administrative staff: secretaries, a minute-taker, two book-keepers (for the Crown and Lithuania), an archivist, a court representative etc. The right to obtain scientific degrees and doctorates at the Main Schools was conferred on all people “of any denomination or religion (with the exception of morality studies, theology and Church law”).

The Commission of Education received the exclusive right to open or transfer male and female schools, to supervise all educational institutions (without interference in home education) and the training and examining of medical doctors. It also had the powers to employ as teachers secular and monastic priests (in agreement with their superiors). The Sejm’s Act contained provisions that were proposed in drafts prepared before the Second Partition that tied one’s qualifications to fill a relevant post with one’s education. The plans prescribed formation of veterinary faculties at the Main Schools, a main school of commerce in Warsaw, as well as faculties and courses in political and international law (which was obligatory for law students in Lublin). New provisions specified the school hierarchy and general school visitations. The 1793 law regulated management of educational funds, donations for education, inheritance of the estate of deceased members of the academic estate, jurisdiction and the scope of the Commission of Education’s juridical power over individuals associated with educational institutions, administration, the legal validity of documents and the Commission’s attitude to the Sejm, control institutions and other authorities.

The KEN retained its authority over the Załuski Library. Printing houses were required to provide publications (two obligatory copies in each case) to the Main School’s library in Vilnius and to the Załuski Library in Warsaw. The validity of the Acts of the Commission of National Education was retained, but there was no doubt that the KEN was facing the prospect of a major time-consuming overhaul of the provisions of that school law. The reduction of the state territory and the smaller number of schools required a new division into school departments.

The years of the Great Sejm and the early 1790s saw the patriotic awakening and activation of Warsaw townsmen spearheading other Polish townsmen in their effort to obtain full civic rights. With 80,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, Warsaw was rising to the role of the capital of the entire country⁷². 1791 saw the

⁷² It is hard to establish the number of the population. Some authors often provide very inconsistent information, though all of them underline the quick population growth in the last quarter of the 18th century, caused not so much by the natural growth, as by the influx of people from outside

removal of the independence of *jurydyka* tracts of land which were unified in one city organism under the authority of one common municipal government. A separate Warsaw diocese was established.

At the Grodno Sejm in 1793, the king was involved in an effort to reinstitute a single Commission of Education for the Crown and Lithuania and to adopt a new law on the KEN. After the dissolution of the Targowica Confederation, on 15 September 1793, in his conversation with Jan Śniadecki, thanking him for his work for the good of education, Stanislaus II Augustus confessed: "You know, Sir, that there is nothing left to us in Poland other than education, and it is education that matters to me. I think about it every day."⁷³ The new Sejm invalidated many of the Targowica resolutions (particularly those related to educational funds). The Commission of Education, a joint authority for Lithuania and the Crown, was a state institution exercising its governance over the education system of the Commonwealth. The educational potential of that territory was impressive: very likely that the king realised that fact and placed his hopes there. The territory was home to two universities, in Vilnius and Kraków, which had the experience in managing a network of well organised secondary schools, with consolidated curricula in Polish and properly adjusted textbooks, where instruction was provided by teachers with university education.

Warsaw was fulfilling its role of the capital better and better, being at the turn of the 1780s and 1790s a large Central European city, accommodating the seat of the royal court, the Sejm, state institutions, public libraries (including the Załuski Library under the KEN's authority), being the centre for crafts, industry and commerce, with high press readership, a good education system, culture, art and religious life. The king had reasons to believe that the country would resurrect thanks to education. He did not realise that the invading countries had decided to remove the Commonwealth from the map of Europe and the Second Partition had been just a prelude to complete elimination of the Commonwealth.

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A half of the last composition of the Commission of Education at the turn of 1793 and 1794 included past members of the Commission, such as those

of town (which might explain the volatility of population numbers). According to Maria Bogucka, Marek Kwiatkowski, Władysław Tomkiewicz and Andrzej Zahorski, the population of Warsaw is calculated to have been from 63,000 in 1784 to 110,000 in 1792 (M. Bogucka et al., *Warszawa w latach 1526—1795*, Warsaw, 1984, 272, 283—285). In another note, on the basis of a 1792 register, the author provides the number of slightly more than 80,000, of whom 65% were townsmen and 26% were nobles. In another publication, he says that the city's population in late 1792 was 115,000 inhabitants (M.M. Drozdowski, A. Sołtan, A. Zahorski, *Historia Warszawy*, Warsaw, 2017, 137).

⁷³ *Korespondencja Jana Śniadeckiego. Listy z Krakowa, 1787—1807*, 217.

who had formulated it in 1773 (Massalski, Chreptowicz and Poniatowski) and 1776 (Prince Stanisław Poniatowski). From 1783, the KEN included Michał Radziwiłł, and from May 1793, Bishop Wojciech Skarszewski. Five new members of the Commission began work on 16 December 1793: Andrzej Gawroński, Dawid Pilchowski, Hieronim Stroynowski, Stanisław Woyna and Mikołaj Wolski⁷⁴. The Commission of Education for the Commonwealth was, therefore, composed of members of its first composition along with the members from the Targowica period: Bishop Wojciech Skarszewski, the head of the Crown's Commission, and Ignacy Massalski, its first president and a member of the Targowica Commission of Education. The work of the Commission members in the period starting from the Four-Year Sejm, in particular in the years 1792—1794 (like the work of their predecessors in 1791—1792), and during the half-year Targowica period in 1793 requires examination and characterisation (inasmuch as sources will allow).

At the turn of 1793 and 1794, several of them most likely did not participate in KEN sessions at all. Prince Poniatowski settled abroad; Chreptowicz and Radziwiłł did not attend sessions; Massalski attended just one or two of them. No facts are known about the activity of the president of the Targowica Crown's Commission of Education Wojciech Skarszewski or the new members — Royal Chamberlain Mikołaj Wolski and Franciszek Ksawery Woyna, former deputy to Vienna. It can be assumed that instruction at the main schools was provided by academics who had been for long connected with the KEN — priests who had obtained bishop titles; retired literature professor, the president of the Morality College, former Jesuit, Vilnius Prelate Dawid Zygmunt Pilchowski; economist and lawyer, general school inspector, enthusiastic supporter of the 1791 Constitution, co-author of the KEN Acts amended in 1790, and secularised Piarist Lusk Bishop Hieronim Stroynowski, former professor of the Main School and the rector of the Lithuanian Main School and the Imperial Vilnius University at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries; last but not least, working in the Crown's territory, Priest Andrzej Gawroński — member of the Society for Elementary Books, co-author and translator of textbooks, coadjutor of the Kraków Cathedral in the 19th century. That last, socially very diversified composition of the Commission lacked the charisma and social prestige that had been characteristic of the KEN in its first dozen or so years of operation. Irrespective of its communication or financial problems, that Commission did not have enough time to integrate and develop the tasks outlined in the 1793 law.

⁷⁴ The dates of appointments of the Commission members are provided by, among others, S. Tync (*Komisja...*, 30—34).

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Although very little is known about the KEN's work during the period from the turn of November and December 1793 until April 1794, the fragmentary available information indicates that the Commission and its offices continued operation. The main schools and the secondary schools under their supervision continued working. It is very likely that President Michał Poniatowski headed the operations in Warsaw offices. Another 31 sessions were held in 1794 until 10 April. Instructions were prepared for "provincial" school inspectors in the Crown and Lithuania⁷⁵. Current business was being dealt with until the last session on 7 April 1794, concerning such issues as the personnel, salaries or settling the accounts. The archive and general fund continued work until the spring 1794. Plans were being outlined to employ a new clerk for the economic chancery. Sick leave was granted for Jacek Przybylski to recuperate etc.

A more detailed and in-depth examination of source materials are consequential, even a quite superficial examination of the work of the Society for Elementary Books. According to *Protokoły posiedzeń Towarzystwa do Ksiąg Elementarnych*, published by Teodor Wierzbowski, and the monograph by Janina Lubieniecka⁷⁶, it could be assumed that the Society "dispersed" and ceased its operation in the spring 1792. The last recorded session of the Society took place on 19 April 1792⁷⁷. The minutes of the session did not indicate that it was the last one. The members of the Society usually went home in May on holiday and continued work outside Warsaw. That was the case that time, too.

After the establishment of the Targowica Confederation, intended to reinstate in the Commonwealth the system existing prior to the Great Sejm, on 9 (3?) August in Dubno, Stanisław Szczęśny Potocki signed an instruction for the general confederation delegates to examine the operation of administrative bodies, including the Commission of National Education. The KEN's subalterns and staff (and that was what the members of the Society for Elementary

⁷⁵ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 378—383. School inspectors were assigned to examine thoroughly the condition of school buildings, the finance, levels of education, the condition of *convictus* dormitories, the levels of religious education, involvement and morale of the teachers, extent of compliance with the Acts and the attitude of the local community to schools and education.

⁷⁶ *Protokoły posiedzeń Towarzystwa do Ksiąg Elementarnych 1775—1792*, ed. T. Wierzbowski, Warsaw, 1908; J. Lubieniecka, *Towarzystwo do Ksiąg Elementarnych*, Warsaw, 1960.

⁷⁷ The session on 19 April 1792 was headed by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz. Piramowicz delivered the first part of the textbook *Wymowa i poezja*, published in 1792 in Kraków (the first and the second part were published in Kraków in 1819, after the author's death). The participants discussed preparation of the textbooks in physics, mineralogy and chemistry, as well as the need to prepare textbooks for education about morals for senior grades. Priest Kopczyński promised to deliver a prospectus of *Dykcjonarz polski* (*Protokoły...*, 116).

Books were) were required to accede to the Confederation and make a pledge that they would combat the Constitution of 3 May, which “was a grave of the Commonwealth’s freedom”, but would not allow “the tiniest fraction of the country to be torn out” and would remain faithful and obedient to the Commission of Education as the ultimate authority — otherwise they would lose their jobs⁷⁸. Several members of the Society signed their accession to the Targowica Confederation⁷⁹. The significance of the KEN had, however, diminished, as that of an institution degraded to an office subjugated to the authority and supervision of Targowica. In response to the KEN’s Question 10: “What salaries are paid to those assigned to write elementary books, what kind of people are they and what have they done before?”, the Commission provided quite an extensive and positive opinion, which means that the Society was still in operation⁸⁰, preparing a detailed report on the curriculum and about instructions for the teaching⁸¹. The Society continued work until the end of the KEN’s operation in 1794⁸². At the KEN’s penultimate session on 3 April 1794, in Point 5, the Commission requested Karol Lelewel, its general cashier, to pay the Society members overdue salaries for the period from 1 April 1793 to 1 April 1794⁸³.

⁷⁸ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 324—325. The report of the delegates examining the KEN’s operation at the behest of the Targowica authorities is testament to the fact that the Commission and its bodies (including the Society) continued work on 30 September 1792.

⁷⁹ The register of the Targowica Confederation members of 1792 (*Spis członków Konfederacji Targowickiej 1792 r.*) contains the names of members of the Society for Elementary Books who had acceded to the Confederation. The following priests were listed as members of the Society: Andrzej Gawroński, Szczepan Hołłowczyc, Grzegorz Piramowicz, Adam Jakukiewicz, Józef Koblański, Kazimierz Narbut, Onufry Kopczyński. There were also secular members: Paweł Czempiński and Franciszek Zablocki. See: <genealogia.okiem.pl/forum/viewtopic.php?f=73&4472> (seen: 17 November 2017).

⁸⁰ “The salaries of members of the Society for Elementary Books are itemised in the table below. In the case of members of the Society for Elementary Books, they are considered as most distinguished in their skills and knowledge, which the Commission certifies and whose activity presents in a separate report; their usefulness and work being remunerated insufficiently will allow the Society for Elementary Books to earn the enlightened men’s favour and recognition” (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 329)

⁸¹ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 330.

⁸² The Commission quotes a letter received from the Society for Elementary Books “requesting payment of overdue salaries, a bonus for 20 years of work for public education and certification for their careful, diligent and compliant performance of the regulations” (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 372). By resolution, the Commission delays the decision until its general regulation is made. Of note is the information that there is some “general regulations” in stock for the Commission.

⁸³ 4,000 zloty to Piramowicz, 2,000 zloty each to Gawroński, Hołłowczyc, Jakukiewicz, Koblański, Kopczyński, Narbut, Zablocki, as well as 1,000 zloty to the widow of Doctor of Medi-

8.

The most significant decisions and activities for the formation of the KEN and education system reform had taken place 20 years prior. It required a certain vision, a sense of mission, courage and determination in a situation that appeared to be hopeless in the political sense, with a rather apathetic attitude of the noble society. In the final phase of the Commission's operation, at the time of great expectations and social emotions in the years of the Four-Year Sejm and after the introduction of the political reform in 1791, a rapid transformation of the political situation despite the consolidation of the conservative parts of the public, nothing presaged the complete collapse of the state and the loss of national independence in 1794. The public reacted very vigorously. The rapidly progressing political changes surrounded the military action. The breaks occurring after each political shift were too short (and they were getting shorter), which did not allow the internal order to set in, or the Commission of Education to stabilise its activity and consolidate itself. The Commission had lost its character of an aristocratic institution, which was arguably one of the reasons why its position languished. Education would open the way for an individual to social advancement. Important individuals from academic circles would become members of the KEN, but for national independence to be retained, the state needed military force and armed struggle. That was why education and the education system did not stir any major emotions in the younger generation and not so much evoke opposition as ideological distress in the older generation. In that situation, the public interest in the Commission dwindled. Also, the lapse of time played an important role in changing the public attitude to the KEN, constituting the chronological framework for the events, as well as generational mentality shifts.

For the generation that created the Commission of National Education, the state taking control over the schools and the education system reform had become the requisite condition of saving the country. It was carried out by a group of Commission members representing the magnate community — well-known politicians and people with excellent education, inspired by King Stanislaus II Augustus, his family and friends. The core of that group had existed for some 18 years. They established the Commission, resolved the matters pertaining to the educational fund, selected fitting collaborators — fine teachers and educationalists who devised the pedagogical aspects of the education reform, ensured that modern textbooks would be published and contained the defiance of the opponents of the king and the reforms.

cinie Paweł Czempiński for six months, from 1 April to 1 October (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 377).

The support provided by the king and a circle of his close associates was enormously important for the development of the Commission as an institution. The king's successes in the field of education and his subsequent efforts aimed at political transformation earned him great public support for a limited period. His involvement in the transformation of the state system did not suffice, however, for the Commonwealth to retain its independence. The collapse of the Constitution of May, the king's access to the Targowica Confederation, his calculated decision to cease the war with Russia, as well as acceptance of the Second Partition all caused him to lose his credibility and public trust and support. All of that was very skilfully and ruthlessly inflamed by contenders for the throne and the calculated actions by Russia and Prussia.

The king persisted in his belief that keeping alive the Commission of National Education and its educational reforms would allow rebuilding the state, but given that he had lost his credibility and public trust, he could not attract any public interest in his ideas. The KEN in its existing format had lost its validity. The significance and achievements of that institution for the national spirit, civic education and lifting of the culture, the university reform, its role in building the foundations for a modern nation, the development of the national tongue, modern school curricula, administration, research into national history and nature, the creation of a modern profession of the teacher — all provided for the bedrock of a modern state and they all were an undisputed and priceless contribution in the development of Poland and its culture. Perhaps they were conducive for the Polish nation's survival of the Partitions of Poland and the 20th century. The significance of the reform had begun being rediscovered and appreciated after the collapse of the state. But it was not understood as a living and radiating power but rather as an idea that was a cause of pride and a source of inspiration and experiences. From the perspective of the last 250 years, the enormity and modernity of the KEN in its influence on Polish education is evident in Poland and in the European scale. In the last decade of its operation, the Commission of National Education had exhausted and exceeded its format.

One might surmise that in “normal conditions” the KEN would have transformed itself into a ministry of education and science with a powerful administrative apparatus and a competent body of commissioners managing relevant departments. However, the political conditions prevented that from happening. The two decades (including the 1793 Grodno Sejm) of a draining and uneasy endeavour in a stormy period of political transformation had exhausted the strength and energy of the most committed individuals. The first decade was a period of the concept taking shape, the KEN organising itself as an institution and preparing a comprehensive education system reform. The reform was implemented and the school machinery was set in motion. In the

second decade, the principles of the reform were conferred on schools, where they were subjected to verification in practice. Consequently, the Commission as an institution and its responsibilities changed. The younger generation of activists took the Commission and its schools for granted, as something already established. What the younger generation of activists were striving for, with the support of the Society for Elementary Books, in opposition to older groups of teachers, was sometimes criticised and sometimes ridiculed by the public and older teachers. That was a clash between tradition and modernity in the understanding of school curricula, civic obligations and patriotism. It resulted, among other things, from the education reform.

In the *Minutes of sessions of the Commission of National Education 1786—1794* (*Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*), published by Tadeusz Mizia, the information on the short last period is fragmentary. Having acceded to the Targowica Confederation, King Stanislaus II Augustus had lost all his reputation among the public. Neither he was trusted nor his brother, Primate Michał Poniatowski, although both of them seemed to be hoping that they could still rebuild the state out of the remaining fraction of the homeland. It seemed all the more the case because the young and teachers, Main School professors, and the progressive public were all experiencing a new wave of patriotism and desire to fight their way out of the cage set up by the invaders.

In the eyes of contemporaries and, as it would turn out later on, the subsequent generations, the Targowica Confederation had been discredited completely. No one realised, however, that the Second Partition was only a prelude to the ultimate elimination of the Commonwealth, which the invading countries had already agreed. Proposed and announced multiple times by his enemies during the entire period of his reign, the king's dethronement was to be accepted by his "custodian", Catherine II. Nobody realised either that the king would cave in and step down in return for the invaders paying off his enormous debts. It seems that Michał Poniatowski was first to realise that the ultimate disaster could not be reversed. Still young, understanding the real situation the Commonwealth had found itself in, he was under no illusions and lost all hope. He was just 58 when he died of an unrecognised illness he had suffered from for several weeks (perhaps it was severe depression?⁸⁴). The rumours of his poisoning have not been confirmed.

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Stirred by new political shifts since 1792 and disorganised by the Second Partition, the Commonwealth was fired up by conspiracies and preparations

⁸⁴ A letter points to this which he had prepared shortly before his death and which was found in the documents he left behind.

for an insurgency. Aside from the Commission's offices, its president, Primate Poniatowski continued his work, whereas the king was not reckoned with at all. According to the remains of the *Protokoły posiedzeń...* [*Minutes of the sessions...*], published by Tadeusz Mizia, another 31 Commission sessions were held in 1794. The 30th session on 7 April affirmed an instruction for general school inspectors, appointed some school inspectors and allocated the money for their trip; Jacek Przybylski was given permission to travel abroad for two months to recuperate. The 31st session on 10 April examined memorial decisions concerning various expenditures, e.g. for the physics study room at the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, payment of bills for cleaning the Załuski Library, an amount to pay for two Piarist priests' studies, an assignate for Priest Tadeusz Kundzicz, school inspector in Lithuanian schools, and acceptance of Franciszek Olesiński to work at the economic chancery. Both of the Main Schools were in operation, in Vilnius and Kraków, inasmuch as it was possible, along with the schools under their authority. The uprising broke out on 24 March. The signal for fight was given by Kościuszko.

The KEN entered the last period of its operation without the determination and energy of its members, with much reduced funds and without the old aura of prestige that had surrounded it in the years 1776—1792. The magnates had decreased their support for the concept of rebuilding the state through modernisation of the education system and with no more faith in the magical capacity of bringing into effect physiocratic concepts. Although the Targowica Confederation did not come up with proposals to remove state supervision, it did demand reinstating conservative principles of education and even bringing the education system back in the hands of religious orders. The Poniatowski brothers — the king and the primate — were attempting to save what was left of the ideas underlying the KEN. Initially, it did not appear so completely hopeless, especially that they seemed to have no awareness that the invaders had already decided on the ultimate destruction of the Commonwealth. Following the Second Partition, it was still quite a large territory, with two main schools, a new constitution, committed teachers and students, curricula and textbooks.

In the situation fired up by preparations for the insurgency, in a country surrounded by the Prussian and Russian troops, the social status quo was not favourable for the education system. It turned out that the Kołłątaj reform gave an invaluable input not only to universities but also to the education of teachers and the fulfilment of school inspectors' duties and to the prevention of the education system falling apart. The Commission, the Acts, and the newly formed academic estate all deserve great credit for the fact that new arrangements survived! Schools accepted them. The medications applied at the turn of the 1770s and 1780s were effective (and continued to be effective for the

subsequent decades). But the magnates, part of the Church and part of the “revolution-incited” youth and cities, especially Warsaw, turned their backs to that “positivist” programme.

The young Commission members lacked the experience and prestige of the first KEN teams by some distance. They did not possess the same political significance and prestige as the Commission members from the first years of the Commission’s operation. News from revolutionary France exerted a very strong influence as well. Presumably, the change of the nature of the Commission’s activity had an enormous significance, as did the extended stay abroad of Primate Michał Poniatowski from 1789 to 1791. Education had ceased being one of the key tools of his political influence. The king and the primate lost their capacity to impact state affairs and the KEN (apparently, Stanislaus II Augustus exhausted all his remaining vigour when he was saving the KEN at the 1793 Grodno Sejm).

In 1793—1794, the Commission’s main heroes were 20 years older and very tired, but they were trying to duly fulfil their responsibilities. Appointed to the position of president of the Commission of Education, Michał Poniatowski discharged his duties until the end of its operation. The KEN members appointed under the new law on the Commission of Education, adopted in late 1793 in Grodno, would rarely participate in its session for obvious reasons: some of them had gone abroad and others lived too far away to systematically take part in sessions. Most likely, they communicated by written correspondence. Warsaw was home to the operations of two Commission offices and... the primate. It seems that Michał Poniatowski understood how hopeless the situation was. He deserves great credit for his work in the first decade of the Commission’s operation, but at the turn of 1793 and 1794, even though he was formally the president, there was not much he could achieve. He was away from the country for two years (1789—1791) at the time when the most important turn of events transpired in the social and political life of the Commonwealth. The issues of modernisation of the education system and education itself had largely been regulated; it may be said that the KEN had by then fulfilled its mission of awakening the civic spirit, modernising schools and the universities, creating a secular teaching profession and implementing new curricula and textbooks. Now, it was social issues and the question of national independence that were coming to the fore. Unclear were prospects of the KEN’s operations as an institution in the future and the situation of the primate in his dual role as a KEN member and its president. The format that had been in place till then had been exhausted, and the issues of the subsequent transformation of the Commission and its public reception were only to be deliberated on.

The primate's two-year absence from Poland at such a critical and uneasy period was extremely disadvantageous for the KEN, diminishing its position and significance. It was also damaging for his own position. When he finally returned to Poland, he faced a different society. Changes were occurring hastily at that pivotal period, the Commission's composition was different and so was its social role. On his return home, Michał Poniatowski took up the position of president. He was working on the new law on the KEN, prepared by Kollątaj and yet to be completed. In his work on the "constitution for education", Poniatowski was supported by Kollątaj, who was always extremely interested in the issues of education and the education system. However, pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of 3 May, Chreptowicz and Potocki because they were appointed by the king to join the Guardians of the Laws⁸⁵ and had to leave the Commission because of that. They had not managed to devise a new law on the Commission prior to the Second Partition, only for the war with Russia and the Targowica terror to ensue. Yet again, Michał Poniatowski lost his influence on the KEN, and the Commission itself had to pause its operation for a short period. Even though one Commission was reinstated for the Crown and Lithuania, its conditions and capacity to operate had completely changed.

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Despite the general belief, in its short 20-year existence, the Commission of National Education was significantly transformed on several occasions and did not operate without stopping. The Commission's setup from the first 15 years of its operation dispersed, and the person with the greatest credit for the Commission's development and activity, for ensuring that it assumed authority over the educational fund and that it could claim part of the captured post-Jesuit estate in 1776, for the dozen or so years of relatively calm development and for the implementation of the education system reform — rationalist, pragmatic, reliable, cautious and talented organiser Michał Poniatowski, rather distrustful and always unpopular — was losing his influence.

9.

A more thorough examination of the circumstances surrounding the formation by the Sejm of the "commission appointed to supervise the education of nobility youth" is a source of a multitude of comments and opinions about the KEN that provoke a more comprehensive analysis. For example:

1. The papal breve suppressing the Jesuit Order was reflective of the attitude of the nobility towards the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. While

⁸⁵ *Protokoły posiedzeń Komisji Edukacji Narodowej 1786—1794*, 272.

being fanatically devout followers of the Catholic religion, opposed to the intrusion by Russia and Prussia in the Commonwealth's religious issues, fighting to retain the privileges of Catholicism in relation to the followers of other faiths during the anti-Russian Bar Confederation, the society of the nobles stood up in disobedience towards the pope and was capable of sensibly looking at the interest of the state and reach an agreement with the king.

2. The acquisition by the Polish state of post-Jesuit schools and properties before the formal suppression of the Jesuit Order prevented interruption of schools' activity or dispersal of the teachers. The Commission and the Polish education system were secured by an educational fund formed from the post-Jesuit property acquired by the state (against the pope's intent). It is worthy of note that given the circumstances (the particular setting of the Partition Sejm, the unexpected introduction of the Jesuit question for parliamentary debate and the parliamentarians' shock and initial resistance to the suppression), the decisions on the establishment of the KEN and a financially independent state education system and on modernisation of school syllabi were made swiftly and responsibly.
3. The transformations introduced by the Commission of National Education and the course of its activity were not smooth or uninterrupted. The Commission worked on the theoretical tenets of school reform and introduced innovations in school practice under continual confrontation between its theoretical assumptions and practice, the local circumstances. This in turn prevented stagnation and petrification of the adopted resolutions. What was invariable was the KEN and its schools' idea and objective: to raise an enlightened, public-oriented and happy man, a good citizen and patriot, capable of building a happy, wealthy society and a strong state.
4. The Commission sought to impose tighter supervision over the schools run by monastic orders. It engaged in a conflict with the Main Schools, regarding supervision over teachers who rebelled against the principles of living a communal life (living and dining together, celibacy, clerical clothing), low salaries and vast differences between their high ambitions and mediocre pay, as well as its interference with the universities' internal matters. It clearly sought to enlarge its competencies and powers, which was connected with the reform camp's desire to modernise social and administrative structures of the state and which would require new legal regulations.
5. The conservative opposition was being consolidated against the syndromes of and initiatives aiming at socio-economic changes and against the KEN itself. Craving resumed for post-Jesuit funds, which was extremely dangerous, as it would deprive the Commission of its independence and efficacy.

Attacks were being mounted against secular teachers, graduates of the reformed Vilnius and Kraków academies, and against new educational programmes. The Commission and its schools were accused of spreading godlessness, turning people away from tradition or even demoralising the youth. The attacks on the KEN education reform's ideological direction intensified during the Great Sejm and after the passing of the Constitution of 3 May⁸⁶. Teachers' assemblies began rejecting the constraints imposed upon them. This essentially natural development of the KEN's activity, its position within the structure of state administration and the fluctuating public attitude towards the schools, Commission and institutional transformation was brutally negated and attacked by the milieu connected with the Targowica Confederation and undoubtedly supported by Russia and Prussia.

6. Those Commission members who were appointed by the Targowica Confederation leaders and joined the separate Educational Commissions of Lithuania and the Crown were not particularly broad-minded and did not intend to pursue either the KEN's activity or the ideological direction of the education reform. The Educational Commissions they were members of cannot be named successors of the KEN, which was set up by parliamentary acts of 1773 and 1776. The Targowica Confederation was an expression of opposition towards the Constitution of 3 May. The Targowica educational commissions existed very briefly (just over six months); the "makeshift" members of the Targowica commissions were uninterested to continue the work of the old Commission.
7. In the years 1773—1792, changes in the composition of the Commission were not too frequent. In principle, changes occurred as a result of vacancies caused by the number of commissioners as set out in law. The biggest one-off change was the one made by the Lithuanian Confederation of Targowica. The newly established Commission of National Education in 1793 consisted of many KEN members who had already performed that role before. Till 1778, the parliament had several times extended the terms in office of the commissioners. Since work in the Commission required a certain degree of continuity and knowledge, this may be regarded as positive. Till 1792, aside from Bishop Massalski and Primate Poniatowski, the Commission's 23 members included only two priests, Bishop Garnysz in the years 1783—1789 and Bishop Cieciszowski in the years 1790—1791. In the

⁸⁶ Andrzej Woltanowski and Ryszard W. Wołoszyński wrote about this concisely but clearly in *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej 1773—1794*. They presented convincingly the background and ideological, social and political causes of the opposition mounted against the Commission of National Education.

following two years (from May 1793 to April 1794), the 15 people that were formally appointed commissioners according to Stanisław Tync's list included nine priests; among them, from December 1793 to April 1794, two were Main School (later the Vilnius University) professors. The candidates for the vacated places were appointed by the king. Except the complete failure of appointing Stanisław Szczęśny Potocki, which was supposed to earn his favour for the education reform, the king was usually right. The Commission's core until the years of the Great Sejm had included the "activists" of the first period.

8. During the Great Sejm, no separate KEN constitution was passed, although the Commission was widely discussed, not always positively, both in terms of the curricula and the finances. At the turn of the 1930s and 1940s, Jobert wrote in his monograph: "The history of education in the years 1788—1794 has till now been almost completely unexplored"⁸⁷. 40 years later, Mirosława Chamcówna reiterated that opinion in her translation of Jobert's work into Polish. It is also evident in a little book, written in an easy-to-read way, based on their own research and putting in order the knowledge about the Commission in the years 1788—1794, by Andrzej Wołtanowski and Ryszard W. Wołoszyński.
9. As Jobert writes, it was the ideological opponents of the transformation in the mentality of the Polish people and of the broader powers for the Commission on the one hand, perhaps too radical for the conservative nobility; on the other, it was a fairly big group of all those interested in obtaining and exploiting the educational fund that the Commission had at its disposal (e.g. to finance the army). Quite a big role was played by monastic milieus, e.g. ex-Jesuits, who offered to take over the education system and teach free of charge.

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⁸⁷ A. Jobert, *Komisja...*, 189.

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