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Short history of the Radziwiłł Family

Bóg nam radzi (The Lord is Our Counsel) is the famous family motto of one of the most prominent Polish aristocratic families of Lithuanian extraction—the Radziwiłłs. Looking back at its history, it is clear that, apart from Providence, it has been Radziwiłłs' notion of kinship and family solidarity that guided them throughout the often turbulent Polish history. While other families prospered only for three, four generations, Radziwiłłs have not only kept their influential profile for over five hundred years, but have done so 'in style', acquiring and maintaining great wealth and influence until the beginning of World War II. This family has produced many outstanding politicians, military commanders, clergymen, cultural benefactors and entrepreneurs who left a significant mark on the Polish and Lithuanian history and culture.¹

¹ The largest number of archival sources concerning the Radziwiłł family is held in Archiwum Głównym Akt Dawnych (hereafter: AGAD) in Warsaw. The collection is known as "Archiwum Warszawskie Radziwiłłów," (Warsaw Archive of the Radziwiłł Family). Apart from that repository, AGAD is housing also documents from Nieborów and Połoneczka estates. Fragments of documents from the archives of the Przygodzice estate have been deposited in the Archiwum Państwowe in Poznań. Similarly family papers from the archives in Nagłowice, Oksa i Chycza can be found in Archiwum Państwowe in Kielce. Still some records pertaining to that family can be also found in Czartoryski's Library (Biblioteka Czartoryskich) and PAN Library in Cracow, Raczyński's Library (Biblioteka Raczyńskich) in Poznań, PAN Library in Kórnik, National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa) in Warsaw and the Public Library of the City of Warsaw (Biblioteka Publiczna m. Warszawy). Although the family is still awaiting a major monograph of academic standard, a number of publications have provided much information about its history and genealogy. Of the most important secondary sources are S. Uruski, *Rodzina: Herbarz szlachty polskiej*, 15 vols. (Warszawa: 1904-1938), vol. 15, pp. 143- 151; T. Zychliński (ed.), *Złota księga szlachty polskiej*, (Poznań: 1879-1908), vol. 4 and 11 as well as supplementary information appended in volumes 26-27; J. Dunin-Borkowski, *Almanach błękitny: genealogia żyjących rodów polskich*, (Lwów-Warszawa: nakł. Księgarni H. Altenberga, Wende i Ska, 1908), pp. 93-118; and 29; S. Górzynski, (ed.), *Radziwiłłowie herbu Trąby* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 1996); T. Zielińska, *Poczet polskich rodów arystokratycznych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1997), pp. 303-348; and heavily criticised for various omissions and errors study by S. Mackiewicz, *Dom Radziwiłłów* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1990). Of much value is appended to this volume genealogical tree by J. Grala containing information about subsequent generations of Radziwiłłs till 1990s. Another descendants chart has been published by W. Dworzaczek, *Genealogia* (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), tabl. 163, 164. The chart includes information about offices held by the Radziwiłłs, as well as, much data about spouses and women of the family. Of interest are also publication which strived to present information about contemporary descendants of the family i.e. E. Borowski, "Genealogie niektórych utytułowanych rodów polskich," in *Materiały do biografii, genealogii i heraldyki polskiej*, vol. 2 (Paryż - Buenos-Aires, 1964), pp. 213-220 and S. Leitgeber, *Nowy almanach błękitny* (Warszawa-Poznań: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Adiutor", 1993), pp. 142-145. Finally, over eighty biographies of men and women of that family have been described in the Polish Biographical Dictionary. Cf. *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* (hereafter: PSB), (Cracow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1936-current), vol. 30 (1987).

The eighteenth century genealogists, in accordance with the Baroque fashion, tried to glamourise Radziwiłłs' pedigree by deriving their origins from mythical ancestors-the ancient Romans. In reality, however, the family had far more humble beginnings. The most recent research suggests that Radziwiłłs descended from Lithuanian boyars-ducal courtiers, lesser nobility, who advanced considerably in the fifteenth century.²

The first, historically sourced, ancestor of the Radziwiłłs was **Krystyn Ościk of Kiernów** (†1442/44), a court official and Castellan of Vilnius. In 1413 in Horodło he witnessed the signing of the Union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania; a union that extended privileges thus far enjoyed by the Polish nobility, onto boyars.³

Of Krystyn's four sons, **Radziwiłł** (†1477) became the progenitor of the family, which in the subsequent generations adopted his first name as its surname. At the failed coup attempt (1452) against Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Radziwiłł's high social standing secured his candidature being put forward to replace the Grand Duke. While the estates he acquired, incontrovertibly helped to launch the grand career of his only son and successor - Mikołaj.⁴

As the Palatine of Vilnius (1492) and later the Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, **Mikołaj I Radziwiłł** (†1510) became the head of the Council of Lords of the Grand Duchy, and as such exerted substantial influence on the appointments of Aleksander Jagiellończyk, and later his brother Zygmunt, as the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. In this, Mikołaj displayed a trait so characteristic of the later Radziwiłłs-favouritism towards his kin, helping them to obtain offices and grants of land from the Royal demesne. Mikołaj's own, increased fortune (through grants, dowry and acquisitions) elevated the family to new heights.⁵ While his daughter **Anna** married Konrad II Duke of Masovia, his third son **Wojciech** (*1476, †1519), became the Bishop of Łuck, and eventually took up the highest position within the Church in Lithuania, as Bishop of Vilnius. Wojciech became famous for his munificence shown to the poor. His deeds earned him the nickname *Jałmużnik* (The Almoner).⁶

No less grandeur were the fortunes of the three remaining sons of Mikołaj. They all became forebears of the three main branches of the Radziwiłł family: of Goniądz and Medele (Lithuanian: Meteliai); of Birże and Dubinki (Lithuanian: Biržai and Dubingiai); and of Nieśwież (Belarusian: Нясвіж), Kleck (Belarusian: Клецк) and Ołyka (Ukrainian: Олика).

Branch I – the Radziwiłłs of Goniądz and Medele

Mikołaj II (*1470, †1522), the eldest son of Mikołaj I, succeeded him in both offices. As an advocate of closer ties between Lithuania and Poland, he supported the Court, and, as a Lithuanian envoy, was sent on a diplomatic mission to the Habsburg-Jagiellonian congress at Wien (1518). During this congress, Emperor Maximilian granted him a hereditary title of the Prince of the Holy Roman Empire (SRI).⁷ The new splendours bestowed on Mikołaj II, the head of this branch of the Radziwiłłs, did not last. It became extinct in the male line by the very next generation. Of his sons, the most famous was **Mikołaj III** († c. 1529), Bishop of Samogitia (Lithuanian: Žemaitija).⁸

² Górzynski, *Radziwiłłowie*, pp. 3-4.

³ Ibid, p. 4; Zielińska, *Poczet*, pp. 303-304.

⁴ Górzynski, *Radziwiłłowie*, p. 4; Zielińska, *Poczet*, pp. 304.

⁵ K. Pietkiewicz, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj h. Trąby (†1509)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 315-316.

⁶ M. Michalewiczowa, "Radziwiłł Wojciech (Albrycht) h. Trąby (c. 1476-1519)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 377-379; H. Stupnicki, *Herbarz polski i imionopis zasłużonych w Polsce ludzi wszelkich stanów i czasów*, 3 vols. (Lwów: 1855-1862), vol. III, p. 7.

⁷ G. Błaszczuk, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj h. Trąby (c. 1470-1521)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 316-319.

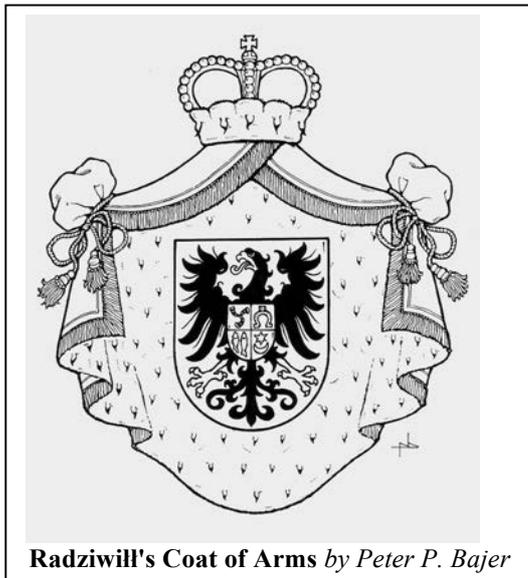
⁸ M. Michalewiczowa, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj h. Trąby († c. 1529)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 319-321.

Branch II – the Radziwiłłs of Birże and Dubinki

Mikołaj I's youngest son, **Jerzy** (*1480, †1541), Grand Hetman of Lithuania, was the ancestor of the second branch of Radziwiłłs. Known for his military achievements—he took part in various conflicts against Muscovites, Cossacks and Tatars—he also proved a talented politician. In 1526, as a member of the Lithuanian Council of Lords he petitioned Zygmunt I, King of Poland, to create a separate Kingdom of Lithuania under the reign of Zygmunt's son, Zygmunt II August. Between 1530 and 1540, in an unofficial triumvirate with his cousin Jan Radziwiłł of Goniądz, he exerted practical control over Lithuania's matters of state. Like his predecessors, Jerzy also managed to increase his estate, which after his death was inherited by his only son **Mikołaj IV Rudy (the Red)**. Of Jerzy's two daughters, the younger **Barbara** (*1520, †1551) became mistress and later queen to King Zygmunt II August of Poland, thus greatly enhancing the family's position in Lithuania.⁹

The Reformation saw many Polish noble families embrace the Protestant faith. Among the ranks of the converts, the most prominent and vocal proponents of the faith were Barbara's brother Mikołaj IV Rudy (the Red), and their cousin Mikołaj *Czarny* (the Black) Radziwiłł, the son of Jan Mikołaj.

Mikołaj IV Rudy (the Red) (*1512, †1584), Palatine of Vilnius, Grand Chancellor and later Grand Hetman of the Lithuanian Army, spent most of his life in military service. Although he was not an outstanding commander, King Stefan Batory employed his courage



Radziwiłł's Coat of Arms by Peter P. Bajer

and extensive martial experience in defending the eastern borders of the Grand Duchy against the Muscovites. His significant political career was overshadowed, however, by the accomplishments of his more influential cousin Mikołaj the Black (see below), with whom he formed a pact against other notable Lithuanian families in the rivalry for the dominant status in the Great Duchy. As a consequence, he became an advocate of Lithuanian independence and thus a vocal opponent of political union with Poland. The significance of this coalition was twofold: firstly, it marked the formation of a dynastic-like alliance, and secondly, showed how family interests could affect Radziwiłłs' relations with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.¹⁰

During the life of Mikołaj IV's son, **Krzysztof Piorun (the Thunderbolt)** (*1547, †1603), Radziwiłłs' interests more or less followed those of the Commonwealth - with Krzysztof proving one of the most talented commanders in the service of Poland-Lithuania during the wars against Muscovy and Sweden. His achievements and family backing helped him rise to the office of Palatine of Vilnius and Grand Hetman of Lithuania.¹¹

The common interests between the Crown and the Radziwiłł family began to drift apart, however, during the life of Krzysztof's son, **Janusz I** (*1579, †1620). Janusz expanded the already immense family fortune through his first marriage to Zofia Olelkowicz Słucka, who, at her deathbed in 1612, left him a huge estate, including seven castles and some thirty-two villages. Just like his father, Janusz I took part in a military campaign against Swedes in Livonia. Unhappy with the lack of material rewards in appreciation of his skilful involvement in that campaign, however, he voiced his opposition against King Zygmunt III Vasa by

⁹ J. Błaszczyk, "Jerzy Radziwiłł (c. 1480-1541)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 225-229.

¹⁰ H. Lulewicz, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj zwany Rudym h. Trąby (1512-1584)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 321-335.

¹¹ Idem, "Radziwiłł Krzysztof zwany Piorunem h. Trąby (1547-1603)," in idem, pp. 264-276.

joining in 1606 *Zebrzydowski Rokosz* (Zebrzydowski's Confederation).¹² This Confederation was aimed at halting the Royal plans of introducing hereditary monarchy, and strengthening the executive with extra-parliamentary taxes and a standing army (which would disturb the rights of the nobility and the traditional balance between the Crown and the Parliament). Janusz's participation (as one of the leaders) in this conflict accentuated a growing clash between the dynastic policies of this line of Radziwiłłs and the interest of Poland-Lithuania.¹³

This tension reached its peak with the coming of the next generation of the Radziwiłłs. Janusz I's son **Bogusław** (*1620, †1669) and nephew **Janusz II** (*1612, †1655) were, it seems, no longer satisfied with the magnat status of the family and began craving for more power. Polish sources acknowledge that especially vain in this regard was Janusz II, son of Krzysztof (*1585, †1640), and grandson of Krzysztof the Thunderbolt. His lofty ambitions appeared early in his career. Upon marching into Kiev in 1651, he ordered a production of a commemorative medal on which he compared his victory to the taking of Kiev by the most powerful Polish King, Bolesław Chrobry, some six hundred years earlier. Janusz II also used political intimidation against King Jan Kazimierz in order to secure the offices of the Palatine of Vilnius and the Grand Hetman of Lithuania. In 1652 he paralysed the central government by evoking a *Liberum Veto* - a procedure whereby any single member of the Parliament could halt its proceedings by the simple expression of dissent-saying '*Veto*' (Latin: I deny).¹⁴ Later, in 1654, during the Swedish invasion of Poland-Lithuania, known as *Potop* (The Deluge), together with his cousin Bogusław (son of Janusz I and his second wife Elżbieta Zofia von Hohenzollern, daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg), they began negotiations with Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, aimed at breaking the union between Poland and Lithuania. As a result, they signed a treaty according to which they were to rule over two sovereign principalities carved up from the lands of the Grand Duchy, which were to remain under the Swedish protectorate.¹⁵ The Swedish retreat, however, sealed the fate of the proclaimed traitors and abruptly ended their plans. The nineteenth century Polish writer and Noble Prize winner, Henryk Sienkiewicz, bluntly commented on their treason in his historical novel entitled 'Potop'. This is what he wrote about Janusz's death in the besieged by the regalist forces, Tykocin: *Earthly ruin, a fallen soul, darkness, nothingness - that is all he managed to attain as a reward for service to himself.*¹⁶

All that Bogusław and Janusz managed to achieve, it seems, was to tarnish the Radziwiłł family name for years to come. Their own lines became extinct by the next generation.

Branch III – the Radziwiłłs of Nieśwież, Kleck and Ołyka

Jan Mikołaj (*ca. 1474, †1522), Castellan of Troki, was the ancestor of the third, and the most numerous branch of the Radziwiłł family - the Radziwiłłs of Nieśwież, Kleck and Ołyka. This branch continued to play an important role in the Polish history well into the twentieth century.¹⁷

One of the most outstanding members of this branch and the family as a whole was Jan Mikołaj's son, **Mikołaj V Czarny (the Black)** (*1515, †1565). The romance between his cousin Barbara and Zygmunt II August brought him close to the future King and made him one of the most trusted and influential Royal counsellors. Showered with signs of royal

¹² T. Wasilewski, "Janusz Radziwiłł h. Trąby (1579-1620)," in idem, pp. 202-208.

¹³ The Confederation has been described by Davies as 'a bloody adventure, which divided the state and distracted the government from important foreign engagements in Muscovy and Livonia'. – N. Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), vol. I, pp. 340-343.

¹⁴ Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. I, pp. 345-346.

¹⁵ T. Wasilewski, "Radziwiłł Bogusław h. Trąby (1620-1669)," in PSB vol. 30/I, pp. 161-172; Idem, "Radziwiłł Janusz h. Trąby (1612-1655)," in idem, pp. 208-215.

¹⁶ H. Sienkiewicz, *Potop*, 3 vols. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988), vol. II, p. 410.

¹⁷ K. Pietkiewicz, "Radziwiłł Jan h. Trąby (*ca. 1474, †1522)," in PSB vol. 30/I, pp. 191-192; Zielińska, *Poczet*, p. 312.

favours, Mikołaj became Marshal of Lithuania, Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, as well as Palatine of Vilnius, and amassed immense wealth that made him the most powerful magnate in the country. The new status of the family was further strengthened when, during his diplomatic mission to Charles V and Ferdinand I, a hereditary title of Prince (German: Reichsfürst) the Holy Roman Empire was granted to him and his cousin Mikołaj the Red. A skilful politician, Mikołaj V's greatest achievement was perhaps the successful negotiation between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the state controlled by the Order of the Brethren of the Sword, which led to the secularisation of Livonia and its union with Poland-Lithuania (1562).

Mikołaj also formed a political alliance with his cousin Mikołaj the Red against other magnates in the rivalry for the dominant status in the Great Duchy, which was manifested in his calls for the Lithuanian independence. Coincidentally, despite opposing close ties with Poland, Mikołaj greatly influenced the Lithuanian nobles to become polonised by adopting Polish fashion, customs and language. He was also known as one of the most prominent converts and advocates of the Protestant faith in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He financed the printing of the first Polish translation of the Bible (in 1563), diffused works written in defence of the Reformed faith, erected a magnificent church and college at Vilnius, supported learned Protestants, and in many other ways fostered the Calvinist faith.¹⁸

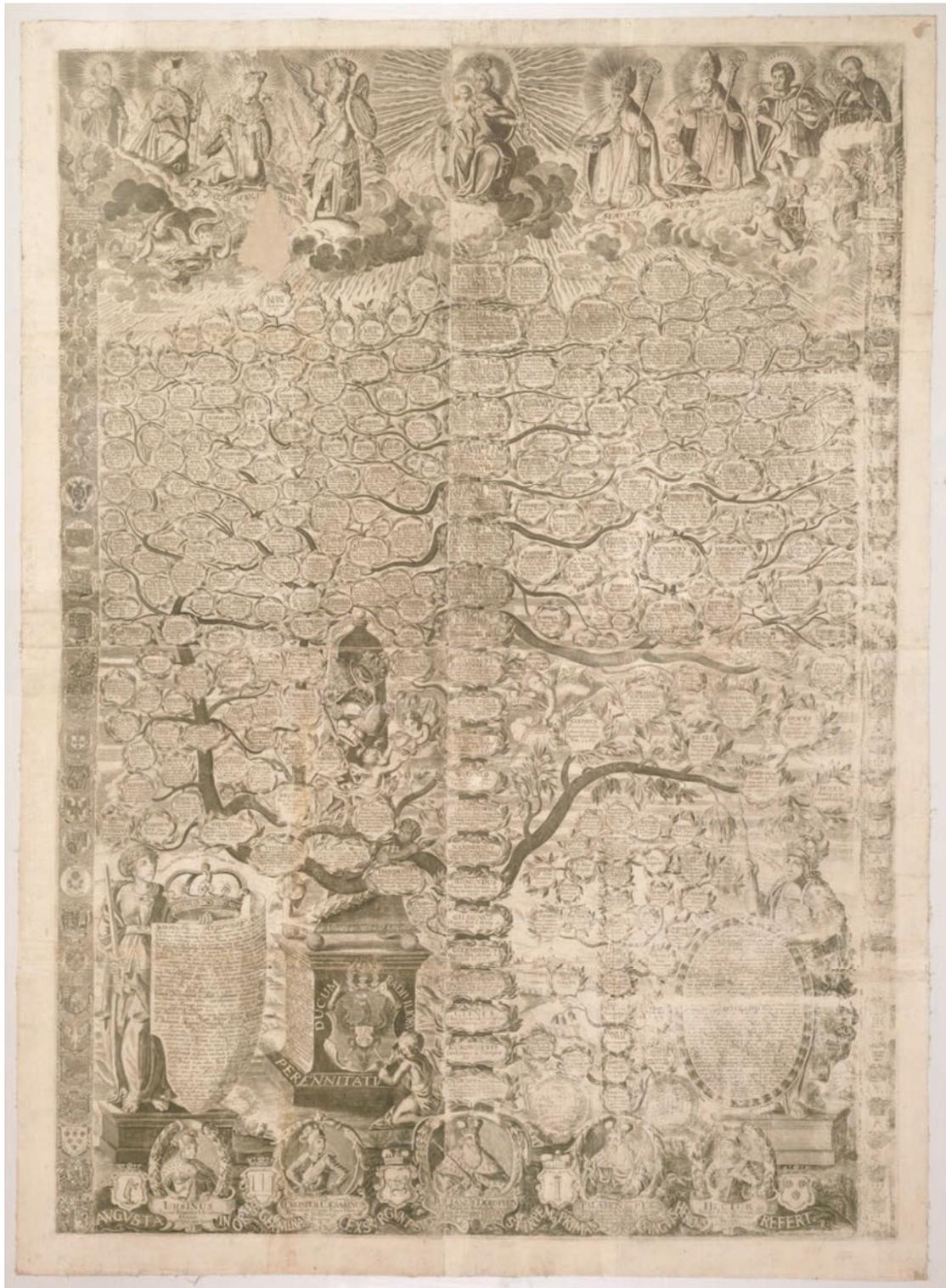


Diploma with the Radziwiłł's Coat of Arms granted in 1547 by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I

After Mikołaj's death, all of his nine children returned to Catholicism and supported Poland's Counter-Reformation policies. One of his sons, **Jerzy** (*1556, †1600), became Bishop of Vilnius, Bishop of Cracow, and the Cardinal of the Catholic Church. He was apparently nominated for the Papal stool during the conclave of 1585.¹⁹

¹⁸ H. Lulewicz, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj zwany Czarnym h. Trąby (*1515, †1565)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 335-347.

¹⁹ W. Müller, "Radziwiłł Jerzy h. Trąby (*1556, †1600)," in idem, pp. 229-234; Cf. M. Miller, *Arystokracja* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Tenten, 1993), p. 258.



"Family tree of the Radziwiłł family (c. 1742)," Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, Archiwum Sanguszków, sygn. ASang teka 556/6.

The remaining three sons of Mikołaj, apart from their personal talents and achievements, became important to their family history yet for another reason. In 1586 they signed a pact aimed at protecting the main parts of the estate inherited from their parents, and formed *ordynacja*, an institution modelled on the Western European right of primogeniture. According to the rules of *ordynacja*, which later became a statute approved by the Parliament,

the estate was not to be divided between the heirs but inherited in full by the eldest son. Women descendants were excluded from inheritance, which meant that in case of a lack of male descendants in a particular line, the estate was to be given to the closest male cousin from a sub-branch of the family. The estate that formed a particular *ordynacja* was to be excluded from sales or mortgage. Apart from *ordynacja*, Mikołaj's sons, were to receive allodial estates that were to be governed by the universal (in Poland-Lithuania) legislation of ownership and inheritance. All this was designed to keep the main estates in the hands of the Radziwiłłs and by doing so help maintain the family splendour. Three such land holdings (*ordynacjas*) were formed by Mikołaj's sons: **Mikołaj Krzysztof's** (*1549, †1616) – *Ordynacja* of Nieśwież²⁰; **Albrycht's** (*1558, †1592) – *Ordynacja* of Kleck, which survived virtually intact until 1939²¹; and **Stanisław's** (*1559, †1599) – *Ordynacja* of Ołyka²².

Ordynacja of Ołyka became extinct in the second generation. Of this line, the most famous representative was **Albrycht Stanisław** (*1593, †1656), the 3rd *Ordynat* of Ołyka who, as the Chancellor of Lithuania, was in charge of foreign policies and internal affairs of the Grand Duchy. Just like other Radziwiłłs, he was famous for the support given to his relatives: he did not fail to watch over the interests of his Calvinist cousins, despite being renown for his opposition to the heretics. However, Albrycht's highest achievement was perhaps his lengthy memoir that is an excellent source of information about the public life of Poland-Lithuania between the years of 1632 and 1653. With his heir-less death, the descendants of the 1st *Ordynat* of Nieśwież inherited his estate.²³

A similar fate was met by *Ordynacja* of Kleck that after three generations was transferred to the descendants of **Mikołaj Krzysztof Sierotka (the Little Orphan)** (*1549, †1616), the Grand Marshal of Lithuania, Palatine of Vilnius, and the 1st *Ordynat* of Nieśwież. Despite the high offices bestowed on him, he tried to stay away from politics. He took part, however, in the campaign against Muscovites and supported the regalists during the *Rokosz* of Zebrzydowski. He is credited with trying to persuade the confederates to surrender their arms.

Like other Radziwiłłs, he looked after the interests of his family. For example, he gained royal pardon for his cousin Janusz, one of the organisers of the *Rokosz*. On the other hand, Mikołaj Krzysztof was not uncritical in his help: he refused to support Krzysztof the Thunderbolt in the feud with another magnaterial family, which threatened to develop into a bloody civil war in Lithuania.²⁴

Upon Mikołaj Krzysztof's initiative, all of his siblings followed his example and converted back to Catholicism. The fame he acquired came mostly from his cultural and charity works. He was a founder of many castles, cloisters, hospitals and churches, of which the most splendid was the Jesuit church in Nieśwież. One of the chapels in this church became the family's mausoleum for the next two hundred and fifty years. For his son, **Zygmunt Karol** (*1591, †1642), a Confrere of the Knights Hospitallers, he found a *Commanderie* in Stwołowicze. In Nieśwież, which became his seat, he built a castle where he established a library and a gallery of the family portraits. Because of these works, he attracted many skilful artisans and tradesmen into his estate. Mikołaj Krzysztof also gained notoriety for a vivid account of his eventful pilgrimage to the Holy Land published in 1601.²⁵

Among the immediate descendants of Mikołaj Krzysztof the Little Orphan and in the next two generations, there was a lack of notable characters who would play a major role in politics or cultural patronage, despite the fact that many of them occupied the highest positions in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The offices of palatines, chancellors and hetmans were bestowed on them because of the family standing, rather than their personal achievements. However, they were able to further solidify the might of their family, and build

²⁰ H. Lulewicz, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj Krzysztof zwany Sierotką h. Trąby (*1549, †1616)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 349-361.

²¹ Idem, "Radziwiłł Albrycht h. Trąby (*1558, †1592)," in idem, vol. 30/I, pp. 135-140.

²² Idem, "Radziwiłł Stanisław h. Trąby (*1559, †1599)," in idem, 30/II, pp. 363-159.

²³ A. Przyboś, "Radziwiłł Albrycht Stanisław h. Trąby (*1593, †1656)," in idem, vol. 30/I, pp. 143-148.

²⁴ Lulewicz, "Radziwiłł Mikołaj Krzysztof," pp. 349-361.

²⁵ T. Wasilewski, "Radziwiłł Zygmunt Karol h. Trąby (1591-1642)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 379-382.

on the enormous wealth and influence amassed in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Many of Mikołaj's descendants aligned themselves politically with the Court, e.g. unlike his cousins Janusz and Bogusław of Birże and Dubinki, **Michał Kazimierz** (*1635, †1680) the 4th *Ordynat* of Nieśwież, fought against the Swedes (1655).²⁶

Fame was eventually met by **Michał Kazimierz** customarily referred to by his idiolect **Rybeńko (the Sweetheart)** (*1702, †1762), the 9th *Ordynat* of Nieśwież, the 7th *Ordynat* of Ołyka, Palatine of Vilnius, and the great-great-grandson of Mikołaj the Little Orphan. In his early adulthood he became the chief of the family and as such took great care in assisting his relatives in maintaining their public status. In politics he supported the Court by aligning himself with the Saxon dynasty in its battles to keep the Polish throne, but he also maintained good relations with the opposition. His skills in trimming between the opposing camps demonstrated his strong political ability. Michał Kazimierz was also known for looking after his estates, where he continued the work begun by his mother, Anna Katarzyna Princess Sanguszko (*1676, †1746), who managed to make a variety of financial investments in, e.g. textile workshops, pure-breed cattle-farming, road and bridge building. Michał Kazimierz's wife, Franciszka Urszula Princess Wiśniowiecka (*1705, †1753), became the first Polish woman playwright. Her plays, re-writes of the original works by other authors, e.g. Moliere, were staged at a theatre established in Nieśwież, and performed by the Princess herself, her immediate family and courtiers.²⁷

Michał Kazimierz's prominence was slightly overshadowed by the celebrity status of his heir, **Karol Stanisław** often referred to by his idiolect **Panie Kochanku (the Darling Sir)** (*1734, †1790), Palatine of Vilnius, the owner of almost half of Lithuania and large estates in the Crown. After his death, a twofold legend was built around his life. On one hand, he was shown as a drunkard and a degenerated reveller; on the other, as a flamboyant character, a noble favourite, the best representative of Sarmatism²⁸ and a great patriot – he was the Marshal of the Bar Confederation in 1768 which begun the war between Poland-Lithuania and the Russian Empire.²⁹

After Poland's final partition in 1795, the Radziwiłłs continued to play an important role in the Polish history. Many gained notoriety through establishing close ties with other European aristocratic families: Archdukes von Habsburg, Princes von Hohenzollern, Princes Blucher von Wahlstatt, Princes Clary et Aldringen, or Princes Sayn-Wittegenstein. Because of marrying into such families, some Radziwiłłs came close to losing their Polish identity, (e.g. the Berlin line of Radziwiłłs). However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the strong Catholicism and piety towards their roots helped those Radziwiłłs not only to regain and crystallise their Polish identity, but also made them strongly patriotic. This is perhaps why some Radziwiłłs joined in the Polish struggle for independence.



The Coat of Arms as granted in 1547 by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I

²⁶ J. Jaroszek, "Radziwiłł Michał Kazimierz h. Trąby (1635-1680)," in idem, pp. 292-299.

²⁷ H. Dymnicka-Wołoszyńska, "Radziwiłł Michał Kazimierz zwany Rybeńko h. Trąby (1702-1762)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 299-306.

²⁸ Sarmatism - a movement among the nobility proclaiming supremacy of the Polish state over other nations, arguing for the protection of the rights of nobility; also deriving descent from ancient Sarmatians, and opposing foreign coercion. – A. Borowski, "Sarmatyzm," in *Słownik Sarmatyzmu*, edited by A. Borowski, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), pp. 175-179; Cf. M. Karpowicz, *Baroque in Poland* (Warszawa: Arkady, 1991), p. 68; Davies, *God's Playground*, vol. I, p. 367.

²⁹ J. Michalski, "Radziwiłł Karol Stanisław h. Trąby (1734-1790)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 248-262.

After the heir-less death of Karol Stanisław, his nephew **Dominik Hieronim** (*1786, †1813), a colonel of the Napoleon Army, who took part in the Russian Campaign in 1812 and later died from wounds after the battle of Hanau, inherited all his estate.³⁰

Under Napoleon's banners fought also **Michał Gedeon** (*1778, †1850), the Emperor's Chamberlain. As a colonel, he took part in the defence of Gdańsk and was decorated with Legion d'Honneur. Later, he became Senator in the newly created Kingdom of Poland – a vassal state of Russia. In 1831 he joined the November Uprising against Russia and became one of its foremost commanders. After the collapse of the uprising, Michał, the then General of the Polish Army, together with other Polish patriots, was sent to Siberia.³¹

His older brother, **Antoni Henryk** (*1755, †1833), after his marriage to Princess Luiza von Hohenzollern, cousin of the King of Prussia, became the governor of the Grand Duchy of Posen. His fame came about, however, not because he was a statesman, but as a result of his musical talents and cultural benefactions. A cello player, singer and composer, he organised concerts and meetings of music devotees in his different residences. Befriended by van Beethoven, Goethe and Zelter, he composed a series of musical compositions to Goethe's 'Faust'. Living mostly in Berlin, he became the ancestor of the Berlin line of the Radziwiłłs.³²

Belonging to this line was also **Antoni Wilhelm** (*1833, †1904), the 14th Ordynat of Nieśwież, and aide-de-camp to Wilhelm I, Frideric III and later Wilhelm II, Emperors of Prussia. His wife Maria Margrave de Castellane (*1840, †1915) became involved in the restoration of the ruined castle at Nieśwież. Her actions helped to save the priceless archives and the library. She was also able to recover many items looted from the castle's treasury during the times of war.³³

The end of World War I saw Poland regaining its independence in 1918. The famous Marshal Józef Piłsudski became the second Poland's first chief of state. Among the men who fought for Poland's freedom was the son of Antoni Wilhelm – **Stanisław Wilhelm** (*1880, †1920), aide-de-camp to Piłsudski during the Polish-Soviet War 1920-21. Stanisław died during the Polish offensive in Ukraine and was decorated posthumously with the highest Polish military honour—the Cross of Virtuti Militari.³⁴

The new Polish state faced many problems. Its leaders had to unify three regions, which after the final partition of 1795 were occupied by Austria, Prussia and Russia, and thus separated for over a hundred years. During the 1920s and 1930s, Poland managed to rebuilt its economy and develop a uniform system of government, transportation and education. The Radziwiłłs, like other aristocratic families, became actively involved in this process of rebuilding by participating in politics, administration, economic development, social actions, as well as cultural and artistic activities and benefactions. The most famous representative of the Radziwiłłs of that period was the great grandson of Antoni Wilhelm - **Janusz Franciszek Ksawery** (*1880, †1967), the 13th Ordynat of Ołyka, a conservative politician, Member of Parliament and Senate, chief of the Polish aristocracy.³⁵

World War II and the occupation brought tragic experiences for the Radziwiłłs and other aristocratic families. Just like other millions of Poles, they lost their properties, were persecuted and forced to migrate. Some had to pay the ultimate price: **Artur Mikołaj** (*1901, †1939), the officer of the Polish Army, was killed during the September Campaign; his brother **Konstanty Mikołaj** (*1902, †1944), a cavalry captain and member of the Polish underground, was arrested, tortured and killed by the Germans after the Warsaw Uprising in

³⁰ Z. Anusik and A. Stroynowski, "Radziwiłł Dominik Hieronim h. Trąby (1786-1813)," in idem, vol. 30/I, pp. 176-178.

³¹ Z. Zacharewicz and W. Zajewski, "Radziwiłł Michał Gedeon h. Trąby (1778-1850)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 309-312.

³² A. Galos and A. Nowak-Romanowicz, "Radziwiłł Antoni Henryk h. Trąby (1755-1833)," in idem, vol. 30/I, pp. 156-160.

³³ A. Galos, "Radziwiłł Antoni Wilhelm h. Trąby (1833-1904)," in idem, vol. 30/I, pp. 160-161.

³⁴ W. Roszkowski, "Radziwiłł Stanisław Wilhelm h. Trąby (1880-1920)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 371-372.

³⁵ J. Jaruzelski, "Radziwiłł Janusz Franciszek Ksawery h. Trąby (1880-1967)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 215-225.

1944; **Hieronim Mikołaj** (*1885, †1945), landowner and entrepreneur, and his cousin **Konstanty** (*1873, †1944/5?), also a landowner, met their end in the Soviet Gulags.³⁶

After the war and in the new political environment with the Communists taking to power, the aristocracy and landowners were sentenced to destruction. Following the Decree of 6 September 1944 their estates were nationalised and parcelled out between the state and the peasants. Their family residences, if not looted or ruined, were turned into museums (this includes the Radziwiłł's residences in Nieborów and Antonin), e.g. their palace in Warsaw was nearly destroyed in 1944 but was subsequently rebuilt by the Communists as a museum of Lenin (sic!). All of this was done suddenly and without compensation to the Radziwiłł family. Also at that time, the Radziwiłłs, like other members of the Polish aristocracy, were proclaimed 'bloodsuckers' and 'enemies of the working class', banned from working and persecuted in other ways-some even imprisoned by NKVD and sent into the Soviet camps. Among them was Janusz Franciszek, the famous pre-war politician together with his family: wife Anna neé Lubomirska (*1882, †1947), son **Edmund** (*1906, †1971), and his family: wife **Izabella neé Radziwiłł** and their two children: **Ferdynand** (*1935, †1992), and **Krystyna** (*1937), all of whom were incarcerated in a camp in Krasnogorsk without trial or conviction until 1947.³⁷

Because of the situation in the Communist Poland, many Radziwiłłs who emigrated West during the war, decided not to return to their homeland after 1945. Among them was **Stanisław Albrecht** (*1914, †1976), the younger son of Janusz Franciszek, who established a very prosperous branch of Radziwiłłs in England. He was one of the organisers of the Sikorski Historical Institute in London and founder of the St. Anne Church in Fawley Court. Stanisław's third wife Carolina Lee-Bouvier was the sister of Jaqueline, wife of John F. Kennedy, president of the USA.³⁸ Stanisław's son from this marriage, **Antoni** (*1959, †1999), was a broadcast journalist who migrated to USA. Winner of three Emmy awards, e.g. for his work during the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul for NBC Sports – he also won the television's prestigious Peabody Award in 1990 for an investigation of new Nazism in the United States.³⁹

Those Radziwiłłs who decided to stay in Poland despite prosecution and hardship faced by all 'enemies of the working class', were able to adapt to the new political situation with perseverance and resourcefulness. For example, the already mentioned Ferdynand, son of Edmund, was prevented from entering university for four subsequent years, despite successfully passing all exams. Finally, thanks to his forbearance, he managed to become a medical practitioner. Other Radziwiłłs have also managed to find work and provide their children with good education. Consequently, and against the odds, they managed to carry on, until the present times, the values that throughout the centuries shaped them into a distinct social group.

It should be noted, however, that not all Radziwiłłs were persecuted. **Krzysztof Mikołaj** (*1898, †1986), a pre-war landowner and a politician (imprisoned in a German concentration camp) after the war collaborated with the Communist authorities. His servitude helped him to become the Chief of the Diplomatic Corps and Member of the Communist

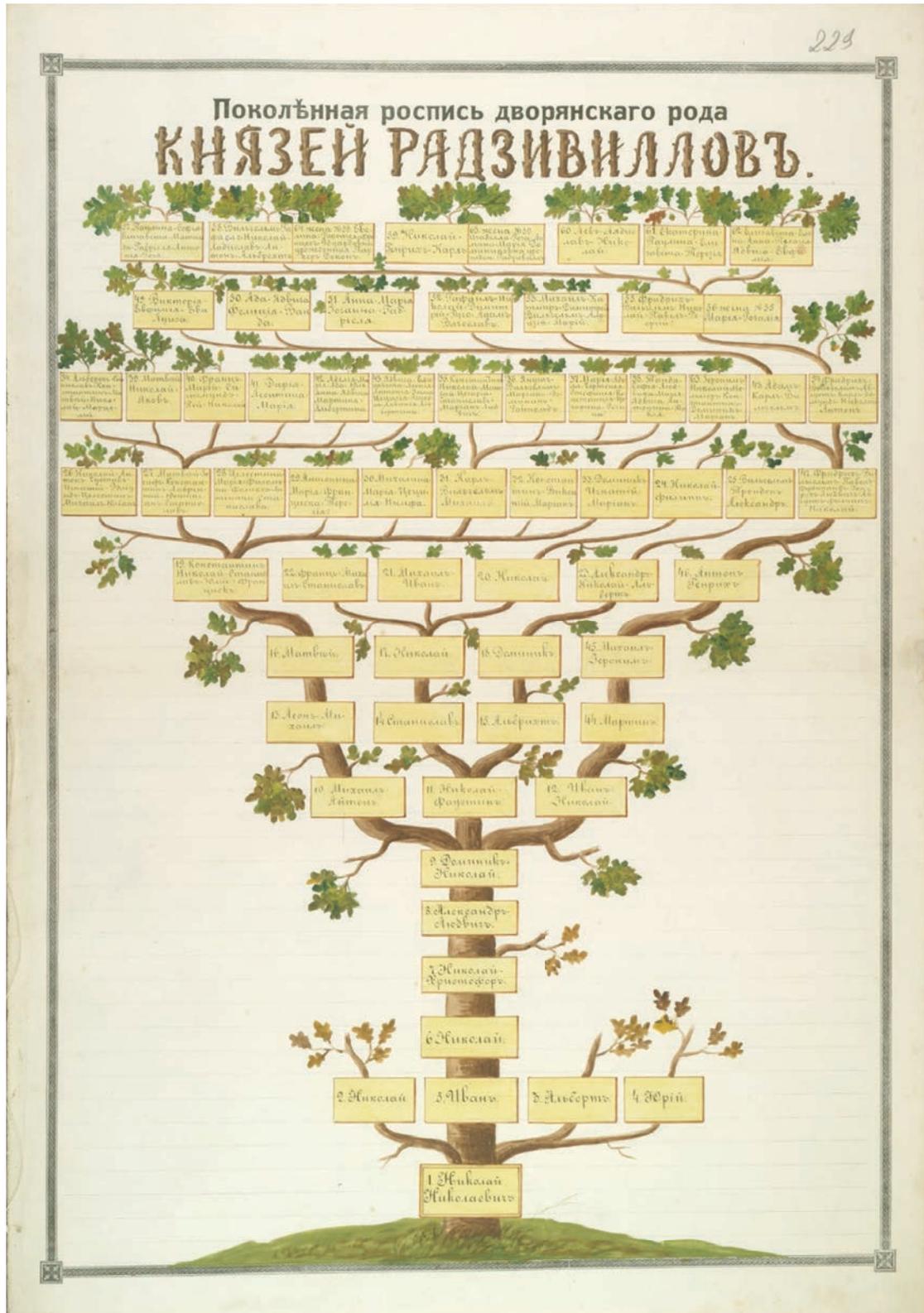
³⁶ J. Gozdawa-Gołębiowski, "Radziwiłł Konstanty Mikołaj h. Trąby (1902-1944)," in idem, pp. 264; A. A. Zięba, "Konstanty Radziwiłł h. Trąby (1873-1944/5?)," in idem, pp. 263-264; K. Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939-1945*, 2 vols. (Warszawa: Pomost-Alfa, 1995), vol. I, pp. 849-852.

³⁷ This chapter in the history of the Polish aristocratic families deserves a separate, full-length article. The best work on the subject, so far, was written by Miller. He interviewed members of various aristocratic families imprisoned in Krasnogorsk, and then used their oral histories to present the experiences of this social group prior to World War II, throughout the War and occupation, and up to the early post-war years. – Miller, *Arystokracja*.

³⁸ M. Paszkiewicz, "Radziwiłł Stanisław Albrecht h. Trąby (1914-1976)," in PSB vol. 30/II, pp. 372-373.

³⁹ S. Crenson, "Anthony Radziwiłł, JFK Jr.'s cousin," in *The Associated Press*, 13 August 1999, available at: <http://www.bergen.com/obits/obradz19990813c.htm>, accessed 20 September 2000.

Parliament; and this in turn earned him a derogatory nickname - *Czerwony Książę* (the Red Prince).⁴⁰



"Family tree of the Radziwiłł family in 'Księga rodostawa' (1914)", Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Warszawskie Radziwiłłów, dz. XI, nr 4, s. 219-229.

⁴⁰ Zielińska, *Poczet*, p. 332.

The loss of Radziwiłłs' wealth and political influence, however, has not robbed them of their social prestige. It was and still is based simply on the fact of bearing of a surname that manifests the family's ancestry, (such values are appreciated by the highly traditional Polish society). Their never-waning prestige was also upheld through marriages conducted almost exclusively among families of similar aristocratic or noble origins, e.g. Princes Czartoryski, Counts Rey, or Counts Tyszkiewicz. Radziwiłł's exclusivity is also sustained by the upholding of a patriotic-religious ideology associated with the Polish aristocratic circles and based on the principle of *noblesse obligé* – binding them personally to an intensive service towards the common good. This type of activity is represented, for example, by **Mikołaj Konstanty** (*1958), founder of the Foundation of Saint John of Jerusalem, known as “Pomoc Maltańska”, an organisation that cares for the sick and the poor, and works under the auspices of the Association of Polish Knights of Saint John.⁴¹

The importance of the Radziwiłłs in the Polish history is indisputable and well documented. The evidence of this can be found among the eighty-six entries allocated to Radziwiłłs in 'Polski Słownik Biograficzny' (Polish Dictionary of Biography). The limited character of the current essay, unfortunately only allowed for the presentation of a few of the most prominent representatives of this family.

⁴¹ Information on current activities and initiatives of the “Pomoc Maltańska,” can be accessed on the website of the “Portal Fundacji Polskich Kawalerów Maltańskich w Warszawie POMOC MALTAŃSKA,” available at: pomocmaltanska.pl.

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