
The General Confederation of Warszawa

We the Crown Councils, both ecclesiastical and secular and the entire nobility and other estates of one and indivisible Commonwealth, from Greater and Lesser Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kiev, Volhynia, Podlachia, from the Lands of Ruthenia, Prussia, Pomerania, Samogitia, Livonia and the Crown towns. We notify everyone who should know it in perpetual memory of this matter, that in these dangerous times, living without the superior lord the king, we have all diligently made efforts at the convention of Warszawa to maintain and preserve among ourselves the peace, the justice, the order and the defence of the Commonwealth, following the example of our forefathers. Therefore, by means of a solid and unanimous permission and a sacrosanct pledge we all promise this to one another in the name of the entire Commonwealth and we oblige to maintain this under our faith, honesty and conscience.

Firstly, not to make any disruptions among ourselves and not to allow for any dismemberment as in one and indivisible Commonwealth neither one part should elect the ruler without the other one, nor it should join another ruler acting as a private party. Instead of it, we promise to convene as a Crown assembly and jointly and peacefully carry this act of election into a just effect, according to the will of God. And not to allow for any election of the ruler, unless with the following certain agreement: that he first has to swear all our rights, privileges and liberties, which are extant and which we will submit to him after the election. That is, he has to swear and maintain the common peace among people who are diverse and different with regard to faith and Divine service; that he will never call us to arms beyond the borders of the Crown by no habit or his Royal request; that he will not decree a payment of five Marks per lance [a military tax] or a general levy without the resolution of the Parliament. We therefore promise to rise up against anyone who would choose another place and time for the election or who would intend to cause riots during the election or to privately enlist mercenary soldiers or who would dare to oppose to an election which would be jointly approved by all.

And as there is a considerable disagreement in our Commonwealth concerning the Christian faith, in order to prevent any harmful dissention to originate among the

people for this reason, as we can clearly see it in other kingdoms, we promise this together to one another, for us and perpetually for our descendants under the bond of our oath, faith, honour and conscience, that we, who disagree with regard to faith, will keep the peace among ourselves. We will not shed blood due to different faith and differences concerning the Church, nor we will persecute one another with confiscation of estates, deprivation of honesty, imprisonment or exile. Furthermore, we will not support any authority or office in such proceedings in any way. On the contrary, wherever anyone would intend to shed blood, we will all be obliged to oppose to this for that reason, even if anyone wanted to do so under the pretext of any decree or a judicial proceeding.

However, by means of this confederation we do not deny any suzerainty of ecclesiastical and secular lords over their subjects and we do not abolish the obedience of the subjects to their lords. On the contrary, wherever such disobedience occurs under the pretext of religion, every lord will be allowed, as it has always been the habit, to punish his disobedient subject both in spiritual and in secular terms, according to his own estimation.

All the benefices of the Royal right of patronage concerning ecclesiastical dignities, such as archbishoprics, bishoprics and all other benefices, are to be given exclusively to clergy of the Roman Church, who are Polish citizens according to the statute. Benefices of the Greek Churches are to be given to men of the Greek faith.

As it also belongs to the peace to alleviate disagreements among the estates, and as there is a considerable disagreement between the clergy and the laymen with regard to temporal political affairs, we promise to settle it all among ourselves at the next electoral assembly.

We keep in force the order of justice, as jointly agreed upon by any voivodeship [province] or as it will amicably be agreed upon by them. The same concerns the necessary defence of border fortresses.

Anyone who signed a loan agreement with another person and voluntarily agreed to respond before the castle court on account of the registration of debt, be it before or after the Royal death, should respond according to his obligation according to the ordinary course of law. And the starosts should judge, settle and enforce such cases by virtue of this general confederation, with no delay according to the usual habit, save these voivodeships which have agreed upon other ways of justice and law enforcement during the interregnum or which will yet agree upon them.

We confirm by a joint permission of this confederation all the legacies and perpetual alienations of estates which were made or will be made in the court's registers during the interregnum. This is done so that no-one be harmed in vindicating one's own rights in future during the interregnum since the day of the King's death, on account of prescription or expiration of validity.

Also those who had a deadline for receiving their money on future Christmas or the New Year or at any past date, should all receive their money at the next court session – if God allows it, after the election of the new king – or at the next opening of court's registers.

We also promise this to one another that while travelling to the appointed election, while staying there and departing home, we will not make any violence to the people or to one another.

We promise to solemnly keep and maintain all this for us and for our descendants under our faith, honour and conscience. If anyone wished to oppose to it and harm the common order and peace, we will all rise against him in order to destroy him.

And for a better certainty of all the mentioned matters we have set our seals to this act and have undersigned it with our signs manual.

Acted in Warszawa during the convocational assembly on 28 January 1573

[Transcription according to the publication: *Konstytucyje, statuta i przywileje na walnych sejmach koronnych od roku 1550 aż do roku 1578 uchwalone* (Constitutions, statutes and privileges passed during the General Crown Assemblies since 1550 to 1578), Kraków, M. Szarfenberg, 1579, f. 119v-120v. A copy in the National Library in Warszawa, acc. No. XVI. F. 692]