

Religious Tensions in Early Modern Toruń, a History of War and Peace?

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ABSTRACT

The history of acute inter-confessional conflict in Poland began with Martin Luther in 1517 and the presentation of the declaration of faith by the Protestants at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. Those events became a turning point, which introduced a period of tension and war into an apparently rationalized Europe. However, it was not only the great cultural centres of the contemporary world that were affected by this new conflict. In many cases, smaller centres of regional importance were plunged into a period of confusion and bloodshed, due to tensions between the representatives of different Christian denominations. This is what happened in Toruń, one of the major cities of Royal Prussia. In 1724, despite efforts to reconcile the faiths, the city experienced turbulent riots that had widespread repercussions not only across the Kingdom of Poland but also throughout the rest of Europe. In fact, this provoked a powerful reaction from Prussia, England and Russia, which were disturbed by that religious intolerance so contrary to Enlightenment ideals. The Polish King and Lithuanian Grand Duke, Augustus II the Strong, saw in this an opportunity to reform internal and external policy, but these were not well received internationally. The situation between Protestants and Catholics in German Toruń thus remained unresolved for a long time.

The event is often dealt with by historians as isolated from the earlier history of Toruń. However, the omission of references to that earlier period gives the impression that the bloodshed was merely a local social disturbance caused by individuals. Without claiming to offer a detailed comprehensive account of the phenomenon, this study nevertheless considers important events that preceded the riots and were closely connected with it, namely the spread of Lutheranism throughout Royal Prussia, religious education in the high schools of Toruń and a failed attempt at inter-faith dialogue in 1645.

Historia ostrych kontrowersji międzykonfesyjnych rozpoczyna się od wystąpienia Marcina Lutra w 1517 roku oraz od przedstawienia deklaracji wiary przez protestantów na sejmie w Augsburgu w 1530 r. Wydarzenia te stają się cezurą, która na scenę pozornie zracjona-

lizowanej Europy wprowadza czas pokoju i wojen. Jednak nie tylko wielkie centra kulturalne ówczesnego świata dotknięte zostały nowym konfliktem. Również mniejsze ośrodki, posiadające wybitne znaczenie na płaszczyźnie regionalnej, stają się miejscem nierzadko krwawych nieporozumień między przedstawicielami chrześcijańskich wyznań. Tak też dzieje się w Toruniu, jednym z głównych miast pruskich. W roku 1724, mimo niedawnych prób pojednania wyznań, doświadcza on tumultu, który odbija się szerokim echem zarówno w Koronie Polskiej, jak i w całej Europie, przyczyniając się do ostrej reakcji Prus, Anglii oraz Rosji, wzburzonych ową nietolerancją religijną i ideałami zgoła przeciwnymi rodzącemu się Oświeceni. Król Polski i wielki książę litewski August II Mocny upatrywał w nich sposobność do przeprowadzenia reform w polityce wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej, jednakże na płaszczyźnie międzynarodowej nie zostały one pozytywnie odebrane. Sytuacja między protestantami i katolikami w niemieckojęzycznym Toruniu na długi czas miała pozostać nierozwiązana.

Wydarzenie to rozpatrywano w późniejszej historiografii najczęściej w oderwaniu od wcześniejszych dziejów Torunia. W ten sposób pominiętych zostało wiele odniesień, bez których tumult może być uważany za jedną z wielu awantur lokalnych, wynikających z przyczyn indywidualnych. Artykuł ten, który nie rości pretensji do wyczerpania tematu, wskazuje skrótowo na owe istotne wydarzenia mające związek z tumultem i go bezpośrednio poprzedzające: na stricte konfesyjne wychowanie w szkołach toruńskich, rozmowy braterskie z 1645 roku oraz na historię szerzenia się luteranizmu na ziemi pruskiej.

No one could have predicted the consequences of Martin Luther's public address in 1517. It was mostly an exhortation to the Roman Catholic Church to reform, opening up a debate about the theology of indulgences that had been so abused in recent years¹. Of course he did not stand alone in demanding such changes, and the religious momentum that was unleashed at Wittenberg soon spread through the Holy Roman Empire (*Sacrum Imperium Romanum Nationis Germanice*). Luther was its unquestionable leader, but he found significant support in academic milieus². Other great reformers and theologians, such as Philipp Melancthon, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Butzer, Theodore Beza, John Bunyan and Thomas Cranmer, followed in his footsteps. Their revolutionary ideas resulted in a spiritual division within the Church (the legitimacy and righteousness of which is subject for another paper).

Events followed inexorably. At the Imperial Diet convened in 1526 in Speyer, these pressing religious questions remained unsolved; hence, the next Diet, which met again in Speyer in 1529, divided up the Imperial estates in an attempt to withstand the spread of Protestantism. At the Diet of Augsburg on 25 June 1530, the Protestants presented the Augsburg Confession (*Confessio Augustana*), but this was flatly rejected by Catholics. The Lutheran princes realized that the Emperor intended to declare war against Protestantism, so they founded the Schmalkaldic League, an alliance to defend their political and religious interests, which sought a compromise between Catholics and Protestants. The

tragic Schmalkaldic War broke out in 1547, resulting in victory for the Emperor and the imprisonment of Protestant leaders. This led to a counter-offensive by Maurice I, Elector of Saxony, which was victorious, resulting in the Peace of Passau (1552), which granted some freedoms to Protestants and ended Imperial hopes for religious unity within the Empire. The resolutions were affirmed by an *Interim* of Augsburg in 1555. Unfortunately the tragic Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) heightened political differences in the Empire till the peace treaty of Westphalia (1648), which guaranteed Lutherans and Calvinists the same rights and freedoms as Catholics³.

THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION IN ROYAL PRUSSIA AND TORUŃ BETWEEN THE 16TH AND THE 18TH CENTURIES

Royal Prussia was the Polish territory in which Lutheran Reformation achieved real success and Protestants were granted freedom to follow the new faith, many years before the official proclamation of religious peace at the Warsaw Confederation of 28 January 1573. Influenced by the Hussites (the followers of Czech reformer Jan Hus, who first opted for Luther before later adopting Calvinism), the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund II Augustus (1548-1572), initially favoured the Reformation and corresponded with Calvin. Hence, a general compromise with every Protestant sect was agreed in Poland in 1566 (*Sandomierz Agreement/Consensus*).

However, the triumphant onward march of Protestantism was weakened by internal strife provoked by the Polish Brethren (also called Antitrinitarians, Arians or Socinians). This Arian movement was heterodox, but generally opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, the saving act of Christ and the moral fall of man. Arians accused of favouring of Swedes were sentenced to banishment at the Diet of 1658. But Protestantism had lost its opportunity in Poland much earlier than that. The Catholic Counter-Reformation provided propitious conditions for wealthy and middle-ranking Polish nobility to return to the Roman Catholic Church at the turn of the 16th and 17th century. From then on, the most powerful Protestant groups were the Polish serfs of Cieszyn (Teschen) Silesia and the German bourgeoisie in Polish cities⁴, especially in Royal Prussia. The Prussian cities of Gdańsk (Danzig), Toruń (Thorn) and Elbląg (Elbing) stood in dramatic contrast with other Polish cities outside Royal Prussia. These provinces not only retained a special constitutional position within the Polish State, but also differed with respect to the numbers of Germans they contained and their importance for the socio-economic and political life of those cities.

The Reformation quickly gained currency in Royal Prussia in the form of Lutheran Protestantism, probably because of the German nationality of most citizens and their close connections with many other German cities.

A report, in known German as the *Gründliche Nachricht*, was published one year after the blood bath in Toruń, and it concerns the confessional transformation of Royal

Prussia, which accepted Lutheranism, though not without controversy. According to it, the light of the Gospel appeared in Toruń as soon as Luther had started the Reformation. However, Protestants, for fear of Catholic opposition, had not dared to appoint any preacher until 1557, when the Polish King Sigismund Augustus granted religious freedom to Protestants, and the city received special privileges⁵.

Nevertheless, with the Counter-Reformation, there was a rapid resurgence of Roman Catholicism in Toruń (unlike Gdańsk). This was despite the fact that the government of the city remained in the hands of Lutheran-Calvinistic patricians (and of exclusively Lutheran patricians from the mid 17th century onwards) as a result of privileges granted by the Polish kings, which gave the city considerable freedom in the regulation of internal issues. Therefore, although Catholics outnumbered other Christian sects in the 17th century, they were not only deprived of the chance to influence the political life of the city, but also discriminated against in the laws and regulations imposed by the city authorities⁶.

The dominance of Lutheranism was evident in Toruń, for instance, in the Diet of 1521. Attempts to burn Martin Luther's image and writings were prevented by Lutherans, who attacked the Catholic clergy and put them to flight. In spite of many royal orders, Lutheranism spread through the whole country and was not restricted to Toruń. Even the letters of Jan Lubodziecki (†1562), successor to Bishop Stanislaus Hosius (1504-1579), who tried to convince the citizens to remain faithful to the religion of their ancestors, were ineffectual. Lutherans became more confident, aggressive and malicious towards Catholics. In consequence, Catholic priests were forced out of the city, and their churches were occupied by Protestants. Access was granted only to a few Catholic churches with some restrictions, and public Catholic services, especially processions, were strictly forbidden. In 1558, Toruń was granted the religious freedom to preach the Gospel according to the Augsburg Confession and to take Holy Communion under both forms, which took place for the first time on March 25, 1557 in St. Mary's church in Toruń⁷. That day was considered to be the beginning of Lutheranism in the city and has been celebrated every year since then.

However, inter-confessional conflict persisted, even though the Protestants in Toruń were allowed many religious and social privileges and the town council tried to avoid any kind of violence. In 1557, the fanatic Johann Glaser had to leave the city, as did his successors Johann Bilau (1558) and Benedict Morgenstern (1567), because of the incendiary nature of their sermons against Catholics and Arians⁸. This complex situation led to confessional tensions, which increased in the first half of the 17th century, mainly as a result of the Jesuit support of the Counter-Reformation and a lack of tolerance of the city authorities towards Catholics. There were many socio-economic and political restrictions on Catholics; they were discriminated against in the city's law, forbidden membership of most guilds, and saw their religious practices restricted. Repression also bred anti-Catholic riots in 1606, 1614, 1688 and 1724. Nevertheless, till 1648-1660, the religious situation in Toruń could be described as relatively tolerant. The different faiths co-existed, though not with-

out tension, and the Prussian provinces retained a noteworthy atmosphere of tolerance throughout the 17th century⁹. Thus it was no coincidence that Chancellor Władysław IV Vasa's plan for a dialogue between all Christian believers (excluding Arians) resulted in the *Colloquium charitativum* (also called *fraterna colatio*) which was scheduled to be held in Toruń in 1645. This was the last attempt in the 17th century to cultivate dialogue between the representatives of the various faiths about the differences that divided them¹⁰. However, neither side (the Lutheran Swedes and Wittenberg orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the Counter-Reformation Catholic Habsburgs on the other) was inclined to negotiate, putting pay to the possibility of any agreement. Hence, the Toruń meeting was in vain, causing an escalation in religious tension in the Polish-Lithuanian State¹¹.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CITY LIFE

At the very centre of academic life in Royal Prussia were, however, the academic gymnasia at Gdańsk, Toruń and Elbląg. As a result of the thoroughly planned, and costly reforms since the 1570s, the gymnasia transformed into university-like institutions that provided high-level academic education for Prussian and Polish-Lithuanian students, but also served as centres for professional science¹².

Confessional tensions in Toruń were exacerbated by the educational and dogmatic controversies that took place between two high schools, the Protestant Junior High School (*das Akademische Gymnasium*) and the Jesuit College (*das Jesuitenkolleg*)¹³. Between 1717 and 1720, the situation in the Gymnasium, with the frequent replacement of teaching staff, constant conflict with merchants and artisans, charges against the Rector Peter Jaenichen (1679-1738) and a dispute over dogma with the Pietists, resulted in many conflicts, which generally favoured the conservative forces. The influence of the early German Enlightenment, particularly the unorthodox current of religious renewal in the Lutheran Church represented by Pietism (with its stronghold in Halle), contributed to the development of critical tendencies in the schools, directed against the orthodox conservative Lutheran clergy in Toruń¹⁴.

The Protestant Gymnasium was founded on 8 March 1568 with the merging of two parish schools: St. John's school (where Nicolaus Copernicus apparently studied) and St. Mary's school. Contemporaries claimed that this school had shaped many of the city's most outstanding citizens, including scientists, theologians and philosophers, and that it had contributed to their fame at the international level [... *daß die wohl-eingerichtete Schulen, und hernach das berühmte Gymnasium, das meiste zu dem Ruhme so vieler gelehrten Thorner beygetragen*]¹⁵.

The school statute, the *Novae Scholae Thoruniensis Ratio doctrinae et disciplinae*, was prepared by the rector, Matthäus Breu (†1575), at about the same time as religious freedoms and privileges were granted to Protestants in Toruń. Schools, along with the Church, were regarded as an important vehicle for moral education, and in the 17th

century, the motto of the Protestant Gymnasium was announced on a marble plaque on the school wall bearing the inscription: *Pietati et eruditioni sacrum* [sacred to piety and erudition]. Over the decades, the School paid tribute to this ideal of education, believing *pietas* [piety] to be a Protestant quality and *eruditio* [learning] to be humanistic¹⁶; indeed, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Gymnasium aimed to achieve quite spectacular results in the domain of philological education, which also involved a theological dimension. Religious questions were included even in school theatre plays, while theology, biblical history and Hebrew courses ensured an atmosphere of orthodoxy and educational conservatism¹⁷.

Nevertheless, in the 18th century, discipline declined in the Protestant Gymnasium. The special suits used by students in former times fell into disuse, and despite prohibitions against them, students of the higher classes wore swords, and would provoke duels and conflicts with the no less aggressive students of the Jesuit College. These controversies generated an atmosphere of animosity, which culminated in bloodshed in 1724. The school records describe many such events. In the school records there is a note from the rector, Peter Jaenichen, concerning a student (a certain J.H. Schneidewind, who had arrived in 1707 from Thüringen), who had to be expelled, *homo improbae vitae*¹⁸.

The Catholic college was regarded as the Jesuit response to the foundation of the Protestant Gymnasium in 1568. It was not able to start functioning before 1605, mainly because of the hostility of town council, and even afterwards, the Protestants would regularly provoke conflicts with the Catholics, who rarely retreated. In 1606, the latter were forced to leave the city for the first time during the feast of Corpus Christi in what was evidently a Protestant response to their resumption of the Eucharistic procession. In 1607, the Diet restored the Jesuit order in the city, though the college could not reopen until 1612 due to strong Lutheran opposition and the threat of further religious conflict. Although the Protestants eventually renounced armed confrontation, they nevertheless tried to prevent the Catholics from resuming their studies¹⁹. Consequently, the citizens of Toruń were not allowed to rent rooms to students of the Jesuits, and every subsequent Prussian Diet reconsidered the protests of the town council against the Catholic college, which also involved administrative prescriptions, trials, the arrest of students for what were mostly insignificant delinquencies, and general persecution, in order to force the Jesuits to close the school and leave Toruń.

The Jesuits fought for religious freedom by restoring processions outside churches in opposition to the town council. Such religious manifestations in a Protestant city were not insignificant. In 1606, the liturgical Corpus Christi procession took place in the church-yard, and in 1614 (flaunting the orders from the city) passed through the marketplace on its way to St. Nicolas's church. That event once more caused conflict between the Catholic students and the Protestant crowd, who tried to force the Jesuits to leave the city – though the request was denied by the Polish King because of its lack of tolerance, and the Jesuits remained. In 1643, Toruń agreed to let the Corpus Christi

procession pass through the marketplace from St. John's basilica towards St. Nicola's church and guaranteed the safety of the Catholics. All other processions had to remain inside the church-yards²⁰.

The Jesuits were allowed to return to Toruń after the Polish-Swedish War (1626-1629), which had given the town council an opportunity to get rid of them. But they continued to be harassed, and were forbidden to visit hospitals and prisons, and many complaints were filed against them concerning a variety of public disputes²¹.

THE COLLOQUY OF CHARITY (1645)

As the Thirty Years' War was drawing to an end, "the King of Poland, Władysław IV, came up with an idea for a 'friendly discussion' between the leaders of the rival creeds, which he called the *Colloquium Charitativum*". This was introduced with a letter addressed to all participants, giving details about where the meeting was to be held and instructions about how to organise and hold the talks²². Pope Urban VIII was against such ineffective discussions, but his successor, Innocence X, did not want to call it off. Hence, the convention took place in Toruń, initially led by Chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński and continued later by Jan Leszczyński, the castellan of Gniezno²³.

Im Jahre 1645 ward von dem Könige Uladislao der Schluß gefasset, die 3 Religionen zu vereinigen; weswegen zu Thoren ein so genanntes Colloquium Charitativum angestellet, und darzu die Theologi aller 3. Religionen invitiret worden. Es fienge sich dieses Colloquium an den 28. Augusti 1645 und endigte sich, nachdem man nur 5. Sessiones gehalten, und alle Mühe fruchtlos angewendet, den 18. Novembr. eben dieses Jahrs²⁴.

The *Colloquium Charitativum* in Toruń had begun on 28 August 1645, and ended after five sessions on 18 November 1645, having achieved very little²⁵. There were twenty-five Catholic delegates present, under the leadership of the bishop of Samogitia, Jerzy Tyszkiewicz (1596-1656); twenty-three delegates representing the *Unitas Fratrum* and the Reformed Church jointly, with Zbigniew Gorajski (1590-1655), the castellan of Chełmno (Kulm), and bishop Johann Bythner at their head; and twenty-eight Lutherans, under the leadership of Sztum's elder, Zygmunt Guldenstern²⁶. The Socinians were excluded.

"First each Church was to present its doctrines; then an understanding was to be reached as to the truth or falsity of these doctrines; and finally the ceremonies, or rituals, of the four Churches were to be discussed"²⁷. The meetings were held in the Town Hall, but they did not manage to live up to expectations or satisfy any requirements. All they revealed was the chasm between the rival creeds and the differences that separated them from unity with the Roman Catholic Church²⁸.

Three months were spent in fruitless and often childish disputes²⁹. After several protests had been made on both sides, the futility of continuing the discussions became evident, and the *Colloquium* was closed ... with very little solemnity. The royal commissioner

made a speech, in which he lamented the unsuccessful issue of the meeting; the presidents of the several confessions replied to it; and the assembly separated, after going through some insignificant formalities. Instead of producing a reconciliation of the adverse confessions, or even an approximation to it, the *Colloquium* rather increased their mutual acrimony; and each party published pamphlets, charging its opponents with that ill success which could be fairly attributed to none, because it was produced by the very nature of things³⁰.

The Colloquy of Charity failed because of both ecclesiastical and secular politics. Despite this, it

awakened hopes that Europe's religious disputes might finally be resolved or at least mitigated. Among Protestants, though, the *colloquium* proved more 'irritativum' than 'charitativum', in the words of Calixtus, who attended as part of the Reformed delegation, having been excluded from the Lutheran one by his fellow Lutherans, who accused him of mixing the two faiths. Already a dead letter, the Consensus was formally repudiated at Toruń by Lutheran hard-liners³¹.

The Proceedings of the Colloquy were published in Warsaw in 1646 under the title *Acta conventus Thoruniensis celebrati anno 1645, pro ineunda ratione componendorum Dissidiorum in Religione per Regnum Poloniae*³².

The *Colloquium* did not restore the expected peace between Lutherans and Catholics, and with time, the latter gradually gained greater prestige among servants and artisans through their parish services and the Catholic education given to their children. The next opportunity to drive the Jesuits from the city came during the second Polish-Swedish War, when Toruń surrendered to more numerous enemies under the leadership of the Polish King (4 December 1655). The Jesuit College was sequestered by enemy forces and all its property handed over to the town council with the participation of Lutherans who, despite that fact, were granted King's privileges and relieved of any responsibility. After the 1660 Treaty of Oliva, Jesuits were allowed to return to Toruń and the city had to return the expropriated property. Public controversy between the two faiths flared up again with the Corpus Christi processions, which had to be organized in St. John's Church yard, although in 1643 Catholics were once again granted permission to hold the procession in the city streets³³.

The next Catholic procession, of 1688, also came to grief. This time, a Protestant crowd attacked one of the Catholic bishops and a few priests. During the Great Northern War (1700-1721), Toruń, which was sequestered not only by Swedes (1703), but also by Russians and Saxons, harassed the Jesuits, obliging them to pay contributions, and bringing up conflicts and arguments which returned repeatedly to public debate, creating a constant state of tension in the city. Although Catholics were deprived of many privileges, they demanded equal rights, which provoked hostility in the Protestants, particularly as the Jesuit propaganda was resulting in an increasing number of conversions³⁴.

THE RIOTS OF 1724

The victory of the Counter-Reformation in Poland, the collapse of the political culture in the second half of the 17th century, and the increasing dogmatism and orthodoxy amongst the Lutherans of Toruń inevitably led to the exacerbation of religious differences in the city. This resulted in the dangerous anti-Catholic uprising of 1724, which for the first time caused the state to impose severe repressions upon the city³⁵. The uprising was partly motivated by ecclesiastical rivalry between the Protestant and Jesuit high schools in Toruń, within a broader context of tension caused by the Northern Wars and outbreaks of plague in 1708 and 1710.

The city was at that time a lively intellectual centre, although the events of 1717-1720 had done much harm. The Protestant Gymnasium lost two of its most prominent masters, while the victory of the orthodox camp affected the general intellectual climate in the city by delaying Enlightenment renewal in the schools. At the same time, confessional and environmental animosities grew more intense, with inevitable repercussions.

It was not the first time in the history of religious conflict in Toruń that Catholic ceremonies motivated an outbreak of civil disorder and riots (with the Protestant city authorities taking an aggressive role). Students from the local Jesuit College, who were mostly the sons of the fanatically Catholic local nobility from Chełmno, defiantly resisted the provocations of the Protestant high school youth. Riots between college students and the Protestant crowd broke out on 16 July 1724 during a solemn procession organized by Jesuits in honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel³⁶.

The report *Umstaendliche Nachricht*, published in 1724, describes how the Catholic processions, which had been authorized to take place through strictly designated streets, had forced Protestant merchants to close their stalls. A Lutheran foreign student who had been watching this ceremony (apparently for the first time, as he had come from Hoyerswerda) was hit by a cap, thrown by one of the Polish Catholic students³⁷.

It was Stanisław Lisiecki who had accosted the Lutheran. The same day, he was beaten up by Lutherans, accused of provoking riots and taken into custody on the orders of city mayor Johann Gottfried Rösner; he was asked to explain himself. His colleagues, indignant at this violation of rights, demanded his release from both city mayor and burgrave Gerhardt Thomas. The next day, when their demand was rejected and their attempt to take revenge on the Lutherans quelled, they decided to take captive one of the Lutheran scholars, Jan Jakub Nagórny, whom they dragged into their college. This event influenced the city mayor, who had already decided to release Lisiecki. The rumours spread rapidly around the city and that same evening, Lutherans gathered in front of the Jesuit College calling for the release of Nagórny. Catholic students, together with school rector Kazimierz Czyżewski, demanded the release of other imprisoned colleagues. They started to throw stones at one another, so the city guards and municipal watch had to

intervene and the city gates were closed. The secretary of the town council, Johann Wedemeyer, tried to negotiate with the Jesuits in order to get Nagórny released³⁸.

Finally, both detained scholars were set free and the incident was about to finish, as indicated by the retreat of the municipal police. However, a rumour began circulating that another Lutheran student was to be detained. The crowd stormed the college, broke down the doors and started destroying furniture, breaking windows, doors and tile stoves, even objects of religious worship such as altar in St. Mary's chapel. The school library was ransacked and several Jesuits were beaten up. All household equipment and sacred paintings were burned. The city mayors, Johann Gottfried Rösner and Jakob Heinrich Zerneck, remained passive, unable to deal with this kind of disorder. Only the King's guards finally managed to dislodge the Protestant crowd from the convent. The next day, the Jesuits, even more resentful about a libel nailed to the college door, filed a complaint about the whole event to the bishop of Chełmno, Feliks Kretkowski, the royal chancellor, Jan Szembek, and other dignitaries. The issue grew even more serious. The Polish nobility found it very disturbing and demanded that the perpetrators of the sacrilege be punished. However, the town council, instead of punishing the offenders, merely carried out a half-hearted investigation³⁹.

The residents of Toruń were now fully convinced that the Jesuits had caused the riots. Everything published after the event was biased, accusing the Jesuits of all kinds of savageries including not only attacks on Lutherans but also the assassination of the city mayor, Rösner, who had received a death sentence for his part in the proceedings⁴⁰. A gravestone inscription, published in 1725, and a *consolatio* in his honour, expressed what may have been his sentiments.

*Ich bin gänzlich versichert, daß das grausam an mich vollzogene Urtheil, auf der Welt mehr den hundert tausend vernünftigen Seelen entsetzlich vorkommen wird, und unzählich viel rechtschaffne Evangelische Christen sich meinen Tod mit gerührten Hertzen erinnern werden*⁴¹.

[I'm positive that this cruel sentence, which was carried out on me, may seem dreadful to more than a hundred thousand wise souls, and innumerable decent Christians will recall my death with emotion].

The Warsaw court of justice investigated the issue and pronounced its sentence on 16 November, a sentence that was very harsh from a modern perspective, albeit in accordance with the laws on sacrilege. For conniving with the assailants and neglecting their duties, both city mayors, along with twelve of the major offenders, were sentenced to death (in some cases, with other post-mortem punishments such as the cutting of their hands or quartering). Many others were imprisoned or fined.

What actually transpired was that Mayor Rösner was beheaded, while Mayor Zerneck was pardoned upon the intervention of the King (before receiving the Catholics' request, and in order to show how the state authorities were willing to settle the case differently), though he was deprived of his post⁴².

Toruń was also obliged to give St. Mary's church up to Catholics and grant them half the places on the town council and many other privileges. The court also passed measures to censor all printed material, forbidding the publication of anti-Catholic propaganda, and banished two Lutheran pastors, K.A. Geret and E. Oloff, who were accused of initiating the anti-Catholic riots. The Protestant Gymnasium was to be moved outside the city (*"ad aliquam tamen villam viciniorum civitatis vel locum extra civitatem separatum scholam seu stadium transportari acatholicis permittimus"*⁴³), though this did not in fact occur. The other decisions, though, had far-reaching consequences. On 6 December 1724, the building used by the School was handed over to the Bernardines, who destroyed most of the equipment in it in the atmosphere of general confusion and fear. The students dispersed, particularly the higher classes, who were either under surveillance in connection with the riots or had left Toruń in fear of reprisals or had already fallen victim to them. As for the library, this was hurriedly cleared and the oldest collections of books were passed to Catholics. Some books were lost in the process, as might be expected⁴⁴.

The events in Toruń elicited very sharp reactions in all Catholic circles. Emergency measures were passed in haste, leading to rigorous decisions which reverberated throughout Europe⁴⁵, and religious and national antagonisms became more sharply defined. The decisions taken by the state authorities were draconian, although there was clearly a need for equal rights to be extended to Catholics in Toruń and for the powers of the ruling Lutheran elite to be curbed⁴⁶.

The court's verdict was very harsh, but nobody believed it would be carried out. That was why the city mayors did not try to flee. When the sentence was actually executed, England and Russia threatened war (although this did not come about due to the sudden death of Peter I the Great in 1725). Everywhere, the Toruń case sparked passionate debates about Poland's 'intolerance' towards Catholics, especially Jesuits:

*Schweden und Dännemarck, die zwey mächtigen Puissancen, in deren Landen die reine Evangelisch-Lutherische Lehre vor andern floriret, nehmen sich der armen Thorner recht hertzlich an, so wie es auch Ihre Majestät, der König in Preussen thun, in dessen Provinzien beyde Protestirende Religionen gleiche Freyheit und Glaubens-Exercitium haben. Engelland, welches seine eigene Religion und Kirche hat, die weder mit der Lutherischen noch Reformirten Religion eigentlich übereinkommet, obgleich die Episcopalnen denen Lutheranern, und die Presbyterianer denen Reformirten fast ähnlich seyn, lässet sich den wenigen Religions-Unterscheid nicht abhalten, für die bedrängten Thorner inständigst zu bitten, und die nachdrücklichen Vorstellungen von der Welt zu thun*⁴⁷.

[Sweden and Denmark, where Protestants had won rights over other confessions, interceded heartily on behalf of Toruń, as did the King, who owned those provinces, where both Protestant religions had had similar freedom and privileges. England, which had its own church and religion, had no connection with Protestantism (even if its bishops and priests resembled Lutheran and Reformed clergy) and so also ignored the religious differences and interceded for Toruń, submitting these requests to the world.]

Thereafter, Catholics acquired the courage to take part in public life in Toruń and gradually gained the respect of the Protestants. However, confessional animosities were not quashed completely, but merely weakened. Lutherans did not dare assault Catholics, despite the fact that, in accordance with the judgment of December 1724, four Catholic councillors were chosen: Tomasz Skomorowski, Jakub Kazimierz Rubinkowski, Konstanty Marjański and Kasper Leon Schwermann⁴⁸.

The Jesuits remained in the city, hearing confession, giving sermons, running retreats and taking care of prisoners and the sick. Numerous foundations helped them restore their convent and legal status. Nevertheless, a decree signed by Pope Clement XIV in July 1773 suppressed the Order. It was officially pronounced to them by a bishop delegate in November 1773. The Protestants received the news positively, for their endeavours had been realized. Jesuit property, along with that owned by many Polish noble houses, was partly given over to the Commission of National Education, created by the Sejm and King Stanisław August Poniatowski, on 14 October 1773, partly to supplement a donation to St. John's church⁴⁹.

The Jesuits, from the founding of their college in Toruń, had constantly taunted local Lutherans, instilling into their students a deep-rooted hostility towards Protestants. This caused constant animosity between the two sides⁵⁰. Consequently, the state authorities, weakened by the atmosphere of intolerance, decided to punish Toruń for its participation in the riots provoked by the Catholic procession of 1724. The Protestant Gymnasium, which was indirectly found guilty, lost not only its position, but also its magnificent book collection and leading professors and scientists, and its very legal existence was questioned (at least till 1768)⁵¹.

THE HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT: A SUMMARY

The consequences of this event reverberated throughout the Polish state, and it was recorded historiographically in chronicles and occasional papers. Many of these accounts described the causes, progress and consequences of the riots; others related detailed eyewitness reports; most considered the event from a perspective of inter-confessional dialogue and its expected results. However, all those contemporary writings remained biased in spite of a quite convincing notation of *unpartheyisch* [impartial] added to every report. Jesuits were accused of causing the riots and of having been rewarded for their suffering and persecution. However, assumptions and plans for a dialogue between faiths could not be implemented. The Toruń riots, which took place almost half a century after the Colloquy of Charity, seemed to have determined all contacts and interactions between the representatives of Christian creeds in the country, and the memories of conflict lasted for a long time.

The 350th anniversary of the *Colloquium Charitativum*, held in 1995, provided an opportunity for the reconciliation of faiths and the forgiveness of past errors. The ensuing

Colloquia Thorunensia are modern meetings inspired by an idea of religious peace. They are concerned with social dialogue in different spheres of human activity, such as science, religion, culture, politics and social life, and commemorate traditions of tolerance and ecumenism.

The festivities of the *Colloquium Charitativum II* in 13-15 October 1995, attended by Cardinal Eduard Cassidy, President Emeritus of Promoting Christian Unity, were held under the patronage of Polish Episcopal Conference, Bishop Andrzej Suski, the city authorities, the Nicolaus Copernicus University and Toruń Scientific Society. An ecumenical service in St. John's and St. Mary's churches, together with a scientific conference and exhibitions (of documents, paintings of dignitaries and Colloquy participants, drawings of old Toruń and writings connected with the *Colloquium Charitativum*) attracted many visitors. The first two editions, in 1995 and 1996, were mostly dedicated to confessional issues (*Dialogue between Christians and Jews*, 1996), while the next ones dealt with more general cultural questions, such as social dialogue or human rights and dignity (*Culture that binds Europe*, 1997; *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Lesson of the past for the future*, 1998; *About the philosophy of dialogue*, 1999; *About social dialogue*, 2000; *About Polish-German dialogue*, 2001; *Together in Europe*, 2002; *Unity in multiplicity*, 2003; *Dialogue in New Europe*, 2004; *Dialogue in the teachings of Pope John Paul II*, 2005; *Religion in public area – perspectives for dialogue*, 2006; *Religion and cultures: the courage of a new dialogue*, 2007; *Dialogues about God in Modern Culture*, 2008). Finally, the most recent one – the 15th meeting of *Colloquia Thorunensia*, held on 7 November 2009 – applied the words of Pope John Paul II about the peace between religions: “May the words of religion be always words of peace”, and presented the issue from different points of view. Archbishop and the Primate of Poland, Professor Henryk Muszyński considered the words of Jesus Christ “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (John 14:27). Professor Shevah Weiss, political scientist and former politician, Israeli ambassador in Poland from 2000-2003, discussed the meaning and consequences of Jewish ‘Shalom’. The Dominican Maciej Zięba, Polish philosopher and theologian, director of the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk presented the teachings of Pope John Paul II who was promoting the world peace; while Professor Selim Chazbijewicz, Polish humanist, writer, specializing in science policy, co-chairman of the Common Council of Catholics and Muslims for many years, transmitted a message of peace from the Quran.

Although the Colloquy of 1645 did not manage to achieve its aims because of the divergences in claims and positions, the debate itself was of great value, undoubtedly a milestone in the difficult history of Christian Churches. It indicated future perspectives and tried to revise the view of inter-confessional relations as a history of war and peace. The representatives of the many different cultures and confessions that gathered at that meeting emphasized the worth of a social dialogue, tolerance and mutual acceptance in overcoming divisive barriers. For without them, all heterogeneous societies would be torn apart by internal argument and conflict.

NOTES

- ¹ J. Atkinson, *Reformacja*, in *Historia chrześcijaństwa*, ed. W. Chrostowski, Warsaw 2002, p. 383.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 390.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 391; T. Glemma, *Stosunki kościelne w Toruniu w stuleciu XVI i XVII na tle dziejów kościelnych Prus Królewskich*, Toruń 1934, p. 198.
- ⁴ Atkinson, *Reformacja* cit., pp. 400ff.
- ⁵ “Zu Thorn, Elbing und in andern Preußischen Städten fand zwar die Evangelische Warheit ebenfalls schleunig Beyfall, aber auch eben so hefftigen Widerstand. [...] So bald Lutherus die Kirchen-Reformation angefangen, ist das Licht des Evangelii auch in Thoren erschienen; doch haben die Protestierende, aus Furcht für denen Römisch-Catholischen, öffentlich keinen Prediger dieses Glaubens annehmen dürffen. [...] Im Jahre 1557 hat der König Sigismunus Augustus den 27sten Martii denen Thornischen Protestierenden des Exercitium Religionis nachgegeben, auch der Stadt hierüber ein besonderes Privilegium erteilet.” From: *Gründliche Nachricht/desjenigen/was sich seit dem 16. Julii des 1724sten Jahres/in der bekannten Streit-Sache zwischen denen Evangelischen und Jesuiten in Thoren zugetragen/nebst einer bilänglichen Beschreibung der Stadt Thoren und dem Lande Preussen, mit unpartheyischer Feder entworfen von Sincero Philaletho*, 1725, 16, 26.
- ⁶ *Historische Nachricht von dem Olivischen Frieden worinnen kuertzlich enthalten, was selbigen veranlasset, und wie darinnen vornehmlich das Polnische Preussen mit eingeschlossen worden, wie nicht weniger auch, wer die Garanteurs von solchen seynd, deme zugleich eine kurtze Beschreibung dieses Landes mit beygefueget, wie nicht weniger was in der Thornischen Tumult=Sache zeither vorgefallen, wobey dieses Letztere mit behoerigen Documenten erleutert und nach ihrer wahren Beschaffenheit vorgestellt wird*, Hamburg 1725, pp. XX-XXIII. See also S. Salmonowicz, *Szkice toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku*, Toruń 1992, pp. 18f.
- ⁷ Protestants owned most churches in Toruń: St. Mary's, St. Jacob's, St. George's and St. Catharine's churches; St. John's Basilica was meant for both Catholic and Lutheran services. Only three churches remained Catholic: St. Lawrence's, St. Nicholas's (Order of Preachers, Dominicans) and Holy Ghost Church (Order of Saint Benedict). *Dzieje Torunia*, ed. K. Tymieniecki, Toruń 1933, p. 269.
- ⁸ *Dzieje Torunia* cit., pp. 266-270; Salmonowicz, *Szkice toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku* cit., pp. 13-26.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19f.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24f.
- ¹² M.G. Müller, *Science and Religion Royal Prussia around 1600*, in J. Helm, A. Winkelmann, *Religious confessions an the sciences in the sixteenth century*, Leiden - Boston - Cologne 2001, p. 41.
- ¹³ S. Salmonowicz, *Toruńskie Gimnazjum Akademickie (1568-1817)*, in *Krótką historia Gimnazjum Toruńskiego 1568-1968*, eds. K. Podlaszewska, S. Salmonowicz, Z. Zdrójkowski, Toruń 1968, pp. 11-12.
- ¹⁴ Id., *Toruńskie Gimnazjum Akademickie w latach 1681-1817. Studium z dziejów nauki i oświaty [Księga pamiątkowa 400-lecia Toruńskiego Gimnazjum Akademickiego]*, vol. IV, ed. Z. Zdrójkowski, Bydgoszcz 1973, p. 53.
- ¹⁵ *Gründliche Nachricht/desjenigen/was sich seit dem 16. Julii des 1724sten Jahres/in der bekannten Streit-Sache zwischen denen Evangelischen und Jesuiten*, in *Thoren zugetragen* cit., p. 25.
- ¹⁶ S. Tync, *Dzieje Gimnazjum Toruńskiego*, vol. 2, Toruń 1949, p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Salmonowicz, *Toruńskie Gimnazjum* cit., pp. 59-61.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ¹⁹ *Dzieje Torunia* cit., p. 279.

- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 280.
- ²¹ S. Salmonowicz, *Toruń w czasach baroku i oświecenia. Szkice z dziejów kultury Torunia XVII-XVIII wieku*, Warsaw - Poznań - Toruń 1982, pp. 14-15.
- ²² The quotation is from the *Gründliche Nachricht* cit., p. 27. For the letter: *Vladislavs IV. Dei Gratia Rex Poloniae, Magnus Dux Lithuaniae, Russiae, Prussiae, Masoviae, Samogitiae, Livoniae, Smolensciae, Czerniehowiaeqve, nec non, Svecorum, Gotthorum, Vandalarumque Haereditarius Rex reverendo, magnificis, generosis, nobilibus... viris ad Colloquium Thorunense a Nobis indictum conregatis, sincere et fideliter Nobis dilectis, Gratiam Nostram Regiam*, 1645.
- ²³ *Dzieje Torunia* cit., pp. 281f.; *Copia litterarum, quibus Curlandiae princeps S.R. Majestatis Polon. et Svec. ad colloquium pontificiorum Charitativum invitatorijs, respondet cum responsorijs S.R. Majestatis Polon. et Svec. ad Curlandiae Ducis responsorias*, 1645.
- ²⁴ *Gründliche Nachricht* cit., p. 27.
- ²⁵ The quotation regards reports from *Ibid.*, p. 27. Nevertheless the later secondary literature e.g. *Dzieje Torunia* (K. Tymieniecki, Toruń 1933, pp. 281f.) reports on meetings which were held from 25 August till 21 November 1645.
- ²⁶ E. de Schweinitz, *History of the Church known as the Unitas Fratrum or the Unity of the Brethren, founded by the followers of John Hus, The Bohemian reformer and martyr*, Bethlehem (Pennsylvania) 1901, p. 583.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 583.
- ²⁸ *Dzieje Torunia* cit., pp. 281f.
- ²⁹ de Schweinitz, *History of the Church known as the Unitas Fratrum* cit., p. 583.
- ³⁰ W.S. Krasniński, *Historical sketch of the rise, progress and decline of the Reformation in Poland*, vol. 2, London 1840, pp. 263-264.
- ³¹ B.J. Kaplan, *Divided by faith: religious conflict and the practice of toleration in early modern Europe*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 139-140; J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: Reformation of church and dogma (1300-1700)*, Chicago 1983, p. 338.
- ³² W.R. Morfill, *The story of the Nations - Poland*, London - New York 1893.
- ³³ *Dzieje Torunia* cit., p. 283.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- ³⁵ Salmonowicz, *Szkice toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku* cit., p. 21.
- ³⁶ See *Gott allein die Ehre! Kurtze Nachricht Vom Marien-Dienst/Oder Wie die Catholiquen die H. Jungfrau Maria verehren/Um welcher willen zu Thorn Ein so grausames Blut-Bad angestellet worden, Zu dieser Zeit courieuses Lesern nicht undienlich zu lesen*, 1725.
- ³⁷ "Was nun aber den am Frohnleichnams-Tage entstandenen Tumult betrifft, so geben die Nachrichten aus Thoren, so viel, daß, wie denen Römisch catholischen daselbst frey stehet, ihre Procession an obbenannten Tage mit gewöhnlicher Solennität durch gewisse Strassen der Stadt zu halten, daher denn auch alle in denselben Strassen gelegene Kauffmanns-Laden und Boutiquen, wenn sie gleich denen Evangelischen zuständig, den Tag über zugeschlossen werden müssen, und nicht eröffnet werden dürffen, sie auch solches dieses 1724 Jahr nach ihrer Gewohnheit gethan. Da nun hat es sich gefüget, daß ein Studiosus von dem Lutherischen Gymnasio, als ein Fremder, solches mit ansehen wollen, weil ihm dergleichen Procession als etwas ungewöhnliches vorgekommen, indem er sie in seinem Vaterland, welches Hoyerswerda seyn soll, woll niemahlen gesehen haben dürffte. Wie er nun auf der Strassen stehen geblieben, und nicht mit denen andern zugleich mit niedergefallen, so hat ihm dieser halben ein Pohnischer Römisch-Catholischer Studiosus einen Schlag aufs Haupt versetzt." From: *Umstaendliche Nachricht von dem in der Koeniglichen Pohnischen Stadt Thoren, bey einer, von den Roemisch=Catholischen, am Fronleichnams-Tage 1724. gehaltenen Procession, zwischen denen Evangelisch=Lutherischen und Roemisch=Catholischen Studiosis*

- entstandenem Tumult, denen daraus erfolgten Sviten, und der dieserhalb, an dem damahligen Evangelischen Buergermeister Roessnern, und andern Personen, so an dem Tumult mit Theil genommen haben sollen, d.7. Decembr. 1724 ... vollzogenen Execution und Todtes=Straffe, 1724, pp. 5-6.*
- ³⁸ *Historische Nachricht von dem Olivischen Frieden cit., XXIV; Gründliche Nachricht/desjenigen/was sich seit dem 16. Julii des 1724sten Jahres/in der bekannten Streit-Sache zwischen denen Evangelischen und Jesuiten, in Thoren zugetragen cit., pp. 30-32; Salmonowicz, Szkiece toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku cit., pp. 91-94.*
- ³⁹ *Umstaendliche Nachricht von dem in der Koeniglichen Pohlischen Stadt Thoren [...] entstandenem Tumult cit., pp. 5-8; Historische Nachricht von dem Olivischen Frieden cit., pp. XXIV-XXVII; Umstaendlicher Verlauff, was wegen des zu Thorn den 16 Julii 1724. erregten Tumults bissher vorgegangen, nebst der Sententz und Execution, 1724, pp. 3-6; Salmonowicz, Szkiece toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku cit., pp. 95-97; W. Krasinski, Zarys dziejów powstania i upadku reformacji w Polsce, vol. 2, part 2, Warsaw 1905, pp. 60-71.*
- ⁴⁰ *“Den Thornischen Tumult haben die Jesuiten erregt / indem sie die Lutheraner geschlagen und gefänglich eingezogen / diese aber hat man deshalb belohnet massen die Stadt ihnen davor eine grosse Geldes-Summe auszahlen müssen; Unser Präsident hingegen hat die Straffe des Tumults den er auff alle Art zu steuern gesucht / mit seinem Haupte bezahlen müssen. / Sein größtes Verbrechen ist wohl gewesen die Religion, Denn / wofern er dieselbe nicht behalten / hätte er das Leben erhalten.” From: Grab-Schriefft, Des in der Königlich Pohlischen Stadt Thoren/d. 7. Decembris 1724. enthaupteten Stadt-Präsidenten und Burgermeisters, Johann Gottfrid Rösners, zum Audecken gesetzet, 1725, 2, 3.*
- ⁴¹ *Trost-Rede. Aus der Ewigkeit, Des am siebenden Dezembr. verwichenen 1724. Jahres/zu Thorn executirten Stadt-Präsidentens und Bürger-Meisters Rösners/An seinen in der Zeitlichkeit zurückgebliebenen Bedrängten Glaubens-Genossen, 1725, p. 1.*
- ⁴² *“Den Vice-Praesident Zernicke, vor den die Römisch-Catholischen in Thorn selbst intercediret, haben Ihro Königl. Majestät, zum Zeugniß, wie gern Sie gesehen, daß in dieser Sache anders hätte verfahren werden können, noch ehe sie die Vorbitte erhalten, pardoniret, und ihm das Leben geschencket. Indessen aber, weil er einmal vor einen Complice vom Tumult mit angegeben worden, so ist er, ob er gleich das Leben erhalten, seiner Ehren-Stellen entsetzet worden.” From: Das Neueste Von der Thornischen Affaire, Oder Eigentlich Bericht, Wie sich vorietzo die Sachen in Thorn aufs neue befinden, und was in der Welt von der Execution hin und wieder geurtheilt wird, insonderheit mit was vor Augen Engelland und die Protestirenden in Europa dieselbe ansehen, Unpartheyisch und nach der Warheit mitgetheilet, 1725, p. 3.*
- ⁴³ *Salmonowicz, Szkiece toruńskie z XVII-XVIII wieku cit., pp. 104-105.*
- ⁴⁴ *Id., Toruńskie Gimnazjum Akademickie (1568-1817) cit., p. 62.*
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid., p. 60.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid., p. 63.*
- ⁴⁷ *Weiterer Verfolg Des Neuesten, Von der Thornischen Affaire, Und was dazu sonst gehöret, oder bey Gelegenheit derselben kürztlich vorgegangen, 1725, p. 2.*
- ⁴⁸ *Dzieje Torunia cit., pp. 285f.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid., p. 287.*
- ⁵⁰ *Krasinski, Zarys dziejów powstania i upadku reformacji w Polsce cit., pp. 59-60.*
- ⁵¹ *Salmonowicz, Toruńskie Gimnazjum cit., p. 49.*

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