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Olszewski, Krzysztof

Ca'Foscari University of Venice, Economics Department

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The Rise and Decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth due to Grain Trade

Krzysztof Olszewski

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I present the cause of the rise and decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The main driving force was Polish grain trade over the Baltic. At the beginning, Polish grain was vital for Western Europe thus the Commonwealth was able to make significant profits and obtain economical growth. However, once the cultivation of grain was not any more profitable, the Commonwealth missed to adopt its economy to the new situation and fell behind. I present the main political and sociological background that caused this process and give some facts on the town structure that also played an important role.

Keywords: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Grain Trade, Baltic Trade, Economic Growth and Decline.

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1 Introduction

Polish grain played an important role in the development of Europe in the 15th-17th century. In this article I give an overview on the Polish grain trade and describe the background. I show how the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth first grew and later declined because of grain trade. The reason was that it completely relied on it and was not able to adopt itself to the changing needs in Western Europe. To my best knowledge, there is not a single article that captures all the aspects of grain trade and its sociological, political and historical background. For example, von Loewe (1973) captures only the agriculture in Lithuania and considers solely the period of economical rise. My aim is to provide facts that explain the rise and decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that lasted from 1569 till 1795, due to grain trade.

Two important events in the history of Europe account for the growth of Polish grain trade. One made it possible, while the other made it profitable. Grain trade was possible due to Baltic trade that developed in the same time as the surplus of grain production in Poland. The profitability emerged from the victory over the Teutonic Knights. Before the Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald), the Teutonic Knights controlled a large area, and Poland had no access to Baltic ports, especially to Gdansk (Danzig). Whoever wanted to transport goods from Poland to Gdansk, had to pass the Teutonic land and pay a tax twice, for entering and for leaving the region. The products became very costly, thus their trade was unprofitable. In 1410 the Polish-Lithuanian forces absolutely defeated the Teutonic Knights, took over their land and declared Gdansk to be a free town in 1457. I concentrate mainly on the Baltic trade and the social structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at those times and aim to explain the interdependencies. In this article, in Section 2, I give an overview on Baltic trade. In Section 3, the Polish nobility and the structure of towns is presented. Section 4 deals with the growth and decline of the Commonwealth due to grain trade. Finally, in Section 5 I summarize the facts and give some critical comments.

2 The Baltic trade in Europe

Apart from easy access to the free town Gdansk, the growing Baltic trade made it possible to sell Polish grain to the rest of Europe (more details on the whole Baltic area can be found in Malowist (1959)). In this section I describe the Baltic trade and its role on the development of Europe and its effect on the Commonwealth economy, basing on Bogucka (1980). In her opinion the 16th and 17th century are considered as the era of Baltic trade. Geographical discoveries of the 15th century had a strong impact on the trading routes, made old ones disappear and lead to the emergence of new trading centers like Antwerp, Amsterdam and Baltic Ports. Also a shift in the demand was observed, as luxury goods lost their importance and basic consumer commodities like grain and raw materials began to play a leading role. This was immediately caused by the fast population growth in the 16th century Europe. While the population grew

significantly, Western Europe was not able to increase agricultural productivity and a new source for food supply was needed. Poland was able to provide the supply and gained from this process. In those times, there were only a few publications on agriculture, thus little knowledge concerning technological improvements in the agricultural sector in Europe existed (Kjaergard 1986). Contemporary, Poland had a very fertile soil and large areas which could be extensively used for grain production. Bogucka (1980) points out that the doubling of inhabitants and fast urbanization created an enormous demand for foodstuff in Western Europe that could not be satisfied locally. The only solution was Baltic trade. Especially for the Netherlands this trade was vital, and as Spanish politicians argued, it made the armed uprising of the Dutch provinces possible. Indeed in the period 1550-1660 every delay in the delivery of Polish grain caused hunger in the population of Amsterdam as well as in other large Western and even Southern-Europe towns. In those times, people consumed some 0.75 kilogram of grain per day, as Bogucka (1980) points out. On average, towns with more than 30.000 inhabitants were not able to provide their nutrition supply from their own hinterlands (Bogucka 1980). We also need to consider the devastating wars that occurred in France but also in the Netherlands, which had a negative impact on local grain production. Polish grain was therefore very important for Western Europe, and Poland made huge profits from it for over two centuries.

The Polish gentry was overoptimistic, as it thought that Poland has the monopoly for grain supply for the rest of Europe (Bogucka 1980). But at latest in the 18th century Baltic trade has changed unfavorably for Poland, as both Bogucka (1980) and Cieslak (1983) state. Bogucka (1980) observes that the "grain-stage" in Baltic trade lasted only up to the mid-17th century. After that point in time, the food situation in Western Europe changed drastically and the demand for Baltic grain declined. Primarily, wars diminished the population thus the demand went down. Secondly, the local farms intensified the production and were able to satisfy the nutrition needs. Kjaergard (1986) mentions an extremely accelerating amount of publications on farming in the mid-18th century, which can be considered as a proxy for technological innovations and their spreading among Western Europe. New crops like rice and corn were introduced, the Netherlands dried large areas and made them fertile (Bogucka 1980). Eventually, British trade took the place of Baltic grain trade for international markets. In the second half of the 18th century more and more grain was imported from America and the mass cultivation of potatoes, which produce a lot more food per hectare soil than grain diminished the demand for grain. The Baltic trade was changing its supply to raw materials, but Poland was not able to catch up. Poland, which was the main trading partner of Western Europe in the 16th and 17th century failed behind and proved to be unable to adopt its economy to the new demands (Bogucka 1980). Poland was pushed aside by Sweden, Russia and Finland, who became the global players in raw material supply. Cieslak (1983) states, that at this time Sweden dominated the whole northern coast of the Baltic. Meanwhile Poland, Russia and Prussia were strong competitors who supplied Sweden with grain and raw materials, thus pushed the prices down. Polish corn made some 20% of imports to Sweden before the Polish partition. In 1785,

Poland supplied less than 10% of Swedish corn demand. In that time, Poland was partitioned and Gdansk deprived of its very important hinterland. Moreover, Prussia favored Elblag and discriminated Gdansk by unfavorable customs. These facts hold for the trade with Sweden, but in my opinion they can be considered as a proxy for the trade with other Western European countries.

3 Historical background

In order to understand the economical growth and decline of the Commonwealth, we need to know and understand some basic but important facts. The Commonwealth history was affected by the actions of its nobility and the specific type of towns. It is important to describe both factors in detail, as both differ slightly from those known in Western Europe at contemporary times. I start with the development of the nobility in Eastern Europe. Then I move to the history of the Polish nobility, which to my best knowledge it is very similar to the Lithuanian nobility.

3.1 Development of the aristocratic system

To understand the economical and sociological development in the considered times, we need to take a look on the development of the feudal system in the Commonwealth. I base my statements on Topolski (1981), who analyses and describes the feudal system in Eastern Europe. We have to be careful, because Davies (1982) points out, that feudalism never existed in Poland. The only source I found was Topolski, thus I use both words as substitutes, even though in fact they are not really the same. As Topolski (1981) states, feudalism developed as the evolution from agrarian communities to private properties and aristocracy. Initially, the free peasant was the owner of his land. By the transformation process of property rights, he lost his property and was obliged to provide serf labour. Finally, a landlord owned a large piece of land, and his peasants had to pay him feudal rents. Specific privileges for the nobility gave it the right of direct management of land. The noblemen had the authority over the peasants and the peasants were their main source of income. The reasons why serfdom emerged in the 15th century are studied by Domar (1970). A deep economical analysis on the organization of serfdom, based on the economy of Poland can be found in Millward (1982). There was also a large shift in the source of power and economic growth. During the 9th and 10th century the economy and its development was driven by the king or the church. Over the 13th and 14th century the main role was played by the land-owners. The landlord actively managed his property and managed to receive an appropriate income which allowed to consolidate and maintain his status (Topolski 1981). Like in Western Europe, the peasants were asked to pay increasing rents and tributes of different kinds. This also included offering free labour to the landlord. At the end of the 15th century the economy was driven more and more by peasant holdings, on which material

prosperity and living standard was growing. Those peasants were able to send their sons to university, and those made some 10% of students in Cracovia at that time. Between the mid of the 14th and 16th century the population in Poland increased by some 140%, while the production of crops per capita was nearly constant, thus grew also significantly in absolute terms (Topolski 1981). This was, in my opinion one of the important factors which allowed for the significant economical growth for both Poland and its nobility in the following centuries.

3.2 Polish nobility

The origin of the Polish nobility "Szlachta" is not very well known, as Davies (1982) points out. Basically, the nobility emerged from heroic soldiers who fought for the kings. The king honored them with land and gave them a specific name. I have to mention, that in those times usual people did not have surnames, but only first names, sometimes the name of the father or grandfather was added. Later on, the occupation was added to the first name. Contrary to those, noblemen had the same name structure as German noblemen. For example somebody who owned the town Zamosc was called "Jan z Zamosci" - Jan of Zamosc. Later the "z" was included into the name itself, which is done by the ending "-ski". Thus Jan's offsprings were later called Zamoyski. Davies (1982) mentions that a very important moment was the year 1505, when the nobility signed the "Nihil novi" law. It states that nothing can be done about the noblemen without their knowledge and acceptance. This gave them absolute freedom against the king and secured their property rights. Moreover, the nobility had a monopoly for farms, which allowed it to grow significantly. As the countryside was a gold-mine for the nobility, it had no need to move to towns. Also the lifestyle of the nobility made it more convenient to live in the countryside. Having guests and visiting friends was one of the most valuable occupations during free time. A known saying tells that "A guest in the house brings God to the house". The days were spend on hunting while the evenings on dancing and nights on drinking. Even French noblemen appreciated the kind of Polish dance, the "Polonaise". Ceremonies were held wherever possible, quite often in the sense of "ars gratia artis". Davies (1982) criticizes that the form was much above the intrinsic value and he cites somebody from those times calling this behaviour "rich poorness". On the other hand, the nobility contributed to the development of the country and used the profits from grain trade to increase the culture, build palaces and churches (Bogucka 1980). Moreover, the Polish nobility was open minded, accepted different religions and a multicultural society. The king was elected, thus his power was bounded. Foreigners of different professions were imported to Poland and had the very same rights as Polish townsmen. There were experts from the Netherlands who drained marshes as well as usual peasants. As Bogucka (1980) concludes, the exchange of people and different goods lead to a cultural interchange and the creation of new ideas and trends in the Commonwealth.

3.3 Town structure

Polish towns had a significantly different meaning than those in Western Europe at the time considered. My description covers the functional types of Polish towns in the XVI-XVIII centuries and origins from the articles by Wyrobisz (1983) and Bogucka (1996). Polish towns were populated by about 20% of the total population at the end of the Middle Ages, the nobility made some 10% of the population and the rest consisted of peasants (Bogucka 1996). Two facts are striking, namely the underdeveloped bureaucracy (Wyrobisz 1983) and the fact that most towns were based on German law and habits (Topolski 1981). In general, I conclude that Polish towns did not have any significant meaning for the aristocracy. Wyrobisz (1983) states that bureaucracy was underdeveloped and even the most important authorities employed only a minimal number of officials. Even pilgrimage centres had the usual number of clergy as in any other town. In my personal view, this fact comes from the strong decentralization and the fact that the nobleman was responsible for most of the bureaucratic duties on his own. Following Wyrobisz (1983), productive towns in the considered period were those whose main aim was to secure mineral and organic raw materials and their processing. This resulted in quite little populated towns which specialized on few professions. Another specific aspect was the agrarianisation of the towns, which hampered and deformed the urbanization process. Especially in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania such towns were very common. This was problematic as only three of those towns were able to satisfy around 50% of their needs. This made proper urbanization and especially technological innovation nearly impossible. Wyrobisz (1983) states that Polish towns were mainly oriented to supply the food for the local market, which allows to conclude that only a few were able to export surpluses. Bogucka (1996) points out, that at the beginning of the 17th century only 25% of towns belonged to the crown and the overwhelming part was organized by private landowners, like magnates, clergy and rich gentry. I assume that given the different interests of the groups and the poor bureaucracy it was quite impossible to coordinate the production and specialization of this towns, which finally lead to low efficiency. About 90% of towns had both manufacturing and commercial activities, which mainly served the local markets. Only a few towns were able to perform long-distance and international trade. Those were sea-ports like Gdansk, Vistula-ports like Warsaw, Cracow and Torun and finally those lying at crossroads of large overland routes, like Poznan, Lwow, Zamosc and Lublin (Bogucka 1996). Only the mining towns had a specialization. On average the private towns had more than 20 different specialists, but hardly any banks. The only town, which had an enormous amount of specialists and a strong banking system was Gdansk. Most of the small towns served as marketplaces for big land estates of the rich noblemen and magnates. The gentry did not undertake any effort to make the towns attractive for specialists, thus hardly any technological improvement could be observed. The Polish gentry preferred small towns or even to stay on their own estate. Bogucka (1996) does not provide the exact reason for such behaviour, but assumes that it was less costly to live on the countryside. Moreover, the Polish

gentry "Szlachta" considered the town-life as inferior compared to rural living, which allowed for a lot of freedom.

4 The Economical Rise and Decline

Instead of following a continuously growing path driven by the grain trade, the economy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth followed a hump shape. The highest growth was achieved in the 16th century. In this part of the paper I give an overview of the whole process, following very close Davies (1982).

In the middle of the 15th century there was an amazing grain trade on the Vistula river. All grain surplus was shipped to Gdansk, which was the main trading city and port in the whole area. Most of the trade was performed from there by Dutch traders. During the 1491 to 1618 period the volume of trade grew by twenty times and peaked in 1618. The yearly amount of grain trade on the Vistula river took the following weight in tons (Davies 1982): **1491**-14.000; **1537**-23.000; **1563** - 150.000; **1618** - 310.000; The volume of traded grain can be considered as a good and well measured proxy for the economic growth of the Commonwealth. The numbers come from professional traders in Gdansk, thus they are precise. Secondly, they consider real weight of grain so the numbers are comparable over time. The grain traded comes only from surplus, therefore more volume proxies an increased economical growth. The landlord or large peasant first had to satisfy his own needs, like obtaining seeds for the next period, food for own consumption, food for the animals and finally taxes. Only what remained unused could be sold. It is remarkable and also important, that Polish noblemen brought the grain on their own to Gdansk, but from there it was shipped by foreigners. This has twofold reasons. The secondary reason emerges from a law, that forbids Polish traders to trade abroad, thus only foreigners could perform trade with other countries. The primary reason comes from a sociological aspect of the Polish aristocracy. While other European gentry stayed in towns, the Polish Szlachta preferred to live on the countryside and have the social life there. The main reason to go to a town was to perform trade, speak to the government or to study. It was therefore interesting, especially for a young nobleman to perform trade. Once the whole grain surplus was collected, the nobleman took about 20 of his men and hired some professionals in order to build a float. This float was loaded with the grain and shipped downwards the Vistula river to Gdansk. After the trade was performed, the workers dismanufactured the float and the wood was sold. It is obvious, that the trading process was not cheap, thus only noblemen and magnates were able to perform it. Average peasants were not able to produce a surplus that could be sold. As their land was quite small, any risk affected their whole soil with the same impact. It was therefore difficult to diversify and to protect against risk. The only way was to save some of the produced grain for bad times. Noblemen possessed whole villages and magnates owned conglomerates of villages, thus a storm or a crossing army destroyed only a small part of the grain.

The landlord had three possible ways to sell his grain, namely to sell it locally, to a trader

or by his own. The travel was a possibility to relax and to get news from abroad. It was so common for noblemen to accompany their grain that in 1595 a book was written on how to perform trade and how to enjoy the travel. The city of Gdansk was considerably large, with 50.000 inhabitants in 1600 it was five times larger than the capital, Warsaw. Around 70% of exports done in Gdansk came from grain trade. Three fourth of the whole grain trade of the Commonwealth was performed with abroad. Other countries used the amount of grain for economical espionage, as traders reported to their government how much they bought. The gain for traders was enormous, both the noblemen and the Dutch traders made some 30% of gain. Serfdom was a very important institution in those times. As Davies (1982) points out, peasants were able to give the agricultural risk away and get a fixed salary instead. As mentioned before, a single peasant was not able to produce a surplus and was moreover not able to insure himself against risk of a natural disaster or a insufficient production of crops. He gave his working power to the landlord, who gave him a small piece of land with which he was able to produce some food for himself. The landlord requested some working days to be spent on his own fields, thus had a very cheap workforce. But as the time went by the peasants became poorer and poorer. Because the landlord required them to work more often on his fields, the peasant spend all his energy on the landlords field. Only his wife and children were able to care about their own field, thus the production was rather low. This very badly or even un-paid workforce was the main source of prosperity of the landlord.

4.1 The Decline

Starting in 1618, the whole economy started to decline. First and foremost, the landlords had a bad effect on the cities, secondly they did not contribute to the overall prosperity. Davies (1982) states, that the agricultural sector did not contribute in any way to the technological growth. Hardly any improvements have been done, and because few noblemen lived in towns, the profit from grain trade was not spend in towns. The Polish nobleman had whole villages which produced everything that was needed, but there were only few people who came to the villages from outside. The mobility of the workforce was negligible, because every year only one peasant could move from the village. Without getting capital from the countryside, the towns started to decline. The serfdom which was initially the motor of growth became the biggest problem. The noblemen did not focus on future investment, thus did not accumulate capital. Whenever they had to spend more money, the only financial source were Dutch traders and Gdansk bankers. Because the noblemen were far away from Gdansk and did not interact with the bankers on a daily basis, the interest rate was very high. It went up to 20% per year, while the interest rate between Gdansk traders was about 5%.

The collapse of the grain trade in 1648 coincides with the economical decline of the Commonwealth. Davies (1982) mentions that some scholars see a direct link while others do not. Whatever the causality is, we observed a steady economical decline since 1618. The main cause

was most likely the period 1648-60, when a lot of wars occurred. The Vistula river was the main transport way for the grain, but it was crossed by armies which destroyed buildings and killed people. In this period about one-fourth of the population was killed and around 70% of the capital stock destroyed. Because the trade was not any more continuous, many trading partners became impatient and risk averse and chose other suppliers. Exactly in the same time England and the Netherlands were able to invest in agriculture on a large scale. Primarily, a lot of land was dried, such that it could be used in order to produce grain. Secondly, the farming techniques were improved. As the foreign trading partners stopped to trade demand declined and the noblemen stopped to produce a surplus. Eventually, the whole trade came to a stop. Another problem emerged from the fact that the Commonwealth was decentralized and the king had little power. This led to good property rights for the nobleman, magnates and larger peasants, but diffused the power in such a way that there was hardly any political power that could control the noblemen. The king was not able to collect a proper amount of taxes (Davies 1982). The noblemen were personally responsible for keeping an army or a kind of police, which was good enough against thieves or small invaders, but not enough to fight large armies. Beside this, there was no central management for the economy. Every landlord was dealing with his own problems and there was no countrywide coordination. Consequently, important changes of the economical structure were not performed and resources allocated inefficiently. The Commonwealth nobility separated itself from technical improvements that emerged in Western Europe. Instead of improving farming techniques, human labour force was used more and more extensively. This led only to uprisings but never to an increase in the production. The result was obvious and nothing could prevent it. The farming techniques declined and the demand for food could not be satisfied. The peasants had a bad diet and worked even worse. As no capital was accumulated nor brought to towns, there was no stimulus for manufacturers. As the people were poor, the taxation was producing a very small income stream for the king. In consequence, the defence went down and allowed for the prelude of the partition of Poland (Davies 1982).

Poland tried to adjust itself to the economic shocks that emerged in the first half of the 17th century (Wyczanski 1981). The change of the economic situation came among different reasons from the movement of relative prices. The landlords and peasants were able to make profits, but this hit the towns quite hard. Even though the prices were damaging the towns, they accelerated the urbanization process by creating large markets in rural areas for artisan products (Wyczanski 1981). But in the beginning of the 17th century the relative agricultural prices began to decline, while artisan products became more and more expensive. The main good exported, making some 80% of the trading volume in Gdansk at this time was grain. On the other side, some 75% of the imports consisted of manufactured goods and spices. What initially was the main driving force of the economy started to become a problem, and due to the adverse price ratios Poland started to make a foreign trade deficit (Wyczanski 1981). Moreover, bad foreign currency rushed in while the domestic, silver based currency disappeared. Some

actions were undertaken by the government in order to make the imports less expensive, but those failed. Finally, the monoculture turned out to be a bad choice in the long run. The soil became less fertile, there was less money to be invested in the production, thus less and less was produced. In the whole Commonwealth the production of grain fell significantly compared to the values in the 16th century. The poor noblemen and peasants became very poor, while the rich ones traded only over Gdansk. In those times the towns started to gain power and were able to survive easily due to the price ratios. Concerning the decline, Wyczanski (1981) draws certain conclusions: The economic adjustment did not originate from any conscious policy but rather from spontaneous decisions. The landlords caused considerable losses and negative changes to the economy. Finally, the disastrous wars that emerged shortly after this period brought more problems. The grain trade was eventually stopped, and Poland was partitioned among three Monarchies. It took Poland some 250 years, starting from the decline in 1648 to recover its grain market around 1884-99 (Kostrowicka 1984). The recovery based on the increasing domestic demand and industrialization was taking over. Poland's economic structure changed to a mixed agricultural-industrial one. In the years 1870-1900 industrial production outperformed the agricultural one, by growing nearly six times, while the latter one grew only twice (Kostrowicka 1984). Unfortunately, Polish grain never again played a significant role in Europe.

5 Conclusions

This article deals with the rise and decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth caused by grain trade. The grain trade that first allowed for a significant economical growth and a strong position in Europe eventually led to a decline. As we know from the deep economical and historical analysis of the rise of Western Europe by Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2004), two necessary conditions have to be fulfilled, in order to obtain significant and sustainable growth: political institutions that guarantee property rights and a long-lasting source for economical profit need to exist. In the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, we had both of them at the very beginning. First and foremost, Poland had a unique political and social structure that was futuristic for those times in my opinion. The landlords, which were noblemen but also rich peasants had the total control over their land and the king only collected taxes. The property was never endangered and small armies, which belonged to the richer noblemen and magnates, ensured security and safety on the main trade routes. The king was elected as a "superior among equal" and had only a part of the power a contemporary French or German king had. By this the first necessary condition was surely satisfied. The second one was satisfied as well. Poland was the main supplier of grain to Western Europe and a considerable trading partner. As long as the grain produced high profits, the economy grew and the Commonwealth was powerful. But two serious mistakes were done, which led to a fatal outcome, namely the decline and subsequent the partition of Poland. The king had not enough power to control the

actions of the noblemen and was thus not able to dictate the long-run economic strategy for the country, which could save the economy after the grain crisis. The noblemen were concerned only with their own local and small problems and did not think in a global manner. The only solution they thought about was the intensification of serfdom labor. We know that this did not increase the grain volume but only lead to pain and poverty of the peasants. The second, and in my opinion the major mistake was the overoptimism of the nobility, which thought, that the demand for Polish grain will last forever. Nobody did take a single step in order to find new profitable occupations, as long as grain created profits. When the profits stopped, it was already too late to deviate, as other countries took the leading role in supplying new required materials like raw materials. Because the banking system was underdeveloped, hardly anyone of the rich noblemen accumulated money. They created culture or invested it in the improvement of their villages and fields. The main part was invested in buildings which were used for the grain production, and therefore were useless for other purposes. As the grain demand crashed, the noblemen did not have the possibility to consolidate their capital and start a new enterprise. There was nobody who was willing to buy the useless buildings and soil. Towns, which could serve as the starting point for spreading of technologies were missing. The towns in the Commonwealth served mainly as marketplaces for the hinterlands and did not create an own lifestyle and economic existence. When the hinterland produced less and less grain, their existence was jeopardized. Finally, the economically and militarily weak Commonwealth introduced a constitution, that was the first on the continent and declared everybody to be equal. This did not please the neighbouring Monarchies, thus they invaded Poland and partitioned it. My main conclusion from those facts is that a country should never rely on a single source of income and should think about possible threats and solutions to emerging risks. The Commonwealth was a considerable power and innovative political and economical state. I compare it to present European Union. Still, many things were completely different than they are nowadays, but the basic idea was similar. Property rights were secured, different religions were accepted and all foreigners had the same rights as inhabitants. Under the right leadership and implementation of ideas, this could have lead to a very strong country. But two deadly mistakes were committed. Primarily, the noblemen wrongly assumed, that the economic situation of Europe would not change, thus did not adapt themselves to the changing reality. Secondly, there was no central power that steered the economy and took care about technological innovations and specifications. In my opinion, this is also a problem of the EU, as every country cares about its own business and tries to stick to old rules.

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