

Union of Krewo (Act of Kreva) - English text

We, Jagiełło¹, by the grace of God, the Grand Duke of Lithuania and the lord and natural heir to Ruthenia, hereby let it be known to all for whom it be appropriate, and whomever may inspect the present document, that from the most serene princess, by the grace of God, Elżbieta² [Elisabeth of Bosnia] the Queen of Hungary, Poland, Dalmatia, etc., we have received a memorial through the intermediacy of honourable and noble gentlemen – to wit: Stefan, the provost³ of Csanád; Władysław, son of Kakas de Kaza, castellan of Potok; Włodko, cup-bearer of Kraków; Mikołaj, castellan of Zawichost; and Krystyn, the protector of Kazimierz*⁴. And thus they said, firstly, how the magnificent ruler Jagiełło, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, etc., dispatched his dignified diplomatic envoys to the lords of Poland, and subsequently, to her royal majesty. And those envoys who had been sent to her royal majesty took with them credentials from the even more dignified, honourable, and excellent envoy – namely, the illustrious prince Skirgiełło⁵ (Skirgaila), the brother of lord Jagiełło, the Grand Duke – and yet for certain reasons they were unable to appear before her royal majesty in person. Yet his messengers, the dukes Borys and Hanko, starost of Wilno, presented the matter to the same Queen of Hungary and said thus:

“Although there have been many emperors, kings, and various princes who have striven, aspired, and desired to contract perpetual relationships with this same Grand Duke of Lithuania, almighty God has preserved any such deed until the present day for thine own very royal majesty. Therefore, may thy majesty, most serene princess, for this most salvific plan, acknowledge that same, lord and Grand Duke, as your son, and consent that he be joined into lawful matrimony with thine own most beloved daughter, the most illustrious princess Jadwiga⁶, queen of Poland. For we do believe that divine glory, the salvation of souls, honour for the people, and growth of the Kingdom shall ensue from this.

¹ Władysław II Jagiełło (c. 1351–1434), born Jogaila, was the Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland. In 1386, having agreed to baptism, he married Jadwiga of the Anjou dynasty, the monarch of Poland. The marriage initiated a union between Poland and Lithuania that was to last until the end of the 18th century. On July 15, 1410, the Polish-Lithuanian army under Jagiełło's command was victorious over the Teutonic Order in the famous Battle of Grunwald. The outcome of that conflict reinforced the position of Poland in Central Europe, whilst the importance of the Teutonic Order and its state then began to wane.

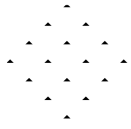
² Elżbieta Bośniaczka/Elisabeth of Bosnia (1340–87) was queen consort of Hungary and of Poland. After the death of her husband Louis, she became regent of Hungary (1382). Elisabeth designated her youngest daughter Jadwiga of Anjou as 'King' of Poland in 1384.

³ In the Roman Catholic Church, a provost was the head of a cathedral chapter, rector of a collegiate church, or deputy superior (abbot, prior) of a religious order.

⁴ This enumeration includes the Hungarian and Polish dignitaries who acted as envoys.

⁵ Skirgiełło/Skirgaila (c. 1354–94) was Grand Duke Jagiełło's brother.

⁶ Jadwiga Andegaweńska/Hedvig of the House of Anjou (1373–99), daughter of Elisabeth of Bosnia and Louis of Hungary, was Queen of Poland (crowned 'King') from 1384.



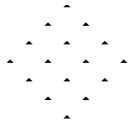
However, before the matter mentioned here comes to fruition, Jagiełło, Grand Duke, shall first, together with all his brethren who have not yet been baptized¹, and likewise with his relatives, the nobles, and landowners great and small who reside in his lands, earnestly seek and desire to accept the Catholic faith of the Holy Roman Church. And although many an emperor and sundry princes laboured toward this end, they attained very little, notwithstanding their strenuous endeavours. Nevertheless, God almighty has reserved this honour for thine own royal majesty.

In order to strengthen, acclaim, and make lasting this thing, the same Jagiełło, Grand Duke, promises to submit and offer the entirety of treasures for the recovery of the lands severed from either of the two kingdoms, namely, Poland and also Lithuania, but only on condition that the same Queen of Hungary give her daughter Jadwiga, Queen of Poland, as aforesaid, to him in wedlock. Also, the same Jagiełło, Grand Duke, promises to tender and indeed to pay the monies as fixed, and constituted by means of a pledge² between the same Lady, Queen of Hungary, on the one hand, and the Duke of Austria³, on the other, to wit, two-hundred thousand florins. Likewise, the same Jagiełło, Grand Duke, promises and guarantees to rejoin, by means of his own efforts and expenses, the lands taken away and severed from the kingdom of Poland, in their entirety, by whomsoever's hand these might have been seized and taken. Likewise, the same Jagiełło, Grand Duke, promises to restore to their original freedom all those faithful to Christ and, principally, to the people of either sex, from the lands of Poland, who have been carried away and, by way of the military custom, removed, so that each of them, male or female, may depart to wherever they should deem right by their own inclination.

¹ This did not pertain to those members of the dynasty who had been baptized in the Orthodox rite.

² In 1378 Hedwig had been betrothed to Wilhelm, the Habsburg heir to the Duchy of Austria. It is conjectured that the party which broke off the engagement was obligated to pay the other 200,000 florins in gold.

³ Wilhelm Habsburg (c. 1370–1406), Duke of Austria, was a son of Austrian duke Leopold III.



Lastly, Jagiełło, the oft-mentioned duke, also promises to perpetually adjoin his lands of Lithuania and Ruthenia to the crown of the kingdom of Poland.

Thus, we, Jagiełło, the aforesaid Grand Duke of Lithuania, shall proceed upon the legations set forth above, proposed and, in the way as aforesaid, declared, on our behalf, to the aforesaid cited barons of the kingdom of Poland by the aforesaid Skirgiełło, our dearest brother, and thereafter, similarly and in the way as aforesaid, explained by the envoys of the same brother of ours to the most serene princess, the aforesaid Lady Elżbieta, Queen of Hungary, in the presence of the aforesaid ambassadors, that is, envoys of her Lady the Queen, Hungarian and Polish, dispatched to our highness, together with the below-written brethren of ours, to wit, lord Skirgiełło, Korybut¹, Witold² (Vytautas), Lingwin³, dukes of the Lithuania, and in the name of the other brethren of ours, whether present or absent, and relate this to both the aforesaid Lady the Queen and, likewise, to the aforesaid barons of the kingdom of Poland. Which legations we have affirmed by appending the present seals of ours and of our above-written brethren, and do hereby confirm anew that the same shall in every way and by all means be dispatched forward. Done in Krewo, Monday, on the eve of the Assumption of the glorious blessed virgin Mary [August 14], in the year of our Lord 1385.

Translated © by Tristan Korecki, Philip Earl Steele

¹ Dymitr Korybut/Coribut (?–1404) was a brother of Władysław II Jagiełło.

² Witold/Vytautas (c. 1351–1434), baptized Alexander, first-cousin of Władysław II Jagiełło (Jogaila), was Grand Duke of Lithuania. He opposed Jagiełło militarily in their struggle for power in Lithuania, entering to this end into an agreement with the Teutonic Knights. The collapse of his plans for eastward expansion eventually forced him to recognize Jagiełło and Poland as his allies. As a result, Vytautas became the lifelong ruler of Lithuania, where he reigned as Grand Duke in alliance with Poland against the Teutonic Order.

³ Lengvenis/Lingwen (?–1431) was a brother of Władysław II Jagiełło.