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INFORMATION FLOW BETWEEN THE TEMPLAR BROTHERS DURING THEIR TRIAL IN FRANCE (MARCH–APRIL 1310)

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

After the arrest of the Templars in France in October 1307, they were held in various prisons throughout the kingdom for almost three years. They did not have the opportunity to exchange information with each other and, above all, to get instructions from the leaders of the Order. This changed in the beginning of 1310, when more than 650 brothers came to Paris to participate in the inquiry led by the papal commission against the Order as a whole. In the beginning of the Paris proceedings, French Templars were offered a chance to defend the Order together. They tried to make use of this opportunity, but in May of 1310, after fifty-four brothers were condemned as relapsed heretics by the Council of Sens and burned at stake, they abandoned it.

The paper focuses mainly on the first phase of the Paris proceedings (before the Council of Sens). The information flow between the Templar brothers and its influence on their situation at that time will be analysed. It will address the following questions: Was the possibility to exchange the information enough for the Templars to defend the Order in an effective manner? Could they do this without the involvement of the Grand Master and other dignitaries of the Order? The answers to these questions will then allow to show that, contrary to the opinion of the vast majority of historians working on this topic, the Templars lost their chance to defend the Order long before the tragic events of May 1310.

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After the sudden arrest of the French Templars in October 1307, during the next few years the members of the Order were detained in prisons in various parts of the kingdom. During the inquisition proceedings they were tortured and subjected to other types of pressure, related, among others, to the information that they received, or the lack thereof. On the one hand, they obtained various information from people outside the Order, with whom they had contact probably in connection with the proceedings,¹ and on the other they had neither the possibility of contacting brothers in other prisons, nor the leaders of the Order, except in a few cases.² As a result, any organized resistance or attempt by the Templars to coordinate their defence was virtually impossible. This situation changed in the spring of 1310, i.e. a few months after the start of the proceedings conducted by the papal commission against the entire Order in Paris. From that time until the end of the procedure in June 1311, more than 800 brothers from different parts of France stood before commissioners. For the first time since their arrest, they had the opportunity to exchange information about the proceedings against them and the charges brought against the Order on a broader level. This opportunity allowed them to better understand the position they and their Order found themselves in and try to elaborate a common line of defence. In this article, I will focus on this stage of the proceedings and discuss the impact that this fact had on the situation of the Templars at that time. In doing so, I will try to determine whether the Templars' communication with each other was enough to elaborate a common line of defence?

¹ Some of the brothers testifying before the papal commission in Paris mentioned that they learned about the alleged offences of the Order from various laymen only after their arrest, *Processus contra Templarios in Francia. Procès-verbaux de la procédure menée par la commission pontificale à Paris (1309–1311)*, vol. 1, ed. Magdalena Satora (Leiden: Brill, 2020), fol. 68r, 114v, 173r. In the Paris trial records one can also find references to letters received from the representatives of the French king, in which was suggested how they should testify, where various promises were made, and where it was argued that the Order would certainly cease to exist, *ibid.*, fol. 52v. One of the groups of Templars who appeared before the papal commission in 1310 even brought such a letter along, received from royal guards, *ibid.*, fol. 18v–19r.

² In preserved documents there are a few mentions of the transfers of some brothers from one prison to another, i.e. in the beginning of 1308 the Templars detained in the Temple of Paris were transferred to different prisons outside the town, and those detained in other places in Paris were transferred to the Temple; Alain Demurger, *La persécution des templiers. Journal (1305–1314)* (Paris: Payot, 2015), 89–93. One can assume that on that occasion they had opportunity to contact brothers from other prisons. Probably the same was the case of 72 brothers who were brought to Poitiers in May 1308 in order to testify before the pope and the cardinals – see i.e. Malcolm Barber, *The Trial of the Templars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 2nd edition), 116–117; Demurger, *La persécution*, 111–112.

The papal commission in Paris began its proceedings in August 1309. Its main task was to interrogate all persons willing to say something about the Templars' alleged crimes, using the list of 127 accusations against the Order created in the papal Curia.³ The most important stages of this procedure are well known thanks to the detailed records⁴ and have been analysed several times by the historians in recent years.⁵ However, to answer all the questions raised above requires a fresh look from a slightly different and novel perspective.

After a long phase of preparations during which the Templars, already present in Paris, had an opportunity to elaborate their strategy, the commissioners began interrogating witnesses in April 1310. The hearings were interrupted a month later, after the Council of Sens sentenced to death 54 Templars (most of whom were involved in the proceedings). Their executions were carried out immediately. The commissioners decided to stop the proceedings, and after resuming them in November 1310, the brothers standing before the commission no longer wished to defend their Order. This suggests that the Templars' attempts to organize a common defence were interrupted by the decision of the Council of Sens.⁶ However, from the perspective of the issues discussed here, the most important events, which affected the course of the proceedings, occurred in April, i.e. one month before the Council. It was in that month that the Templars gained a real chance to organize a joint defence of the Order, but then almost immediately lost it.

In the first months of 1310, around 650 Templars stood before the papal commission.⁷ The brothers came from different parts of France in groups, and then, in the same groups, they were put in different prisons in Paris. Although the commissioners first of all called for those Templars willing to defend the Order, not everyone declared such intention upon arrival. Some refused to stand in defence,⁸

³ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 2r. For the list of accusations see *ibid.*, fol. 23r–24v.

⁴ *Le procès des Templiers*, vol. 1–2, ed. Jules Michelet (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1841–1851 (repr. Paris: Editions du C.T.H.S., 1987)); *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora. In this article we refer only to the new edition, based, in contrary to the J. Michelet's publication, on both existing manuscripts of the proceedings.

⁵ See primary Barber, *The Trial*, 139–201; Demurger, *La persécution*, 151–262. For a brief literature survey on this topic, see *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, 30–31.

⁶ Both Malcolm Barber and Alain Demurger are of the opinion that the Council of Sens was the only reason why the Templars lost their chance to defend the Ordre before the papal commission – see the works cited above.

⁷ M. Barber gives the number of 597 brothers willing to defend the Order (*id.*, *The Trial*, 152), A. Demurger – 652 (*id.*, *La persécution*, 184–185).

⁸ Gérard Le Lorinhe (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 15v), Pierre de *Sancta Gressa* (fol. 17r), two brothers arrived from Poitiers (fol. 20r), six brothers detained in the Temple of Paris (fol. 20r–20v) and others.

others declared that they were unable to do so,⁹ and still others asserted that they were ready to defend only themselves, and not the Order¹⁰. There were also those who expected the Grand Master to take on the Order's defence,¹¹ or at least advise them.¹² This shows that at least some of the brothers did not understand why they were summoned to Paris. The vast majority of them took part in the subsequent stages of the proceedings and stayed together with those Templars who had declared their desire to defend the Order.

The brothers who come to Paris were in different prisons located in different parts of the city.¹³ However, they had many opportunities to contact brothers from other prisons, and thus from different regions of France, i.a. during gatherings organised by order of the commission in the first phase of the proceedings. The most important of these gatherings were undoubtedly two assemblies convened by the commissioners on 14 and 28 March, at which the list of accusations brought against the Order were read.

In the first assembly, 70 brothers took part.¹⁴ Probably for the first time in several years, they had the opportunity to learn what was happening to other members of the Order or to the Grand Master and other leaders. However, it was the meeting of 28 March that proved crucial for their situation, and for the further course of the proceedings. The commissioners ordered that all the brothers present in Paris be brought to the garden of the episcopal palace. There were 547 – the vast majority of those arrived.¹⁵ Because there were so many of them, the commissioners immediately announced that they were not able to conduct proceedings involving everyone. Interrogating every brother according to the long list of accusations would take too long from the point of view of the approaching start date of the Council of Vienne, initially scheduled for October 1310 (the commission-

⁹ Six brothers arrived from Poitiers (ibid., fol. 20r), Jean de Pont-l'Évêque (fol. 20v), Gérard de Causse (fol. 21r) and others.

¹⁰ Lambert de Courmelles (ibid., fol. 16r), Thomas de Casnay (fol. 16r), Pierre de Hanappes (fol. 16r); Robert de Mella (fol. 20v).

¹¹ Eight brothers arrived from Poitiers (ibid., fol. 20r).

¹² Eight brothers arrived from the diocese of Sens (ibid., fol. 18v–19r) and Audebert de la Porte (fol. 20r).

¹³ See the list of the prisons and their location on the map of Paris in: Demurger, *La persécution*, 190–191.

¹⁴ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 24v–25r.

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 26r–29r; M. Barber (*The Trial*, 152) and A. Demurger (“*Éléments pour une prosopographie* du ‘peuple templier’. La comparution des templiers devant la commission pontificale de Paris (février–mai 1310),” in *Élites et ordres militaires au Moyen Âge. Rencontre autour d’Alain Demurger*, ed. Philippe Josserand, Luis Filipe Oliveira, and Damien Carraz (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez 2015), 23) give the number of 546 brothers based on J. Michelet's edition. The number given here is based on the new edition.

ers only learned about the delay of the Council for a year in May 1311).¹⁶ As a result, the commissioners recommended to the Templars to choose from among themselves several procurators who could stand for all those gathered. They also promised to create the conditions to prepare their defence in the best possible way, also ensuring that the procurators would have complete freedom of communication with each other and with other brothers. After this statement, they left the brothers, leaving them time to deliberate.¹⁷ We do not know how long this lasted, or what course it took. However, it brought about very specific effects. After the return of the commissioners, two of the brothers spoke on behalf of all gathered. These men were Pierre de Bologne, the procurator of the Order to the Roman Curia, and the Order's chaplain, Renaud de Provins. From that moment on, they became the most important figures in this stage of the proceedings. Later, two knights joined them, Bernard de Sartiges and Guillaume de Chambonnet, and the four of them acted as spokesmen for all of the accused Templars.¹⁸ They presented a list of complaints to the commissioners regarding the treatments received in prison and various problems related to the proceedings. They requested a meeting with the dignitaries of the Order so that they could discuss with them the issue of selecting procurators and the Order's defence. They noted that without the consent of their leaders, they could not make a decision on that first matter, yet on the second they declared that even if the dignitaries could not or did not want to meet them, they were ready to act alone. This interpretation of the role of the Order's leaders in the proceedings was to be pivotal for the decisions made by the Templars during next few weeks. Finally, Pierre de Bologne and Renaud de Provins also asked for the opportunity to consult lawyers, because, as they emphasized, the vast majority of them were uneducated in this respect.¹⁹

The commissioners immediately answered to all the requests. Since the assembly in the garden of the episcopal palace took place after Grand Master Jacques de Molay, as well as other high Templar dignitaries, who stood before the commission on November 1309 and in the first half of March 1310, refused to defend the Order,²⁰ the commissioners communicated this fact to the gathered brothers,

¹⁶ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 72r.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. 25v; cf. Demurger, *La persécution*, 193–194.

¹⁸ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 25v and 29v. For more on their role in the Paris proceedings see Demurger, *La persécution*, 209–211.

¹⁹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 25v; cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 152–153; Demurger, *La persécution*, 194.

²⁰ Jacques de Molay stood before the commissioners on 26 (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 9v–10r) and 28 November 1309 (fol. 12r–12v), and on 2 March 1310 (fol. 22v). For more on his depositions and the reasons of his decision not to defend the Order, see primary Paul Viollet, "Les interrogatoires de Jacques de Molay, grand maître du Temple. Conjectures," *Mémoires de l'Institut national de France* 38 (1911): 121–136; Georges Lizerand, „Les dépositions du grand maître

thereby rejecting their request for a meeting.²¹ However, they completely ignored the request to consult lawyers. The brothers had to decide about their representatives and prepare their Order's defence themselves. What is more, they had to do it fast, because the commissioners wanted to end the protracted proceedings as soon as possible for the reasons mentioned earlier (the approaching start date of the Council of Vienne). Initially, they ordered the Templars to make their decisions the same day, but eventually gave them time to think, yet without further opportunities for discussion. It was decided that three days later, notaries would be sent to the prisons where the brothers were detained to ask them two questions: did they want to appoint procurators, and did they have anything to say in defence of the Order?²²

Within three days, from 31 March to 2 April, notaries visited 23 prisons in Paris, where 26 groups of brothers were detained. These visits illustrate that the meeting in the garden of the episcopal palace had not been enough to develop a common line of defence, even if its most important elements had been discussed, and also that the individual groups of brothers at this stage were not able to defend the Order themselves. Only two groups spoke more widely about the defence of the Order. Pierre de Bologne spoke on behalf of the brothers detained in the Temple of Paris. His defence consisted mainly in denying the value of the testimonials extracted by the inquisitors, arguing that they were made under the influence of torture or as a result of bribery. Additionally, in order to be able to defend the Order, he demanded his release from prison and the opportunity to attend the Council in Vienne.²³ His arguments, repeated several times later before the commission, eventually became the line of defence for all the Templars present in Paris. Another group of brothers, detained in the abbey of Sainte-Geneviève, presented a letter in defence in the form of a prayer, but without any legal arguments.²⁴ From

Jacques de Molay au procès des templiers (1307–1314),” *Le Moyen Âge* 26 (1913): 81–106; Malcolm Barber, “James of Molay, the Last Grand Master of the Order of the Temple,” *Studia Monastica* 14 (1972): 110–120; Alain Demurger, *Jacques de Molay. Le crépuscule des Templiers* (Paris: Payot, 2007, 2nd edition), 248–264; Magdalena Satora, “Przyczyny zmiany zeznań wielkiego mistrza zakonu templariuszy, Jakuba de Molay w latach 1307–1314,” in: *Kaci, święci, templariusze*, ed. Błażej Śliwiński (Malbork: Muzeum Zamkowe, 2008), 265–284. Hugues de Pairaud, Visitor of the Temple in France, stood before the commission on 22 November 1309 (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 8v) and 13 March 1310 (fol. 22v). The other dignitaries of the Order stood before the commission on 2 and 13 March 1310 (fol. 22v).

²¹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 26r.

²² *Ibid.*, fol. 26r; cf. Demurger, *La persécution*, 195.

²³ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 30r–30v. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 155.

²⁴ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 31v–32r. A. Demurger analysed in detail the content of this and other letters in defence presented later by the brothers, *id.*, *La persécution*, 202–209. Cf. also Barber, *The Trial*, 154.

the point of view of the Templars, these statements were one of the most important or even the most important elements of their defence of the Order. However, from the perspective of the commissioners they did not have any impact on the course of the proceedings. They decided to include them in the records of the investigation, but they still had to carry out their task, which was interrogating the witnesses according to the form sent by the Pope.

Except in the cases mentioned above, the Templars merely stated that the Order, its Grand Master, and other brothers were innocent and the accusations were false,²⁵ or said nothing. Some of them explained that they could not say anything without first consulting their superiors or other brothers. One group asked for the opportunity to consult those brothers who spoke their language (i.e. Occitan),²⁶ which suggests that they did not understand other members of the Order, another asked for contact with a second group detained in the same building.²⁷ Two asked to consult with lawyers.²⁸ Several others wanted to see Pierre de Bologne and his companions.²⁹ It turned out that there was some misunderstanding, because a few groups were convinced that the royal guards would escort those brothers who volunteered to represent everyone, in order to consult with them. Because no one came to them, they were unable to comment on the questions they were asked. Five groups submitted a complaint about this fact.³⁰ The notaries writing the reports observed, however, that according to the commissioners there had been no such arrangements.³¹ There is also no mention of this in the proceedings. Surprisingly, only one group requested a copy of the list of accusations, in order to be able to refer to them,³² and only one asked for parchment and ink to write down their arguments.³³ This shows their intellectual capacities to prepare an effective defence strategy of the Order.

²⁵ The groups detained in: the abbey of Saint-Martin-des-Champs (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 30v), the houses of Leuragie (fol. 33v), Nicolas Hondrée (fol. 34r), Jean le Grant (fol. 34v), Robert Anudei (fol. 34v), Guillaume de Marcilly (fol. 35r), abbot of Preuilly (fol. 35v).

²⁶ The group detained in the house of the count of Savoy (ibid., fol. 31r).

²⁷ The groups detained in the house of Jean Rossel (ibid., fol. 35v).

²⁸ The groups detained in the houses of Richard des Poulies (ibid., fol. 34r) and l'Ocrea (fol. 34v).

²⁹ The groups detained in the houses of Robert Anudei (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 34v), Blavot (fol. 35r) and abbot of Preuilly (fol. 35v).

³⁰ The groups detained in the house of Guillaume de la Huce (ibid., fol. 29v), abbey of Sainte-Genève (fol. 31r), the houses of prior of Cornay (fol. 32v) and abbot of Preuilly and Jean Rossel (fol. 35v). Cf. Demurger, *La persécution*, 198.

³¹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 32v.

³² The group detained in the house of Guillaume de la Huce (ibid., fol. 29v).

³³ The group detained in the house of the abbot of Latigny (ibid., fol. 33v).

Equally problematic was the choice of procurators. Just one single group named their representatives.³⁴ One declared their readiness to choose, but only if other brothers did so, too.³⁵ In 15 cases, the brothers asserted that they could not choose any without the consent of the Order's leaders.³⁶ Four groups replied that they did not intend to elect procurators at all³⁷. One of them explained that they did not intend to oppose the Pope or the king in this way, and that such a choice made no sense since they would stay incarcerated anyway.³⁸ The Templars from another group said that because they were simple and uneducated people, they did not want to make any decisions themselves, but agreed to everything that other brothers would decide.³⁹ One of the brothers held in the house of Jean Rossel, Aymon de Pratimi, also declared he was poor and simple, and because of that he was not able to defend the Order against the Pope and the king of France. He did not want to participate in choosing procurators and he asked permission to leave the Order.⁴⁰ Some groups made their decision dependent on the possibility of meeting other brothers.⁴¹ Two, however, wanted to consult their decision with Pierre de Bologne and his companions.⁴² Malcolm Barber is of the opinion that the accused deliberately rejected the selection of procurators in order to avoid too much formal involvement, which they assumed to be part of the strategy outlined by Pierre de Bologne and Renaud de Provins during the meeting in the garden of the episcopal palace.⁴³ Yet the declarations cited here of individual groups of Templars are rather a testament to informational chaos and often ignorance. In the following days, the brothers consistently demanded a meeting with the Grand Master and the other dignitaries. This suggests that at least some of them either did not

³⁴ The group detained in the abbey of Sainte-Geneviève (ibid., fol. 31r).

³⁵ The group detained in the house of the abbot of Lagny (ibid., fol. 33v).

³⁶ The groups detained in the house of Guillaume de la Huce (ibid., fol. 29v), the Temple of Paris (fol. 30r), the abbey of Saint-Martin-des-Champs (fol. 30v), abbey of Sainte-Geneviève (fol. 31v), the houses of prior of Cornay (fol. 32v), Serene (fol. 32v), abbot of Lagny (fol. 33v), Richard des Poulies (fol. 34r), Nicolas Hondrée (fol. 34r), Jean le Grant (fol. 34v), l'Ocrea (fol. 34v), Blavot (fol. 35r), Guillaume de Marcilly (35r), Jean de Chamini (fol. 35r), abbot of Preuilly (fol. 35v).

³⁷ The groups detained in the house of the bishop of Beauvais (ibid., fol. 31r), the abbey of Saint-Magloire (fol. 34r), and the houses of Blavot and of the abbot of Tiron (fol. 35r).

³⁸ The group detained in the house of Blavot (ibid., fol. 35r).

³⁹ The group detained in the house of the abbot of Tiron (ibid., fol. 35r).

⁴⁰ Ibid., fol. 35v–36r. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 154–155; Demurger, *La persécution*, 198.

⁴¹ The groups detained in the houses of count of Savoy (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 31r), Robert Anudei (fol. 34v) and Jean de Rossel (fol. 35v).

⁴² The groups detained in the houses of count of Savoy (ibid., fol. 31r) and Jean de Rossel (fol. 35v).

⁴³ Barber, *The Trial*, 156.

comprehend the answer of the commissioners to the same request made by Pierre de Bologne during the assembly in the garden of the episcopal palace, or they did not want to accept the consequences of the decision of the leaders not to defend the Order.

The commissioners seemed to be aware of the limitations arising from the fact that the majority of the brothers gathered in Paris were uneducated and therefore incapable of making decisions related to the proceedings themselves. At the same time the notaries were sent to prisons, on 31 March they also ordered the guards to bring Pierre de Bologne and his companions the following day, as well as other educated brothers representing the various Templar provinces.⁴⁴ They were probably to act as intermediaries between the commission and all the brothers. Five of them came. It seems that this group had had an opportunity to meet early and discuss issues related to the ongoing proceedings, as they presented a joint letter to the commissioners. They stated again that they could not choose procurators without the consent of the Order's leaders. So they asked, among other things, for a meeting with them, as well as to provide funds to pay for lawyers, and to guarantee the personal safety of the defenders.⁴⁵ One more letter was sent to the commissioners that day: the group of brothers held in the abbey of Saint-Martin-des-Champs, who had asked for a meeting with their superiors the day before in order to be able to elect procurators, this time stated that they did not intend to elect them after all, and requested a meeting with Pierre de Bologne and Renaud de Provins.⁴⁶ Thus the attempt to persuade the Templars to appoint joint representatives failed. After three days of urging the brothers to take decisions enabling the end of the preparatory phase of the proceedings, and thus to start the proper investigation, the commissioners were actually at the same stage as they had been on 28 March.

The situation got even more complicated the day after, on 3 April. Fourteen brothers stood before the commissioners, who on behalf of eight groups presented a joint letter in defence of the Order and requested the possibility to speak with lawyers.⁴⁷ This means that at the same time of the notaries visiting the prisons, the brothers must have been able to meet each other or to establish contact amongst themselves by other means. It is not known, however, why only brothers from a few prisons banded together. Malcolm Barber thinks that the notaries

⁴⁴ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 29v.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 33r. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 155–157.

⁴⁶ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 33v.

⁴⁷ The fourteen brothers represented the groups detained in: the houses of Blavot, l'Ocrea, Robert Anudei, Guillaume de Marcilly, Nicolas Hondrée, Jean Chamis, Richard des Poulies and the abbey of Saint-Magloire – *ibid.*, fol. 36r–37v. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 157–158; Demurger, *La persécution*, 200.

gathered them,⁴⁸ however, there is no mention of this in the proceedings. Besides the fourteen brothers, a royal guard came to the episcopal palace and delivered a letter from another group, detained in the house of Leuragie, to the commissioners. They asked for the opportunity to consult the four spokesmen and a few other brothers. They also requested permission to stand all together before the commission and if it was not possible, they were ready to appoint two brothers to represent them.⁴⁹

At this point, the commissioners had to clarify whether the selected brothers did actually represent their individual groups, since the day before, these did not want to elect any representatives, and also had nothing to say in defence of the Order. To this end, they ordered notaries to visit them once again to ask whether they actually had chosen them as such, and whether they really wanted to communicate to the commissioners what was in the letter.⁵⁰ The last question was also to be asked to the group held in the house of Leuragie. This postponed the start date of the proceedings by at least one more day. In addition, the impatient commissioners recommended to the brothers to put forward all arguments in favour of defending the Order through chosen representatives or through anyone else, as soon as possible, by 7 April, because they wanted no more delays for its preparation.⁵¹

In the next few days, notaries had to visit prisons they had not yet visited, and also go to several ones for the second time. During these visits, it turned out that, despite the consultations that must have taken place, the Templars still had not developed a common defence strategy and did not make joint decisions as to their representation before the commission. Among the groups asked about the choice of procurators, there was still no unanimity as to whether they intended to choose any. The brothers who had already sent their representatives to the commission wanted them to continue to represent them, but only as spokesman (*nuncios*), not procurators (*procurators*).⁵² Only the group held in the house of Leuragie, which had presented their own letter on 3 April, refused to appoint their representatives without first consulting them, because it would be very dangerous to entrust the defence of the Order and themselves to four or five persons without being sure that

⁴⁸ Barber, *The Trial*, 157.

⁴⁹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 37v–38r.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 38v.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 38v.

⁵² On 3 and 4 April the notaries visited the houses of Richard des Pouilles (*ibid.*, fol. 38v), Guillaume de Marcilly (fol. 38v), Jean de Chaminois (fol. 38v) and Blavot (fol. 39r). The terms *nuncios* and *procuratores* were used by the brothers from the house of Blavot. The notaries visited the other groups only on 6 April when the situation was already different. At that time, they asked the brothers only if they really wanted to communicate to the commission what was in the letter presented on 3 April (fol. 42r).

they would do it in an appropriate way.⁵³ The opinions of other groups differed, as they had before. One of them declared that they did not intend to elect the procurators,⁵⁴ the other that they were ready to do it, but only if other brothers did so, too. They also requested the opportunity to consult their superiors.⁵⁵

The situation changed on 5 April, when notaries observed that most of the groups visited since the beginning of the week had requested a meeting with Pierre de Bologne and Renaud de Provins. Bishop Bayeux, to whom they made this observation, ordered notaries to fulfil the brothers' requests and send lawyers to them, and to provide them with writing tools, stating that they now had only two days to prepare their defence.⁵⁶ As a result, during subsequent visits to prisons, this time in the company of Pierre de Bologne and his companions, notaries finally obtained unified answers. The Templars did not intend to elect procurators to lead their defence, but had chosen four brothers to represent them before the commission as spokesman (*nuncii*). All the Templars also wanted to attend the Council of Vienne and only if they were free could they choose defenders⁵⁷. The same, common position, together with the arguments for the defence of the Order, previously presented by Pierre de Bologne, the brothers (or rather their representatives), was finally presented to the commissioners on 7 April.⁵⁸ Once again one of the groups – this time the brothers held in the house of Richard des Poulies – sent their own letter in defence of the Order.⁵⁹ It did not, however, influence the position of the commissioners. They rejected all the arguments presented on that day for different reasons, mainly connected to differences in understanding the legal bases of the procedure. On top of this, they refused the request to meet with the dignitaries of the Order, which had been voiced again at this time. The Grand Master, during the last interrogation, had stated that he did not intend to say anything to the commission, but only to the Pope, who would close the case.⁶⁰ Since the brothers had not elected procurators, the commissioners decided to hear everyone who would like to stand before them and say anything to defend the Order until the end of the proceedings. At the same time, however, they proposed that Pierre de Bologne and his three companions should attend the hearings, but not as procura-

⁵³ Ibid., fol. 38r. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 158.

⁵⁴ The group detained in the house of Penne Vayrie – *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 39v.

⁵⁵ The group detained in the house of Guillaume Domont – ibid., fol. 39v.

⁵⁶ Ibid., fol. 40r.

⁵⁷ From 5 to 7 April the notaries together with the four spokesmen of the Templars visited 27 prisons – ibid., fol. 40r–42v. Cf. Demurger, *La persécution*, 202.

⁵⁸ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 43r–44r. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 159–162; Demurger, *La persécution*, 207.

⁵⁹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 44r–44v.

⁶⁰ Ibid., fol. 44v. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 162–163.

tors or counsellors.⁶¹ A. Demurger thinks that in fact the four brothers were to act as procurators,⁶² but the position presented by the commission in that matter was quite clear.⁶³ The fact that the commissioners intended to conduct individual interrogations instead of hearing them as representatives of all the brothers gathered in Paris also suggests that their role was different.

These decisions in effect closed the matter of the organization of a joint defence of the Order by the Templars present in Paris, and had the following effects:

Firstly, the brothers were unable to entrust their defence to a person with the right skills, which the vast majority of them did not have. How big this problem was became clear after the Council of Sens. Pierre de Bologne was then separated from the other brothers, and his three comrades directly stated that they were unable to take any action related to the proceedings without him, which is why they asked the commissioners to intervene.⁶⁴

Secondly, individual hearings meant a significant extension of the proceedings. If the brothers had been properly represented, the work of the commission would probably have taken a few days (which was their original intention), i.e. with a few weeks remaining before the Council of Sens. Therefore, the decisions of the Council would not have affected the position of the defenders of the Order.

Thirdly, and finally, the Templars were again in a similar situation as before 28 March: they were to stand before the commission individually, and independently answer the charges against the Order, as well as to face various methods of pressure. The consequences of this state of affairs quickly became apparent.

On 11 April, the commissioners began the appropriate proceedings, including the interrogation of witnesses. However, the first to testify were not the defenders of the Order gathered in Paris, but newly arrived witnesses who had completely different intentions. On the first day, four seculars and 20 Templars came. In the following days ten of them testified.⁶⁵ Information about their incriminating testimonies must have reached the other brothers and influenced their position, because on 23 April, Pierre de Bologne and his companions presented to the commissioners two requests regarding the possibility of contact between the Templars.

⁶¹ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 45r.

⁶² Demurger, *La persécution*, 208.

⁶³ [...] *non intendentes propter hoc dicti domini commissarii, ut dixerunt, recipere dictos IIII^{or} fratres ut defensores ordinis pro se et aliis memoratis fratribus qui se ad defensionem obtulerunt supradictum vel ut partem facientes in negocio isto, vel ut instructores nisi si et in quantum admittendi essent de jure* – *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 45r.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 71v.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 45v–52r. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 164–168.

They asked that witnesses who had already testified should be separated from those who had not yet done so, and that the commission should oblige all witnesses to keep their testimonies secret.⁶⁶ This shows that at that time, the freedom of information flow between the brothers, which had been the greatest asset of the Templar's defence since the start of the Paris proceedings, became its downfall.

The commissioners at least partially met the expectations of the Templar's spokesman. From this point on, the records at the end of each testimony mention that the interrogators ordered the witnesses to keep these a secret.⁶⁷ In December 1310, when two brothers testified about purported events in a very similar way, the commissioners asked one of them if they had the opportunity to contact the other Templars, to make sure that he had not discussed his testimony with him.⁶⁸ However, at the later stage of the proceedings, after the Council of Sens, this did not matter much anymore, as all witnesses had by then testified against the Order.

This did not mean that all the brothers gave up defending the Order altogether. In 1311, after the opening of the Council of Vienne, the Templars once again tried to stand up against the accusations, as they had envisioned themselves doing during the Paris proceedings. Many of them, probably already released from prison at that time, came to the city, asking for the opportunity to meet the Pope and present their arguments, but Clement V did not consent.⁶⁹ So their only real chance to defend the Order had come and gone in April 1310, resulting in failure. The commissioners conducting the Paris procedure enabled them to exchange information, and thus created the conditions for the preparation of a common defence strategy and the choice of a leader, something that they were strongly lacking in at that time. However, this turned out to be not enough. The lack of contact with the Grand Master and other dignitaries of the Order meant that the broth-

⁶⁶ *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 52v. Cf. Barber, *The Trial*, 168–170.

⁶⁷ This mention appears for the first time in the record of the testimony of the 7th witness – *Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 55r. Cf. Demurger, *La persécution*, 215.

⁶⁸ The brothers Gautier de Bure and Étienne de Dijon testified one after another on 19 and 21 December 1310 (*Processus*, 1, ed. Satora, fol. 76r–79r). The commissioners asked about the similarities in their testimonies the second of them (fol. 78r–78v).

⁶⁹ Clement V informed Philip the Fair about this situation in the letter from 4 November 1311. According to his relation more than 1500 Templars gathered around Lyon to defend the Order. Nine of them presented themselves before the Council asking for the possibility to present their arguments. The pope ordered to arrest them – Georges Lizerand, *Clément V et Philippe le Bel* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), 472–473, Appendix, no. 30; *Les actes pontificaux originaux des Archives nationales de Paris*, vol. 3, ed. Bernard Barbiche (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1982), 78–79, no. 2424. Cf. Joseph Lecler, *Vienne 1311–1312*, Histoire des conciles oecuméniques 8 (Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1964), 64; Magdalena Satora, *Sprawa templariuszy w dyplomacji zachodnioeuropejskiej 1307–1312* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2011), 163–164.

ers, most of them being uneducated and simple, could not entrust their defence to a person with the appropriate competence. The harmfulness of Jacob de Molay's decision to give up the defence of the Order was not only that the Templar leader left them on their own at the time of their greatest crisis, but also prevented them from taking independent action and, as a result, determined the outcome of the Paris proceedings even before the commissioners began to hear witnesses.

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