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PAPAL DIPLOMACY IN THE FACE OF THE DISPUTE FOR THE THRONE OF POLAND IN THE YEARS 1704-1709*

ABSTRACT: The following article focuses on an opinion of papal diplomacy on Stanisław Leszczyński, a rival of Augustus II, at the dispute for the throne of Poland at the beginning of the 18th century. Polish society was then divided into two political camps, which caused chaos in the country. Since the reign of Stanisław Leszczyński was considered illegal, papal diplomacy recognised absent Augustus II as the king of Poland and maintained official relationship with the Sandomierz Confederation, yet contacts with the Leszczyński's camp were not broken off.

During the preparations for the war with Sweden, Tsar Peter the Great intervened in the dispute for the Polish throne. He searched for a new candidate for the Polish crown, who could perform a similar role to that of Leszczyński towards the Swedish king. Therefore, papal diplomacy expended enormous efforts to prevent the third elections, which, as estimated by Nuncio J. Piazza, could pose a great threat to the state. In the absence of Augustus II and a threat of the third election, papal diplomacy sought to recognise Leszczyński as the king in the first months of 1707. However, already in the summer of the same year interregnum was announced by the Sandomierz Confederation and a treaty between Charles XII and emperor Joseph I ratified in Altranstädt, which, among other things, concerned concessions for the protesters in Silesia. In consequence, papal diplomacy withdrew its support for Leszczyński and again recognised Augustus II as the king, who returned to Warsaw in 1709.

KEYWORDS: papal diplomacy, Juliusz Piazza, Stanisław Leszczyński, Augustus II.

In the history of Poland, the period between 1704 and 1709 was the most difficult: this unfortunate entanglement of the country in the Northern War of Augustus II, the dictate of the victorious King of Sweden, and finally treatment of Poland by the neighbouring powers as the theatre of the Swedish-Russian rivalry. This led the country to destruction, weakened the system of government and the state as a whole. The confirmation of the collapse of the Commonwealth and

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its political foundations came with the announcement of Augustus' dethronement by the Warsaw Confederation (14 February 1704), the election of S. Leszczyński under the pressure of Sweden (12 July 1704), his coronation (4 October 1705), ratification of the Polish-Swedish treaty humiliating for Poland (18 November 1705), and finally, forced resignation of Augustus from the Polish throne under the Altranstädt Treaty and recognition of his rival as a legal ruler (24 September 1706). Not only was this a series of tragic events for the country, but also these were stages of degradation of Poland. Papal diplomacy had to express their standpoint as well. The following study is an attempt to systematise the arguments of a political and propagandistic nature that conditioned the formation of the pro-Stanisław position of papal diplomacy.

1

A central issue for the Holy See in this respect, requiring its solution at the time of shaping the pro-Swedish option, that is support for her candidate for the throne of Poland, was to determine their own standpoint towards the election of the voivode of Poznań and to possibly transfer the existing diplomatic relations from Augustus to a new king.

A delicate measure of the approach to Leszczyński in Rome's view – apart from the awareness of the new king's close dependence on the Swedish ruler – was the consequence of this election, i.e. terms of the Polish-Swedish treaty, which unambiguously showed the vassal position of the Commonwealth towards the northern power, and danger of a new shape of the conditions of the ecclesiastical life, which Rome could not accept.¹

There is no doubt that a fact of support for August since the inauguration of his rule in Poland in 1697 hindered the justification of the right of Leszczyński for the throne in Poland. The credit of trust expressed by Rome to the Wettin rested on far-reaching plans of upholding a key role of the Commonwealth in this part of Europe, and also

¹ Cf. i.a. J. Feldman, *Stanisław Leszczyński*, Warszawa 1988; E. Cieślak, *W obronie tronu króla Stanisława Leszczyńskiego*, Gdańsk 1986; *I d e m*, *Stanisław Leszczyński*, Wrocław 1994. The update maintains: J. Ziekursch, *August der Starke und die katholische Kirche in den Jahren 1697-1720*, „Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte” Bd. 24:1903, pp. 121-135.

on promising plans of the re-Catholicization of Saxony. The ruling dynasty, in which conversion to Catholicism occurred, was to be very useful in this respect, and accession of Augustus to the Polish throne could even be a guarantee of its success.

However, this was the period of the Northern War, in which the Elector of Saxony – and the King of Poland in one – became an imperial supporter. By contrast, the orientation of Pope Clement XI (1700-1721) during this period of the Spanish Succession War was clearly pro-French, hence the inevitable tensions in relations with the Viennese court could have fundamentally altered the political constellation in Europe, and the resolution of the Polish question could have proved an important element in the creation of a new order.²

Meanwhile, the Swedish power turned out to be victorious in the Northern War, who could be in no way a partner for the papacy. Therefore, every expression of their activities caused opposition of the Roman diplomacy, ordered vigilance and forced their diplomacy to search for new ways of resistance to the Swedish dictate. A considerable issue was also a Russian-Swedish conflict growing from the beginning of independent rule of Peter I in Russia (1696) and the paths of these hostile political and military camps intersecting in the territory of the Commonwealth. It was almost paradoxical that the Russian issue found itself in the centre of interest of Rome, owing to the perspectives of expanding the union of Russia and Rome, and thanks to which a possibility of free passage of foreign missionaries to China could be effected. These great projects had to be juxtaposed with a substantial problem of the succession to the Polish throne. Nuncio Orazio Filippo Spada felt that Leszczyński's victory could be a threat, if not an attempt to eradicate the vision of the expansion of Catholicism in the above-mentioned countries.

In this period of the reign of two kings (1704-1706) – which coincided with a diplomatic mission in Poland of Nuncio O. F. Spada – illegality of the election of Leszczyński was accepted as an undeniable fact. It was known that the only legitimate ruler was Augustus. In turn, a Swedish candidate was an intruder imposed on the Commonwealth,

² Cf. J. B o u t i e r, *Clemente XI*, [in:] *Dizionario storico del papato*, ed. Ph. L e v i l a i n, vol. 1, Milano 1996, pp. 342-345.



Portrait of J. Piazza in the chapter house of Faenza Cathedral
(phot. New Foto Video, Faenza)

while his election was defined as *nulliter et perperam facta*. Both camps, already crystalised and hardened by Warsaw and Sandomierz Confederation, obtained considerable independence in their activities and competed in acting to their advantage, searching for support in the whole of Europe.

Augustus had an easier task, as he was perceived as a legitimate ruler who had been forcibly deprived of the throne by the occupying power. Leszczyński had a more difficult situation, especially as his principal did not make his task any easier. After all, the new king's actions were based solely on force and facts created by Charles XII, and both were fully aware of this situation.³ An important element of this political scene in the country was the fact that after the Leszczyński's election and forced resignation of Augustus, the party of the incumbent ruler did not disappear, and despite the Wettin's staying in Saxony and lack of his active interest in upholding his rights to the Polish throne, it did not resign from attracting people against the anti-Swedish forces. In addition, a new elect, attempting to build a group of his own supporters in the country, had to take support of the Swedes into account in its entirety. Moreover, the Leszczyński's camp distributed offices and dignities among their own members, ousting Augustus' associates, which frustrated the restoration of the national unity.⁴ Therefore, a new monarch by the grace of the Swedes failed to convince Poles of himself. It is also well known how difficult the circumstances of his coronation were.⁵ The Swedish king was basically to blame for all this; who far from being generous, ruthlessly persecuted all Leszczyński's opponents.

2

Leszczyński's diplomacy acted inappropriately towards Rome.⁶ Admittedly, Leszczyński himself volunteered with an official notifica-

³ Characteristic is for instance the statement of the Nuncio in the correspondence with the Secretary of State referring to the King of Sweden: "a cui tutto dipende", Archivio Segreto Vaticano (henceforth: ASV), Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 729 r.

⁴ Cf. J. F e l d m a n, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-268.

⁵ Cf. E. C i e ś l a k, *Stanisław Leszczyński*, pp. 46-49.

⁶ Cf. J. A. G i e r o w s k i, J. L e s z c z y ń s k i, *Dyplomacja polska w dobie unii personalnej polsko-saskiej*, [in:] *Polska służba dyplomatyczna XVI-XVIII w.*, ed. Z. W ó j c i k, Warszawa 1966, p. 387 nn.

tion to Pope on 20 December 1706 referring to the accession to the throne,⁷ and in February the following year as a ruler of Poland proposed Pietro Ottoboni for the post of cardinal – protector of Poland,⁸ yet both – as his other letters – remained unanswered. As J. Staszewski rightly stated, this was a “war of arguments” of both rivals for power.⁹ There was a rise in anti-papal sentiment in the country in the camp of the Voivode of Poznań, and the Nuncio scrupulously recorded numerous statements made by the representatives of this camp, such as those related to Augustus’ imprisonment of the Bishop of Poznań Mikołaj Stanisław Świącicki or the reactions to Papal breves forbidding the bishops to participate in the coronation of the Poznań voivode; such statements and facts created a barrier in the diplomatic relations of both subjects. Growing misunderstandings with the Leszczyński’s camp caused that Nuncio O. F. Spada left Warsaw in 1705 and moved to Opava, which until the Poltava defeat in July 1709 became a seat of the nuncios sent to Poland.¹⁰

The attitude of papal diplomacy towards Leszczyński had to change after Augustus had left the Polish throne pursuant to a Swedish-Saxon treaty, though forced yet signed in Altranstädt near Leipzig in September 1706. Rome’s astonishment at this treaty was immeasurable. Augustus’ silence was puzzling, and the uncertainty in Rome about the situation in Poland became particularly irritating. The victory of Augustus’ army at Kalisz on 28 October 1706 was all the more surprising since it was not used to the political advantage.

A new Nuncio Julius Piazza, equipped with the instruction including the earlier state of the reign of two kings, strenuously searched for a reasonable *modus vivendi* in order not to by indiscretion ruin such a fragile foundation of the functioning of the Catholic Church and to maintain the existing rights in the Commonwealth.¹¹ Hence, we can

⁷ A letter in ASV F. Albani 194 f. 269 r - 270 r.

⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 294 r-v.

⁹ Cf. J. Staszewski, *Stosunki Augusta II z Kurią rzymską. Tzw. misja rzymska*, Toruń 1965, pp. 93-105.

¹⁰ J. Kopiec, *Śląski epizod w dziejach nuncjatury polskiej w czasach Augusta II (1705-1709)*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 47:1992 Nos. 1-2, pp. 331-336.

¹¹ J. Kopiec, *Podstawowe źródła do badań nuncjatury Juliusza Piazzę w Polsce (1706-1708)*, [in:] *Ad libertatem in veritate. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Alojzemu Marcolowi*, ed. P. Morcinniec, Opole 1996, pp. 610-612.

note Nuncio's great caution and confidence-building based on Sandomierz supporters, who maintained their support for Augustus and did not thwart his chances of returning to the Polish throne, while at the same time remaining very independent of the Tsar and his political plans for Poland.¹² Taking into account this fundamental direction, J. Piazza was an acute observer of the Polish scene and gradually suggested still other possibilities of diplomatic and political moves.

Tsar Peter commenced to play a dominant role in the Polish matters, inspired by the vision of consistent subordination of the Commonwealth. In the context of the development of the then European scene and ever increasing tension between Russia and Charles XII, he could only take advantage of the Polish potential in this growing Russian-Swedish conflict. Peter needed Poland with a new king, in the same way as Charles needed Leszczyński. Having come to terms with the loss of Augustus as an ally, Peter did not see, though, a possibility of accepting Leszczyński. Therefore, he intended to conduct the third election in Poland, during which his candidate would be selected, fulfilling the same role towards him as did Leszczyński towards Charles XII.¹³ This perspective became a basis for Nuncio J. Piazza on which he built his negative attitude towards Peter and his prospective candidate for the throne, and searched for an optimal solution from the point of view of the interests of the Church and papacy in the Commonwealth.

3

The final decision concerning the succession to the Polish throne also interested the leading political circles in the country. It was particularly important to create a social aura around both candidates to the throne, especially that around Leszczyński, who in the opinion of powerful political circles, possessed compelling justification for his power. The proof of these endeavours linked to amassing legal and factual arguments were various letters, most often ephemeral prints, which were

¹² Cf. A. Kamiński, *Konfederacja sandomierska wobec Rosji w okresie poaltrastadzkim*, Wrocław 1971.

¹³ Peter's elective "campaign" has thoroughly been discussed by A. Kamiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-91.

distributed in the quarrelling country, and which were also collected by the Nuncio. It is worth recalling here at least some of them.

We shall start with “A Letter of the Polish Nobleman”, still from the period of the reign of two kings.¹⁴ Its author was Franciszek Radzewski, alias Franciszek Poklatecki (d. 1748), starost of Wschów, chamberlain of Poznań, well-known political writer.¹⁵ The “letter” captures the public mood created around the situation in Poland. Leszczyński, in the light of all the implications of his election, was seen as a legitimate ruler. This was not without an attack issued at the Holy See and its position. It was the Pope who was a despot since he supported Augustus – as it was proclaimed, for he was violating the laws of the Commonwealth by disrespecting its system. It has to be admitted that the author of the “Letter” hit upon a strong propaganda argument, since almost from the very beginning of his reign Augustus was at odds with the Polish society and its elites, and the Saxon style of exercising power in Poland was often severely criticised. Hence, Augustus himself was often fiercely criticised. In addition, he was blamed for waging a war with Sweden, against the interest of the Commonwealth. Therefore, also after 1704 (the announcement of dethronement of Augustus and interregnum by the Warsaw Confederation) full understanding of his exclusive right to the throne was difficult to be maintained, while the author of the “Letter”, supporter of Leszczyński, could count on a public response to his writing. A tone of this publication as well as its significance had to touch papal diplomacy severely, since for a long time in the contacts of Nuncio O. F. Spada and then J. Piazza with the Roman Secretariat of State a postulate was advanced that the Nuncio find the author of the above letter, oppose it and discount its content in this complicated political fight.

The second text worth referring to is *Vox clamantis sinceræ Poloniae ad Sanctissimum Dominum Papam Clementem XI, Dominum et Patrem Clementissimum, ante egressum Serenissimi Regis Stanislai de Polonia in Saxoniam Anno Domini 1700*.¹⁶ The text is imbued with emotion, especially sadness that the Holy See shows so much ruthlessness towards the new king, while anyone could point to many

¹⁴ See: J. S t a s z e w s k i, *Stosunki Augusta II*, pp. 96, 102-104.

¹⁵ W. K r i e g s e i s e n, *Franciszek Radzewski*, PSB vol. 30:1987, pp. 36-38.

¹⁶ A copy in ASV F. Albani 194 f. 237 r - 241 r.

examples of reprehensible behaviour by the Saxons in the Commonwealth from the beginning of the Augustus' reign. Augustus himself did not deserve to be supported, for, as a ruler, he had behaved inappropriately and had caused much evil in the country; he had therefore personally given cause to criticise him. Whereas, Stanisław is a candidate by all means worth recommending and we can say that *A Stanislawo nullum periculum fidei sanctae nec relapsu nec scandalo*.¹⁷ Such statements were not indifferent to the formation of the standpoint of the Holy See, who so far was inclined to only support Augustus, as a guarantor of the Catholic right in the Commonwealth as in his home Saxony; in turn, the nominee of the Swedish side was treated in terms of great threat to Catholic freedom in the country.

New content was submitted by *Simplex et clara defensio Episcoporum Poloniae contra censuras Romanas ex occasione dethronisationis Regis Augusti et subsequenter Electionis atque Coronationis Regis Stanislai die 14 Februarii 1707*.¹⁸ This text was published when in fact the processes of bishops M. S. Świącicki and Andrzej Chryzostom Załuski ended, but restrictions were still in force towards all the bishops who participated in the coronation of Leszczyński.¹⁹ It caused a lot of divisions in the country and constituted a barrier for extending the influence of Leszczyński. The author's argumentation, who was a supporter of King Stanisław, includes results of the legal analysis of the facts connected to the election. The author argues in the following manner: since there is a free election of the king in the Commonwealth, then free is also their testimony, especially when it has to be announced as a consequence of the abuse of power. Every ruler understands this fact. There is always a "pars fortior" at the king, hence it also has the possibility of dismissing the king freely. Rome, therefore, by forbidding the recognition of Augustus' dethronement violates rights of the Commonwealth. Worse still, it supports tyrants and thus does not allow itself to be freed from them. That is why also the bishops who spoke in favour of Stanisław had to suffer unjustifiably.

Yet another text comes from the very period *Informatio quod propositio Romana de accessu Partis adversae per Poparcie alias per*

¹⁷ ASV F. Albani 194 f. 241 r.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 284 r - 285 v.

¹⁹ This is the outcome of the papal breve of 10 June 1705.

*confirmationem Electionis Stanislavianae sit impossibilis de more et legibus Patriis die 10 Septembris 1707.*²⁰ The author of this postulates the recognition of Leszczyński, and in his argumentation he refers to a need of strengthened influence exerted of those “unstable” by collective support in case of any defects in election.²¹

These quoted texts depict randomly chosen attempts of the then fight of two camps and indicate that the presence of one of the rivals on the throne was not insignificant to explicate legal rights and justify them by means of referring to fundamental and appropriate arguments. Ephemeral prints also contributed to forming the opinions, especially those undecided, who found it difficult to explicate their support for one or the other pretender.²²

4

In the last months of 1706 and at the beginning of 1707 in the period of heated discussion, Nuncio J. Piazza strenuously built his opinion on the situation in Poland. This seat was for him a new diplomatic experience, although he came across some of the Polish problems at the diplomatic post in Cologne, when Augustus was searching for supporters among the dukes of the Reich.²³ His surprise by this situation, impatience, and especially uncertainty characterises his stay and action in Opava. We shall as well stress that especially at the time the Pope and the Secretary of State Cardinal Fabricio Paulucci disposed of earlier convictions concerning a need to support Augustus unconditionally. They stopped to believe him, and the fact of ignoring Baron Schenck’s mission to Rome in May 1707, which presented his monarch’s rationale and explained the circumstances of the new situation, signalled a real change of the position in the papal circles. We find reflection of this change in subsequent instructions to J. Piazza, in which he is asked to try to win favour of both warring parties in Poland at the same time. Hence, the Nuncio endeavoured to undertake contacts with various representa-

²⁰ ASV F. Albani 194 f. 259 r - 260 r.

²¹ The author of the text notes that a similar support had already taken place twice, and that was at the election of Bathory and at the election of Augustus himself.

²² Of course, the arguments for the rights of Augustus – a legitimate ruler – to the throne were also significant, but I do not include that thread in this article.

²³ Cf. J. S t a s z e w s k i, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

tives and supporters of the Leszczyński's case. Not only did the King of Sweden appear to be the enemy of Poland, but also Tsar Peter, despite the fact that he was an opponent of Charles XII and, in Nuncio's opinion, posed a threat to the freedoms of the country.

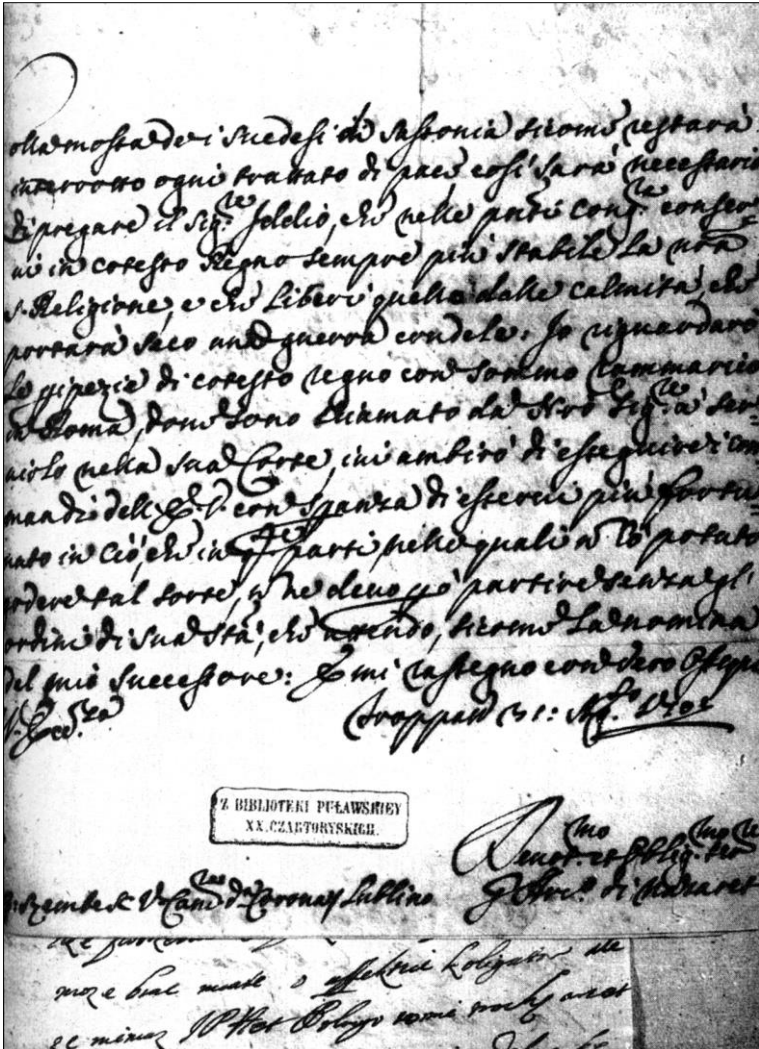
While observing the changing political and military situation attentively, the new Nuncio came to the conclusion that only final stabilization on the Polish throne can guarantee peace and maintenance of the rights of the Catholic religion in the country. J. Piazza weighed the arguments of both candidates, analysed the existing advantage of the victorious King of Sweden and – excluding real chances of the success of a new, third election – came to a conclusion that only support for Leszczyński and enforcement of the renegotiation of the Warsaw treaty within the points dangerous for the Catholic religion could be a reasonable solution for the impasse on the front of the Northern war, all the more that it seemed that the King of Sweden was a winner for good, especially when the Swedes appeared in Poland in the autumn of 1707.

A new option could have been effectuated by papal diplomacy after the Roman process of bishops M. S. Święcicki and A. Ch. Załuski, when they were freed from all charges filed at them by Augustus. Bishop Święcicki, who was sick, did not survive even a year and died on the way to Poland in Vienna in September 1707. Bishop Załuski, in turn, started very intensive actions in the camp of the supporters of Leszczyński. In May 1707, he was in Dresden and visited Leszczyński in his Saxon headquarters in Leisnig.²⁴ He later talked in Opava with Nuncio J. Piazza and presented his own vision of the Polish case.²⁵ On 19 April 1707, through the intercession of Nuncio he presented his remarks to the Pope, in which he supported the succession of the Polish throne to S. Leszczyński.²⁶ With reference to the support for Leszczyński by papal diplomacy, he also saw a necessity to remove Stanisław Szembek from the Gniezno Archdiocese, and Konstancy Felicjan Szaniawski from the Kuyavia Bishopric. Both dignitaries, as

²⁴ Cf. *avviso Piazza* of 2 May 1707, ASV Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 342 v - 343 r. and J. Piazza to Paulucci 16 May 1707, ASV Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 367 r.

²⁵ Cf. A. Ch. Załuski, *Epistolae familiares-ecclesiasticae*, vol. 3, Brunsbergae, 1713, pp. 795-6.

²⁶ ASV F. Albani 194 f. 306 r - 310 r. Piazza wrote about these arguments in the letter of 23 May 1707, Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 386 r - 392 v.



Handwritten letter from J. Piazza to Jan Szembak – Opava, August 31, 1707.
Kraków, Bibl. Czart. 452 f 119

the leaders of the Sandomierz Confederation, but above all, Augustus' nominees, created – in the opinion of Załuski – a significant obstacle in regulating the Polish case. The Warmia Bishop, and as events unfolded, papal diplomacy as well could not see a possibility of reconciliation of Leszczyński with Szembek, but especially with the primate.²⁷ Hence, it became inevitable to take a crucial decision.

A very delicate and complex issue of the release of Archbishop Konstanty Józef Zieliński, the one who coronated Leszczyński, from Tsarist prison was widely discussed.²⁸ Diplomatic efforts were extremely difficult, especially as Leszczyński took this opportunity to renew accusations against Primate Szembek that it was his fault that the Archbishop of Lviv had been kidnapped and imprisoned. Papal diplomacy was deprived in this respect of a manoeuvre, which they earlier possessed, when they were fighting for the release of bishops Załuski and Świącicki imprisoned by Augustus. This delayed release of Archbishop Zieliński weakened the reliability of Tsar Peter as a guarantor of law and order in Poland, and an initiative undertaken by Peter of a new election put J. Piazza in a state of anxiety.

Tsar Peter's plans for Poland, which was to be an ally base in the looming prospects of a military settlement between Russia and Sweden, are well known. Alone, Peter had to seek allies, even if it was to be a weak Poland, which nevertheless represented a sizeable reservoir of military forces and supplies, not forgetting propaganda. Peter consistently aimed to subjugate Poland first by supporting Augustus (talks in Żółkiew, now Zhovkva, between December 1706 and January 1707 and the pressure to renew the Treaty of Narva of 1704), and from the spring of 1707 by forcing the plan leading to a new election.²⁹ Hopes for the return of Augustus were then very weak – and the opposition against him significant. At the same time the cooperation with Leszczyński was not taken into consideration.

What left was the “third election”. The Nuncio quickly spotted his intentions and the perspective of their fulfilment troubled him even more since he did not trust Peter and expressed numerous objections

²⁷ See: ASV Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae, vol. 41/1: Iulius Piazza 1706-1708, ed. J. K o p i e c, No. 195.

²⁸ Cf. J. K o p i e c, *Nuncjusz Juliusz Piazza wobec uwolnienia arcybiskupa K. Zielińskiego*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 43:1996 f. 4, pp. 189-193.

²⁹ A. K a m i ń s k i, *Konfederacja sandomierska*, p. 42.

to the pro-Russian orientation of the Pope, despite the fact that he respected the priorities of papal diplomacy for closer relations with Russia. This aspect of the establishment of a new political centre in the Polish society, leading to even greater tensions and confusion in the country, as well as a perspective of thereat to the right of the Catholic religion made J. Piazza turn to the camp of Leszczyński. He was inclined to do so by an analysis of clear political processes: the strengthening position of Charles XII, the weakening of Saxony and the withdrawal of Augustus, the hard-to-predict resolution of a possible Russian-Swedish military conflict seemed to lead inevitably to the recognition of the Voivode of Poznań as king. Such an option appeared to be the safest for the Nuncio from the perspective of the interest of the country and Catholic religion. It was only a matter of legitimising the election by the accession of the whole of the Commonwealth, and, what could be achieved on the way – negotiation of a few most controversial conditions of the Polish-Swedish Treaty of November 1705, from the point of view of the Holy See. Nuncio J. Piazza commenced to be involved in his diplomatic actions for the described plans and choices.

5

Also the Holy See seemed to support such choices. This can be seen in the instructions to the Nuncio contained in the letter of the Secretary of State of 14 May 1707, which made explicit reference to the situation in Poland: since the expectations of the return of Augustus to the country had proved futile, and the idea of a new election would be a fatal threat to the country, the only solution is to reconcile both camps and support the Poznań voivode.³⁰ This was also the time of debates of the Lublin Council under the supervision of Primate S. Szembek. A way out of the impasse was also searched for. These were the issues of the Nuncio's lively correspondence with the Holy See until July 1707. Having received the necessary instruction from Rome, the Nuncio established contacts with both a wider circle of people and most distinguished personas from both camps, e.g. vice-chancellor Jan Szembek from Sandomierz Confederation and hetman Jan

³⁰ A letter in ASV Nunz. Pol. 203 A f. 205 r; Cf. also J. Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.

S. Jabłonowski from the Leszczyński's camp. At the same time the Nuncio did not neglect close relationships with the leaders of the Sandomierz Confederation, working on their conciliatory attitude towards Leszczyński. The basis for the Nuncio's actions in this respect can be found in F. Paulucci's cipher to Piazza of 2 July 1707, which obliged the Nuncio not to recognise Leszczyński officially, while at the same time, through his trusted collaborators, he was to hint that the Pope would nevertheless be prepared to recognise the voivode of Poznań as king.³¹ However, J. Piazza at the beginning of July repeatedly expressed his disbelief in the pacification of the country and the reconciliation of the conflicting camps, and made the development of the situation in Poland dependent on the arbitrary attitude of the King of Sweden³² and on the political and military decisions of Tsar Peter I.³³ There are numerous indications that a decision was made in Rome to change the Nuncio. In the private correspondence of J. Piazza with Bishop Agostino Steffani many complaints were filed at his own helplessness. We can as well ponder whether this was not camouflage for the pro-Stanisław option, which did not succeed? In this situation it was more beneficial for Rome to make a change on the post of the Nuncio. From later course of events we know that J. Piazza did not make any mistake, since his successor Mikołaj Spinola would also express his far-reaching support for Leszczyński, yet it was not official and was not stable and definitive, especially in the first period of his office. Having returned home, J. Piazza was appointed Secretary of Breve and a Member of the Commission for Poland, which at the time was convened quite often, preparing documents for the Pope and the Nuncio in Poland. In turn, M. Spinola was to act in the same way as his predecessor.³⁴

This ground-breaking significance of the change in the position of the Nuncio can be deciphered from two important sources. The first is an instruction to the new Nuncio – M. Spinola himself.³⁵ If his appointment took place in August 1707, then the text of the instruction

³¹ ASV Nunz. Pol. 203 A f. 259 r-v.

³² Cf. A letter of 4 July 1707, ASV Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 489-490 v.

³³ A letter by Piazza to Steffani of 8 July 1707. A letter in Arch. Kongr. de Propaganda Fide, F. Spiga vol. 47 sf.

³⁴ Cf. the remark of the Secretary of State for Nuncio Spinola of 7 April 1708. ASV Nunz. Pol. 220 f. 80 r-v.

³⁵ The text in ASV Fondo Garampi 250 sf.

(the date of which we do not know) must have reflected the political situation of the time.³⁶ The above instruction concerned two problems: the recognition of Leszczyński and support for the endeavours of the agreement between Russia and the Catholic Church. A leading motif of papal diplomatic activities in Poland were to be actions for the return of permanent peace in the country and earnest endeavours not to lose any right of the Catholic religion in the Commonwealth. Therefore, in the atmosphere of tensions, divisions and uncertainty referring to the plans of the King of Sweden, and anxieties linked to pursue a new election from the inspiration of Tsar of Russia – in the opinion of the authors of the instruction – the wisest solution was to recognise the election of Leszczyński by the state.³⁷ The new Nuncio was also to strive to ensure that no new divisions in the society arose, therefore he was not to break relations with the Sandomierz Confederation. In order to preserve freedom of actions, he was to stay in Opava, though it would be most beneficial to take a post in the country. The move to Warsaw would be a sign of support for Leszczyński and his camp, which was to be avoided. This very careful and unstable standpoint of Rome, not having any clear line of action and still waiting for the development of the situation, can well be seen. Specific decisions could be expected, depending on this development. Thus, the general guideline valid since Augustus' resignation to balance support and not to lose any of the opportunities to play a role in shaping the post-war order in the Commonwealth continued to be applied.

6

The situation deteriorated dramatically in the summer months of 1707. It was consequent upon an announcement of interregnum by the leaders of the Sandomierz Confederation on 11 June of that year. They did so after the closure of the Lublin Convention, surely after the pressure of Peter and in the act of disappointment of the deeds by Augustus, who disregarding the sworn royal laws and with no participation of the states,

³⁶ The appointment took place on 20 August 1707, cf. *Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae*, vol. 1: *Nuntiorum series chronologica*, by H. D. W o j t y s k a, Romae 1990, p. 294.

³⁷ See: ftn. 35.

resigned from the crown, and left the country in chaos.³⁸ Contrary to what we might think at first, this act was by no means directed at Augustus, rather the opposite: it reopened the possibility of bringing the question of the throne beyond the pressure of the Swedish and Russian rulers.³⁹

Both the Nuncio and the opponents of Leszczyński were troubled by the news from secret negotiations of Charles XII with Emperor Joseph I with reference to the protesters in Silesia. The King of Sweden ordered that the Catholic authorities returned Protestant churches seized after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In fact, the treaty in this respect was signed in September 1707. It showed an uncompromising approach of the King of Sweden on fundamental religious matters, which bore the worst possible outlook for the status of the Catholic religion in the state.⁴⁰

The readiness towards the recognition of Leszczyński as king in the months to come after the announcement of interregnum was not so unequivocal. On 20 August 1707, Card. F. Paulucci stressed that the matters of recognition should be approached with care, until the validation of the election was conducted. Until then, all the actions should be suspended, which could be read as the recognition of Leszczyński as king.⁴¹ This coincided with expressions of panic caused by the activities of Tsar Peter, whose troops were destroying churches, monasteries and the union, in order to show that he would never agree to recognise the Poznań voivode as king. The Pope saw a considerable difficulty in this, all the more that Tsar did not release Archbishop Zieliński from the Russian prison.⁴²

Striving to save some time, J. Piazza knowing the situation in Poland, postulated that they should not be in a hurry with their approach to Leszczyński, before he entered Poland. Only then would his support be measured.⁴³

³⁸ Print: *Oznajmienie interregni* in the Princes Czartoryski Library – Kraków, [in:] ms. 452, pp. 25-31.

³⁹ When the interregnum was declared, the Sandomierz leaders left the Commonwealth, went to Silesia, then to Olomouc, where they continued their anti-Swedish activities, staying in touch with Augustus, who was still in Saxony.

⁴⁰ The outcome was the Convention signed on 1 September 1707 in Altranstädt between the envoys of the Emperor and the King of Sweden on concessions for protesters in Silesia. Cf. N. C o n r a d s, *Die Durchführung der Altranstädter Konvention in Schlesien 1707-1709*, Köln-Wien 1977.

⁴¹ ASV Nunz. Pol. 143 f. 507 v.

⁴² *Tamże*.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, Nunz. Pol. 132 f. 680 r - 681 r.

To make matters worse, Leszczyński, more confident after the departure of the Swedish troops from Saxony to the Commonwealth, wanted to finalise the removal from the posts of Primate Stanisław Szembek in Gniezno and Konstanty Szaniawski in Włocławek. The issue was not new, and the Pope was also well aware of it. This can be confirmed by the information of the Secretary of State for the Nuncio of 8 July 1707, that Clement XI was ready to withdraw his support for both mentioned dignitaries, while those interested placed their persons at the disposal of the Pope.⁴⁴ In turn, under the pressure of the voivode of Poznań, two relevant Chapters appointed Bishop Suffragan of Chełm Jan Dłużewski as administrator of the diocese in Gniezno on 3 October 1707, and in Włocławek the local priest Wojciech Bardziński. This incident was an interesting example of a conflict in the church and political sphere. Above all, this was an attempt to exert pressure on Rome. The Nuncio was upset by the suddenness of this step, in which papal jurisdiction was ignored. Rome, alarmed by these events, pressed for the pseudo-elections of the chapters to be declared null and void, and for the bodies of canons participating in them to be declared under the penalty of excommunication. It took Piazza a great deal of time and effort to eliminate this difficult problem, until, on 5 December of that year, based on a papal delegation, he annulled the lawless acts of the chapters.⁴⁵

We can therefore see in these facts of yet another weakening of the papal support for the voivode of Poznań, who was at the time perceived as highly dependent on the King of Sweden and not able to bring peace back to the country.

7

A lot of light was shed on the sequence of events and conflicts of the political camps in Poland in the accounts of J. Piazza summarising his nuncio mission.⁴⁶ He wrote bitterly about his helpless position of the

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, Nunz. Pol. 203 A f. 259 r and 276 r.

⁴⁵ The case lasted for another year, as Rome demanded that the two administrators individually remove their censures. The whole affair is richly documented in the materials of the nunciature.

⁴⁶ It was preserved in ASV Nunz. Pol. 132 A f. 289 r - 301 v. Remarks on the validation of the Leszczyński's election, see: f. 298 r - 301 v, por. J. K o p i e c, *Podstawowe źródła*, pp. 613-614.

papal representative. Throughout the whole mission, he put a lot of effort to gain valid and checked information. He did not meet King Augustus, who he was to serve. In this context, the indications of the manual prepared for him were mostly out of date. He, therefore, searched for optimal solutions and behaviours on his own and even Rome was essentially reliant on his discernment.⁴⁷

With reference to the most important issue: the attitude towards Leszczyński, the Nuncio, in his account, wrote emphatically that, in the Pope's opinion, it was a leading issue in the context of efforts made to restore peace in the country. He said that the convalidation of Leszczyński's election would be the most promising way to achieve this. As Nuncio, he was instructed by the Pope to suggest this direction of solving problems, which he did with all diligence.⁴⁸ In turn, under the influence of the endeavours of Augustus and the Bishop of Kuyavia, upholding hope for the return of the King from Saxony, Nuncio's proposals were received critically and often treated as whims. Hence, his mission was particularly difficult. In addition, Tsar Peter I got involved in solving the Polish case, who was assessed very critically by the Nuncio.

J. Piazza did not mention in his account any of the detailed issues, as, for instance, remarks referring to the possible candidate to the throne in a new election, or his remarks concerning interregnum. We know it from ordinary post to the Secretary of State, in which he considered the validation of Leszczyński as possible. Later there were even fewer specific proposals of how to lead the country out of these anxieties and divisions.

A decision on the change in the post of the Nuncio was taken in a very specific moment. The political-military situation was undergoing some changes. Already in the summer months of 1707, Tsar Peter was seeking favourable peace with Charles XII. Polish diplomacy, at the same time, represented by the Sieniawski family was making endeavours for peace with Sweden.⁴⁹ On the other hand, owing to Augustus' reluctance to return to Poland, Russians feared the agreement between the Sandomierz Confederation and Leszczyński, which

⁴⁷ Cf. J. K o p i e c, *Korespondencja prywatna nuncjusza Juliusza Piazza z biskupem Agostino Steffani z lat 1706-1708*, „Nasza Przeszłość” (further cit. NP), 79:1993, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁸ ASV Nunz. Pol. 132 A f. 288 v.

⁴⁹ Cf. A. K a m i ń s k i, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-112.

would happen to be frightening reinforcement of the anti-Russian forces.⁵⁰ Moreover, in September 1707, the Swedish army in the amount of 32 thousand soldiers received orders in Saxony to march to Poland and this was a long planned mission against Russia, but earlier yet another Swedish occupation of the Commonwealth.⁵¹

Poland was once again under the direct sovereignty of the Swedes. It seemed that this time the consolidation of Leszczyński's position would not cause any major difficulties, especially as the Tsarist army withdrew from Poland, and in the spring of 1708 Charles XII himself was in the Russian territory. After the first victory at Berezina, the Bishop of Chełmno, Teodor Potocki, ordered to sing thanksgiving *Te Deum*.⁵² The onward march of the Swedish army was increasingly hampered by both climatic conditions and the "scorched earth" tactics employed by the fleeing Russian troops. After parting with Karol, Leszczyński returned to Poland, and this was a moment which was exceptionally favourable for him, as he almost became the master of Poland. There was even time in May 1708 which was considered appropriate to recognise Leszczyński, only requiring from him and the King of Sweden a guarantee of safety for the Commonwealth. Nonetheless, the leaders of Sandomierz Confederation explained that Stanisław should first safeguard state rights and promise to install internal peace; until he achieved this, as they claimed, there was no question of the support for Stanisław. Further moves of the Sandomierz Confederation blocked the help of the Polish troops for the Swedish army in Russia. Years 1708-1709 is also the period of intrigues in the Leszczyński's camp and weakening of his power in the country.⁵³

8

In Nuncio Spinola's behaviour, in turn, we can observe numerous hesitations. The legacy of Spinoza's efforts dictated unusual diplomatic carefulness. The only thing that could speak in favour of a possible accession to the camp of the Poznań Voivode was the expected victory of the Swedes over Russia at the time, which, however, ruled out in

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 137-143.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 124-126.

⁵² ASV, Nunz. Pol. 133 f. 549 r.

⁵³ J. F e l d m a n, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-291.

advance the possibility of Augustus' restoration to the Commonwealth. The parties were tired, which can be evidenced by M. Spinola's letter to the Secretary of State of 23 July 1708, hence the period of the Russian campaign, during which the Nuncio talked about the standpoint of Bishop Teodor Potocki expressed by his envoy canon Maciej Sołtyk.⁵⁴ The bishop's plans were based on his reckoning for Leszczyński's succession resultant upon the Swedish king's victories. Nuncio opposed the situation which forced him to lay down his authority of a papal representative for one party, against the camp of Leszczyński. Nuncio suggested that Bishop T. Potocki should settle in any place in the country and then could verify his own standpoint. It was, however, obvious that it could happen only as a result of the recognition of Leszczyński by the Holy See. Additionally, in the talks with the Nuncio Potocki emphasised once again that Poznań voivode, whom he called "Re Stanisław" was a gentle man, not bearing any grudges. Nuncio was also informed that Leszczyński put forward a candidacy of Bishop Potocki to the dignity of the Archbishop of Gniezno, due to repeated rumours about the death of the Archbishop of Lviv K. Zieliński, previously selected for the post of Primate. The Holy See recommended a continuation of the previous policy, i.e. striving for the unity of the state, which at the time could only mean renouncing support for foreign powers in the country; the Nuncio was to seek the renegotiation of the points of the Swedish-Polish treaty of 1705 harmful to the Catholic religion, and not to take any specific actions that would lead to Leszczyński's recognition. He was also to oppose fiercely all the efforts of breach of the church immunity and right of the Holy See.⁵⁵

The above-mentioned postulates directed at the Nuncio were difficult to be fulfilled in so much as year 1708 and the beginning of the following were rich in signs of power and significance of pro-Swedish camp of S. Leszczyński. Many abandoned the Augustus' case staying at the time in Saxony and turned to his rival. On the other hand, the revival of contacts between Augustus and Tsar Peter I in the spring of 1709 forced the suspension of all the actions for the Swedish candidate. The attitude of waiting for the results of the Russian war cam-

⁵⁴ A letter can be found in ASV Nunz. Pol. 133 f. 428 r - 436 v.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, ASV Nunz. Pol. 220 f. 114 v (the Secretary of State to the Nuncio of 22 September 1708).

paign prevailed. When, in July 1709, the situation of Charles XII, defeated by Tsar Peter I on the fields near Poltava, was finally resolved, the way was simultaneously opened for Augustus to return to the Polish throne. On 23 September 1709, in a long letter to the Nuncio, the Secretary of State drew up a panorama of tasks ahead and the problems to be solved.⁵⁶ He admitted that in the last years the Pope struggled with a particularly difficult political problem, since Leszczyński was recognised by almost all the countries of Europe with the Emperor and King of France; Even Augustus himself while signing his resignation turned to the Poznań voivode as king. The king of Sweden and the whole of the Leszczyński's camp issued threats and praises to the Pope to make the Holy See recognise him as new king. The Pope, in turn, expressed his reservations towards the elect forced upon the King of Sweden: did not respond to his letters, ordered to remove Leszczyński's coats of arms from the Polish church of St Stanisław in Eternal City,⁵⁷ issued breve nullifying the choice of administrators in Gniezno and Włocławek of Leszczyński's command. It was a sign of opposition towards the Swedish dictate referring to the possibility of the restitution of his power with the support of Rome. In fact, in August 1709, Augustus II headed for Dresden, and at the beginning of September of the same year arrived in Warsaw.

At the same time, Nuncio M. Spinola took up his duties to the without the slightest difficulty. In October 1709, he left Opava, thus concluding the almost five-year period of the residence of the Polish nuncios outside Poland, and in November arrived in Krakow, from which he headed for Warsaw. He carried out his diplomatic mission in the Capital City of Poland until 1712.

On 4 February 1710, the General Sejm announced the return of King Augustus II to the Polish throne and his full, exclusive power in the Commonwealth.⁵⁸ The Treaty of Narva with Russia was as well ratified, which undoubtedly reinforced the impact of Tsars' policies on the further fate of Poland.

⁵⁶ ASV F. Albani 195 f. 90 r - 94 v.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. K o p i e c, *Echa polskich wydarzeń z lat 1704-1709 w środowisku Hospicjum św. Stanisława w Rzymie*, NP vol. 82:1994, p. 379.

⁵⁸ His acts can be found in *Volumina legum*, vol. 6, Petersburg 1860, pp. 137-216. Published by R. M i e n i c k i, *Diariusz Walnej Rady Warszawskiej z roku 1710*, Wilno 1928.

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