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ROYAL FREE ELECTIONS IN THE
POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH.
POLITICAL GAMES, SOCIAL COMMUNICATION,
DIPLOMACY

Edited by
Aleksandra Ziober and Alessandro Boccolini



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The editorial initiative we present comes from the obvious lack of a journal, in Italy, concerning the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the Modern Age, this despite its fundamental role in the history and culture of that part of the continent, wrongly considered distant and peripheral.

Quite the contrary is true, in fact. Main objective of the journal is to create a space for reflection and discussion on topics pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, but also relations with Continental Europe, encouraging dialogue between scholars and experts in the field, and between different approaches of scientific research.

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**THE HOLY SEE TOWARDS THE CONTENTION FOR THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN THRONE
BETWEEN THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VASA DYNASTY:
JOHN CASIMIR AND CHARLES FERDINAND (1648–1649)**

ABSTRACT

On 21 May 1648, the apostolic nuncio Giovanni De Torres reported from Słonim on the death of Ladislaus IV Vasa, announcing at the same time that the royal half-brothers John Casimir and Charles Ferdinand would be the most serious candidates for the throne. The papal diplomats frequently emphasised the universal wish of the nobility for a dynastic continuation within the Polish Vasas. At the same time, this was the first time brothers competed for the throne in early modern Poland-Lithuania. It could have caused concern, as everything pointed to a lack of agreement between the contenders, especially in the context of the then-ongoing conflict with the Cossacks. In this article, the policy pursued by the Holy See towards the election of 1648 is analysed, revolving not only around the personal choice of the monarch but also the issues of the war in Ukraine, the revindication of the Swedish crown, relations with France, Habsburgs and Brandenburg as well as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's religious policy. The diplomatic letters exchanged between the nuncio and the papal Secretariat of State, the correspondence of the Vasa princes with Innocent X and the *sejm* accounts constitute the historical basis for the study.

KEYWORDS: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Royal election; Diplomacy; Apostolic nunciature; Papacy.

SORROWFUL NEWS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH

As early as 21 May 1648, the apostolic nuncio Giovanni de Torres reported from Słonim on the death of Ladislaus IV Vasa (who had passed away the day before in Merecz, in Lithuania), also announcing that the most serious candidates for the crown would become the younger Vasa princes, children of Sigismund III Vasa and his second wife, Constance of Austria: John Casimir (1609–1672, military, ex-Jesuit and a former cardinal) and Charles Ferdinand (1613–1655, bishop of Wrocław)¹. The Roman curia was aware of the nobles' traditional affection for the ruling dynasty. Katarzyna Kosior noted appositely that

the Jagiellonians [and, after them, their direct descendants – Vasas] had become a formidable myth. No longer able to cause a dynastic threat to the monarchy's electiveness, they were remembered primarily in a positive light as one of the forces that had shaped the Commonwealth's republican system of government².

1 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of Giovanni de Torres to Giacomo Panzirolo, Słonim 21 V 1648, f. 182r.

2 Katarzyna Kosior, "Anna Jagiellon: A Female Political Figure in the Early Modern

It had already been noted by a contemporary of the events described, Ladislaus IV's resident envoy in Madrid, Francesco Bibboni, who stressed that, despite the principle of free royal election, Polish-Lithuanian nobility historically tended to favour the candidature of a son or relative of the defunct monarch³. The king's death, this time with detailed reactions from Queen Marie Louise and potential claimants to the throne, was subsequently reported by the nuncio from Kościan on 29 May⁴. Almost contemporarily, Innocent X was informed of the vacancy of the Polish-Lithuanian throne by Maciej Łubieński in his letter of 6 June, in which the primate entrusted the matters of the new election to papal prayers⁵.

The apostolic nuncio's presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during an *interregnum* was not legally defined and had already caused controversies in the past⁶. On the one hand, shortly after the monarch's death, De Torres met with primate Łubieński, who asked the papal representative for the Holy See's intercession and protection during the throne's vacancy, as well as prayers for the success of the upcoming election and other state affairs. On the other hand, the nuncio took steps to inquire about his actual status during an *interregnum*, wanting to assure and systematise his position. He looked for traces about this topic in the Crown

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth", in *A Companion to Global Queenship*, ed. Elena Woodacre (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018): 70-2.

3 Miroslaw Nagielski, "Konsyderacje około elekcyi króla polskiego' barona Francesca Bibboniego posła polskiego przy dworze hiszpańskim w 1648 roku", in *Rzeczpospolita, Europa i świat. Interakcje dyplomatyczne i dworskie w epoce nowożytnej (XVI–XVIII w.). Studia dedykowane Profesorowi Ryszardowi Skowronowi*, red. Aleksandra Barwicka-Makula, Paweł Duda, Dorota Gregorowicz, and Oskar J. Rojewski (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Cum Laude, 2023), 356-57. See also Zbigniew Wójcik, *Jan Kazimierz Waza* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1997), 53.

4 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Kościan 29 V 1648, f. 154-55.

5 Letter of Maciej Łubieński to Innocent X, Warsaw 5 VI 1648, in VMPL III, 449. Theiner erroneously dated this letter to 6 June.

6 During all the *interregna*, the apostolic nuncios found themselves in a peculiar situation with regard to their legal position in the Polish-Lithuanian state. Since Poland-Lithuania was an elective monarchy, with the death of the monarch, to whom a papal representative was accredited, his diplomatic mandate actually expired. In the case of a change of government in any hereditary monarchy, the nuncio would be required to obtain accreditation with the new sovereign as soon as possible. In the Polish-Lithuanian context, during *interregna* lasting for many months, this proved impossible. See Charles Keenan, "The Limits of Diplomatic Ritual: The Polish Embassy of Giovanni Francesco Commendone (1572–1573) and Criticism of Papal Legates in Early Modern Europe", *Royal Studies Journal* III (2016): 106; Dorota Gregorowicz, *Tiara w grze o koronę. Stolica Apostolska wobec wolnych elekcji w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w drugiej połowie XVI wieku* (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2019), 218-19; Gregorowicz, "Una protezione ben accetta? La nobiltà polacco-lituana nei confronti dell'impegno pontificio nelle elezioni dei re (1572–1587)", *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, 55 (2021): 123-48.

Chancellery, from which research he drew the surprising conclusions: «There is no sign [about it] as if there had never been a nuncio here»⁷. It is an interesting observation in perspective of any possible use of the records produced by the Chancellery for the study of the history of diplomacy in the early modern Poland-Lithuania – it surprisingly lacked documents relating to one of the few *de facto* permanent foreign embassies functioning at the Polish-Lithuanian court of the time⁸.

Information about the king's death reached Rome on 17 June 1648. Almost one month had thus elapsed, a surprisingly long time for such important news as the vacancy of a Catholic kingdom's throne. This fact indicates that, for unknown reasons, the information about Ladislaus IV passing away was entrusted to the traditional mail services rather than to a special courier. Cardinal Secretary of State Giacomo Panziroli attested to the papal grief in his response, asking the nuncio to offer his condolences to those De Torres deemed it appropriate⁹. Traditionally, the nuncio was to use the tool of papal briefs for this purpose¹⁰.

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BETWEEN THE TWO BROTHERS

According to the Holy See's diplomats, the forthcoming election of the new Polish-Lithuanian monarch looked fairly peaceful. It seems to be indeed a rather peculiar position, given the war situation in Ukraine and, as Adam Andrzej Witusik put it, «the mood of general panic»¹¹. It was, after all, an election in the time of open war

7 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panziroli, Warsaw 17 VI 1648, f. 172: «Non vi è segno, come a punto se non vi fosse mai qui stato Nuntio». All the translations present in the text are made by the author.

8 Cf. Marta Szymańska, «Kilka uwag o organizacji służby dyplomatycznej w czasach panowania Władysława IV Wazy (1634–1648)», in Barwicka-Makula, et al., *Rzeczpospolita, Europa i świat*: 276–77.

9 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panziroli to De Torres, Rome 17 VI 1648, f. 94.

10 See for example letter of Innocent X to John Casimir, Rome [1648], in VMPL III, 450–51.

11 Adam Andrzej Witusik, «Elekcja Jana Kazimierza w 1648 roku», *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F, Nauki Filozoficzne i Humanistyczne*, 17 (1962): 122: «Nastrój powszechnej paniki». Interestingly, it was not an isolated opinion, reducing the election of 1648 to a simple choice between the Vasa princes, both half-brothers of the deceased ruler, which is also confirmed by the opinion of some historians, according to whom the beginning of the interregnum, including the convocation assembly, was a time of calm among the nobility and free of major internal political conflict. See Mikołaj Jemiołowski, *Pamiętnik dzieje Polski zawierający (1648–1679)*, ed. Jan Dziegielewski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2000), 55; Maciej Franz, «Wolna elekcja w czasach wojny. O okolicznościach elekcji króla Polski w 1648 roku», in *Wokół wolnych elekcji. O znaczeniu idei wyboru-między prawami a obowiązkami w państwie polskolitewskim XVI–XVIII wieku*, red. Mariusz Markiewicz, Dariusz Rolnik, and Filip Wolański (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016): 280; Edward Opaliński, «Elekcje wazowskie w Polsce. Stosunek szlachty do instytucji okresu bezkrólewia», *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, XCII/3 (1985): 547.

– a campaign against the Cossacks that was fractured and fraught with difficulties, during which two commanders of the Commonwealth's army had recently been taken prisoner: grand hetman Mikołaj Potocki and field hetman Marcin Kalinowski. Nevertheless, the nuncio was dismissive of any possibility of conflict for the crown between the aspiring Vasa brothers and of the emergence of severe political divisions among the nobility. In any case, in such a contingency, De Torres pointed to the possibility of the election of Prince Philip William of Neuburg, husband of Anna Catherine Constance Vasa, or Archduke Leopold Habsburg¹².

Political intuition, however, failed – De Torres was wrong. For as early as 24 June 1648, the nuncio reported that the clergy and other Catholic senators were inclined to support the aspirations of Charles Ferdinand, while John Casimir seemed to be pushed by the protestant party. The dividing line, however, was not solely related to the issue of faith. It can be said that John Casimir soon received the support of the 'conciliatory party' in the Commonwealth, in which chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński played the leading role. At the same time, Charles Ferdinand headed the so-called 'war party', aiming for a showdown with the Cossacks, led by Jeremi Wiśniowiecki. Nevertheless, as De Torres stated at the time, it was only the convocation assembly that would only lighten the nobility's mood on the forthcoming election¹³.

Meanwhile, both Vasa princes made efforts to gain papal support in their rivalry for the Polish-Lithuanian crown, which was a common practice on such occasions. John Casimir appealed to the nuncio to obtain for him the official and exclusive support of the Holy See, as had happened in the case of Urban VIII and Ladislaus IV in 1632, through the intermediary of the then nuncio Onorato Visconti (this was a precedent in which the pope deviated from his usual position of *padre comune* in situations in which Catholic princes competed with each other in political matters)¹⁴. At the same time, John Casimir asserted his gratitude for the cardinal

12 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Słonim 21 V 1648, f. 182r. See also AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 194: «Io per me credo, che l'elettione non possa cadere in altri, che in questi Serenissimi Principi, e massime se fra di loro non si disuniranno, et in tal caso penso che s'havrebbe mira del Prencipe di Neoburgo, cognato loro, e doppo questo a qualched'uno degli Arciduchi fratelli dell'Imperatore, o vero d'Inspruch»; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 29 VII 1648, f. 197.

13 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 24 VI 1648, f. 183r.

14 About papal involvement in the election of 1632 see Włodzimierz Kaczorowski, "Stanowisko Stolicy Apostolskiej wobec elekcji królewicza Władysława", *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, XXIX (1984): 155-66; Paweł Duda, *Krzyż i karabela. Polityka zagraniczna Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w ocenie dyplomacji papieskiej 1623–1635* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2019), 179-96. On the papal concept of neutrality towards the Polish-Lithuanian royal elections see Gregorowicz, *Tiara*, 95-110; Ead., "Problem papieskiej neutralności wobec rywalizacji o tron w Rzeczypospolitej w wyniku abdykacji Jana Kazimierza Wazy", in *Sztuka roztropności. Dyplomacja Stolicy Apostolskiej wobec Rzeczypospolitej, Europy i świata*, red. Krzysztof Ożóg, and Ryszard Skowron (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2020): 141-61. In any

dignity he had received in 1646, justifying his controversial departure from Rome¹⁵. In addition, he sent a letter to Innocent X, written in Italian, in which he lamented his unsuccessful attempts to reclaim his Swedish patrimony, together with his empty royal title, asking for papal prayers for success in Scandinavian affairs¹⁶.

Charles Ferdinand opted for a slightly different way of seeking papal support, sending his trusted servant (*Abbate di Plosca*) to the nuncio with a letter addressed directly to the pope, in which the bishop of Wrocław sought the Holy See's patronage in view of the forthcoming election¹⁷. Some historians believe that Charles Ferdinand also asked in Rome for the possibility of withdrawing from the priesthood in the event of a successful election for himself¹⁸. There is hardly any source confirmation of a similar theory; the bishop of Wrocław had, after all, only received the diaconate and had never opted for higher priestly ordination¹⁹.

In response, De Torres approached both princes in very general terms, exalting the virtues of the members of the Vasa dynasty, their devotion to the Holy See and the Catholic faith²⁰. The pope addressed to both John Casimir and Charles Ferdinand, but also to the senate of the Commonwealth, briefs of condolence appropriate to the occasion, traditionally extolling the virtues of the deceased Ladislaus IV, in particular by lauding his activity in the field of battles against the Cossacks, the Tartars and the Ottoman Empire. In the same letters, Innocent X expressed his hope for a concordant course of the *interregnum* and care for the affairs of Catholicism, assuring of the papal protection to Poland-Lithuania²¹.

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case, the grand chancellor of the Crown, Jerzy Ossoliński, informed De Torres that Visconti, by order of Urban VIII, endorsed the Vasa dynasty in general words, and it was only when support for Ladislaus proved to be widespread and did not augur any problems for his acclamation that the Holy See decided to back him by name at the election *sejm*. De Torres pointed out, however, that in 1632, an exceptional situation of consensus about the candidate had taken place, while in the case of the 1648 election, it would be necessary to maintain a far-reaching neutrality towards the competition of the Vasa brothers. See AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 22 VII 1648, f. 215-16.

15 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 184.

16 Letter of John Casimir to Innocent X, Warsaw 15 VII 1648, in VMPL III, 450.

17 Letter of Charles Ferdinand to Innocent X, Warsaw 27 VI 1648, in VMPL III, 449. See also AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 184.

18 Ludwik Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński* (Warszawa: Księgarnia Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1924), 305.

19 Władysław Czapliński, "Karol Ferdynand (Waza)", in *Internetowy Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, [<https://www.ipsb.nina.gov.pl/a/biografia/karol-ferdynand-waza-1613-1655-biskup-wroclawski-i-plocki>], (access: 11 II 2024)].

20 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 184.

21 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of Innocent X to Charles Ferdinand, Rome 25 VII 1648, f. 253; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of Innocent X

According to papal diplomacy correspondence, at the beginning of July 1648, Charles Ferdinand's affairs in the Commonwealth were better than John Casimir's. In the nuncio's eyes, the bishop of Wrocław enjoyed more support among the nobility, and it was in him that De Torres saw the most serious candidate for the throne²². The younger prince also enjoyed the important support of the imperial court²³. As already mentioned, the episcopate was on Charles Ferdinand's part too (except, according to De Torres, of the bishop of Warmia Wacław Leszczyński)²⁴. On the other hand, the nuncio admitted that

the affairs of His Majesty [King of Sweden, John Casimir] cannot be said to be hopeless, as he also has many leading knights in his faction, even if they say they are duty-bound. The French are doing their part, hoping to retain the Most Serene Queen [Marie Louise], even though she says she wants to retire to some monastery²⁵.

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De Torres repeatedly emphasised John Casimir's French contacts. He reported that the prince had met with the French ambassador in a private forum in the apartments of Marie Louise²⁶. According to the papal diplomat's opinion, John Casimir was, however, more interested in revindicating his rights to the Swedish crown and initially did not show particular commitment to the project of assuming the Polish-Lithuanian throne, which opinion quickly proved to be illusory²⁷.

to John Casimir, Rome 25 VII 1648, f. 254; Letter of Innocent X to senators, Rome 25 VII 1648, in VMPL III, 450.

22 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Słonim 21 V 1648, f. 182r: «Concorreranno più degli altri a questo Reame il Principe Casimiro, il quale forse, che hora assumerà il titolo di Re di Suetia, ma non ha affetto, né stima di sorte alcuna nella Republica; anzi che ha molti Senatori contrari. Il Principe Carlo si crede che sia per haver maggior seguito, come ha maggior credito, e perciò avrà ancora più forte fattione». Also AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 185; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 193.

23 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 15 VII 1648, f. 196.

24 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 5 VIII 1648, f. 198.

25 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 29 VII 1648, f. 197: «Le cose però di Sua Maestà [John Casimir] non può dirsi, che habbino per disperare, poiché anch'essa fra la sua fazione è di molti cavalieri principali, se pure dicono da doverlo. Li Francesi ne fanno le loro parti, sperando di rimaritargli la Serenissima Regina, ancorché questa vada dicendo che si vuol ritirare in qualche monastero».

26 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 193.

27 De Torres informed the Secretariat of State that John Casimir had accepted the title of King of Sweden as hereditary, see AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 24 VI 1648, f. 176.

In any case, in July 1648, the papal diplomat acknowledged the problem of the unstable political mood among the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, who, according to De Torres, «can change entirely during one feast»²⁸. In the opinion of the nuncio, only the moment of the election *sejm* and the election act itself was to reveal the definite political sympathies of the respective electors²⁹.

De Torres perceived an apparent and long-standing lack of cordiality between the Vasa brothers. «Prince Charles has twice invited the King of Sweden to the dinner after His Majesty's return [from Rome], and he has never accepted» – the nuncio reported³⁰. According to the papal diplomat's account, it was John Casimir who sowed the seeds of discord, envying his brother's extensive contacts and accusing him of winning supporters to the disadvantage of his own name³¹. The elder prince was even to express that, in the event of an unsuccessful election for himself, he would support the Sultan rather than his brother³². On the other hand, Charles Ferdinand was said to have ignored the presence of a French ambassador in the Commonwealth as a sign of contempt for the *Roi très chrétien* support for John Casimir³³.

In such circumstances, De Torres dissuaded the pope from going beyond the canon of *padre comune* conduct and officially giving papal support to any of the candidates, as had had place in the case of their older half-brother Ladislaus³⁴. «Now, there is no more certainty of one than of another. If, in the meantime, one of the brothers was to be discovered greater than the other, I would present the briefs that I had in the express and specific recommendation of one of them [...]; but in either case, it would have to be done with secrecy»³⁵ – the nuncio reported. In any case, traditionally, the official

28 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 194: «In un banchetto si può mutar tutta».

29 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 194.

30 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 185: «Il Principe Carlo ha due volte invitato il Re di Suetia al desinare dopo il ritorno di Sua Maestà, né l'ha mai accettato».

31 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 193.

32 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 29 VII 1648, f. 197: «Il Re di Suezia si lascia intendere, che non riuscendo adesso il diventar Re, che più tosto vuol chiamar un Turco, che cada in persona del Principe Carlo suo fratello».

33 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 29 VII 1648, f. 197.

34 Gregorowicz, «Problem papieskiej neutralności», 141-61.

35 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 194: «Hora non vi è più sicurezza di uno, che non di un altro. Se fra questo mentre si scoprisse maggiore la fattione di uno, che dell'altro de' fratelli, in tal caso io presentarei li brevi, che havessi in raccomandatione espressa e specifica di qualcheduno di loro [...]; ma nell'una e nell'altra maniera dovrebbe esser con segretezza».

briefs were not to be presented until the election *sejm*, on the occasion of a public audience of a papal diplomat³⁶.

At the convocation assembly (which lasted from 16 July to 1 August 1648), with a fairly poor attendance, there was a majority favouring Charles Ferdinand. As already stated, he enjoyed strong support from a major part of the nobility and the episcopate. On the other hand, John Casimir was supported by the Protestants, especially the Prussian cities and Gdańsk, as well as the Orthodox in Ruthenia³⁷. Pre-electoral writings cited arguments both for and against both brothers. John Casimir's supporters pointed primarily to his seniority, hereditary right to the Swedish crown and military experience. Charles Ferdinand was valued for his positive character traits, which were to distinguish him favourably from his elder brother.

De Torres' initial serenity was soon disturbed by the growing conflict between the competing brothers and, above all, by the worsening political situation in the Commonwealth. Moreover, the unsettled situation in Ukraine adversely affected the presence of Lithuanians and Ruthenians at the election *sejm* and even cast doubts on its convening³⁸. As early as July 1648, the nuncio presented his concerns that the forthcoming election might bring an armed domestic conflict in the Polish-Lithuanian state³⁹.

TOWARDS THE ELECTION SEJM

As for the final position of the Holy See on the threshold of the election *sejm*, the official instructions to the nuncio were very general. Innocent X believed in the effectiveness of primate Łubieński's support for the interests of the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth, expressing his hope for the speedy election of a Catholic monarch⁴⁰. The papal diplomatic correspondence nevertheless reveals a clear preference for the aspirations of Charles Ferdinand, who was also supported by Emperor Ferdinand III⁴¹. It is impossible not to assume that the episode of

36 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 12 VII 1648, f. 193-94.

37 Tadeusz Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1984), 58. See AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 12 VIII 1648, f. 199-200; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 19 VIII 1648, f. 204.

38 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 15 VII 1648, f. 196.

39 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 7 VII 1648, f. 194; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 15 VII 1648, f. 196.

40 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 18 VII 1648, f. 95; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 10 X 1648, f. 99r. In reality, the primate's advanced age and his health ailments largely prevented Łubieński from appearing in 1648 as a strong political mediator of internal dissent, see Franz, "Wolna elekcja w czasach wojny", 283.

41 Witusik, "Elekcja Jana Kazimierza", 134; Aleksandra Ziober, "The Role and Use of Religion in the Politics of Candidates to the Polish Throne in the 17th

John Casimir's Roman adventures concerning his interrupted Jesuit novitiate and, in rather scandalous circumstances, his relinquished cardinal's hat did not harm the elder prince in terms of gaining support from the Holy See for the election of 1648. Indeed, the episcopate, but also the Jesuits, clearly supported the endeavours of Charles Ferdinand⁴². Moreover, Rome could not be pleased with the Prussian support for John Casimir⁴³, which cost the prince the 'Assurance' of September 1648 that, in the event of his election, provided the Elector with many advantages: granting Frederick William and his successors the right to pay fief tribute through deputies, to have part the senate and to vote at the election⁴⁴. Similar resentment must have been aroused by Swedish support for John Casimir. Likewise, Innocent X, breaking with the pro-French policy of Urban VIII, viewed the elder prince's close ties with the French court unfavourably⁴⁵. Finally, on the sidelines of his reflections on the rivalry between the Vasas, De Torres also described the comity between the Cossack Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the Voivode of Transylvania George I Rakoczy, as well as the latter's son's (Sigismund's) aspirations for the Polish-Lithuanian throne⁴⁶. The conflict between the brothers steadily escalated towards the autumn. According to De Torres' account

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the King of Suetia [John Casimir] says he does not wish to hear of any conciliation if this Realm will not be given to him. Prince Charles seems to think that he already has it for sure, nor does he think less of being able to give it up, so there is more and more fear of division and turmoil⁴⁷.

According to the nuncio, the acute conflict between the Vasa brothers might have turned into a risk of the election of a third, less-expected candidate⁴⁸. De Torres

Century", *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej*, 13 (2018): 119.

42 Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, 307.

43 Frederick William officially sided with John Casimir on 12 June 1648. See Barbara Szymczak, "Działalność dyplomacji brandenburskiej w okresie bezkrólewia w Rzeczypospolitej w 1648 r.", *Przegląd Historyczny*, 89/1 (1998): 39.

44 Szymczak, "Działalność dyplomacji brandenburskiej", 40.

45 Hanna Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Polskie uroczystości w barokowym Rzymie 1587-1696* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii Sztuki PAN, 2012), 171-72.

46 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 1 VII 1648, f. 194: «Il Transilvano d'Ungheria, avvicinandosi con buon numero di gente alli confini di Cracovia, fa credere che egli habbia qualche pensiero di voler concorrere con gli altri, per essere eletto Re»; AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 3 X 1648, f. 211-12.

47 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 26 IX 1648, f. 210: «Il Re di Suetia [John Casimir] dice di non voler sentir, che gli si habbi di alcun temperamento, quando non gli si dia questo Reame. Il Signor Principe Carlo, parendogli di haverlo già di sicuro, né meno stima di potergli cedere, onde sempre più si può temer di divisione e di tumulti».

48 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 12 IX 1648, f. 208.

feared that this could have been Rakoczy, who, in his view, was a major threat to Polish-Lithuanian Catholicism. The nuncio's involvement around the election was thus focused in this direction: «I do not leave my part to abolish from the minds of Catholics these pernicious concepts and resolutions for our Holy Catholic Religion»⁴⁹.

The election *sejm* of 1648 deliberated from 6 October to 20 November. Despite the recent defeat in the battle against the Cossacks at Piławice (20–23 September) and a significant weakening of the so-called 'war party', it seemed that Charles Ferdinand remained a favourite at the opening of the electoral assembly. His campaign's leader was then led by the vice-chancellor of the Crown, bishop of Chełmno Andrzej Leszczyński⁵⁰. De Torres also pointed to the support of the Lithuanian vice-chancellor Kazimierz Leon Sapieha as a considerable asset for Charles Ferdinand's candidacy, given the extent of his influence in the Grand Duchy and his financial capabilities⁵¹. However, due to the severe defeats on the Cossack front, a group of John Casimir's supporters gradually reinforced. The fact that Filip Kazimierz Obuchowicz, a supporter of the elder prince, became elected marshal of the election *sejm* was also not without significance. Finally, John Casimir's party was strengthened by the death of George I Rakoczy, whose son the Polish-Lithuanian non-Catholics, and above all the Cossacks, had hitherto sympathised with. It occurred just on the threshold of the *sejm* (11 October 1648)⁵².

In such circumstances, De Torres was just about being afraid to present the electoral briefs on behalf of Innocent X:

In the meantime, I will not share the content of these briefs with anyone. [...] I also have great doubts that these two brother princes will not be satisfied with the candour and affection of His Beatitude towards their Royal House since each of them claims the offices of His Holiness for himself, and the King of Sweden openly told me so⁵³.

49 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 226-27: «Non lascio di far le mie parti per abolir degli animi de' Cattolici questi perniciosissimi concetti e risoluzioni per la nostra Santa Religion Cattolica».

50 Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 58-61. See AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 26 IX 1648, f. 210.

51 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 12 VIII 1648, f. 199-200. Sapieha changed his position during the election *sejm*, shifting to support John Casimir. See Ziober, "Dwie ostatnie elekcje Wazów jako przyczynek do awansu majątkowego i urzędniczego wybranych rodzin Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego", in *W kręgu myśli Władysława Czaplińskiego. Wrocławskie prace z Historii Nowożytniej*, t. 1, red. Filip Wolański, and Leszek Ziátkowski (Wrocław: Chronicon, 2016), 131.

52 Witusik, "Elekcja Jana Kazimierza", 145.

53 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 3 X 1648, f. 211-12: «Fratanto io non pubblicherò con alcuno il contenuto di detti brevi, [...] dubito anche grandemente, che questi due Principi fratelli non si appagheranno di questa candidezza et affetto di Sua Beatitudine verso la Casa

Thus, as in previous cases of royal elections, the papal attitude of *padre comune* could not satisfy either side. As the nuncio noted, «if the Kingdom preaches as just and most holy the resolution of His Holiness to recommend both princes, they will not be satisfied, having declared themselves beforehand. Therefore, the blame will be laid upon me, imputing it to my actions and industry»⁵⁴. De Torres also requested instructions in the event of a possible split election⁵⁵.

According to De Torres, considering the ongoing fighting in Ukraine, postponing the election would have been more advantageous. However, the nuncio was aware of the irrevocability of the convocation assembly's decision on the matter⁵⁶. On the other hand, contradicting his argument somewhat, De Torres stressed that the absence of a monarch worsened the situation of the Commonwealth in the face of the conflict with the Cossacks and that only royal authority would be able to restore domestic peace⁵⁷. The nuncio's position on this issue, therefore, diverges from the essential points of the debate taking place at the election *sejm* around the proposal by the bishop of Kuyavia Mikołaj Wojciech Gniewosz to proceed as soon as possible to the election of a monarch without waiting for the enactment of the exorbitances. The proposal was supported by the vice-chancellor of the Crown, bishop of Chełmno Andrzej Leszczyński, voivodes of Volhynia Adam Aleksander Sanguszka, Mazovia Stanisław Warszycki, Vitebsk Paweł Jan Sapieha, and Braclaw Adam Kisiel. However, once again, the nobility's fear of overstepping the customary law and creating a dangerous precedent prevailed in this matter – the election of the monarch was not accelerated⁵⁸.

As for the presence of foreign representatives in the Commonwealth during an *interregnum*, they were traditionally unwelcome by the nobility⁵⁹. Interestingly, doubts about the legitimacy of the nuncio's presence in Warsaw during the election *sejm* of 1648 arose among members of the episcopate, too. For example, they were to be expressed by the bishop of Kuyavia Mikołaj Wojciech Gniewosz. At that time, the vice-chancellor of the Crown, bishop of Chełmno (and later primate) Andrzej Leszczyński was said to have defended De Torres, claiming that «there was no law or

loro Reale, poiché ciascuno pretende per se gli uffici di Sua Santità, et il Re di Suetia me lo disse apertamente».

54 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 3 X 1648, f. 211-12: «Se bene il Regno predicherà per giusta e per Santissima la risoluzione presa da Sua Santità di raccomandare ambedue i Principi, questi però non se ne chiameranno sodisfatti, essendosene dichiarati prima. Perciò sopra di me si caricherà la colpa, imputandosi ad opera e manifattura mia».

55 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 3 X 1648, f. 211-12.

56 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 19 IX 1648, f. 278r.

57 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 24 X 1648, f. 330.

58 See Opaliński, “Elekcje wazowskie”, 541-42.

59 See Gregorowicz, “Una protezione ben accetta?”, 123-48.

custom by which the Apostolic Nuncios had to be absent from the city [of Warsaw] at the time of the election»⁶⁰. Primate Łubieński also opposed the proposal to dismiss De Torres. Filip Kazimierz Obuchowicz, marshal of the *sejm*, then took up a discussion on the subject in the senate; in the end, the senators decided to recognise and confirm a special regard for the representative of the Holy See. Interestingly, as the nuncio reported, «the heretics themselves voted with such deference in favour of the Holy See, that it is incredible to say»⁶¹.

On 30 October, on the eve of his public audience at the election *sejm*, De Torres visited John Casimir in Nieporęt, and Charles Ferdinand in Jabłonna (the residences of the princes located near the city of Warsaw):

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I consigned to His Majesty the brief of Our Lord in answer to the information of having assumed the title of King of Sweden. I then informed both of these Most Serene Princes about His Beatitude's resolution to perform his offices for the Royal House without expressing them more to one of them than to the other because His Holiness was persuaded that the Realm would go to one of them, and that he wanted it for each, without any distinction of affection⁶².

The nuncio furthermore informed the princes of the planned content of his electoral oration, which was favourably received by both⁶³. According to Ludwik Kubala, a few days before De Torres' public audience, the papal diplomat was supposed to have personally persuaded Charles Ferdinand to concede to his elder brother⁶⁴, but this does not seem likely and has not yet been clearly confirmed by historical sources. The nuncio's public audience at the election *sejm*⁶⁵ occurred on 31 October 1648⁶⁶.

60 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 10 X 1648, f. 317-18: «Non vi era né legge, né consuetudine, per le quali i Nuntii Apostolici si debbono assentare da città nel tempo della elettione».

61 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 10 X 1648, f. 317-18: «Gli stessi heretici votarono con tanto ossequio verso la Santa Sede, ch'è incredibile a dirsi».

62 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 333: «Resi a Sua Maestà il breve di Nostro Signore, responsivo alla parte datagli d'havere assunto il titolo di Re di Svetia. Partecipai poi ad ambedue questi Serenissimi Principi la resolutione presa da Sua Beatitudine di far suoi uffici per la Casa reale, senza espressione più d'uno, che dell'altro, perché si persuadeva la Santità Sua, che non fosse per uscire il Reame da uno di loro, e che a ciascuno lo desiderava singolarmente senza distintione d'affetto».

63 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 333.

64 Kubala, *Jerzy Ossoliński*, 320. See also Witusik, "Elekcja Jana Kazimierza", 147.

65 Cf. Dorota Gregorowicz, "Audienca publiczna nuncjusza apostolskiego Galeazza Marescottiego na sejmie elekcyjnym 1669 r. Znaczenie i ceremonial", *Res Historica*, 52 (2021): 109-40.

66 Janusz Dąbrowski, *Diariusz Sejmu Elekcyjnego 1648 roku* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Historia Iagellonica", 2013), 118-20.

De Torres arrived in a traditional setting, escorted by carriages sent by nobles, senators, and the French ambassador. The delegation arriving at the papal diplomat's residence consisted of the bishop of Lutsk Andrzej Gembicki, bishop of Chełmno Andrzej Leszczyński, and the grand secretary of the Crown, bishop of Cracow Piotr Gembicki. Upon arrival near the site of the election (De Torres gives a distance of an Italian mile, equal to about one and a half kilometres), there was a welcoming from the part of four marshals and the secretary of the election *sejm*, but also many bishops and other senators. The nuncio was then escorted to the 'circle' (Polish: koło), where he was given a central seat between the archbishops of Gniezno and Lviv. Then, he handed over two papal briefs: one for the senators and the other for the deputies of the nobility. The letters were collected by primate Łubieński and handed over to secretary Gembicki, who read them aloud to universal applause⁶⁷. De Torres then made his speech⁶⁸. He was answered by Łubieński, who thanked him for the traditional papal protection of the Commonwealth and emphasised the role of the principle of unanimity in the tradition of Polish-Lithuanian elections. In the nuncio's opinion, this last detail was to cause particular satisfaction to Innocent X. The audience was thus concluded, and De Torres, accompanied by the same retinue that had brought him to the venue, was escorted back to his residence⁶⁹.

From Rome, awaiting news of the election's final result, it was continuously written in a similar fashion: «We expect to hear from you soon about the successful election of the new king»⁷⁰. The Holy See expressed the hope that the election of a new monarch would successfully resolve the internal conflicts and the Cossack affair⁷¹. However, the protracted deliberations of the *sejm* and the ever-growing political tensions were causing increasing concern at the papal court. Innocent X, therefore, in November 1648, addressed the nobility in accusing terms, expressing his dissatisfaction and appealing for the preservation of internal peace⁷². Moreover, in one of his letters addressed to John Casimir, the pope directly admonished the prince, emphasising how significant a threat to the position of Catholicism was posed by the ongoing conflict over power in the Commonwealth⁷³. The papal briefs also show that in November, it was decided at the papal court that Scipione Pannocchieschi, archbishop of Pisa and the then apostolic nuncio to the imperial

67 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 182, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 89v-90.

68 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Electoral speech of apostolic nuncio Giovanni de Torres delivered on 31 X 1648, f. 336-40.

69 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 182, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 89v-90.

70 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 24 X 1648, f. 99v: «Presto aspettiamo d'udire da lei felice successo dell'elettione del nuovo Re».

71 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 31 X 1648, f. 100r.

72 Letter of Innocent X to senators, Rome 28 XI 1648, in VMPL III, 451-52.

73 Letter of Innocent X to John Casimir, Rome 28 XI 1648, in VMPL III, 452.

court, was to travel to Poland-Lithuania as extraordinary nuncio and supporter of De Torres' actions⁷⁴. Such a letter was sent by Innocent X before news of John Casimir's election reached Rome so that, in the final resolution, Pannocchieschi's planned mission proved unnecessary and did not materialise.

In the end, it was primarily the support of the Lithuanians, followed by the arrival of Bohdan Khmelnytsky at the walls of Zamość and the presentation of his readiness to conclude peace on condition of John Casimir's election, that determined the choice of the new monarch⁷⁵. As a result of the settlement subsequently concluded between the princes, John Casimir was to receive the crown, while Charles Ferdinand was to obtain the abbeys and the Duchy of Opole and Racibórz⁷⁶. Already during the sejm, Charles Ferdinand used to be visited by numerous delegations aiming to persuade him to make concessions to his elder brother, seeing in bishop of Wrocław such an inclination⁷⁷. At the time, however, the nuncio was distrustful of similar rumours that the younger of the princes would be disposed to withdraw his aspirations to the throne in favour of calming the situation in the Commonwealth: «I have found that none of these Princes is wary of their advances, on the contrary, each one is sure to secure the kingdom for himself»⁷⁸. Finally, on 14 November 1648, a letter from Charles Ferdinand was read to the electoral assembly in favour of his elder brother's election. The nomination of the new monarch took place on 20 November, and the election sejm concluded its deliberations five days later⁷⁹.

The election of John Casimir was conveyed to Innocent X by primate Łubieński in a letter of 23 November 1648, expressing gratitude for the papal protection and the service of the apostolic nuncio present in Poland-Lithuania, asking for further support for both the new king and the Commonwealth⁸⁰. According to custom, following the election, John Casimir also personally informed Innocent X of his success, acknowledging the papal prayers and intercession and asking for a blessing

74 Letter of Innocent X to Łubieński, Rome 28 XI 1648, in VMPL III, 451. In Ibid., Letter of Innocent X to senators, Rome 28 XI 1648, 451-52; Letter of Innocent X to nobility, Rome 28 XI 1648, 452; Letter of Innocent X to John Casimir, Rome 28 XI 1648, 452.

75 Witusik, "Elekcja Jana Kazimierza", 146, 150-51; Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 64-66.

76 Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 66.

77 On 1 November 1648, a meeting of the episcopate was held at the primate's residence. As a result, a delegation of two bishops – Wacław Leszczyński of Warmia and Stanisław Pstrokoński of Chełm – was sent to the princes. Its main task was to reconcile the two candidates for the throne, but it sought, above all, to have Charles Ferdinand withdraw from the rivalry, as he seemed inclined to step down. See Wójcik, *Jan Kazimierz*, 61-62.

78 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 31 X 1648, f. 266-67: «Io ho trovato, che niuno di questi Principi diffida de' suoi avanzamenti, anzi che ciascuno si tien sicuro per sé il Regno».

79 Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 67; Wójcik, *Jan Kazimierz*, 63-4.

80 Letter of Łubieński to Innocent X, Warsaw 23 XI 1648, in VMPL III, 454.

on his upcoming reign⁸¹. A separate dispatch was sent by John Casimir to Cardinal Secretary of State Giacomo Panziroli⁸².

THE HAPPY (?) OUTCOMES

Shortly after the election, the nuncio met with the newly elected monarch. De Torres congratulated the king-elect, assuring him of papal support. He also launched efforts to direct the new monarch's nomination policy, as well as the affairs of the Eastern Churches' Union⁸³. During this first audience, John Casimir revealed to De Torres his intention to marry the Queen dowager, Marie Louise, expressing hopes for papal dispensation, as the project of marrying his brother's widow was classified as an incestuous act and not permitted by canon law⁸⁴. The nuncio then presented the royal argumentation on the issue in Rome:

That the Commonwealth, especially in these calamitous times, would not and could not provide a living for two Queens, that the King himself and the Queen dowager can hardly now be sustained because of the inclemency of revolutions and wars, that in the present strait of the Kingdom. Neither the King nor the Commonwealth would have subjects who could make the expenses of bringing a new Queen from distant countries. That since the King and Queen are much advanced in age, this marriage would satisfy Prince Charles [Ferdinand] and his adherents in the hope of succeeding to the crown. Otherwise, one might fear, seeing him [the King] marrying some young Princess, that they would disturb the peace of the Kingdom or conspire against his Royal Person. That His Majesty does not think of giving jealousy to any Catholic Prince so since this Queen, who is already here, is Italian rather than French or Austrian, he is persuaded that all the parties would be conciliated. That if he [the King] were to have many offspring, it would be necessary for him to see them in a state of poverty because the Commonwealth would not allow him to provide for those princes especially, as it finds its treasury very poor. All these reasons have been suggested to me by the King, who desires and begs an answer to them with extraordinary solicitude and all the greater celerity⁸⁵.

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81 Letter of John Casimir to Innocent X, Warsaw 4 XII 1648, in VMPL III, 454-55.

82 Letter of John Casimir to Panzirolo, Warsaw 4 XII 1648, in VMPL III, 455.

83 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 28 XI 1648, f. 379.

84 See Wójcik, *Jan Kazimierz*, 69.

85 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 28 XI 1648, f. 231-32: «Che la Republica massime in questi tempi calamitari non darebbe e non potrebbe dar da vivere a due Regine, che l'istesso Re e la Regina Vedova difficilmente posson hora vivere per le inclemenze delle revolutioni e delle guerre, che nelle presenti strettezze del Regno non havrebbe né il Re, né la Republica, soggetti che potessero far queste spese di andar a levar una nuova Regina da lontani paesi. Che essendo il Re e la Regina assai inanzi con l'età, con questo matrimonio si conservarebbe sodisfatto il Signor Principe Carlo con li suoi adherenti con speranza di poter succedere a questa corona, potendosi temer altrimenti, se vedessero, che si maritasse con qualche giovane Principessa, che non intorbidassero questi la quiete del Regno e non cospirassero contro la sua

This passage is particularly interesting and confirms the motivations known to historians, which guided the king and the nobility in John Casimir's decision to take Marie Louise as his spouse. Nonetheless, it is surprising to see the king (and later the nuncio) portraying her as a 'neutral' Italian, leaving her French connections aside in silence.

News of the successful election has reached Rome relatively late, at the turn of the year. The first unofficial information of 'Casimir IV's elevation arrived in the Eternal City as the Viennese *avvisi* of 26 December 1648⁸⁶. In Panziroli's letter to De Torres of 2 January 1649, the Cardinal Secretary of State reported that «Our Lord's Holiness took great delight and joy in this, hoping and promising us from His Majesty's singular piety and zeal every success for the profit and increase of our Holy Faith and the Catholic Religion in these Kingdoms»⁸⁷.

118 As early as 28 December 1648, liturgical celebrations in honour of the new ruler of the Commonwealth were held at the Church of St Stanislaus in Rome. In the temple, appositely decorated for the occasion, the Mass was celebrated by the canon of Warmia Domenico Roncalli in the presence of the Cardinals Francesco Barberini and Virginio Orsini, who belonged to the French party in the College of Cardinals. Also present were the Ambassador of the *Roi très chrétien*, prelates, nobility and aristocracy sympathetic to Poland-Lithuania. Traditionally, the *Te Deum* anthem was sung on the occasion. There was also an illumination of the surrounding buildings, a fireworks display, and mortar shooting. It should be noted, however, that Innocent X himself did not particularly celebrate John Casimir's electoral success. It cannot be denied that the king-elect was not received very warmly in Rome, given the events of 1643–1646 concerning his Jesuit novitiate and later his cardinal dignity, out of which emerged a scandal reflecting negatively on the Holy See's relations with Ladislaus IV. The pro-Habsburg Innocent X was also reluctant about John Casimir's apparent links with the French court⁸⁸.

Nevertheless, a papal brief congratulating the king-elect was issued on 9 January 1649⁸⁹. On 23 January, Innocent X addressed the senators, expressing his joy for the outcome of the election, praising the nobility's 'unanimity', and appealing for the

Real Persona. Che Sua Maestà non pensa di dar gelosia a niun Principe Cattolico, onde essendo questa Regina già in casa Italiana più che Francese, o Austriaca, si persuade che si rimovebbero tutti li rispetti di più inclinatione ad uno, che ad altro. Che se gli succedesse di haver molti figli, gli converrebbe vedergli in stato di povertà, perche la Republica non consentirebbe di proveder quei Principi, e massime che trovano poverissimo il proprio erario. Tutte queste ragioni mi sono state suggerite dal Re e ne desidera, e ne prega la risposta con straordinaria premura, e con ogni maggior celerità».

86 AAV, Segr. Stato, Avvisi, vol. 101, Vienna 26 XII 1648, f. 32r. See Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Polskie uroczystości*, 171.

87 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 2 I 1649, f. 103r: «La Santità di Nostro Signore ne ha preso contento, e allegrezza grande, sperandone, e promettendoci dalla singola pietà, e zelo della Maestà Sua ogni buono successo in profitto e acrescimento della nostra Santa Fede, e della Religione Cattolica in cotesti Regni».

88 Osiecka-Samsonowicz, *Polskie uroczystości*, 171–72.

89 Letter of Innocent X to John Casimir, Rome 9 I 1649, in VMPL III, 456.

interests of the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth to be protected⁹⁰.

John Casimir's coronation took place in Cracow on 17 January 1649 without the participation of foreign envoys⁹¹. The new monarch granted the first post-coronation audience to De Torres on 2 February. Papal briefs were handed over during this meeting, and mutual courtesies were exchanged. In addition, the marriage of the new monarch to the Queen widow, Maria Louise, was discussed once again⁹². Afterwards, in the spring of 1649, John Casimir received a papal dispensation to marry his late brother's wife⁹³. The royal wedding took place on 30 May in Warsaw.

CONCLUSIONS

The Holy See followed the events of 1648 in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with great interest and equally serious concern. The war in Ukraine, the death of Ladislaus IV, and then the problem of the throne vacating at a time of deep military and internal crisis in the state could have posed a real threat to the political position of Poland-Lithuania on the map of Europe at the time, and thus significantly destabilised the local Catholic Church, straining the interests of the Holy See. Cardinal Secretary of State Giacomo Panziroli, therefore, cited the pacification of the Cossack uprising, the successful election of a new monarch and the maintenance of the strong position of the Catholic Church as the main objectives in papal policy towards the *interregnum* in the Commonwealth⁹⁴.

The apostolic nuncio in Poland-Lithuania at the time, Giovanni de Torres, seemed to be moderately involved in the political games of the *interregnum*. The political mediocrity and passivity of the then representative of the Holy See in the Commonwealth is attested by external testimonies. Wojciech Miaskowski, chamberlain of Lviv, wrote with a great deal of criticism that «Giovanni de Torres, of mediocre intellect and great ambition, was ready to do anything just to get the scarlet [hat]»⁹⁵. However, the nuncio's activities clearly intensified in the autumn of 1648, during the election *sejm*. De Torres reported that at that time, he was in particularly intense contact with bishop of Cracow Piotr Gembicki, who provided the nuncio's main source of information⁹⁶, as foreign diplomats were not allowed to

90 Letter of Innocent X to senators, Rome 9 I 1649, in VMPL III, 456.

91 Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 71.

92 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 57, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Cracow 6 II 1649, f. 27.

93 Wasilewski, *Ostatni Waza na polskim tronie*, 73.

94 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 178, Letter of Panzirolo to De Torres, Rome 4 XI 1648, f. 100-01.

95 "Relacya legacyi P. Miaskowskiego podkomorzego lwowskiego do Ibrahima i Amuratha cesarzów otomańskich roku 1641", in Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Zbiór pamiątek historycznych o dawnéj Polsce [...]*, t. V (Puławy: Breitkopf i Haertel, 1840), 33: «Jan de Torres, miernego rozumu, wielkiej ambicyi, gotów był wszystko uczynić, byle tylko purpury dostąpił».

96 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 14 XI 1648, f. 360.

participate in the political debates (except on the occasion of a public audience)⁹⁷. De Torres was dedicated to the non-introduction of new legislation during the electoral *sejm*, particularly against the implementation of the demands of dissenters against the interests of the Catholic Church. He was later pleased to report that no similar amendments had taken place⁹⁸. The nuncio was moreover committed to his speech in the public audience, weighing his words and acting with a great deal of political sensitivity in the face of the hanging risk of civil war. Despite the Holy See's rather obvious preference for the aspirations of Charles Ferdinand, the papal diplomatic service staked its claim on the neutrality of the *padre comune* of all the Catholic princes, adopting a conciliatory and mediating stance. Both De Torres and his Roman superiors were relieved by the news of John Casimir's election, which nonetheless dismissed the prospect of political disaster for the Polish-Lithuanian state.

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On the sidelines of reflections on the interest and involvement of papal diplomacy in the election of the new monarch after the death of Ladislaus IV, the nuncio's observations on the electoral procedure of 1648 are interesting. According to De Torres, given the political divisions in the Commonwealth, primate Łubieński was then said to have favoured holding the election «by a plurality of votes, even though he was first declared that he would sooner leave the senate than to acclaim [the king] if there were not the consent of all»⁹⁹. This motion caused a negative stir among the nobility and was rejected as incompatible with customary law in the Commonwealth, detrimental to the vaunted idea of unanimity, and therefore all the less appropriate in a conflict situation¹⁰⁰. It is, however, an essential reference enriching our knowledge of the nobility's attitude to state reforms in the seventeenth century, particularly the glorious but paralysing rule of unanimity in Polish-Lithuanian parliamentarism¹⁰¹.

97 Gregorowicz, *Tiara*, 247-49; Gregorowicz, "Audienca publiczna", 109-40.

98 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 56, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 14 XI 1648, f. 360.

99 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 19 IX 1648, f. 209: «Secondo la pluralità de voti, ancorche prima si fusse dichiarato di voler più tosto uscir dal Senato, che di acclamarlo, non essendovi il consenso di tutti».

100 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 53, Letter of De Torres to Panzirolo, Warsaw 19 IX 1648, f. 209.

101 Władysław Konopczyński, *Liberum veto. Studium porównawczo-historyczne* (Kraków: Krzyżanowski i Wende, 1918), 150.

ABBREVIATION

AAV: Archivio Apostolico Vaticano

Segr. Stato: Segreteria di Stato

VMPL III: *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae gentiumque finitimarum historiam illustrantia: maximam partem nondum edita ex tabularis Vaticanis deprompta collecta ac serie chronologica disposita*, t. III: A Sixto PP. V usque ad Innocentium PP. XII. 1585–1695, edidit Augustin Theiner. Romae: Typis Vaticanis, 1863

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