

Director Emeritus

Gaetano Platania (Università degli Studi della Tuscia)

Director

Alessandro Boccolini (Università degli Studi della Tuscia)

Scientific Board

Irena Vaišvilaitė (Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to UNESCO)

Matteo Sanfilippo (Università degli Studi della Tuscia)

Massimo Carlo Giannini (Università degli Studi di Teramo)

Rimvydas Petrauskas (Vilnius University)

Giordano Altarozzi (Petru Maior University of Târgu Mures)

Giovanni Pizzorusso (Università degli Studi “G. d’Annunzio”, Chieti-Pescara)

Michaela Valente (Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”)

Cesare La Mantia (Università di Trieste)

Prokhorov Andrei (Belarusian State University of Minsk)

Olexiy Sokyrrko (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv)

Rafał Quirini-Popławski (Jagiellonian University of Kraków)

Jarosław Pietrzak (Pedagogical University of Kraków)

Marta Gołąbek (Museum of King John III’s Palace at Wilanów – Warsaw)

Dorota Gregorowicz (University of Silesia in Katowice)

Michał Salamonik (Södertörn University)

Language Expert

Sonia Maria Melchiorre (Università degli Studi della Tuscia)

Editorial Board

Bogdana Nosova (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv)

Francesco Vitali (Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”)

Małgorzata Trzeciak Cygan (University of Warsaw)

Giulio Merlani (University of Caen Normandy)



Centro Studi sull'Età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna
(Study Center on the Sobieski Age and of Modern Poland)
www.cespom.eu

Proprietà letteraria riservata. La riproduzione in qualsiasi forma, memorizzazione o trascrizione con qualunque mezzo (elettronico, meccanico, in fotocopia, in disco o in altro modo, compresi cinema, radio, televisione, internet) sono vietate senza l'autorizzazione scritta dell'Editore.

Eastern European History Review è una rivista on-line peer-reviewed con lettori anonimi

Chiuso il 31-12-2024

Impaginazione a cura di: *Emanuele Paris*

ISBN: 979-12-5524-146-1
ISBN ebook: 979-12-5524-147-8
ISSN: 2612-0402 008

Permalink: <http://hdl.handle.net/2067/53009>

EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW
Via Santa Maria in Gradi 4 – 01100 Viterbo
www.easterneuropeanhistory.eu
eehr@unitus.it

Edizioni **SETTE CITTÀ**
Via Mazzini 87 – 01100 Viterbo
t. +39 0761 303020 – info@settecitta.eu

EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW

Annually Historical Journal

~
n. 7/2024
Special Issue

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

Edited by
Aleksandra Ziober and Alessandro Boccolini



EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: LA RIVISTA

Il Comitato redazionale e scientifico è lieto di presentare al pubblico la rivista scientifica *Eastern European History Review*.

Con un carattere internazionale e interdisciplinare, una cadenza annuale e una fruibilità *open access* la rivista focalizza i propri interessi sulle dinamiche occorse nell'Europa Orientale durante tutta l'età moderna (XIV-XIX). *Eastern European History Review* è espressione del Centro Studi dell'Università della Tuscia CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna) nato nel 1997 per intuizione del Prof. Gaetano Platania, Direttore Emerito della Rivista.

L'iniziativa editoriale che presentiamo nasce dall'evidente mancanza in Italia di una rivista scientifica relativa alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale in Età Moderna, nonostante la penisola abbia giocato un ruolo fondamentale per la Storia e la Cultura di una parte integrante del continente, a torto considerata come lontana e periferica.

Consapevoli di questo, il Comitato ha posto quale obiettivo primario della *Eastern European History Review* quello di offrire uno spazio di riflessione e di discussione su temi che appartengono alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale, e insieme alle relazioni - politiche e culturali - che questa vasta area del Vecchio Continente ha avuto con l'occidente d'Europa, e l'Italia in particolare, incoraggiando il dialogo tra studiosi e esperti di settore, e tra differenti approcci della ricerca scientifica.

Il Comitato Redazionale e Scientifico

EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: THE JOURNAL

The Editorial and Scientific Board are proud delighted to present the *Eastern European History Review* under the aegis of Sette Città Editore.

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XIV-XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997, from an idea of Prof. Gaetano Platania, today Director Emeritus of this journal.

It publishes articles with significant approaches and original interpretations in all research fields concerning Central and Eastern Europe, with specific attention to the History sciences.

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.

The Editorial and Scientific Board

SUMMARY

Aleksandra Ziober <i>Introduction</i>	9
Miguel Conde Pazos <i>The Spanish Monarchy in the free royal elections in Poland: aspirations and diplomatic strategies (16th and 17th centuries)</i>	15
Kateřina Prařákova <i>The Secret Candidature of William of Rosenberg to the Polish Throne in 1574 and 1575</i>	37
Justyna Gałuszka <i>The role of Stanisław Stadnicki (c. 1551–1610) during the third free election</i>	51
Urszula Augustyniak <i>Magnate projects of electoral reform during the reign of Sigismund III and the potential effects of their implementation</i>	61
Bartosz Staręgowski <i>Security of the Greater Poland during the elections of the Polish Vasa dynasty. Mechanisms, organization and legal state</i>	85
Dorota Gregorowicz <i>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)</i>	103
Julia Paduch <i>Election 1648 from the perspective of Charles Ferdinand Vasa</i>	125
Alessandro Boccolini <i>The political and diplomatic activity of Virginio Orsini, Cardinal Protector of the Poland Kingdom in the time of John Casimir Vasa, last king of the Vasa Dynasty</i>	145

Aleksandra Ziober <i>The Art of Persuasion and Power: Profiles of Candidates for the Polish Throne after the Abdication of John II Casimir in the Light of Pamphlets</i>	171
Jarosław Pietrzak <i>Livio Odescalchi and his candidacy for Polish throne between 1696 and 1697</i>	193
Gaetano Platania <i>Fabrizio Paolucci: an extraordinary nuncio in the post-interregnum Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1697–1698)</i>	225
Grzegorz Glabisz <i>Political activities of the nobility of the voivodships of Poznań and Kalisz during the interregnum following the death of August III</i>	247
 VARIA SECTION	
Matteo Sanfilippo <i>Bald Island: A Review</i>	273
Michaela Valente <i>Amor libertatis e tolleranza nell'Europa centrale dell'età moderna: questioni politiche e religiose.</i>	283
Bibliocard Susanna Piselli <i>I Nunzi di Papa Urbano VIII nella Rzeczpospolita dei Waza</i> , Series: <i>Acta Barberiniana</i> , vol. 7, edited by Alessandro Boccolini, and Gaetano Platania. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2024.	303



**THE POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY OF VIRGINIO ORSINI,
CARDINAL PROTECTOR OF THE KINGDOM IN THE TIME OF JOHN CASIMIR VASA,
LAST KING OF THE VASA DYNASTY IN POLAND**

ABSTRACT

In June 1669, Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki's election as the new sovereign of Poland marked the end of a complex interregnum initiated by the abdication of John II Casimir Vasa in September 1668. This period of political instability for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had attracted the attention of major powers, including France, the Empire, Muscovy, and the Holy See, which viewed Poland as a bulwark of Christianity. This article uses sources from the Capitoline and Vatican archives to examine the figure and role of Cardinal Virginio Orsini, Protector of the Kingdom of Poland, during this interregnum period. It explores Orsini's position, interests, and connections to the French court, positioning him at the heart of intricate political and diplomatic negotiations among Warsaw, Rome, and Paris, all aimed at securing the new king's reaffirmation of his Protectorate.

KEYWORDS: Holy See; Poland; Interregnum; Cardinal Protector; Virginio Orsini; Diplomacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, strategically positioned and deeply intertwined with Latin culture, was paramount to the Holy See. The papacy perceived this distant kingdom of the European Sarmatians as a formidable bulwark – an *Antemurale Christianitatis* – against the encroaching Protestant factions, schismatic Orthodox Christians, and the Ottoman Turks. The Papal Nuncio, operating under explicit directives from the Secretary of State, served as the diplomatic liaison between Rome and Warsaw. His primary responsibility entailed providing regular, detailed reports on his activities within the Commonwealth. Complementing the Nuncio's role was the Cardinal Protector of the Kingdom, a unique figure appointed by the Polish king to safeguard the country's interests within the College of Cardinals. This position was vital for addressing conflicts between Rome and Warsaw, particularly concerning the appointments of abbots and bishops, the presentation of monarchical requests, and advocacy for candidates during the interregnum.

Among those who undertook the role of Protector¹, Cardinal Virginio Orsini², who

1 From 1519 to 1795, since the first mission of a papal representative in Poland to the Third Partition, 14 cardinals were appointed as Protectors. *Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae*, vol. I, ed. CP Henrik Damian Wojtyska (Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1990), 66-70.

2 Irene Fosi, "Virginio, Orsini", in DBI, vol. 79 (2013), 715-19.

held the office from 1650 until he died in 1676³, exemplifies the intense diplomatic relations between Poland-Lithuania and the Holy See. The extensive documentation preserved in the Capitoline Archive of Rome regarding his tenure in the Republic constitutes a valuable historiographic source for investigating the history of this region in Europe. Recent scholarly work has rekindled interest in Cardinal Orsini's mediation role⁴. Notably, Irene Fosi's research has concentrated on the relationships and influence exerted by the cardinal during the early years of King John III Sobieski's reign. On such academic inquiries, the present study seeks to illuminate a historically significant phase that has received insufficient attention – namely, the events surrounding King John II Casimir's abdication in 1668, which signalled the decline of the Vasa dynasty⁵ and set the stage for a contentious interregnum leading to the election of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki⁶. Focusing on Cardinal Orsini's contributions, this analysis offers a novel perspective on a transformative historical juncture for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its intricate relationships with Rome and neighbouring European powers. This period was critical for the political future of a fragmented Europe, particularly in light of the threats posed by the Ottoman Empire.

3 He was appointed Protector on 9 April 1650 and became effective a few months later. Letter of confirmation in AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 63, John II to V. Orsini, Warsaw 29 X 1650, c. 0037). It is worth noticing that Orsini had already been the co-protector of the kingdom since 1647, appointed by Władysław IV to support Cardinal Gaspare Mattei. (AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, c. 0343). He was appointed Protector of Sweden due to the Polish-Swedish royal title linked to the Vasa dynasty, a position he held until 1672 (AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 63, John II to V. Orsini, Lviv 17 VIII 1653, c.0124). After John II Casimir's death, the Swedish Protectorate became the prerogative of Queen Christina of Sweden, his cousin, who was exiled to Rome.

4 Irene Fosi, "Il cardinale Virginio Orsini e la "Protezione" del regno di Polonia (1650–1676): note e documenti dall'Archivio Orsini", in *Per Rita Tolomeo, scritti di amici sulla Dalmazia e l'Europa centro-orientale*, eds. Ester Capuzzo, Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi, and Francesco Guida (Venezia: La musa Talia, 2014), 229–44.

5 The Swedish Sigismund III started the Vasa dynasty in Poland when he became king of the Commonwealth in 1587 and king of Sweden in 1592. He was forced to leave the throne of Stockholm because he was already king of Poland-Lithuania. See: Henryk Wisner, *Zygmunt III Waza* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991). Despite this, the Vasa dynasty in Poland would still claim – and boast – the title of King of Sweden until John II Casimir's death, as established in the Treaty of Olive signed in 1660. Norman Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 327–54.

6 On the complex personality and kingdom of the new sovereign, see: Adam Przyboś, *Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, 1640–1675* (Kraków-Wrocław: Wyd. Literackie, 1984); Id., "Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki", in PSB, vol. 20 (1975), 605–09; Ilona Czamańska, *Wiśniowieccy. Monografia rodu* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007).

2. THE EVE OF THE ABDICATION OF JOHN II CASIMIR: THE CARDINAL ORSINI BETWEEN THE COURTS OF WARSAW, ROME AND FRENCH INTERESTS

The history of the Vasa dynasty has significantly influenced the relationships between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Holy See, and the broader European context⁷.

This investigation is rooted in a specific historical benchmark: 1667 when the Cardinal's Chancellery began the systematic collection of outgoing diplomatic correspondence from Cardinal Virginio Orsini in bound volumes⁸. However, it is essential to recognize that the foundation of this investigation can be traced back to 1666. This pivotal year marked the Tartar invasion of the Commonwealth, signalling the potential for future incursions by Ottoman forces. Additionally, it was the year in which Pope Alexander VII expressed intentions to proceed with the "Promotion of the Princes" [*Promotione de' Principi*], facilitating the appointment of select individuals to the cardinalate suggested by Europe's crowned heads. These circumstances propelled the court of Warsaw into the political and military forefront, necessitating the direct involvement of the Cardinal Protector to advocate for the interests of the Poland-Lithuania both in Rome and throughout Europe. The alarming reports regarding the Tartar invasion of Ukraine at the end of 1666, which plunged the kingdom into chaos, were communicated to Cardinal Virginio Orsini via a letter from Ludovico Fantoni⁹, a reliable secretary for Italian affairs of the king and Orsini's representative in Warsaw.

147

In Ukraine, the Tartars want to become masters of that province. It is highly probable that they collaborate with the Turks, who will surely want to take advantage of the internal disagreements between the nobility of the kingdom, blind to the danger that is weighing on the homeland¹⁰.

The Polish monarchs promptly called upon the Cardinal to report on the critical situation in Poland, emphasizing the urgent need to transfer resources to Warsaw for reinvestment to confront the impending danger. A missive dated 4 January 1667,

7 Robert Frost, *After the Deluge: Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War, 1655-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993).

8 The volumes of his diplomatic correspondence go from 1667 to 1676: AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vols. 225-259.

9 Ludovico Fantoni was agent of the Cardinal Protector Orsini since 1668, and Intimate Secretary for the *cose d'Italia* of Władysław IV, John II Casimir and Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki. From 1655 to 1681 was appointed canonic of Vilnius and Dean of the Cathedral of Heilsberg. Karolina Targosz, *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marii Gonzagi 1646-1667. Z dziejów polsko-francuskich stosunków naukowych* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975), 72-3.

10 «Li Tartari in Ukraina mostrano di volersi render padroni di quella provincia et si ha luogo di sospettare che se l'intendino col Turco che vorrà facilmente approfittare delle discordie e sconcerti che regnano fra la nobiltà che si mostra cieca di non vedere li apparenti pericoli dell'interito della patria», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 224, L. Fantoni to V. Orsini, Warsaw 28 XII 1666, c. 0295.

sent by Cristoforo Masini, the king's Intimate Secretary, issued a warning about the situation.

the Turks have unveiled their plan through their Tartars, who, supported by some Cossack troops, defeated 17 companies and 11 others who had come to the rescue [...]. It is said that when the Tartars have secured the province, another and larger army will come to make an greater destruction¹¹.

The entry of the Tartar troops into the Kingdom, apparently backed by the Ottoman Empire, compelled the Polish court to seek assistance from neighbouring countries. Masini noted in his correspondence that this led the Monarchs to dispatch extraordinary delegates to various European courts¹².

148 To grasp the gravity of the situation and Warsaw's strategic responses, it is essential to consider the correspondence between the Cardinal Protector and Fantoni in the early days of January 1667. A letter dated January 4 provided an extensive postscript from the Secretary, offering detailed insights into the occupation and anticipating future injustices against the Kingdom¹³. In a subsequent letter dated January 11, the discourse shifted to the rationale behind John II Casimir's decision to send royal delegates to multiple European courts, soliciting support to defend «against the Common Enemy threatening the bastion of Christianity»¹⁴. Despite Poland's vigorous diplomatic efforts, pleas for assistance from European powers essentially went unaddressed. Warsaw's last hope rested on the Holy See potentially responding favourably, akin to past support during the Deluge period when the Papacy had allocated 100,000 florins¹⁵. However, the Papal Court dismissed a reasonable and legitimate request from the Kingdom, opening a political crisis between Warsaw and the Vatican.

It is necessary to consider that, despite itself, Warsaw was entangled in a broader and more serious rift involving Rome and Paris at that time, particularly Pope Alexander VII and Louis XIV. Their relationship, never particularly harmonious, had suffered further strain following the incident involving Charles III de Blanchefort-Créquy, the Ambassador of the *Christianissimo*, in Rome.

11 «il turco si è affatto smascherato per mezzo dei suoi tartari, i quali con alcune truppe di Cosacchi hanno tagliato a pezzi 17 compagnie di cavallerie et altre XI, che andavano in rinforzo, sono state disperse [...]. Dicono che quando questi con la preda saranno in sicuro, un altro esercito verrà per fare una grande distruttione», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 225, C. Masini to V. Orsini, Warsaw 4 I 1667, c. 0453.

12 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 225, C. Masini to V. Orsini, Warsaw 4 I 1667, c. 0453.

13 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 226, L. Fantoni to V. Orsini, Warsaw 4 I 1667, c. 0181

14 «contro l'inimico comune che pare risoluto di attaccare questo Antemurale di Christianità», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 226, L. Fantoni to V. Orsini, Warsaw 11 I 1667, c. 0165.

15 See: Gaetano Platania, *Rzeczpospolita, Europa e Santa Sede tra intese e ostilità* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2000), 84-6.

The pro-French party's presence in Poland-Lithuania was firmly established during the reign of John II Casimir, particularly in the Polish Court. Following the arrival of Marie Louise Gonzaga de Nevers, the widow of King Ladislaus IV, John II Casimir's brother, who died in 1648, the influence of this faction significantly increased¹⁶. The party was actively engaged in discussions aimed at amending the country's Constitution to enable the appointment of a French heir to the Polish throne – specifically, Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé – “vivente rege”. This manoeuvring manifested the pronounced pro-French policy pursued by the Vasa Dynasty during the 1660s, ultimately weakening Warsaw's standing with the Chigi Pope, a traditionally and previously enjoyed favour.

The request for papal allowance soon after the Tartar invasion became entangled with the more complex issue related to the “Promotion of the Princes”. John II Casimir sought Pope Alexander VII's promotion of a candidate from the Warsaw court. Through the intercession of Cardinal Orsini – operated soon following a visit to Paris¹⁷ – the Polish monarchy received this grant from Rome. Nevertheless, sovereigns had nominated not a Polish candidate but the Bishop of Beziers – the Italian Pietro Bonsi¹⁸ – the French ambassador in Poland.

Pope Chigi rejected this appointment, asserting that the bishop did not meet the impartiality standards necessary to become a cardinal, particularly as he was perceived to depend on the French royal court and the gratitude owed to it¹⁹. The situation's complexity extended beyond the relationship between Alexander VII

16 On the French influence in Poland: Gaetano Platania, “Alcuni significativi episodi dei rapporti franco-polacchi nel Seicento”, in *Gli archivi della Santa Sede e la storia di Francia*, eds. Giovanni Pizzorusso, Oliver Poncet, and Matteo Sanfilippo (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2006), 137-61.

17 As maintained by Fosi, Orsini travelled to France to meet Louis XIV after the Duke of Crequy was injured in an accident. One of the matters discussed was the Polish king's appointment of a French candidate to the cardinalate in the *Promotione de' Principi* (Fosi, “Virginio Orsini”, 718). Documents on the Orsini's journey in AC, I, Miscellanea Pressutti, vol. 49, “Articolo di lettera del P.re Gismondi sul trattamento fatto al Cardinal Orsini di Bracciano da Sua Mestà Christianissima”, ff.nn.

18 Born Piero Bonsi, Louis XIV's faithful clergyman and politician had been in Poland as ambassador for many years (AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, Avvisi, Warsaw 24 October 1668, f. 426r). He was later proclaimed by the *Christianissimo* Extraordinay Ambassador for the Diet of Election (AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, Avvisi, Warsaw 26 IX 1668, f. 387v). In 1667 John II Casimir proposed him as Cardinal. He was eventually created Cardinal by Clement X on 22 II 1672. See: *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, vol. V (1667–1730), ed. by Remigium Ritzler, and Pirmin Sefrin (Patavii: Il Messaggero di Sant'Antonio, 1952), 7; Umberto Coldagelli, “Piero Bonsi”, in DBI, vol. 12 (1971), 388-95.

19 «in order to become Ambassador of the Christianissimo, or to be appreciated and benefited by that Royal Court, and consequently to profess dependence on it, for the gratitude he owes it» [«per essere Ambasciatore del Re Christianissimo, o per essere amato e beneficato da quella Regia Corte, e conseguentemente per professare com'egli deve per gratitudine dipendenza da quella»], AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 17 V 1667, c. 0346.

and Louis XIV, as it also involved broader interests concerning the organization of the Papal Court. Galeazzo Marescotti²⁰, the nuncio to Poland a couple of years later, grasped the implications of this delicate matter when Warsaw submitted a new nomination for the Bishop of Béziers to Pope Clement IX Rospigliosi. Marescotti recognized the potential consequences of a papal concession's transfer between monarchs, cautioning that such actions could inflict significant harm by undermining the principle of equal treatment between European Catholic countries²¹. This situation threatened to disrupt the internal balance of the College of Cardinals, particularly in light of Louis XIV's claims to promote a candidate directly indicated by the French monarchy.

The first to advance the two requests - subsidies and nomination - was the cardinal protector of the kingdom. Reached previously by two royal letters, with an extraordinary one at the end of January 1667, Orsini immediately informed the Polish court about the developments of the affairs. However, he did not hide the difficulties that would be encountered, particularly regarding the nomination²². Unable to speak with the Pope because he was ill, the protector briefly met the Cardinal Nephew, Flavio Chigi. During this meeting, Orsini urged Chigi to facilitate the Pope's approval for a financial subsidy. About the nomination, Orsini acknowledged that the Roman Court desired a list of candidates from which Alexander VII would subsequently select the nominee.

If the missed audience with the Pope had been officially justified on the ground that the Pope was not well, the Protector well understood that behind Alexander VII's refusal of the meeting was a planned strategy to delay the official presentation of Beziers's candidature from Warsaw. Consequently, the request for subsidies against the Tartars and Turks was also delayed. His guessing was, therefore, immediately notified to John II Casimir, to whom he confessed that in Rome, the affaire of Beziers was far from being secret. On the contrary, it had instead gone public since Cardinal Vidoni and Majesty's Agent in Rome Mancini had already been informed from Warsaw, and the news had been spread at the Roman Court²³. Then, Orsini added that this publicity would cause significant damage because the Pope would be prepared to face any opposition.

It must be stressed that the Protector, though not so farsighted, had well grasped the political agenda of the Pope and the Secretary of State about the appointment, to the point of considering the audience denied by Pope Alexander VII as the manifestation

20 Nuncio in Poland until 5 March 1670; he had "Solemn Entry" in Warsaw on 5 June 1668 (AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, Warsaw 6 VI 1668, c. 0154). For a more exhaustive bibliography: Wojtyska, *Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae*, vol. I, 267-68; *Viaggio politico, viaggio materiale: Monsignor Galeazzo Marescotti nunzio a Varsavia*, ed. Alessandro Boccolini (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2015).

21 «what is denied a country is given to another, so infringing the principle of an equal treatment» [«ciò che si toglie ad una nazione si accresce all'altra, con pregiudizio di quella egualità»], AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 8 VIII 1668, f. 316r.

22 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to John II, Rome 22 I 1667, f. 0019r.

23 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, Orsini to John II, Rome 22 I 1667, f. 0019r.

of his willingness to delay, as much as possible, the official presentation of the Polish candidate. Even more, Orsini warned that the Promotion would take place within the first forty days of the year, and it was now already Carnival when, in Rome, nothing was being discussed²⁴. Orsini's perspective is demonstrated by the exchange at the same time between the Secretary of State – Cardinal Chigi – and the nuncio in Poland – monsignor Pignatelli. Rome had asked his representative to inform John II that an eventual recommendation for a “Prince's minister” would require mature reflection²⁵.

His conjecture became reality when, at the same time as the arrival of the secret letter to the Protector about the Polish appointment of Beziers, another letter arrived in Rome, sent by Pignatelli. In this missive, the Nuncio claimed the promotion to the cardinalate for himself by the activities performed during the seven years of his stay in the Commonwealth. It was too much of a coincidence for the Protector, who explained to Masini that the Pope had carefully planned this second candidacy. The Roman Court aimed to relieve the King of the recommendation of the “French”, eventually leading him to accept the appointment of the Nuncio as Minister of the Holy See²⁶.

It is also worth noting that the Cardinal attempted to explain to John II Casimir the machinations behind the simultaneous candidacies from Poland. Orsini suggested that, most probably, when he asked for an appointment for the Polish crown the previous year, the Pope quickly asked Pignatelli to submit his request because he feared a “French” candidate might emerge for Warsaw²⁷. Likely, the Pope believed that John II Casimir could replace the ambassador of the *Christianissimo* when faced with Nuncio's nomination. Orsini thought Alexander VII and the Nuncio collaborated, possibly with Cardinal Vidoni, since Pignatelli had closer ties to him than the Protector²⁸. With this, Orsini suggested the existence of an alternative plotting network, casting doubt on Vidoni. Orsini noted that Vidoni was respected in Poland-Lithuania, having served as Nuncio from 1652 to 1660, allowing him to connect with many Polish leaders. The Protector also mentioned to Fantoni that Vidoni was against the appointment of Beziers, even though he seemed to support it²⁹.

Meanwhile, after several audiences had been denied to him, the Protector could finally report about the audience with the Pope regarding the appointment

24 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, Orsini to Fantoni, Rome 12 II 1667, f. 0083v.

25 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, F. Chigi to A. Pignatelli, Rome 19 I 1667, f. 0003r.

26 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, Orsini to John II, Rome 22 I 1667, f. 0019v.

27 The Secretary of State, Cardinal Chigi, authorized the nuncio to promote in Poland his promotion. AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, F. Chigi to A. Pignatelli, Rome 23 II 1667, ff. 6v-7r.

28 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 22 I 1667, f. 0021v. Orsini shows a more intricate plot woven by the Pope, the Nuncio, Cardinal Vidoni and the agents of the Polish king in Rome, Mancini and Giannuzzi.

29 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini a L. Fantoni, Rome 5 II 1667, f. 0056r.

and allowances. However, a fleeting meeting had been accorded to him after a Consistory³⁰. He found Alexander VII in pain of the present situation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but, unfortunately, the Pope could not bestow any allowances upon it because he was forced to help the Venetians due to the siege of Candia. The many tragic events involving Christianity had, therefore, moved to make targeted choices. So, being answered negatively by the Pope, Orsini reminded him that the Polish fortress of Kamieniec Podolski was a frontier crossing point for Ukraine, and its fall could mean losing the whole Commonwealth. This depiction of the danger, though, did not undermine the certainties of the Pope, who, infuriated against him, cut it short. He told the Protector that, upon no occasion, the Pope answered to a Cardinal and that the answer would be sent in a letter addressed to the Nuncio.

152 Following the conclusion of the Consistory, the Cardinal immediately took the opportunity to discuss the matter of the appointment with Alexander VII, getting a new negative response. On that occasion, the Pope illustrated the many difficulties. He mentioned, in particular, a procedural flaw in the letter from Warsaw and the king of Poland's recommendation of a sole candidate³¹. According to Alexander VII, it would have been more appropriate to submit a list of candidates, leaving the choice to the Pope, according to the "jus of Promotion"³². These were all motivations to which Orsini promptly responded. At the time of the request for a Polish candidate, the Protector recalled that the Pope had only asked for a worthy person to be recommended. For Orsini, Béziers was not only a capable and worthy person for the cardinalate, but being Italian, he would be more faithful to the Holy See than to France. The Protector's reasons, though based on some logic and past examples, went unheard by the Pope, who also reiterated that «upon no occasions, the Pope answers to a Cardinal»³³.

The meeting between the Holy Father and the protector was undeniably tense. Orsini, in a "separate leaflet" intended for John II Casimir, explicitly outlined the nature of the problem. He reported that after the audience, Alexander VII stated, with a clear hint of derision, that Poland could seek support for its troubles from France, with which it had extensive correspondence and friendship.

30 On this audience: AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, Rome 10 II 1667, ff. 0073-77r.

31 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 8 II 1667, f. 0056r.

32 The Promotion involved Orsini during the reigns of Wiśniowiecki (AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, "Scrittura mandata di Polonia dal Nuntio al Sig.r Cardinale Orsino nel principio del mese di giugno 1672", c. 167) and John III Sobieski, as Polish kings continued to transfer appointments to the French. In 1676, Orsini had to inform Sobieski on behalf of the Pope that the Promotion favoured European monarchies as institutions, not a right of the Princes as persons. (AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, V. Orsini to John III Sobieski, Rome 10 IV 1676, c. 0082).

33 «in nessun caso si risponde a' Cardinali», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, Rome 10 II 1667, ff. 0073-77r.

[The Pope answered] with derision that the King of Poland, who has so much confidence and friendship (I do not remember well the word used) with the king of France, should ask for money from the king of France, who has so many millions [...] and so many soldiers – stressing that the excesses of the Duke of Créquy had cost three million³⁴.

With these words, the Pope gave the Cardinal his final negative answer as proof that the question of the allowances – certainly more legitimate and justified – was somehow connected with the closeness or friendship existing between Louis XIV and John II Casimir, something Alexander VII could not accept. Not even the mission to Rome as the extraordinary delegate of Abbot Paolo Doni – the King's resident in Rome and based in Naples as Internuncio, then³⁵ – could affect the determination of the Pope.

Though ill and feeble³⁶, Pope Chigi spent the whole day of 12 March officiating the Promotion of the Princes, with no satisfaction for Poland-Lithuania. This was an outrageous insult for John II Casimir, who threatened the Holy See to expel the Papal Nuncio from the Republic after Orsini had informed him of the Promotion's result³⁷.

153

the nuncio will leave the kingdom, and his successor will not reenter so easily. From there, the Abbot Doni will return to his internunciature according to our royal order, and every diplomatic relationship with the court of Rome will be interrupted, being able to live like good Catholics without these useless and disgusting relations³⁸.

34 «per modo di irrisione perché il Re di Polonia che ha tanta corrispondenza e intrinsechezza o amicitia (che non mi ricordo bene la parola) con il Re di Francia non si fa dar denari dal Re di Francia lui che ha tanti milioni [...] et tanta soldatesca, tanto che tra l'altre cose le pazzie del duca di Crequy ci sono costate 3 milioni». AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, vol. 245, Roma 8 II 1667, c. 0077v.

35 Research on Paolo Doni is only at the beginning. He went to Poland very young and remained there until 1657: first, he went to Rome as a Polish resident and then to Naples as an internuncio to deal with issues related to the inheritance of Bona Sforza (Neapolitan Sums). His instruction in: AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, "Istruttione a Monsignor l'Abbate Paolo Doni [...]", c. 0350, 1-7. Also: Alessandro Boccolini, "Un agente diplomatico a Roma per la Rzeczpospolita: l'abate Paolo Doni al servizio di Jan II Kazimierz Waza", in *Gli agenti presso la Santa Sede delle comunità e degli Stati stranieri*, vol. I, eds. Matteo Sanfilippo, and Péter Tusor (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2020), 227-52.

36 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 12 III 1667, f. 0139v.

37 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 245, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, Rome 12 III, f. 0134r.

38 «Monsignor Nuncio esca dal Regno, et il Successore non ci metterà il piede così facilmente [continuando che] di costà partirà l'Abbate Doni per ritornare alla sua Internuntiatura secondo l'ordine nostro regio, che se gli manda, e si

Some important events kept diplomatic relations between Rome and Warsaw from breaking down. These include the deaths of Queen Maria Louisa on May 10³⁹, Alexander VII on May 22, and the Truce of Andrusovo between Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy⁴⁰. This truce, in particular, allowed the Commonwealth to strengthen its military on the southeastern front and defend against Tartar threats. When Clement IX, also known as Giulio Rospigliosi, became Pope on June 20, 1667, the political situation had changed significantly. Further changes were coming soon, especially with John II Casimir's abdication of the Polish throne the following year.

3. THE RACE TO THE POLISH THRONE AND THE RECONFIRMATION OF THE OFFICE OF PROTECTOR OF THE KINGDOM

154

On 16 September 1668, King Vasa, deeply grieved by the passing of his beloved wife – who had wielded considerable influence over governance⁴¹ – formally presented his intention to withdraw from public life and abdicate the throne to the Sejm. This decision posed significant institutional and political challenges⁴², particularly given the absence of a suitable male heir for succession. While Poland-Lithuania operated under an elective monarchy, it had historically accommodated the hereditary right of the Crown, a principle that facilitated the Vasa dynasty's tenure in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth since 1587, following the election of Sigismund III, the father of John II. After an interregnum lasting approximately one year, a national representative was elected in June 1669. Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, an unknown yet well-connected young man, gained the backing of Andrzej Olszowski, Bishop of Kulm, who authored the influential booklet *Censura Candidatorum*⁴³. This strategic

troncarà ogni corrispondenza con la corte Romana, potendosi anche vivere da buon cattolici senza quest'inutile e sempre disgustosa occupazione», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 5 IV 1667, c. 0367. The King also sent similar letters through Masini to the Cardinals Vidoni and Santacroce, co-Protector of the Kingdom, and the Sacred College, (AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, Warsaw 5 IV 1667, cc. 342; 343; 344).

39 BAV, Barb. Lat. 5259, "Relazione de' funerali celebrati in Cracovia alla Maestà di Ludovica Maria regina di Polonia e Svezia", ff. 577r-79r.

40 Zbigniew Wójcik, *Traktat andruszowski 1667 roku i jego geneza* (Warszawa: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1959); Platania, *Rzeczpospolita*, 74-8

41 After the queen's death, the nuncio reported that she «had held the reins of power in her hands» [«alle di cui mani erano con piena autorità le redini del Governo»]. AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, "Discorso sopra l'abdicazione di Sua Maestà", f. 155r.

42 ASR, Archivio Odescalchi, III/A/5/, n. 25, "Scritture concernenti l'abdicazione di Giovanni Casimiro Re di Polonia 1668", ff. n.n.

43 The booklet attributed to Olszowski aimed to discredit candidates, presenting Wiśniowiecki as the preferred national choice. This book reached Rome through Protector Orsini, who informed Fantoni in Warsaw. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, ff. 211v-12r. It was fully published: Andrzej Olszowski, *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri Polonici. Ocena kandydatów do tronu polskiego*, eds. Casimir Przyboś, and Adam Perłakowski (Kraków: Księg. Akademicka, 2014).

move effectively excluded numerous prominent foreign candidates from succession, including the Prince of Condé and Philip William of Neuburg, both of whom were supported by Louis XIV; Charles V of Lorraine, backed by the Emperor; and the Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich's second-born son, who enjoyed limited support from a segment of the Lithuanian nobility⁴⁴.

This analysis operates within a simplified framework that acknowledges the exclusion of "minor" candidates and allows for a focused examination of Virginio Orsini's role and actions as Protector of the Kingdom. Orsini's position thrust him into a series of complex political and diplomatic challenges that, given the questionable nature of his abilities, may have been beyond his capacity to navigate effectively. The dynamics originating in Warsaw had broader implications for all of Europe and notably involved the Holy See, which maintained a vested interest in the affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In an elective monarchy like the Commonwealth, where kings could be chosen from national and non-national candidates, the Protector's role became inherently enmeshed in intricate political machinations. This involvement often required the Protector to either support a candidate aligning with the interests of Rome or fulfil directives from Warsaw to present specific requests to the papacy. Moreover, personal motivations significantly influenced the Protector's engagement in the Polish electoral process. Primarily, Orsini sought to safeguard his interests, which had been cultivated over time through his protective role, a position contingent upon confirmation by the newly elected king. Consequently, driven by the imperative to maintain his appointment, the cardinal aligned his political strategy with these interests. He manoeuvred to advocate, overtly or covertly, for a favoured candidate, often in divergence from the policies set forth by the Secretariat of State. Recognizing this potential for independence, the Secretariat strategically relied on its nuncio's active presence and initiatives *in loco*.

If John II Casimir's decision to abdicate was dictated, at least officially, by the emotional turmoil he experienced following the death of Maria Louise⁴⁵, it was also profoundly rooted within a series of political defeats that had characterized the final years of his reign. Significant among these failures was the already mentioned controversial appointment of the Bishop of Beziers to the cardinalate, combined with his proposal to establish a successor, *Vivente Rege*, for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in person of the French Prince of Condé or his son, Henri-Jules de Bourbon, Duke of Enghien⁴⁶. Notably, this latter contributed to the dissolution

44 A faction of the Lithuanian nobility, attracted by the Great Duke's promises to restore their losses from the Treaty of Andruszow, backed the Muscovite's second-born. Royal Secretary Masini's report highlights concerns about the potential election of an Orthodox candidate. AAV, Miscellanea, Armadio I, vol. 84, "Relazione di Polonia", ff. 161r-70v.

45 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, "Discorso sopra l'abdicazione di Sua Maestà", f. 155r.

46 The *Vivente Rege* during the kingdom of John II was raised around 1650 after the two little king's children died (Princess in 1651, and Prince in 1652. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b.63, cc.0024; 0053; 0078; 0079). The kings attempted to find a crown heir (a French one); this issue opened a political crisis soon after the

of the Sejm in 1667 without any resolutions being reached. Moreover, the Holy See closely monitored these developments, tasking Nuncio Pignatelli with overseeing and reporting the growing rumours surrounding John II Casimir's potential abdication. Such indiscretions became apparent during the new diet convened in January 1668, which, despite initial optimism⁴⁷, exacerbated the rift between the king and the nobility. On March 7th, Pignatelli communicated the breach within the Sejm to Rome and indicated the likelihood of the king's abdication. In this correspondence – one of the last he sent before being succeeded by Marescotti – the nuncio depicted a sovereign increasingly isolated and embroiled in conflict with the nobility, who were pressing for the expulsion of foreign ministers, particularly the French representatives.

156 The King told them he was fed up with their extravagances, as they were part of his government. After this answer, the King stopped. He was confused and remained silent for almost an hour and a half, giving the impression of wanting to abdicate⁴⁸.

On 22 February, an anonymous disclosure, which was extraordinary in its content, had reached Cardinal Orsini, anticipating the official communication sent from Warsaw by the Nuncio at the beginning of March.

The King has decided to abdicate. [...]. If he does not regret it before July, France will support the Duke of Neuburg. Only God knows the consequences of this. I beg your Eminence not to point me as the author of this message. I do not think the nuncio knows anything⁴⁹.

The evidence indicates that approximately ten days prior, the Protector had already been informed about the King's intention to abdicate, along with intelligence regarding France's support for the Neuburg candidate, effectively sidelining its "historical candidate", the Prince of Condé. The communication from the Protector was likely delivered by an individual within the sovereign's inner circle, most plausibly

Treaty of Oliva. As early as 1660, the difficulties of the monarchs were stated in an "aviso" that reported the nobility claiming its right to elect the king by the Country's constitution. AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol., 402, "anno 1660", c. 0209.

47 AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, Warsaw 25 I 1668, c. 144.

48 «disse loro [...] che già siate satij abastanza del mio governo, come son'io molto più di voi altri per le tante vostre stravaganze. Fermatasi, doppo questa risposta la Maestà Sua in un certo modo sospesa, come se havesse voluto dar loro qualche segno di Abdicazione, rimase in un profondo silenzio per lo spazio quasi di un'hora, e mezza». AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, A. Pignatelli to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 7 III 1668, f. 59 r. Orsini received information about the diet from Fantoni on the same day, AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 228, L. Fantoni a V. Orsini, Warsaw 7 III 1668, c. 0567.

49 «Il re ha risoluto l'abdicatione. [...] è certo che se non si pente da qui alla fine di luglio la Francia porterà il Duca di Neoburgo, con che eventi solo Dio lo sa. Supplico Vostra Eminenza di non farmene autore. Non credo che il Nunzio lo sappia», AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, Warsaw 22 II 1668, c. 0148.

one of the Italian secretaries, Masini or Fantoni, with whom Orsini maintained ongoing correspondence. They apprised the Cardinal of Jan's unsuccessful attempts to garner support from the minor nobility, who sought to compel him to endorse a Constitution mandating the departure of foreign ministers, particularly the French, from Warsaw, alongside a call for a general mobilization of the chivalry to safeguard the kingdom⁵⁰.

While the identity of the author of the anonymous message directed to the Protector is not critical for comprehending subsequent events, it is instrumental in elucidating the nature of Orsini's relationship with Poland-Lithuania and his conduct during the interregnum. Notably, the confidential information received must have originated from the "political creatures" associated with John II Casimir and his late wife, Maria Louise, who had been integral to their court for many years, fulfilling essential roles for the sovereigns of the Republic⁵¹. Officers that Nuncio Pignatelli described well, introducing a Polish king besieged by these individuals.

157

The King is too besieged by these French ministers and by those few of his court who are around him and who are subordinate and salaried by the French. They never leave him, isolating him completely, even from his confessor. If someone has the opportunity to talk to the King, but he has said unpleasant things, he will not have a second chance to meet him⁵².

"Subordinated" and "salaried" by Paris, these royal secretaries functioned as instruments of Louis XIV's ministries, clearly exemplifying the strength of French power at the court of Vasa. This influence did not disturb Orsini, who was known to be closely aligned with France, where he had been appointed co-protector⁵³ and

50 AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, Warsaw 15 II 1668, c. 0146, and Warsaw 22 II 1668, c. 0147.

51 During the *Potop*, the Polish monarchs sent the Italian secretaries as extraordinary delegates to the most important European courts. Masini was sent to Wien for an anti-Swedish League (AAV, Segreteria di Stato. Polonia, vol.68, Avvisi, Warsaw 6 V 1658, f. 234v); Girolamo Pinocci to the United Provinces and England (Alessandro Boccolini, "L'ambasciata in Olanda e in Inghilterra del lucchese Girolamo Pinocci, segretario regio (1658-1659)", *Il Veltro*, LXI/1-6 (2017): 47-69); Fantoni had been destined as a delegate in France (AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 71, Avvisi, Warsaw 29 February 1660, f. 138v.)

52 «troppo assediato da questi ministri francesi, e da quei pochi della sua Camera che gli stanno d'intorno subordinati, e stipendiati da loro, i quali non gli lasciano respiro, e tengono indietro tutto e fino il proprio confessore [tanto che] se per avventura vi è chi arrivi una volta a dirle qualche cosa contraria al genio, e volontà degl'Interessati, non vi può al certo tornare la seconda», AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, A. Pignatelli to G. Rospigliosi, Rome 20 VII 1667, ff. 188v-89r.

53 Orsini's French predilection was so well known that John II Casimir, as soon as elevated to the throne and not yet supporting the French party, was forced to remind him that the role of the Protector should be neutral regarding the disputes between France and the Empire. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 63, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 1 VIII 1650, c. 0026.

where he had been favourably received with all the honours just a couple of years before⁵⁴.

The correspondence with the figures, closely connected to the influential ambassadors dispatched from Paris⁵⁵, served as the primary source of intelligence regarding Polish affairs for the Cardinal. The correspondence with the influential figures, closely connected to the ambassadors dispatched from Paris, served as the primary source of intelligence regarding Polish affairs for the Cardinal. This situation originated a limited view of the entire interregnum in him, which posed a significant risk to his interests, above all, to the reconfirmation of the Protectorate by the forthcoming monarch.

It is evident that, in correspondence dated just days before the election of the new king, the Cardinal still assumed the success of the French Candidate was a certainty⁵⁶. Orsini's belief was rooted in information received from the Polish Court; nothing had shifted for him since he received the anonymous message in February, throughout the entirety of the interregnum. This viewpoint is further reinforced by the last letter sent to the Cardinal before the election by the French ambassador, Bishop of Beziers, who outlined a shortlist of three candidates: the Neuburg, the Lorraine, and the Muscovite⁵⁷.

I cannot believe that Poland chose the Muscovite, both for reasons of religion and politics. Lorraine can compete, but if the election is well-considered, Newburgh will be the best candidate. A more peaceful election will not be possible⁵⁸.

Later events demonstrate how far the Protector was from the truth, so distracted as he was by the certainty (and indeed, his secret hope) of seeing the French candidate on the throne. Eventually, he lost track of the political schemes regarding potential candidates for the Polish crown⁵⁹, such as Queen Christina of Sweden, suggested

54 AC, AO, I, Miscellanea Pressutti, vol. 49, "Articolo di lettera", c. 0006.

55 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, A. Pignatelli to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 31 V 1667, f. 18or.

56 Regarding the election, Orsini wrote to Masini that all the hopes were for the Duke of Neuburg ahead of the other competitors, the Muscovite and the Lorraine. To Fantoni, he communicated that the "prophecy" to see the election of Neuburg was becoming true. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 1 VI 1669, f. 189v.; Ibidem, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 1 VI 1669, f. 19or

57 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 229, P. Bonsi a V. Orsini, Marienwerder 18 III 1669, c. 0218. Orsini firmly believed that the Neuburg would be elected, as evidenced by his letter to Beziers. (AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini a P. Bonsi, Rome 27 April 1669, f. 132r).

58 «Del moscovita non posso credere che la Polonia sul fatto ci si risolva, tanto per ragione di religione che di politica, Lorena in un principio puol correre la sua lancia ma se si fa l'elezione con le dovute ponderationi resterà meglio Neoburgo et più pacifica elettione non mi pare possa darsi della sua», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 229, P. Bonsi to V. Orsini, Marienwerder 18 III 1669, c. 0218.

59 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 15 VI

by the Holy See shortly before the election, or a “Piasto” as a national candidate, but also the option proposed by Piccinardi – Marescotti’s secretary⁶⁰ – at the end of 1668 regarding Alessandro Farnese as a neutral mediation candidate⁶¹.

On May 30, 1668, John II officially communicated his decision to abdicate to Orsini⁶², thereby formally initiating the interregnum for the cardinal. Recognizing the uncertainty surrounding his reappointment as Protector, Orsini promptly activated a series of correspondences from his household secretariat directed at influential figures within Polish affairs. He drafted a letter to the abdicating king, articulating a request for safeguard in his role as Protector⁶³. Additional letters were dispatched to various prominent individuals in Poland-Lithuania, including royal secretaries Masini and Fantoni, Canon Lupini, secretary to the Archbishop of Gnesna, the Kingdom’s Primate, and Prince Lubormiski, as well as to the papal nuncio, Galeazzo Marescotti. Furthermore, Orsini extended his correspondence to France, addressing Louis XIV, the Bishop of Lyon, and Monsignor de Beziers, the ambassador of the *Christianissimo* in Warsaw. He also reached out to the Prince of Condé, whom both in France and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth still viewed as the “ideal successor” to John II Casimir⁶⁴.

The responses from all recipients demonstrated a marked courtesy towards the cardinal. Notably, the reassurances the soon-to-be-abdicated King John II provided were considerable appreciation from Orsini.

We have always cordially considered how much authority and generosity Your Lordship exercised the office of Protector of this Kingdom [...]. You can believe that, as far as it is in our power and authority, we will not leave anything unattempted to reconfirm the Protection⁶⁵.

1669, f. 112r.

- 60 If Piccinardi, along with Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, played a key role in Rinaldo d’Este’s candidacy during the interregnum before John III Sobieski’s ascension, he previously suggested an “Italian election” following John II Casimir’s abdication. Correspondence from 1668-1669 in the State Archive of Parma reveals discussions between Piccinardi and Ranuccio II Farnese regarding Prince Alexander Farnese’s potential candidacy as a mediator among factions. ASP, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero. Polonia, vol. 119, G.L. Piccinardi to Ranuccio II Farnese, Warsaw 26 November, 1668, f. 253v. See, Alessandro Boccolini, “The unsuccessful election of Rinaldo d’Este to the throne of Poland (1674)”, in *I Barberini e l’Europa*, eds. Id., and Péter Tusor (Viterbo: Sette Città, 202), 77-98.
- 61 ASP, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero. Polonia, vol. 119, G.L. Piccinardi to Ranuccio II Farnese, Warsaw 26 II 1668, f. 253r.
- 62 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 30 V 1668, cc. 0033, 01-03.
- 63 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, *V. Orsini to John II Casimir*, Rome 14 VII 1668, ff. 18r-v.
- 64 The letters to Poland, all dated 14 VII 1668: AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, ff. 16-24r.
- 65 «Habbiamo sempre considerato cordialmente con quant’autorità, amore, e

While John II Casimir was reassuring Orsini about the matter, it must be noticed that in the same letter, dated 30 May, the king asked him to present the Pope two new requests, so thorny that could undermine the confirmation of the Protectorate. So, he was forced to carry out a twofold mission: he had to renew the plea for the promotion to the cardinalate of the Bishop of Beziers to the new Pope, Clement IX Rospigliosi, and ask the Pope to send a Papal Legate to Poland-Lithuania to supervise and monitor in Diet the election⁶⁶. Two tasks indeed not easy to perform, officially dragging the Cardinal into the political games and exposing him to the crossfire of his detractors or those who ambitiously aspired for his office.

Bonsi's appointment – elected in 1672 – revealed the same dynamics concerning the diplomatic clash in 1667 in a new diatribe between Beziers and the new Nuncio. This time, though, Marescotti claimed the Polish post, asking Orsini to support his proposal with John II. The position of the Protector was well-balanced between Bonsi and Marescotti, hiding, however, an apparent partiality for the “French” candidate. If, on the one hand, Orsini reassured the Nuncio of his actions to assist him⁶⁷, on the other, the Cardinal was ready to act secretly in favour of Beziers, as revealed to Fantoni. To the royal secretary, Orsini confessed that he could only be a witness in this conflict. However, he would assist the Bishop of Beziers with great pleasure, staying faithful to the *Christianissimo* king's policy⁶⁸. The Papal Court avoided a new conflict between Rome, Paris, and Warsaw, officially deciding to leave the issue pending the definition of John II Casimir's status after the election of his successor⁶⁹. Considering what had happened in the previous years, this resolution reassured the Protector, who could concentrate on John II Casimir's second request. Concerning the demand to send the Legate, the old king had expressly asked Rome for the presence in Warsaw of a high representative of His Holiness who could monitor the election, mentioning the risk of a possible election of the Schismatic Muscovite. Many manuscripts, “News” from Warsaw, confirmed the Tsar's possible candidacy in January 1668, illustrating its strengths based on the promises of the return of the Ukrainian properties and the other provinces occupied in the last war.

generosità Vostra Signoria Illustrissima ha esercitato la carica di Protettore di questo Regno [...]. Può perciò credere, che per quello che sarà di arbitrio, et autorità Nostra non lasceremo alcuna parte per incontrare il suo gusto non solo in ordine alla detta Prottettione», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 18 IX 1668, c.0333.

66 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 30 V 1668, cc. 0033, 01-03.

67 AC, AO, I serie, Corrispondenze [...], vol. 248, V. Orsini to G. Marescotti, Rome 3 VIII 1669, cc. 63v-64r. Marescotti had sent his brother to meet Orsini to discuss his appointment. The meeting took place at Palo, near Bracciano, in March 1669, AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini to G. Marescotti, Rome 12 III 1669, c. 74v.

68 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 27 July 1669, c. 51v.

69 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 19 I 1668, f. 3r.

The faction in favour of the Muscovite grows progressively. If he promises the nobility the return of the properties of Ukraine and the other provinces occupied in the last war, he can hope to conquer the throne. We cannot see other candidates who can offer so much⁷⁰.

The document entitled *Relazione di Polonia* [Report on Poland]⁷¹, preserved in the Apostolic Vatican Archives and drafted – not surprisingly – by the king's secretary, Masini, clearly articulates that the promises made by the Tsar posed a considerable temptation for a significant portion of the Lithuanian nobility. These nobles could be easily attracted by the Tsar's assurances of financial compensation and the return of properties and lands ceded to Muscovy by the Commonwealth through the Peace of Andrusóvo in 1667⁷².

It is reasonable to assert that John II Casimir's request for the dispatch of a Cardinal Legate was motivated by a desire to mitigate the threat posed by the Muscovites during the election process. However, it was evident to astute observers that this explicit anti-Muscovite policy would significantly benefit the French candidate, who represented the most capable opposition to the Great Duke Mikhailovich's influence at that juncture⁷³.

The Nuncio Marescotti comprehended this perspective and communicated his insights to the Secretary of State as early as the summer of 1668. He reported that the anti-French faction expressed doubts regarding whether the King had indeed solicited the Legate Cardinal's assistance on behalf of the court of Paris to advocate for its interests⁷⁴. This suspicion reflected a legitimate concern that positioned John II Casimir's demands within the broader context of pro-French political manoeuvres. The presence and stature of the Legate Cardinal had the potential to not only impede the advance of the Schismatic but also to neutralize the actions of the same Nuncio, accused of pro-imperial sympathies since his initial arrival in Poland-Lithuania⁷⁵.

161

70 «La fattione a favore de Moscoviti sempre più cresce, e s'è vero come ha del probabile, che promettano alla Nobiltà la restitutione de Beni dell'Ukraina, e delle altre Province occupate nell'ultime guerre, certo, che ponno sperare di far gran colpo, non vedendosi qual altro potentato possa offerire tanto, che sia equivalente a tali promesse», AC, AO, I, Avvisi, vol. 402, Warsaw 25 I 1668, c. 144.

71 AAV, Miscellanea, Armadio I, vol. 84, "Relazione di Polonia", ff. 161r-170v.

72 Platania, *Rzeczpospolita*, 72-3; 85.

73 The Czar ensured the return of properties post-Treaty of Andruszów, while Condé committed to increasing the army's income and constructing key fortresses. In contrast, Charles of Lorraine only promised to build a stone bridge over the Vistula. Cfr. Bernardo Zaydler, *Storia della Polonia fino agli ultimi tempi* (Lugano: C. Storm e L. Armiens, 1839), p. 200.

74 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 13 August 1668, f. 274r

75 By the end of 1668, the Nuncio had been accused – through a public demonstration during the diet – of working in favour of the Prince of Lorraine against the Muscovite and French candidates. AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 12 XII 1668, f. 540v). This was why Marescotti, in the conclaves in which he took part, never had the support of the

On June 30, Orsini formally submitted a request to the Legate in Rome⁷⁶. However, he promptly communicated to his Polish correspondents the intrinsic challenges the Papal court might face in deliberating such a crucial and time-consuming matter. The Cardinal expressed concerns regarding the multitude of pretenders in Rome and the extensive discussions surrounding this issue, particularly about the most credible cardinals for this position⁷⁷. Orsini's particular interest in this matter underscored his deep concern for what he valued most – the reconfirmation of the Protectorate. This apprehension was fueled by the prospect that whoever was appointed as Legate and subsequently sent to Poland-Lithuania could potentially gain an advantage for himself or others in the coveted role of protector of the kingdom. Following his request to the Holy Father, Orsini endeavoured to discern whom Clement IX might select, even suggesting a list of candidates he submitted to Secretary Masini in an encrypted letter⁷⁸. Although there is no documented evidence of this missive in the family archive, subsequent correspondence with Poland suggests the identities of those who could aspire to the office of Legate. Notably, candidates included Cardinals Santacroce, co-protector of Poland⁷⁹; Pietro Vidoni, a former nuncio in Poland esteemed for his knowledge of the country and negotiating skills⁸⁰; and Bishop Pignatelli, the previous papal representative in Warsaw who was now based in Vienna. Of particular interest was the information Orsini had received regarding an impending elevation to the cardinalate of Pignatelli and, subsequently, his appointment as Legate⁸¹.

While this latter possibility appeared unrealistic given the timing, Orsini had no reason to fear Vidoni, whom he had assisted in attaining the cardinalate eight years prior⁸². Conversely, Santacroce represented the most significant source of concern

“French” cardinals. Particularly in 1691 (ASR, Fondo Corvisieri, Nunziatura e Avvisi, b. 9, “La Giostra Papale. Discorso pubblico sopra li candidati nella sede vacante di Alessandro VIII”, ff.nn.), and in 1700 (ASR, Camerale II, *Conclavi e Possessi*, ff.nn.).

76 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, Rome 6 VII 1668, f. 6r.

77 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 14 VII 1668, f. 16v.

78 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 4 VIII 1668, f. 48v.

79 Santacroce was the Co-Protector of the Kingdom since 1654. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 63, John II Casimir to V. Orsini, Warsaw 6 VI 1654, c. 0143.

80 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 25 VII 1668, f. 294v.

81 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 28 VII 1668, f. 38v.

82 The correspondence exchanged between the Secretary of State and the Nuncio Marescotti, testify that the Protector had proposed Vidoni as possible Legate. AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 30 VI 1668, ff. 25v-26r.

for Orsini. This anxiety is corroborated by Orsini's inquiries to Marescotti, in which he questioned whether Santacroce had sought to usurp the Protectorate during the election phases⁸³. The extent to which the co-protector may have covertly worked against Orsini to secure personal advantage remains unclear. Nevertheless, the pervasive mistrust that Orsini harboured toward Santacroce is a prominent theme evident throughout all correspondence relating to the interregnum period.

While the Protector grappled with identifying an eligible candidate for the role, communicating to the King that the Pope seemed inclined to proceed with the appointment⁸⁴, the cardinal overlooked a crucial aspect. The Secretariat of State discreetly sought Marescotti's opinion – without Orsini's knowledge – regarding the necessity and efficacy of dispatching a high-ranking papal representative from Rome⁸⁵. Marescotti's response arrived promptly; by the end of August 1668, the nuncio had submitted an extensive letter to the Secretariat advising against the Legate's departure. He highlighted numerous challenges that would encounter the Legate in Warsaw, including potential ceremonial conflicts with the Primate of the Kingdom, the Archbishop of Gnesna, and, more critically, the impracticality of functioning effectively given that, due to his status, he would be lodged in a villa outside the Polish capital, far from the court and the senators⁸⁶. The arguments presented by Marescotti were convincing enough that the Secretariat of State. In the last days of October 1668, the Secretary of State informed the nuncio of the decision not to send the Cardinal Legate and requested that this be kept as a secret from John II and the Polish court to bide time while awaiting further developments⁸⁷.

In reality, there was a precise, much more complex anti-French strategy behind this decision. Examination of the coded correspondence between the Secretariat of State and the nuncio Marescotti exchanged in the summer/autumn of 1668 reveals Rome's intent to support the imperial candidate, Charles V of Lorraine. However, the prevailing influence of the French faction within Poland-Lithuania necessitated immediate and extensive action, executed with prudence to safeguard the Holy See's interests. The nuncio already stationed in the Republic could adequately address this requirement, in contrast to a Cardinal Legate, whose elevated status and delayed arrival in Warsaw would hinder effective diplomatic engagement. On August 4, Rome issued explicit directives to Marescotti⁸⁸, directing him to support the imperial candidate while simultaneously working to undermine the Muscovite's

83 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to G. Marescotti, Rome 27 VII 1669, f. 49v.

84 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 247, V. Orsini to John II Casimir, Rome 6 VII 1668, f. 6v.

85 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 30 VI 1668, f. 26r.

86 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, Warsaw 25 VII 1668, ff. 294r-299v

87 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 20 X 1668, ff. 63r-v.

88 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 4 VIII 1668, ff. 38v-40r, and Ibid. 40-41r.

candidacy by any means necessary. The diplomatic manoeuvres orchestrated by the nuncio effectively contributed to Rome's objectives during the interregnum. Although the election of Charles V of Lorraine ultimately did not materialize, Marescotti's adept diplomatic strategies played a crucial role in neutralizing the Muscovite threat⁸⁹ and facilitating the emergence of Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki as a practicable alternative candidate.

Unbeknownst to him, Orsini became a pawn in the strategy orchestrated by the Secretariat of State alongside the nuncio. This circumstance was so evident – and at times almost absurd – that, by mid-January 1669, Orsini reiterated the request for the Legate's mission during an audience with the Pope. Although Clement IX had yet to deliver a definitive negative response, Orsini had already learned that the mission would likely not materialize⁹⁰. Shortly thereafter, the Pope formally communicated the decision not to send a Legate, citing concerns regarding the effectiveness of such an action based on timing and logistical issues⁹¹.

Upon receiving this papal refusal, Orsini felt compelled to inform his Polish correspondents of the resolution. He promptly communicated the news to Masini, John II Casimir, and the Archbishop of Gnesna. Notably, in his correspondence with Secretary Fantoni, the cardinal expressed apprehension that the failure of this initiative could undermine his credibility in the eyes of the King and the primate, risking the confirmation of the Protectorate⁹².

At this critical juncture, Orsini realized he had been merely an instrument of the policies the Secretariat of State executed. By March 1669, now conscious of having disappointed those who had placed their hopes in his mediation, he admitted to Fantoni that there had been plots and negotiations of which he had remained oblivious regarding the Legate's appointment⁹³. He further highlighted the nuncio's role, deducing that Marescotti had actively worked from Warsaw to advise Rome against dispatching the cardinal Legate. Fearing that this scenario might compromise their esteem for him in Poland-Lithuania and his position as Protector of the Kingdom, the Roman cardinal had no choice but to wait and hope that the King's election would fall to a French "friend".

89 Marescotti neutralized the Muscovite by securing secret oaths from bishops and zealous Catholics who would never vote for him. In early January 1669, the Bishop of Krakow revealed this secrecy, leading the pro-French party to accuse Marescotti of favouring Charles V of Lorraine. Condè and Neuburg sought exclusion at that time due to having actively plotted for the crown in the previous years and "vivente rege". On this matter, the nuncio had sent a long letter to the secretary of state explaining the dynamics in detail. AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 81, G. Marescotti to G. Rospigliosi, 12 XII 1668, ff. 538r-544v. Copy of the secret oath, Ibid. 5 XII 1668, ff. 523r.

90 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini to P. Doni, Rome 12 I 1669, f. 26r.

91 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini to C. Masini, Rome 19 I 1669, f. 36r.

92 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 249, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 19 I 1669, f. 37r.

93 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 23 III, ff. 80r-v, and Ibid., f. 81r.

CONCLUSION

On June 19, 1669, Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki was elected, and the news reached Rome through an express package sent by the Nuncio. Inside, Marescotti included a message addressed to the Cardinal.

Finally, God's Mercy has fulfilled the prayers of the Holy Father, making Duke Visniovieschi the new king of this kingdom with the unexpected and unanimous consent of all the electors⁹⁴.

Orsini promptly responded to the nuncio, expressing gratitude for the letter that informed him about the election⁹⁵. However, to his closer acquaintances and Polish correspondences, the Cardinal's preoccupation with the confirmation of the Protectorate was evident. This concern stemmed from the recent developments in Polish affairs, particularly the failure of the pro-French faction and the unexpected rise of a third national candidate to the throne. After John II Casimir and his secretary Masini left Warsaw, Orsini found himself without influence in Poland-Lithuania. He conveyed his apprehensions to Fantoni, requesting him to send a congratulatory letter to the new King⁹⁶, emphasizing his support for the appointment as Protector of the Kingdom⁹⁷.

Despite reassurances from the Papal representative and the Bishop of Beziers, Orsini began to worry about the King's prolonged silence regarding his appointment. In a message to Fantoni, he speculated that the delay in the correspondence to the Roman court was likely due to the numerous official letters that needed to be delivered through Vienna, Venice, and other stops en route to Rome⁹⁸.

Unfortunately, Orsini misinterpreted the situation. The Secretary of State understood that the absence of royal letters was linked to the Republic's constitution and protocol, as the King was required to wait for the coronation ceremony⁹⁹. Eventually, the awaited official communication from Rome arrived in early August

94 «Si è finalmente degnata la Divina Misericordia di esaudire le fervorose suppliche di Nostro Signore col concedere a questo Regno il Signor Duca Visniovieschi in nuovo Re con inaspettato unanime consenso di tutti», AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 229, G. Marescotti to V. Orsini, Warsaw 19 VI 1669, c. 0036.

95 After communicating with the nuncio, Orsini received a long letter from Fantoni about the election. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 229, L. Fantoni to V. Orsini, 19 VI 1669, c. 0610.

96 In his first letter to the new king, Orsini confidently congratulated him on his election and explicitly requested the honour of being appointed as the Cardinal Protector of Poland. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to M.K. Wiśniowiecki, Rome 6 VII 1669, f. 8r.

97 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 6 VII 1669, ff. 8v-9r.

98 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 6 VII 1669, ff. 9v-10r.

99 AAV, Segr. Stato. Polonia, vol. 82, G. Rospigliosi to G. Marescotti, Rome 27 VII 1669, f. 116v.

1669, containing a letter for the Holy Father and another for Cardinal Orsini. In this correspondence, the King formally confirmed Orsini's position as Protector of the Kingdom¹⁰⁰. Wiśniowiecki stated that the notification had been dispatched after he took the oath and his royal investiture on July 7 at St. John's Collegiate Church in Warsaw. With his confirmation as Protector, Orsini could finally write an official letter to the new King, congratulating him on his election and reminding Wiśniowiecki of his duties as a Catholic monarch. The Cardinal emphasized the necessity of fighting against the infidel Turk, who threatened Poland for the kingdom's glory, traditionally referred to as *Antemurale Christianitatis*¹⁰¹.

Regrettably, Wiśniowiecki's election did not lead to the anticipated improvements; his reign proved challenging for the country¹⁰². The initial optimism surrounding his unanimous election soon dissipated¹⁰³ due to internal political fragmentation and discord, compounded by the advancing Ottoman Empire army led by Michele Kaplan Pachâ¹⁰⁴. This force would soon invade Poland-Lithuania, capturing Kamieniec Podolski and ultimately forcing the new sovereign to sign the Treaty of Buchach on October 16, 1672¹⁰⁵.

Due to the challenges faced soon after Wiśniowiecki's election and his untimely death, Orsini never cultivated a close relationship with the King. His connection with the new king differed significantly from his two-decade rapport with John II Casimir. Even with the election of John III Sobieski, Cardinal Orsini, although confirmed in his role¹⁰⁶, did not have the opportunity to forge a closer bond with the future hero of Vienna. The Protector of the Kingdom passed away two years later, just as John III returned to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after his successful campaigns and assumed the throne.

100 AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, M.K. Wiśniowiecki to V. Orsini, Warsaw 8 VII 1669, c. 0275.

101 Orsini emphasized the urgent need to combat the Turkish army, arguing for creating a Christian princes' alliance to confront the Ottomans, who were vulnerable due to prolonged conflicts in Candia. This was the only possibility of victory against the Common Enemy. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to M.K. Wiśniowiecki, Rome 17 VIII 1669, ff. 100-01v.

102 Platania, *Rzeczpospolita*, 79-85.

103 Even if unexpected, as Cardinal Protector Orsini observed, the election of Wiśniowiecki was agreed upon by all the parties and realized with quiet for the country. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, vol. 248, V. Orsini to L. Fantoni, Rome 6 VII 1669, f. 9v.

104 BAV, Barb. Lat., 2595, "Relazione breve e Fedele della presa di Caminiez fatta dai Turchi nell'anno 1673 stesa da Stefano Gradi per relazione di Mattia Gondola, testimone oculare", ff. 30-33r. On the Podolia under the Turks, see: Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ejlat Kaminiecki. Podole pod panowaniem tureckim (1672-1699)* (Warszaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Polczek, 1994).

105 Platania, *Rzeczpospolita*, 105.

106 On 4 February 1676, John III Sobieski, having recently returned from his two-year campaign against the Turks, reaffirmed Orsini's position as Protector of the Kingdom in a Latin letter. AC, AO, I, Corrispondenza, b. 64, c. 0157.

ABBREVIATION

AAV: Archivio Apostolico Vaticano.

Segr. Stato: Segreteria di Stato.

AC: Archivio Capitolino.

AO: Archivio Orsini.

ASR: Archivio di Stato di Roma.

ASP: Archivio di Stato di Parma.

BAV: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

DBI: Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani.

PSB: Polski Słownik Biograficzny.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Boccolini, Alessandro. "The unsuccessful election of Rinaldo d'Este to the throne of Poland (1674)". In *I Barberini e l'Europa*, edited by Id., and Péter Tusor, 77-98. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2022.

Boccolini, Alessandro. "Un agente diplomatico a Roma per la Rzeczpospolita: l'abate Paolo Doni al servizio di Jan II Kazimierz Waza". In *Gli agenti presso la Santa Sede delle comunità e degli Stati stranieri*, vol. I, edited by Matteo Sanfilippo and Péter Tusor, 227-52. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2020.

Boccolini, Alessandro, ed. *Viaggio politico, viaggio materiale: Monsignor Galeazzo Marescotti nunzio a Varsavia*. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2015.

Boccolini, Alessandro. "L'ambasciata in Olanda e in Inghilterra del lucchese Girolamo Pinocci, segretario regio (1658-1659)". *Il Veltro*, LXI/1-6 (2017), 47-69.

Coldagelli, Umberto. "Piero Bonsi". In DBI, vol. 12 (1971), 388-95.

Czamańska, Ilona. *Wiśniowieccy. Monografia rodu*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007.

Norman, Davies. *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. I. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Irene Fosi, "Virginio Orsini". In DBI, vol. 79 (2013), 715-19.

Irene Fosi, "Il cardinale Virginio Orsini e la "Protezione" del regno di Polonia (1650-1676): note e documenti dall'Archivio Orsini". In *Per Rita Tolomeo, scritti di amici sulla Dalmazia e l'Europa centro-orientale*, edited by Ester Capuzzo, Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi, and Francesco Guida, 229-44. Venezia: La Musa Talia, 2014.

Frost, Robert. *After the Deluge: Poland-Lithuania and the Second Northern War, 1655-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Kołodziejczyk, Dariusz. *Ejlat Kaminiecki. Podole pod panowaniem tureckim (1672-1699)* (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Polczek, 1994).

Olszowski, Andrzej. *Censura Candidatorum Sceptri Polonici. Ocena kandydatów do tronu polskiego*, edited by Casimir Przyboś, and Adam Perłakowski (Kraków: Księg. Akademicka, 2014).

Platania, Gaetano. "Alcuni significativi episodi dei rapporti franco-polacchi nel Seicento". In *Gli archivi della Santa Sede e la storia di Francia*, edited by Giovanni Pizzorusso, Oliver Poncet, and Matteo Sanfilippo, 137-61. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2006.

Platania, Gaetano. *Rzeczpospolita, Europa e Santa Sede tra intese e ostilità* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2000).

- Przyboś, Adam. *Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, 1640–1675*. Kraków-Wrocław: Wyd. Literackie, 1984.
- Przyboś, Adam. “Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki”. In PSB, vol. 20 (1975), 605-09;
- Ritzler Remigium, and Sefrin Pirmin, eds. *Hierarchia Catholica medii et recentioris aevi*, vol. V (1667–1730). Patavii: Typis Librariae “Il Messaggero di Sant’Antonio”, 1952.
- Targosz, Karolina. *Uczony dwór Ludwika Marii Gonzagi 1646–1667. Z dziejów polsko-francuskich stosunków naukowych*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975.
- Wisner, Henryk. *Zygmunt III Waza*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991.
- Wójcik, Zbigniew. *Traktat andruszowski 1667 roku i jego geneza*. Warszawa: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1959.
- Wojtyska, Henrik Damian CP, ed. *Acta Nuntiaturae Polonae*, vol. I: *De fontibus eorumque investigatione et editionibus Instructio ad editionem Nuntiorum series chronologica*. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1990.
- Zaydler, Bernardo. *Storia della Polonia fino agli ultimi tempi*. Lugano: C. Storm e L. Armiens, 1839.

PRIMARY SOURCES

AAV

Segr. Stato. Polonia, voll. 68, 71, 81, 82.

Miscellanea, Armadio I, vol. 84.

BAV, Barb. Lat. 5259, “Relazione de’ funerali celebrati in Cracovia alla Maestà di Ludovica Maria regina di Polonia e Svezia”.

BAV, Barb. Lat., 2595, “Relazione breve e Fedele della presa di Caminiez fatta dai Turchi nell’anno 1673 stesa da Stefano Gradi per relazione di Mattia Gondola, testimone oculare”, ff. 30-33r.

AC, AO, I

Corrispondenza, voll. 224-26, 228-29, 245, 248-249.

bb. 63, 64.

Avvisi, vol 402.

Miscellanea Pressutti, vol. 49.

ASP, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero. Polonia, vol. 119.

PRINTED SOURCES

Wyhowska de Andreis, Wanda, ed. *Elementa ad Fontium Editiones*, t. III: *Repertorium Rerum Polonicarum ex Archivo Orsini in Archivo Capitolino Romae*, I pars. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1961.

Wyhowska de Andreis, Wanda, ed. *Elementa ad Fontium Editiones*, t. VII: *Repertorium Rerum Polonicarum ex Archivo Orsini in Archivo Capitolino Romae*, II pars. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1962.

Wyhowska de Andreis, Wanda, ed. *Elementa ad Fontium Editiones*, t. X: *Repertorium Rerum Polonicarum ex Archivo Orsini in Archivo Capitolino Romae*, III pars. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1964.

Wyhowska de Andreis, Wanda, ed. *Elementa ad Fontium Editiones*, t. XIV: *Collectanea e rebus Polonicis Archivi Orsini in Archivo Capitolino Romae*, I

pars. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1965.
Wyhowska de Andreis, Wanda, ed. *Elementa ad Fontium Editiones*, t. XVIII:
Collectanea e rebus Polonicis Archivi Orsini in Archivo Capitolino Romae, II
pars. Romae: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1968.