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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

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I NUNZI DI PAPA URBANO VIII NELLA RZECZPOSPOLITA DEI WAZA.

Series: *Acta Barberiniana*, vol. 7, edited by Alessandro Boccolini, and Gaetano Platania. Viterbo, Sette Città, 2024, pp. 188.

This volume, published in 2024, is the result of the international conference *I nunzi di papa Urbano VIII nella Rzeczpospolita dei Waza*, organised by Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani, under the scientific direction of Professor Gaetano Platania director of the same institute, and Professor Massimo Carlo Giannini, president of the *Comitato Nazionale per le celebrazioni del IV centenario dell'elezione papale di Urbano VIII (1623–2023)*, established by the Italian Minister of Culture. The conference and the subsequent volume are part of the initiatives promoted by the Committee with the support of public and private cultural institutions, with the aim of “restoring to Italian citizens a knowledge and a re-reading of the papacy as the keystone of a century – the 17th century – that has only been re-evaluated in recent decades and that deserves to be brought to light”. Pope Urbano VIII, who lived in an era of religious conflicts, wars and censorship – but also of great artistic and linguistic flourishing – played a key role in the Seventeenth century in Europe. The celebration of the 400th anniversary of his election to the papacy (1623) allows us to rediscover the complexity of this character, his court and the Modern Age, overcoming stereotypes and hagiographic readings. In this perspective, *I nunzi di papa Urbano VIII nella Rzeczpospolita dei Waza* is helpful to take a closer look at the complex relations between the Pontiff and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, led by the Waza family, in the years of Barberini's pontificate. It was a critical moment characterized by intense relations that showed a specific interest of Pope Urban VIII and the court of Rome in Central and Eastern Europe against the backdrop of important events affecting Continental Europe, above all, the Thirty Years' War. The hope is to open a new season of research on the figure and politics of Urban VIII, integrating the traditional historiography of Pope Barberini with modern studies on papal diplomacy and Central and Eastern Europe, being able to count on the number of documents relating to the Barberini family preserved in the Vatican Library and the Vatican Apostolic Archive.

Alessandro Boccolini and Gaetano Platania edit this volume. It is divided into a preface, written by Massimo Carlo Giannini which introduces the seven interventions presented at the conference. The contributions—indexed according to a chronological and thematical perspective—offer analyses on various aspects, ranging from the apostolic nunciature as an institution to a prosopographic reading of the papal representatives sent to Warsaw by Urban VIII to the work of individual nuncios and their activities in Poland.

The first contribution, authored by Matteo Sanfilippo, is titled *Un prodromo cinquecentesco: il mancato ottenimento del cardinalato da parte di Annibale Di Capua*. Sanfilippo uses the case of Annibale Di Capua's diplomatic endeavours in Poland to

reflect critically on the challenges faced by papal nuncios when their missions do not achieve their intended objectives. He argues that Di Capua's inability to secure the cardinalate and the broader failures of his nunciature exemplify the recurrent tension between personal ambitions and the intricate geopolitical realities of the era. Sanfilippo meticulously retraces Di Capua's biography. Born in 1544 into a noble Neapolitan family loyal to the Spanish monarchy, Annibale was groomed for an ecclesiastical career as the second-born son. A profound interest in intellectual life overshadowed his academic pursuits in canon and civil law at Padua and Pavia. During this formative period, he established a relationship with Torquato Tasso, who later referenced Di Capua in the eighth canto of **Rinaldo** and expressed hopes for his elevation to the cardinalate.

Following a tenure at a Jesuit college in Rome, Di Capua connected with Ugo Boncompagni, who would become Pope Gregory XIII and facilitated his ecclesiastical advancement. Di Capua attained the titles of *referendario di ambedue le signature* and secret chamberlain to the Pope while aspiring to the archdiocese of Otranto, a position held by his paternal uncle, Pietro Antonio, who was reluctant to vacate the seat and suspected of heretical leanings, complicating Di Capua's ambitions. With papal backing, Di Capua entered Roman diplomacy, first serving as extraordinary nuncio to Prague to Rudolf II in 1576 and subsequently as nuncio to Venice the following year. However, his effectiveness in these postings was limited; in Prague, he merely conveyed the Pope's greetings, while in Venice, he failed to mitigate the pro-Protestant sentiments of patriarch Giovanni Grimani. Concurrently, his uncle retained control of the Otranto archdiocese and recommended to Rome that Annibale be reassigned. The sudden death of the Archbishop of Naples, Paolo Burali d'Arezzo, in 1578 presented a new opportunity for Di Capua. Despite opposition from several aristocratic families, he was appointed archbishop, bolstered by Spanish support. Di Capua's tenure in Naples was marked by a vigorous Counter-Reformation zeal, which focused on clergy reorganization, enhanced censorship, and improved ecclesiastical structures. He conducted a pastoral visit to identify systemic issues, including clerical inefficiencies and insufficient parishes. He proposed the establishment of twenty-five new parishes funded by ecclesiastical taxes—an initiative that ultimately faltered. Simultaneously, he intensified oversight of the press, mandating episcopal approval for new publications and instituting a censorship regime to restrict the dissemination of prohibited literature. He was recalled to diplomatic service after seven years in the pastoral role. In 1586, he was dispatched to Poland as nuncio with legate "a latere" powers at the court of Stephen I Báthory. Given Báthory's ambitions in Russia, a high-calibre papal representative was necessary. Di Capua was selected for this mission due to his aristocratic ties, wealth, and connections with Spain and the Austrian Habsburgs. Moreover, Di Capua viewed this assignment as a critical opportunity to achieve the cardinalate, a goal that had eluded both his predecessor and uncle. However, his departure was marred by an unforeseen development: the death of Báthory in 1587. Although conscious of the prevailing political instability in Poland, Rome mandated that he continue his mission without providing adequate support or an advisor familiar with the local political landscape.

Upon arriving in Poland, Annibale Di Capua became embroiled in the intricate dispute over the succession to the Polish throne. The Polish nobility was notably divided between the supporters of the House of Habsburg and those backing

Sigismund Vasa, the son of the Swedish King John III. Acting upon directives from the papacy and Spanish authorities, Di Capua, as papal nuncio, endorsed the Habsburg candidacy, anticipating that Sigismund would adhere to the Pacta Conventa, compromising Catholic supremacy in Poland. Nevertheless, this strategy proved ineffective, as the Polish nobility, mainly resistant to imperial influence, elected Sigismund king on August 19 1587. In a counter-move just three days later, the pro-Habsburg faction elected Maximilian of Habsburg, which ignited a civil war. Di Capua publicly aligned himself with Maximilian, visiting his military camp and declining to meet with Sigismund. Despite his efforts, the conflict culminated in Maximilian's defeat and subsequent capture by the newly elected sovereign.

Confronted with this reality, the Pope compelled Di Capua to recognize Sigismund; however, his position had become precarious. The newly crowned king and the Polish nobility viewed Di Capua as an adversary, significantly diminishing his influence. Efforts to secure the cardinalate, advocated by Anna Jagellon and other notable figures, proved fruitless. Remaining in Poland until 1591, Di Capua utilized his final years as nuncio to gather intelligence on the Ottoman Empire, endeavouring to prevent a diplomatic rapprochement between Poland and England and promoting, albeit with limited success, the Catholic presence in Moldavia and Sweden. Afflicted by gout and increasingly aware of his marginalization, he was ultimately recalled to Rome. During his return, he stopped at the imperial court to report on his activities and reaffirm his allegiance to the Habsburgs. Upon his arrival in Naples, he recommitted to pastoral duties, restructured the parishes, and intensified book censorship, firmly believing that doctrinal discord had contributed to the challenges faced in Poland. Di Capua amplified his initiatives to control the dissemination of prohibited literature and regulate liturgical practices in the final years of his life. At the synod of 1595, he instituted new restrictions on sermons, prohibited fireworks during religious holidays, and imposed regulations on funeral inscriptions. His stringent ecclesiastical discipline, however, led to conflicts with segments of the clergy and the laity. Di Capua died on September 2 1595, leaving behind a substantial debt, with his private archive subsequently seized by the Apostolic Chamber. The career trajectory of Annibale Di Capua exemplifies the complexities and challenges of papal diplomacy within the multifaceted political landscape of the Rzeczpospolita. His failure in Poland transcended personal misfortune, illustrating the strategic deficiencies of the Holy See in managing relations with the Polish kingdom. Nonetheless, his experience indirectly enhanced Vatican diplomacy, prompting refinements in approach during the subsequent decades, particularly under the Barberini nunciatures. Ultimately, Di Capua's quest for the cardinalate made him a scapegoat for an overly simplistic papal strategy inadequately attuned to the prevailing local realities.

The article *La nunziatura in Polonia in Età Moderna. Un quadro generale alle soglie del pontificato di Urbano VIII*, authored by Dorota Gregorowicz, provides an in-depth analysis of the apostolic nunciature in Poland during the Modern Age, mainly focusing on the period preceding the pontificate of Urban VIII (1623–1644). The author effectively underscores the significance of the nunciature as the primary diplomatic mission of the Holy See at the Polish-Lithuanian court, emphasizing its crucial role in shaping relations between the papacy and the Rzeczpospolita. Gregorowicz introduces the historical and institutional contexts essential for

understanding the development of papal diplomacy, showcasing the emergence of apostolic nunciatures in Sixteenth-century Europe as a response to the evolving political landscape of the Early Modern Age. Establishing these nunciatures was imperative for maintaining international equilibrium, with permanent diplomatic missions proliferating in Italy, particularly in cities such as Milan, Florence, and Venice. Conversely, the Holy See adopted a distinct model imbued with a strong religious dimension, recognizing its dual role as both a temporal power and the spiritual authority of the Catholic world. Nunciatures were employed strategically to bolster papal primacy and advance the Counter-Reformation. The foundational regulations governing nunciatures originated from the 22nd session of the Council of Trent (1562), with their institutionalization significantly advancing under the reforms of Gregory XIII (1572–1585). These reforms established a stable papal presence in various regions, including Spain, Portugal, Naples, Venice, Savoy, Florence, Poland, and the imperial court. The functions of the nunciatures were delineated across three primary domains: religious and administrative oversight of local episcopates, political engagement with sovereign courts, and financial responsibilities, encompassing the collection of ecclesiastical taxes. The apostolic nunciature in Poland formally commenced with the appointment of Zaccaria Ferreri in 1519 during Leo X's pontificate. However, it was not until the mid-16th century that the papal missions gained a stable and enduring character. A pivotal moment in this progression was the dispatch of Bishop Luigi Lippomano of Verona in 1555, during the reign of Sigismund II Augustus. Despite delays attributed to the death of Julius III, this mission signified the beginning of a sustained papal diplomatic presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Holy See's decision was driven by the escalation of Protestantism within the kingdom and the potential threat of a national council undermining the Church's unity. Following the Union of Lublin (1569), which solidified the merger between Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the *Rzeczpospolita* emerged as a formidable power in Europe, compelling the Holy See to intensify its diplomatic endeavours, particularly given its inability to establish nuncios at the Muscovite or Swedish courts.

The article rigorously examines the role of the nunciature during the reign of Sigismund III Vasa (1587–1632) on the eve of Urban VIII's pontificate. The double election of 1587, which pitted Sigismund against Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, created a significant political dilemma for the papacy. Despite his strong ties to the Habsburgs, Sixtus V acknowledged the legitimacy of Sigismund's coronation and engaged in diplomatic mediation, culminating in the Peace of Będzin-Bytom in 1589. Initially, under the leadership of Annibale Di Capua, the nunciature, although favourably inclined towards the Habsburgs, effectively positioned itself within the power dynamics of the Polish court and influenced the ecclesiastical politics of the kingdom. However, a notable interruption of the nunciature occurred between 1591 and 1592, likely a consequence of political instability in Rome, marked by four conclaves within a year. The accession of Clement VIII (1592–1605) heralded a strengthened papal presence in Poland. Having personally mediated conflicts between the *Rzeczpospolita* and the Habsburgs, the pope supported Sigismund III's alliances with Vienna and his campaign against Protestantism. Nunciatures such as Germanico Malaspina and Claudio Rangoni were mainly instrumental in promoting Counter-Reformation initiatives and mediating relations with the Ottoman Empire.

During Paul V's pontificate (1605–1621), the papacy concentrated on the strife between Poland and Moscow, alongside Swedish incursions under Sigismund III. Rome viewed the king's marriages to Habsburg princesses Anna and Constance as strategic moves to fortify the Catholic alliance.

Nevertheless, the Holy See's refusal to confer cardinalships on candidates proposed by the king strained relations, as Sigismund interpreted these actions as a direct affront to his status as a Catholic monarch.

The lead-up to Urban VIII's pontificate was marked by Gregory XV's brief reign (1621–1623), characterized by Poland's confrontations with the Ottomans and ongoing conflicts with Sweden. The Treaty of Khotyn in 1621, which concluded the war with the Ottomans without substantial gains for the Catholic side, left the Holy See dissatisfied, prompting threats to withdraw support from the *Rzeczpospolita*. Giovanni Battista Lancellotti's nunciature (1622–1627) coincided with the onset of the Thirty Years' War, during which the Holy See endeavoured to ensure Polish support for the Catholic cause. By the onset of Urban VIII's pontificate, the nunciature in Poland had become an established institution. His administration saw the succession of four nuncios: Lancellotti (until 1627), Antonio Santacroce (1627–1630), Onorato Visconti (1630–1635), and Mario Filonardi (1635–1643). These nuncio missions were marked by rigorous political and religious engagement to reinforce Catholicism's position within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth while countering Protestant and Orthodox influences. The era of Urban VIII thus represented a period of significant diplomatic activity for the Holy See, utilizing the Polish nunciature to assert influence over the kingdom's politics and to solidify the alliance between Poland, the Habsburgs, and Rome.

The third article by Paweł Duda, titled *Riparare i rapporti interrotti. Giovanni De Torres e il suo viaggio a Varsavia nel 1645*, meticulously outlines the mission of Giovanni De Torres, who was dispatched by Pope Innocent X to Warsaw in 1645 with the objective of re-establishing diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Polish-Lithuanian Republic. This initiative followed a diplomatic crisis that had strained relations between Warsaw and Rome under the reign of Ladislaus IV and the pontificate of Urban VIII. In May 1645, De Torres embarked on a critical mission to renew ties severed two years prior. His undertaking acquired significant strategic importance within a geopolitical framework characterized by heightened tensions involving the Polish-Lithuanian monarchy, the Ottoman Empire, and the broader European conflicts of the early Seventeenth century. Under Władysław IV Vasa, Poland emerged as a focal point in the Roman Curia's aspirations to cultivate an Anti-Ottoman League to counter Turkish incursions. The appointment of a nuncio to Warsaw represented a pivotal step for Innocent X in fortifying collaboration with the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. De Torres's journey was deeply entrenched in a historical context of diplomatic mobility, an essential characteristic of papal policy towards the *Rzeczpospolita*. Esteemed historians such as Henryk Damian Wojtyska, Tadeusz Fitych, and Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel have examined the travels of nuncios in Seventeenth-century Poland; however, the case of De Torres stands out due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding his mission. His predecessor, Mario Filonardi, had exited Poland in 1643 following a conflict with the king, thereby severing official contacts between Rome and Warsaw. This disruption was symptomatic of a more significant diplomatic crisis during Urban

VIII's pontificate, during which papal representatives were expelled from Lisbon and Brussels. Only following Innocent X's election, were diplomatic avenues with the Polish court revitalized, aiming to bolster the Catholic Church's influence in the region. Giovanni De Torres, born into a noble family of Spanish descent in Rome in 1605, advanced his ecclesiastical career mainly through the auspices of his uncle, Cardinal Cosimo De Torres, a previous nuncio to Poland and a supporter of the Polish monarchy in Rome. After his scholarly pursuits in Perugia and Bologna, De Torres ascended to curial roles and gained valuable administrative experience as vicar of the Archdiocese of Monreale. In January 1645, he was appointed titular archbishop of Adrianople and apostolic nuncio to Warsaw, facilitated by familial connections with influential cardinals within the Roman Curia. The journey to Poland was fraught with difficulties and marked by numerous logistical challenges. De Torres navigated a route that included traversing the Adriatic to reach Trieste, continuing through Carniola and Styria to Vienna, and ultimately proceeding to Poland. While this route had been utilized by other papal diplomats, such as Onorato Visconti, it presented considerable logistical impediments. Departing Rome around May 20 1645, De Torres arrived in Ancona by May 28 but encountered delays due to adverse weather conditions. Following his crossing of the Adriatic, he reached Graz on June 15, where he met Empress Maria Anna of Habsburg, who was evading Swedish military threats in Vienna.

The prolonged stay in Vienna was marked by intricate diplomatic manoeuvres necessitated by the Swedish siege of Brno, rendering the most direct route to Poland inaccessible. The nuncio, Giovanni De Torres, experienced a delay of over a month while awaiting a pass from Swedish commander Lennart Torstenson. His tenure in the imperial capital was characterized by significant diplomatic engagement, wherein he held meetings with Emperor Ferdinand III, the widowed Empress Eleonora Gonzaga, and Venetian diplomat Giovanni Tiepolo, who was on a covert mission to recruit Cossack troops for the ongoing conflict against the Turks. On July 27, following extensive negotiations, the requested passport was finally issued, enabling De Torres to resume his journey. Upon crossing the Polish border on August 15, he arrived in Krakow on August 19, where he was received with great honour. In Krakow, he delivered a speech introducing himself as the messenger of peace between Rome and Warsaw, emphasizing the symbolic importance of his mission.

Nevertheless, he had to await the return of King Ladislaus IV, who was engaged in affairs in Lithuania, before proceeding to Warsaw. On September 6, De Torres departed again and reached the Polish capital by September 15, where he was formally received by the nobility and local authorities. The official meeting with King Ladislaus IV transpired on September 23. The following day, the king warmly welcomed De Torres during a private audience, wherein he articulated the political and military concerns of the Republic of the Two Nations. The king sought tangible support from the Holy See for his military campaign against the Ottoman Empire, hoping to secure financial assistance from Rome. The appointment of De Torres marked a pivotal reestablishment of diplomatic relations between the papacy and Poland, heralding a new era in the two states' bilateral relations. Giovanni De Torres' diplomatic journey was a significant mission and represented a crucial juncture in the reorganization of papal policy in Central and Eastern Europe. His undertaking

was fraught with logistical challenges, political hurdles, and the inherent risks of the ongoing conflict; however, his resolute determination ultimately led to the successful fulfilment of his objectives. Over the subsequent seven years, the nuncio played an instrumental role in shaping papal diplomacy in Poland, undertaking additional missions within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to reinforce the influence of the Holy See. His experiences contributed significantly to the evolution of diplomatic strategies employed by the Roman Curia, which, in the following decades, would adopt a more structured and systematic approach to relations with the Poland-Lithuania.

Henryk Litwin is the author of the fourth contribution in the volume, entitled *Cambiamenti e continuità. Urbano VIII e le missioni dei nunzi apostolici. Il caso di Giovanni Battista Lancellotti, nunzio in Polonia*. His article rigorously analyzes the diplomatic policies enacted by Urban VIII and their profound effects on the missions of apostolic nuncios, with a specific focus on Giovanni Battista Lancellotti, nuncio to Poland. Contrary to the prevailing historiographical narrative, which posits that Urban VIII's election in 1623 resulted in a wholesale replacement of nuncios appointed by his predecessors, a closer examination reveals a more nuanced and pragmatic selection process. In the initial months of his pontificate, Urban VIII replaced five out of eleven nuncios while retaining six, including Lancellotti. This selective approach underscores that the Pope's decisions were not dictated solely by political allegiance or loyalty to the Barberini family; instead, they were informed by considerations of competence and the effectiveness of the nuncios in fulfilling their diplomatic missions. The author meticulously traces the career trajectories of both the replacement and confirmed nuncios, noting that most emerged from curial and administrative backgrounds and possessed substantial legal education and diplomatic experience. Conversely, those removed from their posts often faced challenges in their relationships with local elites or were deemed ineffective by the Roman Curia. Notably, despite his proximity to the Barberini, Ottavio Corsini was dismissed for his disagreements with French authorities, while Pietro Francesco Costa was removed due to advanced age and perceived ineffectiveness.

In contrast, individuals such as Laudiovio Zacchia were later elevated to the cardinalate, indicating that their removal was not necessarily punitive but rather part of a broader strategy to reorganize papal diplomacy. A critical analysis component centres on extending Lancellotti's mandate following Urban VIII's election. Available documentation, mainly the correspondence notably published by Tadeusz Fitych, elucidates how the new Pope confirmed the nuncio's mission in Warsaw. Receiving news of Gregory XV's death in early August 1623, Lancellotti promptly conveyed his condolences to Cardinal Ludovisi. Upon learning of Urban VIII's election in early September, he sent a letter expressing his loyalty to the new Pope. However, it is significant that his reappointment had already been determined by the end of August, prior to the arrival of Lancellotti's letter in Rome. This indicates that the Pope and the "Secretariat of the State" operated with current and strategic insights concerning the nunciatures, leading to decisions rooted in informed assessments rather than mere expressions of loyalty.

In the subsequent months, correspondence between Lancellotti and the Curia unequivocally confirmed his pivotal role and the significance of his mission. Cardinal Francesco Barberini transmitted explicit papal directives to Lancellotti, instructing

him to deliver an official brief to Sigismund III Vasa. This action formally sanctioned the continuation of his diplomatic mandate. Subsequent letters from Urban VIII reinforced the nuncio's authority in diplomatic negotiations, underscoring the Holy See's intention to maintain an active presence in Poland. Lancellotti, fully aware of the scrutiny from the Curia, intensified his commitment to the papacy, consistently reaffirming his loyalty to the Pope and the Barberinis. This analysis contends that Lancellotti's actions and the administration of the nunciatures under Urban VIII delineate a departure from the thesis positing that the Pope adhered to a rigidly pro-French and anti-Habsburg policy. Instead, the case of Poland illustrates that papal policy exhibited a degree of flexibility and pragmatism, adapting to localized dynamics to ensure the continuity of diplomatic action. The appointment and management of nuncios were not mere manifestations of clientelism; they were predicated on a rigorous assessment of each nuncio's capacity to represent the Holy See effectively. Notably, while some nuncios had ties to the Barberini, others, such as Agucchia, were appointed despite their affiliations with the preceding curial regime. Furthermore, the political role of papal diplomacy within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the importance of the nunciature in Warsaw are salient. The presence of a papal representative in Poland was indispensable for monitoring relations between the Polish monarchy and Catholic powers and supporting the interests of the local Catholic Church. Lancellotti navigated a complex political landscape marked by tensions among the Polish nobility, the monarchy, and foreign influences, with his adept management of relations with Sigismund III and various political factions likely being crucial in his reappointment. Ultimately, this article challenges prevailing stereotypes regarding Urban VIII's policies and the management of papal diplomacy in the Seventeenth century. The examination of Lancellotti's nunciature reveals that the Pope did not adhere strictly to personal loyalty in selecting his representatives. Instead, he employed a more nuanced and strategic approach, prioritizing the effectiveness and stability of diplomatic relations. This analysis demonstrates that Urban VIII's administration of the nunciatures maintained a delicate balance between continuity and change, thereby reinforcing the authority of the Holy See in European affairs without undermining the stability of international relations.

Alessandro Boccolini's article, *Onorato Visconti nunzio nella Polonia dei Waza (1630–1635)*, offers an incisive examination of Onorato Visconti's significant role as nuncio in Poland during a politically volatile era for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. His tenure coincided with the pivotal events surrounding the death of Sigismund III Vasa, the subsequent interregnum, and the election of Ladislaus IV. This period was not only marked by internal strife. However, it was also set against the broader backdrop of the 'Thirty Years' War, characterized by intense tensions among Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox factions. Visconti's diplomatic manoeuvres were crucial in ensuring that the succession to the Polish throne adhered to the interests of the Holy See, thereby preventing the potential ascent of a Protestant sovereign and countering the influence of competing European powers. Born in Milan before 1585 and educated under Cardinal Alfonso Visconti, Onorato Visconti was well-equipped for his mission. After attending the Roman College and serving as an inquisitor in Malta, he was appointed nuncio to Poland by Pope Urban VIII in 1630. His primary objective was to fortify the alliance between

the Holy See, the Polish monarchy, and the Habsburgs. Upon his arrival in Krakow on October 4, 1630, he faced immediate challenges concerning the frail health of Sigismund III, whose death threatened to plunge the realm into chaos. Following the king's death on April 30, 1632, Visconti actively orchestrated the succession. The Holy See endorsed the candidacy of Sigismund's firstborn, Ladislaus IV, motivated by concerns that the election of a Protestant, such as Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, would jeopardize the Catholic Church's position in Poland. Throughout the interregnum, the nuncio worked diligently to rally support for Władysław, applying pressure on the Catholic nobility while striving to insulate the electoral diet from external influences. His strategic diplomatic efforts, bolstered by support from Vienna, culminated in Władysław IV's election as king on November 8, 1632, achieving consensus among the nobility. Once on the throne, Władysław IV prioritized the search for a suitable consort to enhance his international standing. The king's marital prospects carried substantial political implications, potentially reshaping Poland's geopolitical alignments. Initially, Władysław considered uniting with Elizabeth of the Palatinate, a Protestant princess, to secure allegiance from Reformed powers and bolster his claims to the Swedish throne. However, the Holy See vehemently opposed this union, withholding dispensations for a mixed marriage and emphasizing the inherent dangers that such an alliance with a Protestant would pose to Catholicism in Poland.

Faced with opposition from Rome and the Polish Catholic nobility, Ladislaus IV attempted to exert pressure by threatening to proceed with his marriage without the Holy See's approval. In 1634, he dispatched an emissary to Rome seeking an extraordinary dispensation, which was ultimately rejected. While maintaining dialogue with the king, Onorato Visconti endeavoured to prevent any attempts to bypass papal regulations. Ultimately, in 1637, Ladislaus IV married Cecylia Renée of Habsburg, the daughter of Emperor Ferdinand II, thereby reinforcing the alliance between Poland and the House of Austria. In addition to the issues surrounding succession and the king's marriage, Visconti was compelled to confront the pronounced religious tensions within Poland. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a multi-confessional state with a Catholic majority, also housed significant Orthodox and Protestant populations. During Sigismund III's reign, Catholicism had secured a privileged position due to the king's support and the efforts of the Jesuits. However, following his death, religious dissidents seized the opportunity to push for greater freedoms. The Orthodox community, bolstered by Muscovy and the Cossacks, demanded the removal of restrictions imposed by the Catholic Church and the recognition of their ecclesiastical hierarchy. Their opposition primarily targeted the Uniate Church, established by the Union of Brest in 1596, which had led specific Orthodox individuals to acknowledge papal authority while retaining their rites. Visconti actively countered the claims of these schismatics, emphasizing the potential threats their demands posed to the kingdom's stability and the Holy See's position. However, Ladislaus IV, aiming to prevent internal discord, pursued a conciliatory approach, granting several concessions to the dissenters. This stance summoned concern from Rome, which feared a dilution of Catholic hegemony within the kingdom. The Protestant factions also capitalized on the prevailing situation to reassert their demands for religious freedom. During the convocation diet of 1632, Visconti informed the Holy See that heretical groups

sought guarantees for their faith, threatening to boycott the election of the new king if their demands went unaddressed.

The nuncio made concerted efforts to prevent the Sejm from conceding to these requests, finding a reliable ally in the primate Jan Wężyk and the Catholic nobility. Ultimately, through the influence of the clergy, a safeguard clause for the Catholic Church was successfully included in the final legislative documents, thwarting the approval of the dissenters' more radical proposals. Visconti's mission in Poland concluded in 1636, leaving behind a complex legacy. The nuncio played a pivotal role in managing the succession to the throne, contributing to the election of Ladislaus IV and averting the ascension of a Protestant candidate. Concurrently, his diplomatic endeavours effectively obstructed the king's marriage to a heretical princess, thus protecting the influence of the Holy See within the kingdom.

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Nevertheless, his tenure in Poland was marked by numerous difficulties and tensions, particularly concerning the religious policies of Ladislaus IV, who demonstrated a level of tolerance that Rome found concerning. In his final report, Visconti articulated the challenges encountered throughout his mandate and the persistent threats to the Catholic Church's standing in Poland. While recognizing Ladislaus IV's political acumen, he cautioned the Holy See regarding the risks associated with the king's religious policies and dynastic ambitions. The nuncio underscored the king's attempts to cultivate autonomy from Rome, engaging in various diplomatic negotiations to pursue his dynastic interests. Thus, Visconti's experience in Poland exemplified papal diplomacy in 17th-century Europe, a period defined by religious conflicts and the intricate balance of power among the great monarchies.

The sixth part of the volume, authored by Gaetano Platania, is entitled *Tra conflitti e compromessi Mario Filonardi, ultimo nunzio di papa Urbano VIII nella Rzeczpospolita di Władysław IV*. Platania analyzes the complex mission of Mario Filonardi as apostolic nuncio to the court of Warsaw during the pontificate of Urban VIII Barberini in the context of a Europe marked by religious conflicts and diplomatic struggles. Filonardi's mission took place in a historical phase in which the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom boasted a relative religious tolerance, deriving from the political pragmatism of sovereigns such as Bona Sforza and his son Zygmunt II August, who had shown a certain openness towards non-Catholic religious groups. To the decisive policy in the Catholic sense of the zealous Sigismund III, Ladislaus IV seemed to have returned to a more tolerant policy in the wake of his predecessors. Filonardi, born in 1594 near Veroli into a noble family, embarked on a successful ecclesiastical career, holding positions as assessor of the Congregation of the Holy Office and vice-legat in Avignon. After being appreciated for his diplomatic skills in France, he was appointed nuncio in Warsaw in 1635, succeeding Onorato Visconti, whose too-conciliatory approach towards the sovereign Władysław IV had raised concerns in Rome. Arriving in Poland, Filonardi found himself managing complex issues such as the controversy over the Union of Brest of 1596, which had sanctioned the adhesion of part of the Ruthenian Orthodox Church to Rome but which had provoked rebellions by the Cossacks and their supporters. One of the main obstacles that Filonardi faced was the proposal advanced by the Orthodox schismatics for a synod that could have included new accessions to the union with Rome. The Holy See feared that such a synod could undermine Catholic authority and create further divisions, and Propaganda Fide intervened by prohibiting any

synod. However, King Władysław IV, in favour of a tolerance policy, attempted to negotiate concessions for the Orthodox, such as the restitution of churches taken from schismatics and the creation of new Orthodox dioceses. Filonardi tried to oppose this firmly, but the situation became increasingly tense.

Another problem addressed by the nuncio was the controversy regarding the Armenian Archbishop Mikołaj Torosowicz, who, despite having joined the union with Rome, had ambiguous relations with the schismatic Armenian Patriarch. Torosowicz tried to maintain his autonomy and advanced claims regarding using ecclesiastical titles and privileges, causing tensions with the Latin Catholic hierarchy in Poland. Propaganda Fide, aware of the fragility of the Armenian-Catholic union, instructed Filonardi to monitor Torosowicz and manage the requests made by the Armenian community. Filonardi also found himself involved in the complex political dynamics of the Warsaw court, which, under French influence, was gradually moving away from the Austro-Spanish axis. King Władysław IV, after his marriage with Maria Luisa Gonzaga, opened the way to an alliance with France, raising concerns in Rome. During the Sejm of 1641, the sovereign promulgated new laws that guaranteed religious freedom to schismatics, allowing them to build churches, schools and printing presses. This decision aroused the indignation of the Holy See and Filonardi, who denounced the concessions as threatening Catholic supremacy. Despite numerous obstacles, Filonardi tried to keep diplomatic channels open with Władysław IV while constantly denouncing the pressure exerted by the king to obtain the cardinal's hat for Onorato Visconti. Filonardi frequently reported to Rome the difficulties encountered in negotiating with a sovereign weakened by illness and influenced by the local nobility and his advisors. The Holy See, aware of the delicacy of the situation, sought to strengthen the Uniate hierarchy and to limit further concessions to the schismatics.

In conclusion, according to Platania, Filonardi's mission proved particularly complex, highlighting the difficulties of papal diplomacy in maintaining Catholic unity in such a fragmented political and religious context. Tensions between Catholics, Orthodox and schismatics continued to grow, laying the foundations for future crises in the region. Despite Filonardi's efforts, the religious situation in the *Rzeczpospolita* remained unstable, with confessional divisions that would have a lasting impact on Polish history and Eastern Europe.

The last article is authored by Hubert Chlebik, titled *From a 'Terrible Power' to a Colossus on Legs of Clay: The Image of the Ottoman Empire in the Instructions to the Apostolic Nuncios in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Time of Urban VIII*. Chlebik rigorously examines the portrayal of the Ottoman Empire within diplomatic instructions issued during Pope Urban VIII's pontificate (1623–1644). This analysis elucidates the evolving perception of the Holy See regarding the Ottoman Empire during this pivotal period, concentrating on its societal structure, military capabilities, and internal and external policies. The primary sources for this exploration encompass the instructions directed towards nuncios Giovanni Battista Lancellotti (1623–1628), Antonio Santa Croce (1627–1630), Honorato Visconti (1630–1635), and Mario Filonardi (1635–1643). Additionally, the study incorporates instructions composed for Cosimo De Torres during the pontificate of Gregory XV, legitimized by Urban VIII as integral to the mission within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Notably, Polish historians have primarily

approached these instructions through a political lens, frequently neglecting their rich portrayal of the Ottoman Empire. The instructions categorize Ottoman society into three principal groups: the sultan, military commanders (*bashas*), and the populace. Sultan Osman II is depicted as a despotic ruler, driven by emotional impulses rather than rational governance. This sharply contrasts with the idealized image of a rational sovereign prevalent in European political thought. His inexperience and youth further reinforce the representation of an ineffective leader. Likewise, Ottoman commanders are characterized as inexperienced and hesitant to engage in military campaigns. Although the sultan's rule is framed as tyrannical, the commanders possess a degree of political influence. The portrayal of the Ottoman populace is simplistic, depicting them as uniformly loyal to the sultan and equating all subjects of the empire with Muslims and Turks. Santa Croce's instructions perpetuate the characterization of a tyrannical Ottoman state. At the same time, Filonardi's contributions offer more nuanced observations, noting the perceived moral decline within Ottoman society, a deterioration of discipline, and the emergence of prophecies forecasting the empire's collapse from the north. This latter prophecy is potentially linked to King Ladislaus IV of Poland, who was perceived as formidable and invincible. Notably, the instructions posited that, in the event of military failure, the Ottoman population might abandon Islam and convert to Christianity if assured property retention. Despite prior losses at Lepanto and in Hungary, the Ottoman military is initially presented as the preeminent force globally. De Torres' instructions underscore the superiority of the Janissaries over Polish infantry while acknowledging the prowess of Polish cavalry. However, the absence of robust fortifications in the Commonwealth suggests a strategy grounded in prolonged defensive warfare. Lancellotti's instructions characterously depict the Ottoman Empire as vulnerable, raising the potential threat of Cossacks to the food supply of Constantinople. Santa Croce's assessment recognizes the military strength of the Ottomans but advocates for caution in the Danube principalities to avert provoking open conflict. Conversely, Filonardi attributes the decline of the Ottoman military to generational shifts, a loss of discipline following Osman II's assassination, and a growing indulgence in luxury, suggesting that the Ottoman army would falter following an initial defeat in a multi-front conflict. However, such evaluations obscure Sultan Murad IV's military reforms and subsequent victories, including the recapture of Baghdad in 1638. The Holy See's strategic objective encompassed forming a universal anti-Ottoman alliance concerning internal and foreign affairs. While this aspiration was central to their strategy, it was moderated by a pragmatic acknowledgement of the limited support likely forthcoming from European states. The Vatican adeptly anticipated the Persian court's political climate and identified potential peace treaty breaches as justifications for future military engagements. However, there existed an overestimation of the influence wielded by European diplomats over Ottoman decision-making. Lancellotti's instructions predict the empire's collapse due to provincial rebellions, contrasted by Santa Croce's recognition of mutual respect between the Commonwealth and the Ottomans despite conflicting interests in the Danube region. Filonardi's recommendations suggest the division of Ottoman territory among Austria, France, Spain, and Persia; however, he concludes that only the Commonwealth, Persia, and Italian naval forces would suffice for success. Such proposals remain unrealistic, undermined

by the divergent interests of potential allies and the sluggish pace of coordination. According to Chlebik, in conclusion, the image of the Ottoman Empire, as delineated in Urban VIII's instructions, reveals a dynamic interplay between realism and stereotype. While the prior stereotype of an invincible Ottoman army diminished after the Battle of Khotyn, it transitioned into a new stereotype of chronic weakness attributed to moral and cultural decay. The portrayal of the sultan and the empire encapsulates a complex and multifaceted view that merits further scholarly inquiry.

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