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EÖTVÖS LORÁND RESEARCH NETWORK (HUNGARY)****THE KING'S COUSIN, THE EMPEROR'S BISHOP CHRISTIAN AUGUST OF SAXE-ZEITZ
AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN POLAND AND THE HOLY SEE¹****ABSTRACT:**

Christian August of Saxe-Weitz played a decisive role in the election of his cousin, Augustus II to King of Poland, when he converted Augustus to Catholicism in 1697. Christian August, also a convert, gained the sympathy of the Holy See in the early 1690's, and became bishop of Győr in Hungary in 1696. After the conversion and the turbulent election of his cousin, the bishop tried to mediate toward the Holy See and helped to consolidate the rule of Augustus II. In return a hope was growing, that Christian August will be elevated to cardinalate with the support of his cousin and the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I. Although Augustus II earlier nominated Johann Philipp von Lamberg, the bishop of Passau as Polish candidate, the aging Pope Innocent XII admitted also that the cardinalate of Christian August would be 'the coronation of his pontificate'. The paper examines the intermediary activity of Christian August of Saxe-Weitz and his failed nomination to cardinalate.

KEYWORDS: diplomacy, Holy See, Poland, conversion, election

241


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1. INTRODUCTION

The interregnum, which followed the death of John III Sobieski in 1696 and then the election of a new king in 1697 is a well researched period in the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.² The thoroughly explored wide-ranging diplomatic manoeuvres shed lights on several protagonists and background actors, who formed the final decision. One of the episode characters stepped in the spotlight, when Frederick Augustus, the Elector of Saxony had to convert to Catholicism for the sake of his election to the Polish throne. This actor was his second cousin, Christian August of Saxe-Weitz, then the bishop of Győr³ in Hungary and an increasingly important and influential figure of the Viennese court. Christian August was the prelate, in whose presence Frederick Augustus abjured the Lutheranism and accepted the Catholic creed on 1 June 1697 in the Loretto Chapel in Baden, near Vienna.⁴

The conversion of Augustus was a key moment for his election, but his cousin seemingly disappeared from the scene. Still his role was not marginal in the following period, because the sincerity of Augustus' conversion became a major issue. The Polish laws ruled out the election of a non-Catholic sovereign, and many of the participants at the Election Diet doubted the conversion. Of course this dubiety was fuelled by the oppositionist party and especially its leader, Cardinal Michał Stefan Radziejowski, Primate of Poland, who supported the French candidate, François Louis, Prince of Conti, a distant nephew of Louis XIV, from a cadet branch of the House of Bourbon.⁵

1 This article was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

2 Gaetano Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit. Dai Sobieski ai Wettin. La diplomazia pontificia nella Polonia di fine Seicento* (Cosenza: Periferia 1992) 125–171.; Markus Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl von 1697* (Wien: Studienverlag 2008); Francesca De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno. Il declino di Jan Sobieski dopo il trionfo di Vienna* (Viterbo: Sette Città 2014) 291–337.

3 Győr was known in contemporary sources as Raab in German, Giavarino in Italian and Jaurinum in Latin.

4 De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 313. Baden is known today as Baden bei Wien.

5 Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl*, 142, 149–150.

In this delicate situation it was crucial whether the Holy See will approve the conversion of Augustus. At this point the apostolic nuncio, Gianantonio Davia had a decisive role, because Diet requested him to confirm the conversion.⁶ Abbot Melchior Polignac, the French ambassador to Poland made no scruples to write a denunciative letter to the Cardinal Secretary Fabrizio Spada, that Gianantonio Davia, the apostolic nuncio to Poland supported Augustus almost openly, thus passing the Catholic country into the hand of a heretic.⁷

The question of the Polish succession obviously was not an indifferent issue in Vienna as well. Although the relation with the late Sobieski was rather cold in the last decade of his reign, the maintenance of the anti-Ottoman Holy League with Poland and Venice was a crucial question for the Habsburgs. Emperor Leopold I found himself in a two-front war in 1688, when Louis XIV attacked the Holy Roman Empire. After 1691 the campaigns against the Ottoman Empire was mostly unsuccessful, turned into a static warfare. From 1695 the Frederick Augustus was the supreme commander of the imperial army against the Ottomans, but his efforts were unsuccessful. During the tense days of the election in Poland, the peace negotiation had been already in progress between the Habsburgs and Louis XIV. But the Viennese Court obviously needed a friendly ally on the Polish throne, who did not pose a threat on the Habsburgs and continue the war against the Ottomans more vigorously than John Sobieski in his last years.⁸

In that complex international situation the diplomatic activity of Christian August, bishop of Győr gained smaller attention, but in terms of the consolidation of the rule of Augustus II. was not irrelevant. Christian August role in the conversion of the king made him important in the trilateral relations between Rome, Warsaw and Vienna and it might had been decisive in the later career of the bishop. Therefore first we briefly look over the early phase of his career, then we examine the Christian August's diplomatic role in 1697 and finally we explore the background of his nomination as cardinal-candidate in 1699–1700.

2. THE EMPEROR'S BISHOP

Christian August was born 9 October 1666 in Moritzburg as a younger son of Duke Maurice of Saxe-Weimar and Dorothea Maria of Saxe-Weimar, thus a member of the Wettin dynasty. Although Christian August was the first cousin of John Georg III, Elector of Saxony, the father of Augustus II, the two princes were in the same age, as Christian August was only four years senior to the future Polish king. As the Electors of Saxony were the heads of the Corpus Evangelicorum in the Holy Roman Empire, the Wettin dynasty was a strictly Lutheran family. However Christian August had begun to sympathize with Catholicism already in his young age, which did not avoid the attention of his guardian, the Duke of Saxe-Eisenach, who ordered Lutheran preachers to oversee the young prince. The duke also threatened Christian August that if he convert to Catholicism, he will lose his inheritance.⁹ Anyway as a younger son, Christian August would not had got too much hope for a remarkable inheritance and therefore initially he was interested in a military career. He joined the Christian armies that marched against the Ottomans and he fought in the siege of the Hungarian capital, Buda in 1686. Three years later he already was at the western front to fight against the French armies. Despite his military career his interest in Catholicism did not disappear. In 1689 after he attended a homily held by a Jesuit priest in Aschaffenburg, he finally decided to convert. His conversion took place in Frankfurt at the Carmelites on 14 July 1689, but for some years he still kept it in secret in regard to his family.¹⁰

6 De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 320.

7 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 140.

8 Béla Vilmos Mihalik, "Catholics, heretics and the 'common enemy'. Papal diplomacy and the Great Turkish War during the papacy of Innocent XII, 1691–1700", in *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roberta Anderson and Charlotte Backerra (London–New York: Routledge 2021), 40, 44–45.

9 Lakatos Adél, "Sachsen-Zeitz Keresztély Ágost," in *Esztergomi érsekek 1001–2003* [Archbishops of Esztergom], ed. Beke Margit (Budapest: Szent István Társulat 2003) 326.

10 Kelemen Atanáz, *Keresztély Ágost herceg katolikus restaurációs tevékenysége a győri egyházmegyében* [Prince Christian

Two years later, probably in relation to the death of his cousin, Elector John George III. of Saxony, Christian August publicly converted to Catholicism in Cologne in the presence of the Elector-Archbishop Joseph Clemens of Bavaria. At the same year he was admitted to the priest seminary of Cologne.¹¹ With his conversion he gained attention immediately both in Vienna and in Rome. Gianantonio Davia, then the apostolic nuncio to Cologne highly recommended Christian August to the Cardinal Secretary Fabrizio Spada, suggesting that Pope Innocent XII (Antonio Pignatelli) should demonstrate his grace toward the young prince with granting him different indulgencies through the *Dataria gratis*.¹² During Christian August's tour to Rome in 1692–1693 the pope also issued in his favour a breve of eligibility. Although he was not ordained to priesthood until 1695, beside the Chapter of Cologne he gained in the following years canonry in Liège (Lüttich), Breslau (Wrocław) and Münster also.¹³

Christian August came into consideration as a possible Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in 1694. He had connections with the Order already in the 1680's, because according to the testament of his father, he succeeded the duke in the evangelical Bailiwick of Thuringia, a territorial unity of the Teutonic Order. Following his conversion Christian August lost immediately his incomes from the bailiwick. In early 1694 Ludwig Anton of Pfalz-Neuburg, then the Grand Master of the Order tried to help the Prince of Saxe-Weitz to regain the administration and the income in Thuringia, but he died before the resolution.¹⁴ Following the death of Ludwig Anton, Christian August told Gianantonio Davia, the nuncio to Cologne, that even the Palatinate family had recommended him to Emperor Leopold, although the a younger brother of the late Grand Master, Franz Ludwig of Pfalz-Neuburg, then the bishop of Breslau (Wrocław) had a stronger chance to be the successor. Christian August expected himself to be the next Grand Master considering that the family of the Elector of Palatinate suffered from the lack of children, and therefore, if Franz Ludwig had to marry, he could not have obtained a papal dispensation as Grand Master.¹⁵

Although finally Franz Ludwig became the Grand Master, the good relationship between Christian August and Pfalz-Neuburgs provided him fructuous connections to the Viennese Court. Christian August as an offspring of a Lutheran dynasty had a lack of network of supporters in the Catholic establishment. But his friendly connections with the Pfalz-Neuburg family meant an entry to the Habsburg Court, since Ludwig Anton and Franz Ludwig were brother-in-laws of the emperor through their sister, Empress Eleonore Magdalene of Pfalz-Neuburg. This connection opened the door for a further ecclesiastical career, though not as much in the Holy Roman Empire as in Hungary.¹⁶

After the bishopric see of Győr became vacant in 1695, Emperor Leopold as king of Hungary nominated Christian August.¹⁷ In Vienna it was said to be that the royal nomination was in accordance with the

August's Activity for the Catholic Restoration in the Diocese of Győr] (Pannonhalma: s.n. 1931) 11. Other historians disputed the inner urge and personal conviction of Christian August for his conversion, and emphasized the role of major opportunities for a career as Catholic: William Fischer, "Cardinal Herzog Christian August zu Sachsen-Weitz und die Deutschordensballei Thüringen," *Mitteilungen des Altertumsvereins zu Plauen im Vogtland* 3. (1882–1883): 18.

11 Kelemen, *Keresztély Ágost herceg*, 11.

12 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (AAV), Segreteria di Stato, Colonia, vol. 72, fol. 47r, Cologne, 20 April 1692, Gianantonio Davia to Fabrizio Spada (cipher).

13 Jochen Vötsch, "Christian August von Sachsen-Weitz," in *Sächsische Biografie*, hrsg. vom Institut für Sächsische Geschichte und Volkskunde e.V. Online edition: <http://www.isgv.de/saebi/> (27 March 2021). Christian August stayed in Rome in April 1693, mostly managing ecclesiastical affairs: Friedrich Noack, *Das Deutschtum in Rom seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, vol. I. (Berlin–Leipzig: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 1927) 175.

14 Fischer, "Cardinal Herzog Christian August," 15–17.

15 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Colonia, vol. 77, fol. 399r–400r, Cologne, 23 May 1694, Gianantonio Davia to Fabrizio Spada. Most of the brothers from the Pfalz-Neuburg family entered a church career, while Elector Johann Wilhelm II was childless, and his younger brother, Charles Philip had only one daughter.

16 Alessandro Cont, *La Chiesa dei principi. Le relazioni tra Reichskirche, dinastie sovrane tedesche e stati italiani (1688–1763)*, con prefazione di Elisabeth Garms-Cornides (Trento: Provincia autonoma di Trento 2018) 140–141.

17 The former bishop of Győr was the influential Viennese statesman, Cardinal Leopold Kollonich, who became Archbishop of Esztergom and thus the Primate of Hungary in 1695: Mihalik Béla Vilmos, "Kollonich Lipót esztergomi érseki kinevezése és Francesco Maria de' Medici bíboros-protector," [The Cardinal-Protector Francesco Maria de' Medici and the Nomination of Leopold Kollonich as Archbishop of Esztergom] *Magyar Sion* XIV (2020) 323–338. Francesco Maria

papal intentions, and even the auditor of the nunciature suggested, that in case of Christian August they might be able to dispense with the usual personal examination of the candidate.¹⁸ But after the prince arrived to Vienna, he personally asked Abbati to conduct the usual examination to not to become unworthy in the eyes of Pope Innocent XII. The only problem was his age, because he was still under 30. Abbati also proposed to remit all the fees (annata) due to the circumstances of the diocese of Győr.¹⁹ After the new nuncio, Andrea Santacroce arrived to Vienna, Christian August visited him, and they had a really friendly and confidential conversation, where the new bishop expressed his sincere appreciation toward the Holy See. Nuncio Santacroce also assured the new bishop from the support of the pope, emphasizing that his rapid ascension, his conversion, the priesthood, and then the episcopal title show that God has great plans for him.²⁰

3. THE KING'S COUSIN

Shortly after the conversion of Christian August the hopes increased that other members of the Saxon electoral dynasty would follow his example. He assured Davia, the nuncio to Cologne, that his brother, Moritz Wilhelm, Duke of Saxe-Weitz would convert to Catholicism, and only the political circumstances hinder him.²¹

While this hope had ultimately not fulfilled, the conversion of the Elector of Saxony seemed much more unexpected. Although the unexpectedness of his conversion quite questionable. Presumably as early as February 1697, Augustus's plan for the candidacy may have been known in a smaller circle.²² This coincides with the information that Abbot Paolo della Stufa wrote to his lord, Cardinal Francesco Maria de' Medici, the protector of the Austrian Habsburg countries a month after the conversion. According to his report, Christian August had obtained secretly a papal faculty for converting any heretics, months before the conversion.²³ The information of Abbot Stufa coincided with a report written by Franz Pröller, the Jesuit confessor of Christian August, which claimed, that the thought of conversion had arisen in the elector about a quarter year earlier.²⁴ Probably it was a version of the attestation issued by Christian August to the Election Diet, and which was first validated by the Gianantonio Davia, then nuncio to Warsaw and which authenticity was questioned by Cardinal Radziejewski.²⁵

Abbati, the auditor of the Viennese nunciature reported the nomination to Rome on 21 April 1696: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 233, fol. 269r-v. Foglio d'avvisi.

18 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 233, fol. 299r, Vienna, 5 May 1696, Francesco Maria Abbati to Fabrizio Spada.

19 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 233, fol. 340r-v, Vienna, 2 June 1696, Francesco Maria Abbati to Fabrizio Spada. The city of Győr situated near Vienna, and the diocese extended along the Austrian and Hungarian border. Contrary to Abbati's claim, the diocese of Győr was one of the richest among the Hungarian dioceses. In the second half of the 17th century, the episcopal title of Győr could be the top of the ecclesiastical career in Hungary beside the archdiocese of Esztergom: Molnár Antal, *Magyar hódoltság, horvát hódoltság. Magyar és horvát katolikus egyházi intézmények az oszmán uralom alatt*, [Ottoman Hungary – Ottoman Croatia. Hungarian and Croatian Catholic ecclesiastical institutions under Ottoman rule] (Budapest: BTK TTI 2019) 226, 246.

20 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 233, fol. 430r-431r, Vienna, 14 July 1696, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

21 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Colonia, vol. 72, fol. 44r - v, Cologne, 30 March 1692, Gianantonio Davia to Fabrizio Spada. The duke finally converted only in 1717 shortly before his death: Jochen Vötsch, "Moritz Wilhelm von Sachsen-Weitz," in *Sächsische Biografie*, hrsg. vom Institut für Sächsische Geschichte und Volkskunde e.V. Online edition: <http://www.isgv.de/saebi/> (29 March 2021)

22 De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 311.

23 Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5725, Rome, 20 July 1697, Paolo della Stufa to Francesco Maria de' Medici. The cardinal quickly reported that information to the influential Jesuit, Pietro Giuseppe Ederi in Vienna: ASF, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5647, Florence, 27 July 1697, Francesco Maria de' Medici to Pietro Giuseppe Ederi.

24 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 516r-v, Narratio Conversionis ad Catholicam Fidem Serenissimi Saxoniae Electoris.

25 De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 319. Davia defended his action that the Elector seemed to have lived as a secret Catholic, even if he had not won the Polish throne. Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 133. But it is also true that

However the conversion seemed to be a surprise in the Viennese court. At the end of June the nuncio informed Rome with noticeable disappointment that the Saxon and Danish troops marched toward Poland to help the election of Augustus instead of joining the forces in Hungary.²⁶ Nuncio Andrea Santacroce were informed only on this very same day's morning by the Jesuit confessor of Christian August about the conversion of Augustus. In his ordinary report he just mentioned that Father Pröller visited him and told him that the bishop had met twice with Augustus in early June, they had three hours long meeting each time. The Jesuit father promised that the bishop will inform the nuncio soon about very gratifying developments.²⁷ But on the same day Santacroce wrote a cipher to the cardinal secretary, in which he already informed the Roman Court about the conversion of Augustus based on news from Poland. As former nuncio to Warsaw, Santacroce expressed his fears that such a questionable change of faith will cause dangerous turmoils in Poland.²⁸ The Holy See also expressed its concerns about the double election, but in his first reactions the pope praised the bishop of Győr and the conversion of the Elector of Saxony. No doubts or questions about the conversion were written to the Viennese nuncio in the answers of the cardinal secretary.²⁹

Santacroce seemed to be more relieved after he talked personally with Christian August, who secured the nuncio, that the elected king is showing clear signs of being a good Catholic. But in Saxony there was a fear and mistrust about what will cause the conversion of their elector in the religious matters. According to Christian August some Saxon statesmen asked him to travel to Saxony, and also the emperor asked him upon this.³⁰ In Saxony the political situation went indeed upside-down. The Saxon estates resisted to obey to Prince Anton Egon von Fürstemberg, who was deputed as governor in Dresden, and they required Christian August instead of Fürstemberg. The Viennese nuncio was dubious how sincere the request of the Lutheran Saxon estates was, because the bishop was a zealous Catholic and he was the most important actor in the conversion of the Elector. Christian August was urgently called by his cousin to Warsaw, therefore the request of the Saxon nobility could not be fulfilled at the summer of 1697.³¹

The departure of Christian August caused a problem to the Viennese nuncio, because Rome requested Santacroce to acquire an authentic account from the bishop, which describes in detail the form of the abjuration and the profession of the Catholic faith made by Augustus.³² The hesitancy of the Roman court was caused most probably by the intervention of the French resident, Cardinal Toussaint de Forbin-Janson, who tried to discredit nuncio Davia and the authenticity of Augustus' conversion.³³ On the other hand the imperial court was obtuse about the hesitation of the Holy See over the Polish

Davia was obligated to the Saxon Elector, who had just arranged in these months to ransom the nuncio's nephew from Tartar captivity with a Turkish Pasha who was captured by the Elector: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 299r–300r, Vienna, 20 April 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

26 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 479r–480r, Vienna, 29 June 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. Augustus as appointed chief commander of the Christian forces left Vienna to Dresden two weeks earlier, promising the emperor, that he will come back soon: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 438r–439r, Vienna, 15 June 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

27 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 475r–v, Vienna, 29 June 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

28 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 221, fol. 401r–v, Vienna, 29 June 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada (cipher).

29 Archivio di Stato di Roma (ASR), Archivio Santacroce, busta 1169, Rome, 13 July 1697, Fabrizio Spada to Andrea Santacroce (in two letters).

30 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 559r–560v, Vienna, 13 July 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

31 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 221, fol. 474r–475r, Vienna, 20 July 1697, Foglio d'avvisi. Christian August left Vienna to Cracow in the first days of August: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 611r–v, Vienna, 3 August 1697, Foglio d'avvisi.

32 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 43, fol. 284v – 285r, Rome, 20 July 1697, Fabrizio Spada to Andrea Santacroce. The nuncio answered the cardinal secretary that all the acts of Augustus, and mostly the public abjuration and profession had clarified the situation and therefore he had not yet wrote to Christian August for requiring another authentic account: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 630r–v, 10 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

33 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 141. Finally in autumn 1697, after the coronation of Augustus and the disembarkment of Prince Conti in Gdańsk, the Holy See ordered Davia to leave to Warmia, to avoid any involvement in the tense domestic political situation: De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 324.

election, if Christian August had already sent a handwritten account to nuncio Davia in June.³⁴

The irresolution of the Holy See did not change in the following period either. Although in late July the cardinal secretary wrote to Santacroce that the arriving news from Vienna had made the pope and the court to believe in the conversion of Augustus, they still waited for further signs of the new sovereign's filial submission toward the Holy See.³⁵ It is hardly surprising that in August Santacroce informed with some satisfaction the cardinal secretary through an extraordinary courier that the king's ambassador was on his way to Rome. Augustus II. sent his adjutant, Le Jay to Rome, and was ready to assure the pope that he will support the Catholic cause not just in Poland, but also in Saxony. Augustus sent his envoy with letters not only to the pope and the cardinal secretary, but other prominent cardinals in Rome, trying to persuade the Sacred College about his conversion and to win their support as well.³⁶ Christian August met nuncio Santacroce again after he had returned from Cracow. The bishop informed Santacroce that the Polish estates wanted him to stay in Poland and be a mediator between the king and the nobility. However Christian August refused it, arguing that as a bishop he was responsible for his diocese.³⁷ With this argument he might have wanted to gain the nuncio's support for his request on a papal permission, which allows him to stay away from his diocese for a longer time. Christian August probably already knew by this time that the king had further plans with him, as Augustus II. had sent him to Saxony before the coronation in September. At the end of August 1697 the pope issued a faculty to Christian August that let him a six months long absence from the diocese of Győr.³⁸

On the same day the cardinal secretary sent an instruction in cipher to Nuncio Santacroce, requesting again an authentic account signed by Augustus II., that reflects on his abjuration and the profession. But the Holy See seemingly lowered the demands, because as Cardinal Spada wrote, it would have been enough a letter or a detailed attestation by Christian August, if he could not obtain a signed document from the king. Spada emphasized, that they need this letter only to keep it in the Secret Archives to prove in present and in future the glorious conversion of Augustus II. Spada also expressed that the Holy See and its representatives must have took an indifferent position in the tense political situation, which followed the double election. Even Pope Innocent XII. showed himself indifferent when he received the envoy of Augustus II. He expressed his joy over the king's conversion, but did not take any sides in the political dispute.³⁹

That kind of politics of the Holy See proved to be sufficiently far-sighted soon. Although Augustus was crowned in Cracow by the bishop of Kuyavia on 15 September 1697, his reign was still unsolid. Two weeks later the French candidate, Prince Conti arrived to Poland with a small army, but his case was already lost by this time. The internal tensions and uncertainties were much bigger problem for the new king. Cardinal Radziejowski still opposed his election and Augustus II. could not count on the diplomatic support of the Holy See in this situation.⁴⁰ That lack of support from the papal diplomacy

34 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 221, fol. 493v–494r, Vienna, 3 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. The nuncio did not speak personally with Emperor Leopold about the Polish election, he heard the emperor's sentiments from the imperial Capuchin confessor, Marco d'Aviano. Santacroce was also a bit surprised about the conduct of the Roman court that he expressed in a private letter to his brother: ASR, Archivio Santacroce, busta 1226, Vienna, 3 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Antonio Santacroce. Cardinal Secretary Fabrizio Spada defended their position that in Rome they had not received any authentic report about the conversion: AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 219, fol. 369v–370r, Rome, 17 August 1697, Fabrizio Spada to Andrea Santacroce.

35 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 43, fol. 293v–294r, Rome, 27 July 1697, Fabrizio Spada to Andrea Santacroce.

36 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 637r–640r, Vienna, 13 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. Santacroce mentioned in this letter that Christian August of Saxe-Weitz arrived back from Cracow to Vienna on that same day (13 August), but it is not clear, whether he travelled together with the king's envoy, Le Jay. The envoy most probably brought the letter of Augustus written on 6 August, that was answered by the pope only in January 1698: Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 148.

37 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 654r–656r, Vienna, 17 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

38 AAV, Epistolae ad principes, Registri, vol. 82, fol. 43r–44v, Rome, 31 August 1697, Innocent XII. to Christian August.

39 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 219, fol. 372v – 373r, Rome, 31 August 1697, Fabrizio Spada to Andrea Santacroce (cipher).

40 De Caprio, *Il tramonto di un Regno*, 325–326. Nuncio Santacroce in October 1697 informed his brother about such news that in Poland a conspiracy was revealed by the supporters of Augustus II. The originator of the conspiracy was said

was balanced only partly by the good connections of Christian August in Rome.

The bishop was also a mediator of Augustus toward the Imperial Court. Although Vienna initially supported other candidates,⁴¹ the emperor was absolutely satisfied with the outcome of the election according to the nuncio to Vienna. Santacroce wrote to his brother, that the Viennese court had been behind the successful election of Augustus II, and beside him only Emperor Leopold and Count Franz Ulrich Kinsky, the Chancellor of Bohemia had known the plans, which were kept in absolute secret.⁴² As it was mentioned in the introduction, the most important aim of the Habsburgs was the election of a candidate, who is not a Francophile, but willing to support the Holy League's war against the Ottomans. This became an important issue in Polish-Habsburg relations in the autumn of 1697, after the coronation of Augustus II. The Viennese court was still indebted to Augustus with the service pay of the Saxony military fought on the Hungarian front. They sent the thirty thousand florins with Christian August to Poland in September.⁴³ After the bishop returned from Poland, Nuncio Santacroce assumed that Augustus II. sent his cousin back to Vienna for negotiating about the Turkish war.⁴⁴ However Christian August should have discussed in the imperial court mostly about the still labile political situation of the king. But it was clear that the French intrigues hindered Poland to turn against the Ottomans with significant forces. According to Santacroce, it was a real reason of France to help out the failing Ottoman forces.⁴⁵ Just in autumn 1697 the Treaty of Rijswijk ended the Nine Years' War that let the Habsburgs to turn against the Ottomans with all their forces. Four days before the coronation of Augustus, the Christian armies led by Prince Eugen of Savoy delivered a devastating blow to the Ottoman forces at Zenta. In 1698 there was no major military movement in Hungary, and in the autumn preparations for peace talks began, which led to the Treaty of Karlowitz in January 1699.⁴⁶ The French and Ottoman threaten noticeably bothered Augustus II., whose letters were still unanswered by the Holy See. According to his information, Prince Conti had been prepared to disembarkment in the Ottoman Empire, and reach Poland from that direction. Through his envoy to Rome, the king tried to explore, what would be the position of the pope in such case. Abbot Paolo della Stufa, the agent of Cardinal Medici reported to his lord, that he had spoken with two cardinals, who claimed, that the seemingly neutral position of the papal court was derived from the personal pressure from Louis XIV. The abbot heard that a request of Christian August for apostolic missionary faculties were denied by the Holy See, which in della Stufa's view would have been a clear sign of the complete questioning of Augustus' conversion.⁴⁷

to be Cardinal Radziejowski. Santacroce did not want to report this to the cardinal secretary, because the news were insecure and due to his former conflict with Radziejowski as nuncio in Poland would have made his report look as simple allegations against the Primate of Poland: ASR, Archivio Santacroce, busta 1226, Vienna, 26 October 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Antonio Santacroce.

- 41 The main candidates supported by the Habsburg court were the younger brother of the empress, Charles of Pfalz-Neuburg and the nephew of the emperor, Charles of Lorraine. But even in Vienna they were considered as candidates with lesser chance: Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl*, 38.
- 42 ASR, Archivio Santacroce, busta 1226, Vienna, 6 July 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Antonio Santacroce. Santacroce's information should be treated with caution. In an instruction sent on June 22, three days before the election, Emperor Leopold ordered his ambassador to Poland, Johann Philipp von Lamberg, Bishop of Passau, to support the candidacy of Margrave Louis William of Baden also: Milewski, *Die polnische Königswahl*, 321.
- 43 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 709r–710r, Vienna, 7 September 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. The nuncio described in detail the grave financial situation of the Habsburgs, they had to lend money from Don Livio Odescalchi, the nephew of the late Pope Innocent XI to be able to pay out Augustus II. In exchange they gave to Don Livio the Duchy of Syrmia in South Hungary (now part of Serbia).
- 44 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 815r–v, Vienna, 19 October 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. The bishop arrived back to Vienna on 18 October.
- 45 ASR, Archivio Santacroce, busta 1226, Vienna, 26 October 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Antonio Santacroce.
- 46 Mihalik, "Catholics, heretics and the 'common enemy'," 44–46. Poland regained the fortress of Kamianets and the Podolin region.
- 47 ASF, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5725, Rome, 16 November 1697, Paolo della Stufa to Francesco Maria de' Medici.

However della Stufa's information was probably a bit exaggerated, because the frozen relationship between Augustus II. and the Roman court began to melt. We do not want to overstate the role of Christian August, but his negotiations with the Viennese nuncio in mid-October may have played a role in the slow change in the diplomatic relations. After the bishop of Győr returned in October from Poland to Vienna, his main task was probably not the negotiations about the Turkish war, but to somehow dissolve the indifference had been shown by the papal court toward the king. Santacroce gave him an excellent floor for this, because the first point on their – otherwise friendly and confident – meeting was the signed formal abjuration that the cardinal secretary demanded in late summer. Christian August informed the nuncio that the king's letter about his abjuration and a signed profession of the Catholic faith had been already on her way to Rome by the courier. The bishop did not tergiversated, but stormed Santacroce with relentless openness about the complaints against the papal court. He claimed that the pope had never shown out his approving blessing toward the king, neither indirectly, nor directly, at least through a papal breve sent to Christian August. What is more, the letter of Augustus II to Pope Innocent remained unanswered and was simply forwarded to France. Even after the coronation, the Holy See did not want to treat Augustus II. as king, until he and Cardinal Radziejowski does not come to terms. Christian August angrily claimed, that even a vile man's conversion would meet a greater applause from Rome. Santacroce tried to defend the papal court's politics of neutrality, because the pope as the common father of Christianity, like his predecessors, cannot support either side publicly until the political turmoil is over in Poland. Santacroce emphasized that Prince Conti was not treated as a king either for the same reasons, and the papal court gave no such signs toward France in this regard. The Viennese nuncio also tried to explain that the letter of Augustus was not sent to France with bad intentions, but it probably had become known in Paris due to the usual exchange of information between the nuncios. Slightly calmed down, the bishop was willing to accept the nuncio's arguments about the political direction of the papal court, but he still questioned the almost offensive silence they had experienced about the king's conversion. Finally Christian August suggested that the pontiff would have issue a breve to him, which would refer kindly about the conversion of his cousin as well.⁴⁸

The bishop's proposal was heard, and Pope Innocent XII. issued a breve to Christian August in mid-November, which extended his permission to stay away from his diocese, but the pontiff praised unusually long the conversion of the Polish king.⁴⁹ This was already a noticeable shift on the part of the papal court, which was also appreciated by the other side. Even the imperial ambassador, Count Georg Adam von Martinitz, who had an increasingly bad reputation at the papal court, thanked the pope for his breve sent to Christian August.⁵⁰ The bishop of Győr wrote to Santacroce a week before Christmas that the papal breve was not just a simply great honour, but caused in the court of Augustus II. inexpressible joy.⁵¹ In the meantime the king sent two envoys to Rome. Alessandro Salaroli, a Theatin friar was commissioned to negotiate in ecclesiastical affairs. Jerzy Stanisław Dzieduszycki led the 'embassy of obedience', although his conduct disappointed the papal court, and mostly Cardinal Carlo Barberini, the protector of Poland.⁵²

48 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 221, fol. 624r–625v, 628r–630r, Vienna, 26 October 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada (cipher).

49 AAV, Epistolae ad principes, Registri, vol. 82, fol. 52v–53r, Rome, 31 August 1697, Innocent XII. to Christian August.

50 ASF, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5638, Rome, 30 November 1697, Georg Adam von Martinitz to Francesco Maria de' Medici.

51 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 235, fol. 52r, 18 December 1697, Christian August to Andrea Santacroce.

52 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 149. The offensive behaviour toward Cardinal Barberini may have been related to Augustus' view of the cardinal as a friend of France. Christian August in early November told Santacroce that the king did not want Barberini to be the cardinal-protector anymore: ASR, Archivio Santacroce, busta 1226, Vienna, 2 November 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Antonio Santacroce. Eventually Augustus retained Cardinal Barberini in his post. About Barberini's role as cardinal-protector: Gaetano Platania, "Carlo Barberini protettore della Polonia e suoi difficili dossier," in *Gli "angeli custodi" delle monarchie: I cardinali protettori delle nazioni*, ed. Matteo Sanfilippo and Péter Tusor, (Studi di storia delle istituzioni ecclesiastiche 7) (Viterbo: Sette Città 2018), 177–198.

Eventually the ice was broken and in January 1698 the pontiff sent a letter to Augustus, in which Innocent XII. praised his conversion and acknowledged him as king of Poland.⁵³ The pope soon sent another letter to Christian August and to the king, in which Innocent announced, that he send Fabrizio Paolucci, then nuncio to Cologne as an extraordinary nuncio to Poland.⁵⁴ Paolucci was urged by the Secretariat of State in an instruction to cooperate with Christian August in every important matters but especially for the conversion of the electress and for the Catholic upbringing of the son of Augustus II. The main task of Paolucci was to reach a compromise between Cardinal Radziejowski and the king. The nuncio was successful and in May 1698 the Primate and Augustus II. signed an agreement.⁵⁵

The conversion of the wife of Augustus II., Christiane Eberhardine of Brandenburg-Bayreuth was a hard nut to crack. Christian August admitted to nuncio Andrea Santacroce already in summer 1697, that the electress is a stubborn Lutheran, and there is little hope for her conversion.⁵⁶ The Polish estates wanted to crown her as their queen, but they required her conversion to Catholicism before. Therefore in late summer, Christian August was expected to travel to Saxony to convince the electress to attend the coronation in Cracow and probably to convert.⁵⁷ Although news popped up from time to time, there was little hope of Catholicization of Christiane Eberhardine.⁵⁸ Although Augustus II. admitted to Paolucci that there is only small chance for the conversion of her wife,⁵⁹ the king commissioned Christian August to obtain a retrospective dispensation on their marriage with the electress, because they were close relatives, which would have been a canonical obstacle in Catholic marriage law.⁶⁰ According to the news arrived from Warsaw, Christian August and nuncio Paolucci became friends,⁶¹ and they most probably cooperated in the question about the conversion of Christiane Eberhardine as the papal instruction commissioned. However their intention remained unsuccessful, and in this regard the mission of Paolucci was inefficient. Nevertheless after his return to Rome Paolucci was created to cardinal. But he left behind one more open question: the cardinalate of Christian August.⁶²

THE POPE'S CARDINAL?

Already in the summer of 1697 rumours had it that Augustus II. will nominate his cousin as cardinal. Abbot Stufa, the well-informed Roman agent of Cardinal Medici reported his lord that at the next expected cardinal creations the new Polish king will ask the Holy See to grant Christian August the red hat.⁶³ It was clear, mostly in the first phase of his reign, that Augustus need to form a political counterpoint against Cardinal Radziejowski, the Primate of Poland, who opposed his election.

53 AAV, Epistolae ad principes, Registri, vol. 82, fol. 64r–65r, Rome, 18 January 1698, Innocent XII. to Augustus II.

54 AAV, Epistolae ad principes, Registri, vol. 82, fol. 70r–v and 72r–v, Rome, 22 January 1698, Innocent XII to Augustus II. and Christian August.

55 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 163, 222–224.

56 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 559r–560v, Vienna, 13 July 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. About the family relationships of Augustus II. after his conversion: Karl Czok, *August der Starke und seine Zeit. Kurfürst von Sachsen, König in Polen*, (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig 1997) 90–92.

57 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 234, fol. 654r–656r, Vienna, 17 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada.

58 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Barb. Lat., vol. 6565, fol. 55r–56v, Warsaw, 1 July 1699, Maurizio Vota SJ to Carlo Barberini. Father Vota informed Cardinal Barberini that the king was expected to visit Saxony, and they hoped that it would have given a chance for the conversion of his wife.

59 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 167.

60 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 235, fol. 994r–995v, Vienna, 20 December 1698, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada. We do not have any source about whether the dispensation was issued later.

61 Archivio Storico Capitolino di Roma Capitale (ASC), Archivio Capranica, Scarlatti, busta 1181, Warsaw, 1 May 1698, Foglio d'avvisi.

62 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 165–166.

63 ASF, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5725, Rome, 20 July 1697, Paolo della Stufa to Francesco Maria de' Medici.

Therefore it might have not been practical to nominate his cousin, a bishop of the emperor. Later the bishop of Kuyavia, Stanisław Kazimierz Dąbski was mentioned as potential nomination, although the name of Christian August also remained on the agenda.⁶⁴ Bishop Dąbski was a leading opposer of Cardinal Radziejowski, and he had a decisive role in the election, then in the coronation of Augustus II., thus he would have been a suitable 'counter-cardinal' against the primate.

By the beginning of 1698 the situation had changed. Augustus nominated as Polish king the Bishop of Passau, Johann Philip von Lamberg, who was the emperor's special envoy to the Election Diet.⁶⁵ It was not unusual, that a sovereign recommended a foreign prelate to cardinalate.⁶⁶ The French Cardinals d'Estrées and Bonzi were nominated by Poland in 1671 and 1673 respectively,⁶⁷ and John III Sobieski also nominated his French father-in-law, Henri Albert de la Grange d'Arquien. However the cardinalate of the latter caused diplomatic issues with the imperial court.⁶⁸ It is hardly surprising that the Holy See had to awkwardly pay attention to the balance between the nominations of the great powers of Europe. Mostly during the Thirty Years' War the activity of the national cardinals became more and more violent in the Roman politics that affected the popes' policy about creating new cardinals.⁶⁹ In the case of Lamberg his nomination by the Polish king was also a sensible question due to the European political situation and the controversial circumstances of Augustus II. Therefore Pope Innocent XII. answered Carlo Barberini, the cardinal-protector of Poland that there was not an appropriate time and place for creation of new cardinals of the crowns, because he created cardinals on the recommendations of the sovereigns in July 1697.⁷⁰ Augustus II. argued that the Holy See took in consideration the nomination made by his predecessor, and he expected the same.⁷¹ However his efforts proved futile. Finally the Viennese court took over Lamberg's nomination, and so he was created cardinal on the consistory of 21 June 1700.⁷²

Initially therefore Augustus II. wanted his cousin to be created as cardinal by the pope's own initiative (*di suo proprio moto*).⁷³ However the Holy See should have handle the case of Christian August also very carefully like the nomination of Lamberg. According to some unconfirmed information Christian August has even felt offended that the king had not nominated him from the Polish crown.⁷⁴ However by the beginning of 1700 it became clear, that Augustus had not got enough influence in Rome to carry out his will to creat cardinal from Lamberg. Officially Bishop Lamberg renounced his nomination, and it opened the path for an official recommendation of Christian August by the Polish crown.⁷⁵ Only four days after the renouncement of Lamberg, Christian August sent a short account to the

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- 64 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 221, fol. 534r-v, Vienna, 17 August 1697, Andrea Santacroce to Fabrizio Spada (cipher).
- 65 BAV, Barb. Lat., vol. 6647, fol. 85r-86r, Passau, 22 March 1698, Johann Philipp von Lamberg to Carlo Barberini.
- 66 About the crown cardinals: Tusor Péter, "Prolegomena zur Frage des Kronkardinalats," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 41. (2003): 51-71.
- 67 Joseph Bergin, "Cardinals as National Politicians," in *A Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal*, ed. Mary Hollingsworth, Miles Pattenden and Arnold Witte. (Leiden - Boston: Brill 2020) 213.
- 68 Platania, *Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*, 166.
- 69 Gianvittorio Signorotto, "The Squadrone Volante. 'Independent' Cardinals and European Politics in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century," in *Court and Politics in Papal Rome 1492-1700*, ed. Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002) 183.
- 70 BAV, Barb. Lat., vol. 6653, fol. 36r-37r, Rome, 13 April 1698, Carlo Barberini to Augustus II.
- 71 BAV, Barb. Lat., vol. 6626, fol. 18r-19v, Warsaw, 6 May 1698, Augustus II. to Carlo Barberini.
- 72 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 80, fol. 96r.
- 73 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Principi, vol. 128, fol. 44r-45r, Warsaw, 26 February 1698, Augustus II. to Innocent XII. On the same day the king wrote a letter to the cardinal-protector, Carlo Barberini also: BAV, Barb. Lat., vol. 6626, fol. 8r-v, Warsaw, 26 February 1698, Augustus II. to Carlo Barberini.
- 74 ASC, Archivio Capranica, Scarlatti, busta 1181, Warsaw, 10 June 1698, Foglio d'avvisi.
- 75 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Varia, Kart. 15, fol. 107r-v, Warsaw, 14 April 1700, Augustus II. to Innocent XII.

pope about his episcopal activity and the reformation of his diocese.⁷⁶ On the very same day he sent a letter to Lamberg, in which he expressed his thanks for Lamberg's help and he wished him all the best and success for the imperial nomination.⁷⁷ Thereafter Christian August travelled in hurry to Poland to negotiate about his cardinalate, and Augustus II. sent his nomination to Rome two weeks later.⁷⁸ They sent the letters with the Jesuit confessor of Christian August, Father Franz Pröller to Cardinal Barberini, who represented the nomination to the pope and the cardinal secretary during an audience on 18 May. The pope expressed his deep and honest sentiments toward the bishop of Győr, and expressed his happiness about his nomination, although the aging pontiff was worried about his own fragile health whether it would have made possible another consistory for creation of cardinals.⁷⁹ A few days later Innocent also answered Christian August's report on the diocese of Győr, praising his effort for the restoration of the parishes and counter-reformation activity.⁸⁰ Even Emperor Leopold I. wrote to Cardinal Barberini to support the Polish nomination for Christian August.⁸¹ The emperor also ordered his ambassador, Leopold Joseph von Lamberg to assist the Polish nomination of the bishop in every possible way.⁸² Despite all the favourable signs the consistory of 21 June yielded a disappointing result. Although Johann Philipp von Lamberg, the imperial candidate won the red hat, Christian August was not among the new cardinals.⁸³

On the advise of the imperial ambassador Lamberg the confessor of Christian August, Father Pröller asked for an audience at the pope. Returning to the former standpoint, the Jesuit father supposed to the pontiff, that the bishop of Győr could have been an individual creation by the pope himself, on his own initiative. Pope Innocent answered Pröller that he could write to his lord that the cardinalate of Christian August 'would have been the crown of our pontificate'.⁸⁴ However the pope admitted that even he was ready to promote Christian August to the cardinalate, he had to be circumspect, since the bishop was already privy councillor of the emperor, therefore his creation would have angered the other crowns, especially France.⁸⁵ The Venetian ambassador to Rome also protested against the promotion of Christian August presumably because of French pressure and of other political controversies between the Republic and the Viennese court. The imperial diplomats still hoped that probably he was already a cardinal, but reserved *in pectore*.⁸⁶ However the announcement of the two cardinals in pectore never took place. The pope was already dying by the end of summer 1700, and there was less and less hope of convening another consistory. All sides were preparing for the papal

76 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Prelati, vol. 92, fol. 50r–v, Vienna, 27 March 1700, Christian August to Innocent XII.

77 Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Familienarchiv Lamberg, Akten, Kart. 67/368, fol. 10r–11v, Vienna, 27 March 1700, Christian August to Johann Philipp von Lamberg.

78 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Germania, vol. 222, fol. 588r–589r, Vienna, 8 May 1700, Foglio d'avvisi.

79 BAV, Barb. Lat., vol. 6654, fol. 33r–34r, Rome, 22 May 1700, Carlo Barberini to Christian August.

80 AAV, Epistolae ad principes, Registri, vol. 82, fol. 303v–304r, Rome, 22 May 1700, Innocent XII. to Christian August.

81 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Hofkorrespondenz, Kart. 17, fol. 107–108, Vienna, 5 May 1700, Leopold I. to Carlo Barberini.

82 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 82, fol. 32r–v, Vienna, 5 May 1700, Leopold I. to Leopold Joseph von Lamberg. The ambassador was a distant cousin of the bishop of Passau, who was nominated by the Viennese court.

83 The new cardinals were, nominated by the three crowns (France, the Holy Roman Empire and Spain): Louis-Antoine de Noailles, archbishop of Paris, Johann Philipp von Lamberg, bishop of Passau and Francisco de Borja, canon of the cathedral chapter of Toledo. ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 80, fol. 96r.

84 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 80, fol. 75r–82v, Rome, 26 June 1700, Leopold Joseph von Lamberg to Leopold I.

85 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 80, fol. 105r–110v, Rome, 24 July 1700, Leopold Joseph von Lamberg to Leopold I. Christian August became imperial privy councillor after he resigned as Chancellor of Saxony in the summer 1699: ASF, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Francesco Maria de' Medici, busta 5695, Vienna, 8 August 1699, Foglio d'avvisi.

86 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Rom, Korrespondenz, Kart. 80, fol. 133r–138v, Rome, 14 August 1700, Leopold Joseph von Lamberg to Leopold I. The pope created several cardinals in November 1699, but he reserved two in pectore, who were never announced. Many in Rome believed that one of them would have been Christian August,

election conclave, in this situation the counter-interested parties sought to prevent a change in the composition of the college. Eventually Pope Innocent XII died on 27 September 1700 without creating cardinal from Christian August of Saxe-Zeitz.

CONCLUSIONS

Christian August had begun his ecclesiastical career in an internationally taut situation. Although the Nine Years' War ended in 1697, the Habsburg-Bourbon conflict did not come to an end with the Treaty of Rijswijk. For the Austrian Habsburgs it became a matter of life and death to avoid a pro-French king on the Polish throne. Therefore Christian August gained quickly an important role not just in the conversion of Augustus II., but also in the consolidation of his reign. However the Holy See tried to take an indifferent, neutral position at least as long as the French candidate, Prince Conti had a minimal chance to reverse the outcome of the election. As the situation became clear, Augustus was acknowledged by the pope without any further particular objection.

The inner consolidation of the reign of Augustus II. and a possible promotion of Christian August was related with each other. Until Cardinal Radziejowski was a relentless opponent of the king, Augustus tried to counterweigh the primate's position with the nomination of another Polish bishop. But as soon as the Holy See acknowledged his reign, a compromise would be expected with the primate, which opened the path for other ecclesiastical actors. Most probably the nomination of the bishop of Passau came from Vienna, therefore a promotion for Christian August was only able, if Augustus II. try to affect the pope's sympathy toward his cousin. However the Holy See did not want to accept the nomination by the Polish crown, and thus the Viennese court took over the nomination of Lamberg. But in the background there was a much larger game of the European powers. By the end of the 1690s the succession of the childless and sick Spanish king, Charles II. overwrite everything, and the pope was also very old, a papal election was expected soon. Both France and the Austrian Habsburgs tried to strengthen their positions, including in Rome and in the Sacred College. This was also a burning issue for Vienna, because Cardinal Leopold Kollonich declared at the end of 1699 that he would not travel to the conclave because of his age.⁸⁷ That would make Vincenzo Grimani the only 'Austrian' cardinal in a future conclave. Therefore the promotion of Bishop Lamberg became a minimal political goal in the following months, and a cardinalate for Christian August would have been a great success for Vienna.

As the identity of the two *in pectore* cardinals remained a secret, any guess on their person can only be a theory. Whether one of them was Christian August or not, the possibility of his cardinalate caused interventions from the opposite side. During the seventeenth century it became a usual political debate in Rome almost in every case of a new nomination. That made the popes to frequently use the *riserva in pectore* promotions.⁸⁸ In 1700 the European politics were fragile, and the Holy See should have observed carefully to keep a balance. Even if Christian August had been indeed one of the *in pectore* cardinals in November 1699, the situation did not let to announce his creation of cardinalate, either Pope Innocent XII sympathized with him, or it was only a political simulation.

Otherwise these years, the Polish election, his intermediation between Rome and Warsaw and his nomination for cardinalate gave to his career a boost. Charles II. died on 1 November 1700 and the War of Spanish Succession broke out. In the first years Christian August fulfilled an important diplomatic mission in the vacillant Cologne, where the archbishop-elect was driven to the French side.⁸⁹ Finally in 1706 Christian August received the red hat and in the next year he succeeded Cardinal Kollonich as Primate of Hungary.⁹⁰

87 ÖStA, HHStA, Staatenabteilung, Venedig, Dispacci di Germania, vol. 182, pag. 308, Vienna, 12 December 1699, Francesco Loredan to the Venetian Senate.

88 Signorotto, "The Squadrone Volante," 183.

89 Hans Gerig, *Der Kölner Dompropst Christian August Herzog von Sachsen-Zeitz, Bischof von Raab. Seine diplomatische Tätigkeit am Niederrhein zu Beginn des spanischen Erbfolgekriegs im Dienst der Politik Kaiser Leopolds I. 1701–1703*, (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid 1930)

90 Lakatos, "Sachsen-Zeitz Keresztély Ágost," 328.

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