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BRITISH DIPLOMAT GEORGE WOODWARD AND DIARCHY IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH AFTER THE DEATH OF AUGUSTUS II[1]

The succession to the Polish throne stirred the interest of Europe's largest monarchies already during Augustus II's reign over the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The British were not indifferent to the question of succession, either. George Woodward, appointed resident to the Wettin court in Warsaw and Dresden by the King of Britain George II in late 1728, was secretly instructed to collaborate with the Swedish and French ministers at the court in promoting the interests of Stanisław Leszczyński, father-in-law to Louis XV of France. Their mission was to make Leszczyński a popular figure with the Polish-Lithuanian nobles, and Woodward was to remain officially neutral. The British were of the opinion that open support for Leszczyński would do him more harm than good[2]. In mid 1731, Woodward was allowed a brief holiday in England to take care of private matters[3]. He returned to Augustus II's court in the spring of 1732[4] as envoy extraordinary with clear instructions to abandon the support campaign for Stanisław. This sudden change of orders reflected a turn in British foreign policy which

[1] This work has been financed as a research project from funds allocated for scientific research in 2007–2010.

[2] National Archives ("NA"), State Papers ("SP") 88/35, secret instructions for G. Woodward, Windsor, 22 October 1728 o.s. In this article, letters and documents that had been dispatched from Great Britain are dated in accordance with the Julian calendar (old style, "o.s."), while the correspondence from Warsaw – according to the Georgian calendar (new style).

[3] NA, SP 88/39, G. Woodward to Harrington, Dresden, 21 July 1731, f. 71.

[4] He arrived in Dresden on 26 April 1732, and a month later, he was already residing in Warsaw. NA, SP 88/40, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Dresden 29 April 1732, f. 56; ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw 24 May 1732, f. 64.

aimed to break off the alliance with France[5], formed in 1717, and establish closer contacts with Austria. The warmer relations between the courts of London and Vienna resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Vienna on 16 March 1731 under which Emperor Charles VI agreed to wind up the Ostend Company in return for George II's support for the Pragmatic Sanction enabling the emperor's daughter, Maria Theresa[6], to inherit the Austrian throne. The collapse of the British-French alliance[7] also led to changes in Woodward's instructions regarding the French minister accredited in August II's court, Antoine-Felixe de Monti[8]. George II's envoy was to closely scrutinize the French diplomat's actions and plans which were "opposite to those attempts towards a Reconciliation with the Court of Vienna, which We have charged you with"[9]. Woodward was to vest his trust completely in Dutch minister Carel Rumpf and collaborate with him in all matters relating to the Warsaw-Dresden court[10]. The British envoy was instructed to keep a low profile, monitor the situation carefully and report his findings to London or, during George II's travels, to Hanover. Woodward's principals were interested in the attitudes and actions of Augustus II's subjects in both countries under his rule. They were also keen on eliciting more information about the plans of foreign ministers accredited by the House of Wettin[11]. William Stanhope, Baron Harrington and Secretary of State for the Northern Department, advised Woodward to exercise great caution even in matters relating to the Protestant cause in Poland, although support for the Protestant community was the priority objective of the British envoy's mission.

Woodward informed Harrington of Augustus II's death (1 February 1733) in a letter dated 3 February 1733 in which he requested further instructions[12]. While waiting for new orders, Woodward made every attempt to represent the British king in a foreign court to the best of his ability. When offering his condolences to Primate Teodor Potocki on the death of

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[5] Great Britain, the United Provinces and France signed the Triple Alliance at the Hague on 4 January 1717. *An honest diplomat at the Hague; the private letters of Horatio Walpole, 1715–1716*, ed. J. J. Murray, Bloomington 1955, p. 363.

[6] NA, SP 88/38, Harrington to L. Schaub, Whitehall, 26 March 1731 o.s. Text of the treaty in *English Historical Documents, 1714–1783*, ed. D. B. Horn, M. Ransome, London-New York 1996, pp. 917–921.

[7] Ref.: P. Napierała, *Germain Louis Chavelin i rozbrat pomiędzy Francją a Wielką Brytanią, 1727–1737*, in *Szpiegostwo, wywiad, państwo*, ed. C. Taracha, Lublin 2009, pp. 45–65.

[8] For more information on France's policy towards Poland-Lithuania at the time, refer to E. Rostworowski, *O polską koronę. Polityka Francji w latach 1725–1733*, Wrocław-Kraków 1958.

[9] NA, SP 88/40, instructions for G. Woodward, St. James 29 February 1731/2 o.s., f. 8v.

[10] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 16 May 1732 o.s., f. 62.

[11] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 30 May 1732 o.s., f. 66–67, Hanover 20/31 July 1732 o.s., f. 105–106, Hanover 6/17 August 1732, f. 124.

[12] NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 3 February 1733, f. 19–20. In letters forwarded at the beginning of the year, Woodward informed Harrington of the Polish king's deteriorating health. Ref.: ibidem, f. 1v-etc.

Augustus II, he assured him that the news had greatly saddened George II who remained a faithful friend of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He attempted to give accurate reports about the situation in Poland to the ministers in London. His reporting duties were not easy as regards the matter of greatest interest to the British, namely the question of succession to the Polish throne and the candidates who enjoyed the greatest support in the Polish-Lithuanian state. A week after the king's death, Woodward was only able to establish that at least a dozen nobles were willing to reach for the crown, that Stanisław Leszczyński had many supporters, and that the intentions of the deceased monarch's son remained unknown[13]. In a letter to Under-Secretary of State George Tilson, Woodward expressed his dismay over the fact that order and peace had been preserved in Warsaw despite the political tension and the tumultuous arrival of constituents for the Diet (Sejm) that had gone into session on 26 January 1733. He observed that instead of competing for posts and jobs, the nobles had united in a common effort for the good of their country[14].

The first letters that arrived from London after Augustus' death did not contain any instructions. Harrington promised to dispatch orders as soon as "the King has had time to consult his Allies, and take his Resolution upon that important Event"[15]. He assured Woodward that George II was thoroughly satisfied with his efforts[16].

Fresh instructions and new letters of accreditation[17] reached Woodward only on 18 April. The envoy was to assure the Polish nobility that it was George II's hope that the new monarch would be chosen in genuinely free elections, that he would guarantee their liberties, rights and privileges while remaining neutral enough not to stir any fears in the neighboring monarchies. Woodward was to cooperate with the tsarina's and the emperor's ministers, but he was forbidden from supporting or opposing any candidates to the Polish crown. His actions were to be carefully balanced to ensure that they did not offend France nor the French party in Poland. The British diplomat was instructed to express firm opposition only against the Pretend-

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[13] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 7 February 1733, f. 23–25, 14 February 1733, f. 30–31v.

[14] Ibidem, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 7 February 1733, f. 26–26v. In the same letter, the envoy wrote with distaste about a ball organized by Russian minister Frederich Casimir von Löwenwolde on the day of King Augustus' death. The event commemorated the third anniversary of Tsarina Anna's reign, and although it attracted few guests, the revelry continued into the small hours. Löwenwolde claimed that he had been unaware of the monarch's death, but Woodward assured Tilson that this was a blatant lie – the British envoy was one of the guests who had personally excused himself from the ball on account of the tragic event. Ibidem, f. 26v–27v.

[15] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 13 February 1732/3 o.s., f. 28–28v.

[16] Ibidem and 2 March 1732/3 o.s., f. 40–40v.

[17] Ibidem, letters of accreditation to G. Woodward for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 9 March 1732/3 o.s., f. 52–53.

er, James Francis Edward Stuart. Woodward was naturally encouraged to protect the Protestant community in Poland-Lithuania[18]. The new letters did not urge the envoy to become excessively involved in local affairs, and they actually cooled his enthusiasm for political activity as no such inclinations were displayed by Robert Walpole, the First Lord of the Treasury responsible for British policy[19]. Woodward was aware that a neutral stance would be most beneficial for England. He argued with Edward Weston, Under-Secretary of State for the Northern Department, that any attempts to support either party without massive financial aid would be fruitless[20]. In his successive letters, Harrington advised Woodward to keep a similarly low profile, to diligently observe the situation and regularly report his findings to the British court. The secretary of state was particularly interested in the moves of French ambassador A.-F. de Monti[21] and his success in promoting Stanisław Leszczyński's candidacy to the Polish throne[22].

In short, Woodward was instructed to exercise self-restraint and forward detailed reports about the political situation in Poland. This was not an easy task because the British envoy was frequently inquired about George II's political preferences. Woodward would answer diplomatically that his principal's main concern was for universal peace and conciliation[23]. Polish and Lithuanian senators attempted to convince the British envoy that peace could be preserved on the Baltic only if England, the United Provinces and Sweden backed free elections in Poland at the tsar's court. Without their support, if Russia were to invade Poland, Turkey would surely intervene, leading to the outbreak of war[24].

Already in February 1733, Woodward reported that the Poles were inclined towards Stanisław Leszczyński, adding that if he were elected, France would have to back his candidacy with substantial funding[25]. He emphasized that financial support for a chosen candidate was part of standard practice

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[18] Ibidem, Harrington do G. Woodward, Whitehall, 9 March 1732/3 o.s., f. 45–51.

[19] For more references to Britain's neutral stance toward the Polish succession war, see: J. Black, *"British Neutrality in the War of the Polish Succession*, *1733–1735"*, *The International History Review*, 1986, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 345–366; R. Lodge, *"English Neutrality in the War of the Polish Succession: A Commentary upon Diplomatic Instructions"*, Vol. 6: *"France, 1727–1744"*, "Transactions of the Royal Historical Society", Fourth Series, 1931, Vol. 14, pp. 141–173; A. C. Thompson, *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant interest, 1688–1756*, Woodbridge 2006, pp. 168–187.

[20] NA, SP 88/41, G.Woodward to E.Weston, Warsaw, 21 March 1733, f. 81v.

[21] For more information on the efforts made by imperial and French diplomats in Poland-Lithuania in 1733, refer to: J. Dygdała, *Rywalizacja dwóch dyplomatów cesarskiego i francuskiego w Polsce 1733 roku – Heinrich Wilhelm von Wilczek i Antoine-Felix de Monti*, in: *Polska wobec wielkich konfliktów w Europie. Z dziejów dyplomacji i stosunków międzynarodowych w XV–XVIII wieku*, ed. R. Skowrona, Kraków 2009, pp. 495–512.

[22] NA, SP 88/41, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 23 March 1732/3 o.s., f. 73–73v.

[23] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 21 February 1733, f. 35–35v, 5 V 1733, f. 160v, G. Woodward to E. Weston, Warsaw, 21 March 1733, f. 81v.

[24] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 28 February 1733, f. 42, 16 V 1733, f. 186.

[25] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 21 February 1733, f. 35v, 7 III 1733, f. 59.

in the Polish-Lithuanian state, and it was not regarded as a violation of free election principles[26]. Woodward also noted that Leszczyński would be strongly opposed by the Commonwealth's neighbors, in particular Russia whose ministers were openly critical about the candidate[27].

With time, the parties to the election crystallized their positions, but this did not make the situation in Poland-Lithuania any less complex. There were two main rivals to the throne: Stanisław Leszczyński, father-in-law to the French monarch, and Frederick August, Elector of Saxony and the deceased king's son[28]. Woodward complied with his instructions, and he delivered detailed reports about the efforts made by France and its ambassador to enthrone Stanisław Leszczyński. He wrote about an excellently edited manifesto published at the Chambord castle (Leszczyński's residence in France), which listed the errors made during Augustus II's reign. He informed his superiors of massive sums of money that the French ambassador had distributed to Leszczyński's supporters. Woodward also wrote that France had been successful in winning the support of the highly influential and competing magnate alliances of Czartoryski and Potocki[29].

Unpopular in his first term of power (1704–1709) as a monarch who had been brought to the throne by alien forces, Stanisław was now winning the graces of most noblemen, and the fact that he was the father-in-law to France's powerful monarch only added to his appeal. The Poles were increasingly opposed to foreign candidates to the throne, arguing that "great Inconveniencys, were found, from His late Majesty's not knowing their Language, and their being obliged to address themselves to Him by Interpreters, besides his being so long and often absent from them"[30] (original spelling), and they manifested their support for Leszczyński with growing zeal. Most dietines (Polish: sejmiki) instructed their deputies to eliminate foreign pretenders to the Polish throne[31], and the matter was officially sealed at the Diet of Convocation (22 May 1733)[32].

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[26] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 7 March 1733, f. 60v–61.

[27] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 21 February 1733, f. 36, 7 III 1733, f. 56–59, 24 III 1733, f. 88v–89.

[28] On 24 April 1733, the Saxon Elector sent his commissioners to the Primate to announce his plans of running in the elections; ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 25 April 1733, f. 134. In a letter to E. Weston of 14 April 1733, G. Woodward listed all native candidates to the throne; ibidem, f. 115v–116.

[29] Ibidem, G. Woodward do Harrington, Warsaw, 14 March 1733, f. 65, 21 March 1733, f. 77, 24 March 1733, f. 90, 11 April 1733, f. 99v-100v, 28 April 1733, f. 139v–141, G. Woodward to E. Weston, 14 April 1733, f. 116; ref.: J. Dygdała, op. cit., pp. 501-etc.

[30] NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 21 March 1733, f. 78.

[31] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 24 March 1733, f. 85 and 90, 11 April 1733, f. 99.

[32] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 23 May 1733, f. 197–197v, 26 May 1733, f. 204, 30 May 1733, f. 207v. Ref.: E. Szklarska, *Kwestia wykluczenia cudzoziemca od tronu na sejmie konwokacyjnym 1733 r.*, in: *Między Zachodem a Wschodem. Studia ku czci Profesora Jacka Staszewskiego*, vol. 2, Toruń 2003, pp. 561–573.

Despite the growing support of Polish and Lithuanian nobility, Leszczyński's candidacy continued to be rejected by the neighboring states. Russia and Austria began to plan an armed intervention in the event of Leszczyński's victory, openly declaring the size of troops that would invade the Commonwealth[33]. Those threats caused an outrage among the nobility who regarded them as a violation of their liberties and privileges. The nobility's morale was lifted by Louis XV's statement (17 March 1733) in which the monarch guaranteed free elections to Poland and threatened to wage a war on Charles VI if his army were to cross the Polish border. Woodward wrote in his reports that the situation in the Polish-Lithuanian state was serious enough to plunge all of Europe into war. He suggested that the British king should urgently attempt to pacify the escalating conflict[34].

The advantage gained by Leszczyński's party made Russia and Austria realize that the only serious counter candidate was the Elector of Saxony, Frederick August, whom the two powers had opposed for a long time[35]. Already in March 1733, Woodward expressed his surprise that the Saxon Elector and his supporters remained relatively idle in the face of the French party's heightened activity and the growing number of Leszczyński's adherents. He believed that if the Elector's party had demonstrated greater zeal for action, the Saxon candidate could have even won the support of the Czartoryski and Poniatowski families whose interests had been well protected during the reign of Frederick Augustus' father[36].

In Vienna, Saxon and imperial ministers debated on Charles VI's support for the Elector of Saxony in return for Frederick Augustus's recognition of the pragmatic sanction. Harrington provided Woodward with progress reports, and he instructed the envoy to support Frederick Augustus' candidacy with the same discretion that he had exercised to promote Leszczyński[37]

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[33] "…it is positively said, that the next Month, Muscovy will cause to March to the Frontiers of Poland, an Army of twenty two Thousand Foot, ten Thousand Horse, and thirty Thousand Cosacks, and the Emperor will have one of Eighteen Thousand Men upon the Frontiers of Silesia."(original spelling) NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 28 March 1733, f. 91v.

[34] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 11 April 1733, f. 100.

[35] Ref.: J. Staszewski, *"Jak Polskę przemienić w kraj kwitnący…" Szkice i studia z czasów saskich*, Olsztyn 1997, pp. 134–140. In return for Russia's support, the Elector had to make concessions as regards Courland. NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 5 May 1733, f. 163, 12 May 1733, f. 177v.

[36] NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 24 March 1733, f. 89–90. Woodward maintained friendly relations with both families, and he openly admitted to it before his superiors; ibidem and SP 88/35, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 30 July 1729, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to E. Weston, 14 April 1733, f. 115–115 v.

[37] NA, SP 88/41, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 13 April 1733 o.s., f. 97, 4 May 1733 o.s., f. 147–147v, 11 May 1733 o.s., f. 158v, 29 V 1733 o.s., f. 202v. The talks were finalized only in July 1733, and this news was communicated to Woodward by the British ambassador to Austria, Thomas Robinson. NA, SP 88/42, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 25 July 1733, f. 42v.

if the negotiations were to end in success. The imperial ambassador, Heinrich Wilhelm von Wilczek, and the Russian minister, Friedrich Casimir von Löwenwolde, were hoping to solicit Woodward's support in their campaign against Stanisław Leszczyński, but the British diplomat explained that his orders were not that far reaching[38]. Wilczek could not understand why they were not allowed to exclude Leszczyński's candidacy while the British were openly opposing the Pretender to the Polish throne. Woodward argued that this comparison was completely unjustified[39].

The Diet of Convocation that came to an end on 23 May was a reflection on Stanisław Leszczyński's strong position. It forced the courts in Petersburg and Vienna to take more decisive action. Their diplomats admitted to Woodward that further negotiations aiming to block Stanisław's candidacy would be useless. Their monarchs were faced with the following options: to prevent Leszczyński's election by force, to dethrone Leszczyński after he had been elected or to accept his election with complacency. The third solution would not be even taken into consideration. In a very long letter summing up the progress made at the Diet and the political situation in Poland, Woodward wrote that due to the violation of parliamentary procedures at the reported session, attempts were being made to establish a confederation among Leszczyński's opponents[40]. He expressed his hope that the Prussian monarch, who had distanced himself from Russia and Austria, would be willing to resume his cooperation with the two powers. Woodward also noted that although the oath barring foreign candidates from the Polish throne worked in Leszczyński's favor, it would have never been decreed if it had not been for many magnates' monarchial aspirations. In an attempt to engage Great Britain in local affairs, Grand Equerry Duke Karl Gustav von Löwenwolde (Frederich Casimir's older brother) presented Woodward with a draft of a treaty supporting the Protestant community which was to be signed by England, the United Provinces, Russia and Prussia, but George II did not show an interest in the project[41].

The language used by Löwenwolde in mid 1733 clearly suggested that it was only a matter of time before the Russian troops would enter Poland[42]. In July, Woodward informed London that the imperial army had crossed the

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[38] NA, SP 88/41, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 18 April 1733, f. 117v–118.

[39] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 21 April 1733, f. 126v–127.

[40] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 30 May 1733, f. 207–216.

[41] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 19 June 1733 o.s., f. 230v.

[42] On one occasion, Löwenwolde made the following threat when Stanisław's name had been mentioned in passing:

"That the Poles wou'd do better, not to think of that Person, for it wou'd save both themselves and others, a great deal of pains and trouble." Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 2 June 1733, f. 221. Other examples: ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 20 June 1733, f. 234v–235.

Silesian and Hungarian borders[43] and the Russian troops were marching towards the Commonwealth[44].

The deteriorating situation in the Polish-Lithuanian state did not improve Woodward's situation. Despite changes in the geopolitical landscape, the British envoy did not receive new instructions. Harrington praised Woodward for his conduct during talks with members of opposing political camps, but he made it clear that George II would not give new orders before the situation in Poland-Lithuania had stabilized[45]. His merely instructed Woodward to convince his interlocutors that the British monarch was deeply committed to the preservation of peace in Europe[46]. This was not an easy task in the face of Britain's blatantly passive attitude. Woodward's situation was further complicated by the fact that his neutrality failed to satisfy any political faction. The arrival of Russian troops on Polish-Lithuanian territory in mid August 1733 only fuelled the general resentment towards foreigners. The greatest hatred was directed towards Russian, Austrian and Saxon ministers, but after an attempted assassination of the younger of the Löwenwolde brothers (16 August 1733), who was mistaken for Grand Equerry Karl Gustav von Löwenwolde, Woodward wrote that "for 'tis sufficient reason to be attackt, that one does not wear their Dress, the Fury is such against Strangers"[47]. The Englishman was afraid that when members of the nobility would begin their frenzied rush to the capital city for the Diet of Election, the foreigners, even those enjoying diplomatic immunity, would not be safe[48].

Woodward was not provided with new instructions after Poland had been invaded by Tsarina Anna's army[49] and after Stanisław Leszczyński's had been elected king on 12 September 1733[50]. Although bound by an alliance with the emperor under the Treaty of Vienna, George II saw no reason

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[43] NA, SP 88/42, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 7 July 1733, f. 5, 25 July 1733, f. 42v–43. On account of the upcoming confrontation with France in the Reich, the imperial army did not enter Poland despite pressure from Russia. George II also advised his ally against military intervention in Poland. Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 5 September 1733, f. 143v; ibidem, abstract of T. Robinson's letter to G. Woodward, [Vienna] 19 August 1733, f. 153–154.

[44] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 25 July 1733, f. 42, 28 July 1733, f. 59v, 1 August 1733, f. 63v–64v, 8 August 1733, f. 75–75v.

[45] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hampton Court, 7 August 1733 o.s., f. 61–61v, 17 August 1733 o.s., f. 79–79v.

[46] NA, SP 88/41, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 22 June 1733, f. 232.

[47] NA, SP 88/42, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 18 August 1733, f. 93–94v.

[48] Woodward frequently wrote to Harrington about the dangerous situation of foreign ministers and the authorities' efforts to secure them. Ibidem, Warsaw, 25 August 1733, f. 125–125v, 5 September 1733, f. 145, 8 September 1733, f. 158v–159v, G. Woodward to E. Weston, 12 September 1733, f. 182v.

[49] The secretary of state wrote with disarming honesty: "...in this uncertain state of affairs you will hardly expect any particular Commands from his Majesty." Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hampton Court, 31 August 1733 o.s., f. 110–110v.

[50] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hampton Court, 25 September 1733 o.s., f. 202–202v.

to put France's patience to the test. The letters forwarded by Harrington to Thomas Robinson, the British ambassador in Vienna, were marked by the same degree of reticence. Robinson was advised to act with great caution and restraint. If confronted by imperial ministers with an accusation that the British monarch was unwilling to support their candidate, he was to explain that an open declaration of support would only irritate Louis XV[51].

On 18 September, Woodward was visited by two delegates who informed him of Leszczyński's election and asked the envoy to forward the news to his monarch. The diplomat promised to dispatch the message. He assured the visitors that George II had the highest respect and esteem for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and that it was his greatest desire for the nation to accept the newly elected king and to unite under his reign, in order to bring peace and happiness for all of Europe. The delegates admitted that although the nation was divided politically, they would find the means to overcome the differences if foreign powers ceased to intervene in the country's internal affairs[52]. Woodward wrote to Harrington that although all foreign diplomats had received such delegations, none of them, save for Swedish minister Carl Rudenschöld, had paid the new king a visit[53]. The diplomatic corps' restraint was fully justified by a highly complex situation on the political arena. Two days after Leszczyński's election, Woodward wrote to London that a secessionist convention in Prague would proclaim the Saxon Elector king as soon as Russian troops had entered Poland. The Tsarist army was expected to invade Warsaw in 2–3 days. Meanwhile, Leszczyński's opponents were gaining strength, and they were planning to issue a manifesto to proclaim his election null and void. Leszczyński's supporters were growing increasingly concerned about the situation, and their ranks were decimated as many members of minor nobility had left Warsaw directly after the election[54]. The situation was changing rapidly, and foreign ministers who did not openly manifest their support for either party to the conflict were quietly waiting for a resolution. Hasty actions could prove to be very costly. Woodward did what he thought was best at the time – he also waited patiently. He was very cautious not to offend any party or make any statements and declarations that would be difficult to withdraw at a later date[55]. Harrington

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[51] A. C. Thompson, op. cit., p. 172.

[52] NA, SP 88/42, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 19 September 1733, f. 198–198v.

[53] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 18 September 1733, f. 196.

[54] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 14 September 1733, f. 187–187v.

[55] A good example of the above is Woodward's conversation with the French ambassador a day before the latter's departure from Warsaw. Woodward attempted to convince the diplomat that his Polish mission was to preserve peace. In his opinion, Frederick Augustus was a guarantor of peace in the Polish-Lithuanian state, who was capable of making his subjects happy and the Commonwealth's neighbors satisfied. Woodward also claimed that he had heard much good about Stanisław Leszczyński, and if the nobles were able to join their forces, maybe they could find a way of appeasing Moscow. Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 22 September 1733, f. 207v–208.

fully supported Woodward's reticence. He emphasized that Woodward's stance had been fully approved by George II because it coincided with the monarch's heartfelt desire for peace in Europe[56].

Woodward's conciliatory skills were brought into play when the encroaching Russian army had fuelled the public's hatred towards Russian and Saxon ministers and the imperial ambassador. Crown Regimentar Józef Potocki ordered the guards to surround the Saxon Elector's palace and the Russian minister's residence. An armed attack was also planned on the residence of count Wilczek where Russian and Saxon ministers had taken refuge. Józef Potocki and Jan Tarło, the voivode of Lublin, dispatched a delegation to Woodward to assure the envoy that he was absolutely safe. The Englishman replied that he had never felt threatened in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but he cautioned the delegates against the plans they had envisaged for other foreign ministers. An attack on the residence of the imperial ambassador whose principal was a Polish-Lithuanian ally would be unthinkable. Any attempts to raid the palace of the Elector who, according to Woodward, had never done Poland any injustice, would also be completely unjustified. The British envoy warned the visitors that unpremeditated action could bring more disaster upon the country. He emphasized that he was dispensing this advice on account of the warm feelings that George II had for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Woodward did not mention the Russian ministers. He gave the following explanation to Harrington: "I made no particular mention of the Russian Ministers, their Case being very different from the Others"[57]. The British envoy was unable to persuade the Poles to abandon their attack on the Saxon Elector's palace or the Russian minister's residence[58]. The attackers argued that the palace's guard of 200 men could back the approaching Russian army. Woodward also intervened on behalf of the captured prisoners, pleading that they be treated with kindness. The British diplomat feared that the attackers, blinded by extreme hatred towards the Saxons and the Russians, could be brutal, or even cruel towards the prisoners. The imperial ambassador's residence had been barricaded, but it was never attacked[59]. When visiting the residence, Woodward had to climb a ladder.

Woodward's delicate situation did not improve after Leszczyński had departed for Gdańsk on 22 September 1733[60] and after Frederick Augustus had been proclaimed king Augustus III by the noblemen's convention in Prague on 5 October 1733[61]. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had two

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[56] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hampton Court, 2 October 1733 o.s., f. 214–214v.

[57] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 30 September 1733, f. 221.

[58] Allegedly, Woodward's support arrived too late after the orders had already been given. Ibidem, f. 222v–223.

[59] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 3 October 1733, f. 226v–227.

[60] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 26 September 1733, f. 216.

[61] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 6 October 1733, f. 239, 14 October 1733, f. 250.

monarchs. The country was strongly antagonized, but the existing divisions did not have a stable foundation. The nobility's support for one of the two candidates was often a random choice. Gdańsk, Malbork and Elbląg recognized the legitimacy of Leszczyński's election, but Toruń denied its support. Even the officers of the royal guard were divided over the matter[62]. Woodward's dilemma was additionally deepened by disruptions in the postal service. Major roads were blocked by troops faithful to Leszczyński, and the correspondence from the Court of St. James's had been delayed for weeks[63]. When the letters finally did arrive, their content must have been quite disappointing for Woodward. The British court limited itself to commending the envoy's conduct, sometimes throwing in a handful of news on the life of the royal family[64].

In the face of a highly unstable situation in the Polish-Lithuanian state, George II's envoy deemed it impossible to pursue his main objective which was to safeguard the interests of the Protestant community in the country. He was aware that Karl Gustav von Löwenwolde was willing to support the Protestant cause in Poland, but he believed that any measures initiated to achieve that goal would be ineffective during a political rift. Woodward did not abandon his cause altogether, but he limited his actions to private consultations with influential magnates whose powers were so far reaching that they would not be undermined by changes on the political scene[65].

On 17 November 1733, Woodward was visited by the starost of Wieluń who presented the envoy with a document justifying the appointment of Frederick Augustus as king, and asked the diplomat to forward it to the British court. Woodward wrote to Harrington that he was unable to deny the starost's request because the same set of documents had been handed to other foreign ministers and had been accepted[66]. The Elector of Saxony was hoping to speed up his coronation and get a firm grasp of the Polish throne. Woodward was disoriented, and he informed Harrington that he had received divergent reports claiming that Stanisław Leszczyński's Diet of Coronation would be held in Cracow on 6 January 1734, and Augustus' coronation – also in Cracow, but on 19 January 1734. The British diplomat must have been relieved when he excused himself from attending Wettin's coronation with the following words: "a publick Minister cou'd not stir from the Place he

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[62] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 10 October 1733, f. 242, 244–244v.

[63] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 22 October 1733, f. 254, 5 XI 1733, f. 277.

[64] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hampton Court, 26 October 1733 o.s., f. 252–253, Whitehall, 6 November 1733 o.s., f. 266–266v, 9 November 1733 o.s., f. 268, 13 November 1733 o.s., f. 275; NA, SP 88/43, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 12 March 1733/4 o.s., f. 29.

[65] NA, SP 88/42, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 29 October 1733, f. 271.

[66] The message was sent in a letter of 12 November 1733, but owing to problems with the post, Woodward was forced to compile reports covering several consecutive days into a single letter. The discussed news was registered on 18 November 1733. Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 12 November 1733, f. 291.

was sent to, without particular Orders from his Court"[67]. This diplomatic refusal earned him George II's esteem, and London politicians concluded that Woodward should develop an appropriate political stance by the time Augustus III arrives in Warsaw. Harrington promised to send the relevant instructions in the following letter, and he justified the British court's restraint in addressing the matter by the uncertainty as to whether the orders would directly reach the envoy[68]. At the beginning of the new year, Harrington wrote that since George II had not yet decided to recognize Leszczyński or Frederick August as the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Woodward's conduct should be tuned in to the British monarch's position if either of the elects were to visit Warsaw. Dutch minister Carel Rumpf received similar instructions, and the British envoy was to consult the diplomat in the event of doubt. Should Woodward conclude that his actions were frowned upon, he was to leave Poland and await further orders in a safe location[69].

The arrival of the much awaited instructions did not change Woodward's hitherto course of action. They only asserted his conviction that the avoidance of direct confrontation was the most appropriate policy and the only reasonable choice in view of George II's position on the situation in Poland. Backed by the Saxon and Russian armies and a confederation formed in the election camp[70], Augustus III quickly assumed power and felt confident enough to reinstate normal operations in the court. Woodward had to resort to diplomatic excuses to deny invitations to royal receptions, balls and ceremonies[71]. It seems that Augustus III's ministers were aware of the British's envoy's predicament, and they made no attempts to further complicate his situation[72].

In 1734, Woodward sent highly elaborate reports to the court in London. He wrote about everything that could be of interest to his superiors, including the situation in Gdańsk which had offered refuge to Stanisław Leszczyński[73]

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[67] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 7 December 1733, f. 308v–309. Augustus III's coronation was held on 17 January 1734, but the Diet of Coronation did not take place due to a poor turnout. J. Staszewski, *August III Sas*, Wrocław et al. 1989, p. 153.

[68] NA, SP 88/42, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 28 December 1733 o.s., f. 324–324v.

[69] NA, SP 88/43, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 1 January1733/4 o.s., f. 1–2.

[70] W. Stanek, *Konfederacje generalne koronne w XVIII wieku*, Toruń 1991, p. 31

[71] NA, SP 88/43, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 30 January 1734, f. 8v, 7 August 1734, f. 182v, 9 December 1734, f. 277; NA, SP 88/44, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 19 May 1735, f. 110v.

[72] "[…] Orders will be given to their Minister in England, to thank the King for leaving me here, and tho' they [Brühl and Sułkowski – B. K.-C.] find I cannot go to their Court, they don't seem to take it ill in any wise, but say that they are in hopes. Affairs will soon take so favourable a turn for them, that I shall be accredited to the King their Master […]". NA, SP 88/43, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 9 December 1734, f. 276.

[73] For more information on the siege, see: E. Cieślak, *W obronie tronu króla Stanisława Leszczyńskiego*, Gdańsk 1986, pp. 51-etc. Joshua Kenworthy, a British resident in Gdańsk, delivered more in-depth reports on the situation in the city to Harrington in 1734. NA, SP 88/43, passim.

and had remained under Russian siege since January 1734. He reported on Leszczyński's stay in Konigsberg, the plans and moves of both political camps and their leaders, the conflict between the Russians, Saxons and Leszczyński's supporters, the feelings and perceptions of the nobility, the Dzików Confederation formed on 5 November 1734 under the leadership of Adam Tarło[74], the instructions and activities of other diplomats residing in Poland. Woodward described various court events and reported on the health and well-being of prominent magnates. To make the picture complete, Woodward enclosed copies and abstracts of various documents, such as manifestos, legal acts, instructions and letters[75]. In his reports, the British envoy made few references to the war of the Polish succession that broke out in the West in October 1733[76]. In nearly all letters posted in 1734, Woodward complained about massive problems with the postal service. Continued political instability and the activity of Leszczyński's troops prevented letters from arriving on time, many parcels were opened and some never reached the addressees. The British diplomat wrote to Weston, the undersecretary of state: "so you see how the Law of the Nations is observed; To complain one does not know to whom, and if one did, I am persuaded 'twoud be to very little purpose"[77].

Woodward was probably beginning to feel increasingly ill at ease in Poland. The constant uncertainty as to his diplomatic mission, health problems resulting from the harsh Polish climate[78] and obstructed communication with England made his work very difficult in a country torn by civil war. The news that Dutch minister Rumpf, whom Woodward was to consult in his diplomatic endeavors, was to be temporarily transferred to an outpost to Berlin was the proverbial pinch of salt that was rubbed into the envoy's already festering wounds[79]. Although convinced by Harrington that his stay in Poland was the most rational solution, Woodward was beginning to see the futility of his actions. During the time of unrest and disturbances, his departure from Warsaw could prove to be dangerous. George II had no other missions that he could entrust to Woodward. Realizing that the envoy's morale was running low, the undersecretary of state spared Woodward no praise, claiming that the diplomat had demonstrated great prudence in a highly complex situation and that his detailed reports were held in great esteem by the king[80].

The political situation in the Polish-Lithuanian state began to stabilize in 1735. The members of the Dzików confederation scored a certain success

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[74] For more information on the confederation established in Leszczyński's defense, refer to: S. Truchim, *Konfederacja Dzikowska*, Poznań 1921.

[75] NA, SP 88/43, passim.

[76] Ref.: J. L. Sutton, *The King's honor & the King's Cardinal. The war of the Polish succession*, Lexington 1980.

[77] NA, SP 88/43, G. Woodward to E. Weston, Warsaw, 8 September 1734, f. 219v.

[78] NA, SP 88/44, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 9 July 1735, f. 177.

[79] NA, SP 88/43, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 12 March 1734, f. 41.

[80] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Whitehall, 23 April 1734 o.s., f. 71–71v.

in the first half of the year, but they were hoping for foreign support, and their efforts lacked competence. Leszczyński's supporters initiated a wide-scale diplomatic campaign and sent diplomatic missions to several European countries[81]. Those efforts proved to be fruitless[82]. Augustus III's camp was quickly gaining power with a growing number of Leszczyński's former aides pledging loyalty to the House of Wettin[83]. The possibility of George II recognizing Augustus III as the king of Poland was gradually becoming reality.

In the war waged in Western Europe, France and its allies achieved the anticipated goals. In mid 1735, Charles VI's army fighting on the Rhine was backed by 12,000 Russian soldiers under the command of Field Marshal Lascy, but this event had no bearing on the course of the war. Around that time, French and imperial diplomats embarked on secret peace talks in Vienna.

England and Holland recognized their role of conflict mediators, and at the beginning of 1735, they drafted a plan for reconciling the parties fighting in the war of the Polish succession. Their project accounted for the situation in Poland-Lithuania[84]. A part of the plan pertaining to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth reached Woodward on 23 March 1735 with orders instructing the envoy to keep the information in strict confidence and discuss it only with Augustus III's ministers when absolutely necessary. By the time the document reached Woodward, its contents had already ceased to be confidential "as the whole Plan is now become public having been sent from Holland by several hands"[85]. Woodward informed Harrington that the project had not met major opposition, then again, the British envoy made no attempts to subject it to serious debate[86].

In July 1735, Woodward had strong hopes for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Polish-Lithuanian state[87]. When Primate Teodor Potocki and Janusz Wiśniowiecki, the Castellan of Cracow, turned to Woodward with a request for George II's mediation in the conflict between the Commonwealth and Russia, the British envoy replied that although the British king wished Poland-Lithuania nothing but the best, he had no intentions of be-

[81] Woodward informed Harrington of Dzików confederates' plans to send starost Jabłonowski to England and Holland. NA, SP 88/44, Warsaw, 12 January 1735, f. 6v.

[82] For more information on confederate outposts in European courts, see: S. Askenazy, *Przedostatnie bezkrólewie*, in: S. Askenazy, *Dwa stulecia XVIII i XIX. Badania i przyczynki*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1903, pp. 131-etc.

[83] Numerous references to members of the confederation or entire divisions pledging support to Augustus III can be found in Woodward's letters in NA, SP 88/44, passim.

[84] NA, SP 88/44, *Projet l'Accommodement ou de pacification, qu'en suite de l'acceptation de l'Offre de leurs bons Offices le Roi de la Grande Bretagne et les Etats Generaux proposent aux Puissances engage'es dans la presente Guerre*, f. 42–47

[85] He is referring to a copy that the Dutch minister had received from the Hague. Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 24 March 1735, f. 79.

[86] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 31 March 1735, f. 81v, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw 23 July 1735, f. 197v–198.

[87] Ibidem, G. Woodward to E. Weston, Warsaw, 30 July 1735, f. 209.

coming involved in its internal affairs ("mediation" implied official recognition of Augustus III as the king of Poland). If other issues were to require the British monarch's mediation after the parties had brought the matter to a satisfactory closure, George II would be happy to offer his assistance[88].

The Diet of Pacification was scheduled for 27 September 1735. Woodward saw it as a prime opportunity to push for the Protestant cause. He asked Tilson, the Under-Secretary of State, whether he should bring up the issue before the Russian court "which is all mighty in these parts and nothing to be done without them"[89]. Harrington instructed Woodward to seek the advice of Hermann Karl von Keyserling, the Russian minister in Warsaw, and the Secretary of State assured the envoy that appropriate steps would be taken in the Petersburg court[90]. In the following letter, he informed Woodward that the Russian savereign would dispatch appropriate instructions to its representative in Poland. Woodward was also provided with a copy of the letter that George II had received from the burgesses of Gdańsk, requesting the British monarch's intercession on behalf of the dissidents in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Harrington instructed Woodward to support the dissidents' cause in a shared effort with the ministers of other Protestant countries[91]. Heinrich von Brühl, a minister to Augustus III, and Russian minister Keyserling convinced the envoy that any attempts to place the Protestant issue on the agenda could break up the Diet of Pacification whose priority objective was to restore peace in the country[92]. George II fully agreed with their arguments, and he expressed his hopes that the Protestant community would understand that their fate could be improved only in a peaceful country that abides by the rule of law. The Court of St. James's instructed Woodward to remain vigilant and continue working with Keyserling and other diplomats on the dissident issue[93]. Woodward skillfully summarized the need to postpone the Protestant cause until better times: "We must let our Protestant Case sleep a while unless the Enemy awake"[94].

The abandonment of the Protestant case did not save the Diet of Pacification which ended its 6-week debate on 7 November without choosing a marshal of the Diet[95]. On 3 October 1735, French and imperial diplomats signed preliminary peace treaties in Vienna[96]. The news reached the Warsaw court on 21 October, and it was received with great dismay. Following

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[88] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 16 July 1735, f. 181v, 13 August 1735, f. 223v–224.

[89] Ibidem, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 9 July 1735, f. 177v.

[90] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hanover, 10/21 July 1735 o.s., f. 179–179v.

[91] NA, SP 88/45, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hanover, 31 August/1 September 1735 o.s.

[92] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 27 August 1735, 10 September 1735.

[93] Ibidem, Harrington to G. Woodward, Hanover, 2/13 October 1735 o.s.

[94] Ibidem, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 8 October 1735.

[95] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 2 November 1735, 9 November 1735.

[96] E. Cieślak, op. cit., p. 250.

a series of meetings with Charles VI's envoy, Franz Karl von Wratislaw von Mitrowitz, who was instructed to discretion, as well as Dutch and British ministers who were unable to produce any information as the French-Austrian peace talks had been held behind the back of maritime powers, many Poles were convinced that the news had been fabricated by Augustus III's court[97]. The monarch's ministers were no less surprised. Woodward noted that "this Court seems surprized that the Imperial Ministers have made them no communication of their Negociation with France"[98] (original spelling). For Leszczyński's supporters, Louis XV's conciliation with Charles VI meant an end to their dreams of victory. The Polish throne had been given to the House of Wettin. Leszczyński kept his royal title, and he was awarded the duchies of Bar and Lorraine which were to be incorporated into France after his death. The period of diarchy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth came to an end when Stanisław Leszczyński signed an act of abdication on 27 January 1736 in Konigsberg. His supporters vehemently opposed the declaration[99], but such were the wishes of the king of France, and Leszczyński lacked the power or the courage to dispute them.

George Woodward never witnessed the end of the succession conflict in Poland. He died in Warsaw on 11 December 1735 after a three weeks' illness at the age of 38. The letter in which George II recognized Augustus III as the king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was delivered to Grand Marshal Józef Mniszech by Denton Boate, secretary of the British outpost, who unofficially assumed Woodward's duties after his on 24 June 1736, i.e. on the eve of the Diet of Pacification, which put an end to the civil war[100].

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[97] NA, SP 88/45, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 26 October 1735.

[98] Ibidem, G. Woodward to Harrington, Warsaw, 19 November 1735.

[99] NA, SP 88/46, A. Gibson to Harrington, Konigsberg, 26 January 1736, G. Woodward to G. Tilson, Danzig, 4 February 1736.

[100] NA, SP 88/45, I. Coulliette to G. Tilson, Warsaw, 7 December 1735, 10 December 1735, 11 December 1735. The body was transported to the British Isles and buried in Hillesden, Buckingham. G. Lipscomb, *Journey into South Wales, through the counties of Oxford, Warwick, Worcester, Hereford, Salop, Stafford, Buckingham and Hertford; in the year 1799*, London 1802, pp. 365–366.