

JACEK KANIEWSKI

The Financial Backstage of the Fight for the Polish Crown after the Abdication of and before the Election of Michael in the Light of the Reports off Elector's Diplomats

In the presented article, the author has concentrated on the presentation of the backroom activities of the brandenburgian elector's diplomats who resided in the Republic of Poland in the years 1668–1669. The main diplomats of the elector Friedrich Wilhelm Hohenzollern in that time were: Johann von Hoverbeck, Joachim Scultetus, Eusebius Brandt and Friedrich Jena. In the article there is shown an elaborate diplomatic game and actions using money and given promises to acquire political allies who would declare themselves for a candidate to a Polish crown – prince Philip Wilhelm Neuburg – supported by Friedrich Wilhelm Hohenzollern and Ludwik XIV. Branderburgian-Prussian diplomats were leading talks, meeting the former king, Jan Kazimierz and officials of high rank to test their opinion and eventually pull them on their side. There is shown in the article that one of the ways to acquire political allies in the election fight was corruption used by foreign diplomats. The author, using the archival sources has presented diplomatic activities, in which money or a promise of a grace or an office was a price for received support or service. It was possible to examine what sums of money were offered in these political auctions and to whom they were given, how people who were interested were increasing prices by themselves, sometimes playing on both sides. There is presented a game of elector Friedrich Wilhelm's diplomats, tending not only to corrupt magnates and important officials on the election time, but also they were trying to gain long-range aims by winning persons in high positions in the authority and official hierarchy and on this way to gain precious and secret information about Polish politics.

The political result of the election was unexpected, as the nobility has rejected foreign candidates to choose the native one – 19th June 1669 the prince Michat Korybut Wiśniowiecki was elected to be a king of Poland. A big group of nobility were showing hostility toward backroom activity of senators and diplomats and a corruption used by them. It is worth to pay attention that the estimation of a new monarch by the elector's diplomats was very quick. They decided that a choice of him would not be unprofitable for the elector what was a very clear proof that the Friedrich Wilhelm's politics toward Poland was negative. In the conclusion, the author presented the then estimation of the corruption issue and opinions of contemporary academics who investigate this problem.

WOJCIECH SZCZYGIELSKI

Seym and Local Diets on the History of the Mild Revolution

In the old Polish political culture a deputy was regarded not as a representative of the whole nation (gentry) but as a mandatary of a local diet obliged to follow the binding instruction he received from the diet (imperative mandate). At the end of the 18th century it was necessary to change this situation. This problem was to be solved by the Great Seym (1788–1792), which in this article is associated with the notion of a mild revolution. The Polish mild revolution was a great social movement dominated by the enlightened landed gentry, who strongly believed in the fundamental legislative role of the Seym convened in Warsaw in 1788. This Seym became confederated Seym (taking decisions on all questions by a simple majority vote) and permanent governing Seym (combining legislative and executive powers and permanently in session). The great role of the permanent Seym was that it elevated the middle gentry to the position of the real sovereign of the Commonwealth. Owing to this the

enlightened provincial gentry was able to identify with the deputies debating in Warsaw as far as political reforms were concerned. The enlightened landed gentry greatly appreciated the legislative activity of the Sejm, thanks to which the prestige of the deputies as real representatives of the interests of the provincial gentry was increasing. At the same time the landed gentry became more and more disappointed in the binding instruction. During the local diets in February and November 1790 the landed gentry realized that the local diets were dominated by political forces which made it impossible for the enlightened provincial gentry to fully politically identify with the Sejm debating in Warsaw. Hence the provincial gentry started to distrust the binding instruction and began to accept the idea of a deputy as a representative of the whole gentry. The new concepts of the gentry concerning the relations between the Sejm and local diets were shaped not on the theoretical grounds but in the course of political events dominated by the mild revolution. These changes in the consciousness of the provincial gentry made it easier for the king, who was the opponent of the binding instruction, to introduce to the Third of May Constitution the decision that a deputy is a representative of the nation. The new relations between the Sejm and the local diets were shown by the fact that local diets played the role of a specifically understood referendum expressing moral and political opinions and not taking binding decisions. After the Third of May Constitution local diets were reduced to the role of constituencies.