

princess both confined themselves to mysterious hints.⁸³ But the result was unmistakable.

Fortunately for the Habsburgs, at roughly the same time it became clear that the Ottomans were going to fight Poland rather than exploit the Emperor's difficulties in Hungary.⁸⁴ This turn of events put Eleonora in a dilemma: She loyally swore that she would rather see Poland go to pieces than endanger the prospects of the dynasty by pleading for a war on two fronts. But she did continue to throw her weight behind the Polish special envoy's efforts to persuade the Emperor to support Michal Korybut more vigorously.⁸⁵ With hindsight, at least, it is obvious that in this case she was at cross-purposes with Leopold who was determined to avoid any such entanglements. The Emperor only offered a single regiment to his brother-in-law that was supposed to safeguard Cracow in the worst-case scenario of an Ottoman breakthrough.⁸⁶

Leopold's ministers were very much in two minds about the peace of Buczacz that Poland had been forced to sign with the Ottomans in October, 1672.⁸⁷ They piously claimed that war made it more likely that the nation would rally behind the king.⁸⁸ As usual, Leopold did not want to be blamed for the results one way or the other: Stom was told to refrain from any comments or advice on the crucial question of war and peace. Leopold added: It would certainly be against all reason for him to attract the ire of the Turks right now that Poland was on the point of signing the peace.⁸⁹ Eleonora cannot have been too pleased. There was a brief revival of her interventionist spirits after Michal's death in late 1673. When the news of Jan Sobieski's election reached Vienna in May 1674, Eleonora is supposed to have cried for three hours.⁹⁰ But her pleas for an armed intervention fell on stony ground.⁹¹ By now, her allies among the hawks – including Lorraine – clearly wanted to concentrate on the Western Front.

⁸³ Ibidem, fol. 239 (18 March), 247 (1 April), 264 (3 May 1672). Gremonville offered various explanations: Either Eleonora had taken offence because she interpreted his complaints about her patronage of Canossa as hints about an improper relationship – or she resented him spreading the rumour that she had initially agreed to the plot replacing Michal Korybut. In the end, however, Gremonville even claimed the estrangement had been just a charade to confuse observers.

⁸⁴ Ibidem, fol. 260v (21 & 27 April 1672); Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 94 (16 April 1672); KA, AFA 172, 1672/XIII/69 (4 April 1672), 83 (13 May 1672).

⁸⁵ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 90 (2 April 1672); ibidem 140, no. 148 (17 Sept. 1672), 151 (24 Sept. 1672), 185 (7 Jan. 1673); W. G. von Antal & J. C. H. de Pater, eds., *Weensche Gezantschapsberichten van 1670 tot 1720, vol. I: 1670-1697* (s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1929), 48 (17 July 1672).

⁸⁶ HHStA, ÖGStR 53, Fasz. 41/2, no. 51, fol. 199, Leopold to Stomm 23 Oct. 1672.

⁸⁷ HHStA, ÖGStR 53, Fasz. 41/2, fol. 237, conference conclusions 26 Oct. 1672.

⁸⁸ To some extent, they were right: The renewal of the Turkish war was accompanied by an internal truce on 12 March 1673 (Hagenau, *Sobieski*, 331).

⁸⁹ HHStA, ÖGStR 53, Fasz. 41/2, no. 51, fol. 199; no. 54, fol. 223, 228 (23 Oct. 1672).

⁹⁰ HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 500 (17 May 1674).

⁹¹ Miguel Conde Pazos, "La misión diplomática de Don Pedro Ronquillo en Varsovia con motivo de la elección de Juan Sobieski como Rey de Polonia en 1674," *Pedralbes* 38 (2018): 187-227; here: 218.

III. TROUBLE WITH THE MEDICI RELATIVES

During those years, her Polish relations were not Eleonora's only worry. After all, the Dowager Empress was a Mantuan princess. At roughly the same time that Poland and the Dutch were asking for Austrian help, Eleonora instigated a semi-private campaign against her ex-sister-in-law. Her Brother Duke Carlo II had married a Tyrolean Archduchess, Isabella Clara (1629-85), the daughter of a Medici princess who ran the Tyrol after her husband's death. There was little love lost between the Italian relatives. When Eleonora's brother died in August 1665, there were rumours of poison and foul play. The scandal was exacerbated when Isabella Clara was accused of consorting with a low-born lover, allegedly from a family of converted Jews, Carlo Bulgarini.⁹²

The only redeeming feature was that in 1671, Isabella's son Duke Ferdinando Carlo (1652-1708) was married to Anna Isabella, the heiress of the Gonzaga cadet branch of Guastalla that counted as clients of Spain. Thus, when news reached Vienna that the newly-weds had separated, Eleonora finally lost patience with her nephew – and his mother. What Eleonora saw as her trump card – then and later – was the threat to bankrupt the Duchy by withdrawing her dowry.⁹³ She sent Count Gottlieb Windisch-Graetz to Mantua as a trouble-shooter to sort things out. Windisch-Graetz was a rising young diplomat who had just returned from Paris.⁹⁴ If he acted in the Emperor's name, it was still fairly clear who was the moving spirit behind his mission. The Venetian reports spoke of the extraordinary pressure Eleonora applied.⁹⁵ Actually, Windisch-Graetz's official reports were addressed to Eleonora (even if he sent copies to Leopold).⁹⁶

Windisch-Graetz arrived in Mantua in October 1671. He confirmed the reports about the “disordinatissimo vita” of the young Duke. It wasn't just the usual “libidinous” infidelities or the tension between Anna and her mother-in-law that upset his relatives. His Guastalla in-laws insisted that his young wife was in mortal danger as long as Bulgarini continued to be around.⁹⁷ Windisch-Graetz happily cited the example of Louis XIII who had intervened in Savoy and arrested his sister Cristina's lover d'Aglié a generation earlier. He hinted at love trysts of the Dowager Duchess on boat

⁹² Giancarlo Malacarne, *I Gonzaga-Nevers: Morte di una dinastia. Da Carlo I a Ferdinando Carlo (1628-1708)* (Modena: Il Bulino, 2008), 175, 184; Alessandro Bianchi, *Al servizio del principe. Diplomazia e corte nel ducato di Mantova 1665-1708* (Milano: Unicopli, 2012), 64; Coniglio, *I Gonzaga*, 456.

⁹³ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 14 (19 Sept. 1671); on the dowry question see *ibidem* 155, no. 29 (28 Sept. 1681); Daniela Frigo, “Les deux impératrices de la Maison de Gonzague et la politique italienne de l'empire (1622-1686),” *Dix-Septième Siècle* 243 (2009), 219-237. Apparently only a fifth of her dowry had actually been paid – something that was far from unusual, though.

⁹⁴ Windisch-Graetz at that time was still a Protestant; he only converted in 1683; see HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 95, 183, 186v, 188, 221; Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648-1740)* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1976), 242.

⁹⁵ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 14 (19 Sept. 1671).

⁹⁶ HHStA, Österreichische Geheime Staatsregistratur (ÖGStR) 59, Faszikel 45/2.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, Windisch-Graetz to Eleonore, 2 Dec. 1671; see also Bianchi, *Al servizio del principe*, 70-74.

tours but unfortunately divulged no juicy details: “There are a thousand particulars that one could not entrust to paper...”⁹⁸

It was not just Isabella’s private life that raised hackles. Even worse, she also committed political infidelities. When faced with the ire of her Viennese relatives, she threatened to flee to her mother’s native Florence and appeal to the Sun King for help.⁹⁹ In the end, by fair means or foul, Isabella Clara was persuaded to enter the convent of Santa Orsola, where Eleonora herself had once received her education. The Dowager Empress even lobbied the Pope to allow Isabella to dispense with the customary probationary period (“noviziato”) to make sure she stayed in her convent.¹⁰⁰ Bulgarini, too, was supposed to be locked up in a monastery. Moreover, Windisch-Graetz managed to ensure that Eleonora’s favourites, the brothers Orazio and Luigi Canossa, took over the running of the Duchy.¹⁰¹ However, Eleonora’s victory proved to be short-lived. Already one year later, there were reports of conspiratorial meetings in Bulgarini’s cell; Isabella openly celebrated her “outing” from S. Orsola. Orazio Canossa died in the spring of 1673; his brother Luigi, as Imperial plenipotentiary, was summarily banished from Mantua.¹⁰²

1673 was a dismal year for Eleonora, for several reasons. During the mid-1670’s her influence at the Court of Vienna probably reached a low point. After the death of his Spanish wife in the spring of 1673, Leopold was persuaded to remarry with almost unseemly haste.¹⁰³ His choice fell on Isabella Clara’s Tyrolean niece that had long been courted by the Duke of York (later James II). The Alpine beauty had been dangled in front of the Stuarts as an inducement to join the Emperor rather than the Bourbons during the Dutch War. Eleonora had supported that idea, as did the Spanish.¹⁰⁴ But the negotiations dragged on interminably. Once Margarita Teresa had died, Leopold exercised his right of first refusal. Claudia Felicitas was described as proud and string-willed, a trait of character she shared with her mother who moved with her to Vienna. For the first time there was real rivalry between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Empress. Eleonora and her daughter who had returned from Poland after Korybut’s death were in danger of being overshadowed by the Tyrolean-Medici connection.¹⁰⁵

The hawkish Dowager Empress and the ‘appeaser’ Lobkovic had been antagonists on foreign policy issues. Yet, far from gloating over his fall from grace in

⁹⁸ Ibidem, Windisch-Graetz report 26 Nov. 1671, fol. 1, 2, 5.

⁹⁹ Ibidem, Windisch-Graetz reports 29 Oct. 1671, fol. 9; 26 Nov. 1671, fol. 8. Isabella Clara had apparently also tried to arrange a marriage between one of her Tyrolean nieces and Louis XIV’s brother.

¹⁰⁰ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 58 (9 Jan. 1672).

¹⁰¹ Gremonville had already reported such a plan in the spring. Mignet (ed.), *Negotiations* III 523 (31 May 1671).

¹⁰² Francesco Vecchiato, “Tra Asburgo e Bourbon. La tragedia di Louis Canossa, ministro dell’ultimo duca di Mantova,” *Archivio Veneto* 183 (1997): 67-130.

¹⁰³ Mitchell, *Mariana of Austria*, 156.

¹⁰⁴ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 87 (26 March 1672); Alfred F. Pribram, “Ein Habsburg-Stuart’sches Heiratsprojekt,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 29 (1908): 423-466.

¹⁰⁵ HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 503 (5 June 1674); Alfred v. Arneth, *Prinz Eugen* (Vienna: 1864), vol. I, 195.

May 1674, they found themselves in the same boat in terms of factional in-fighting. Lobkovic had also managed to antagonize the Tyrolean Medici ladies. Part of Lobkovic's disgrace rubbed off on Eleonora. Some members of her entourage (like Zinzendorf) privately even showed signs of solidarity with the fallen giant.¹⁰⁶ Hermann von Baden, too, had often mused that if Lobkovic was toppled, his successors might turn out to be even worse.¹⁰⁷ All politics is local. While some saw Lobkovic's fall from grace as a triumph of Spanish influence now that Vienna and Madrid were once again war-time allies, others regarded it as the final step towards a take-over by the domestic network of the Moravian magnate Prince Ferdinand Dietrichstein, often called the father-in-law of the monarchy, who continued in office as the new Empress's mayordomo.¹⁰⁸

It took some time, until March 1675, before Leopold allowed his half-sister to leave Poland and move back to Habsburg Silesia, at least.¹⁰⁹ The Spanish Ambassador, the Marquess of Balbases, apparently launched the idea that she should marry her first love Charles of Lorraine and move to Brussels as regents of the Spanish Netherlands (with himself as a power behind the scenes).¹¹⁰ In 1675, her mother Eleonora also had a falling-out with her mayordomo Count Albrecht Zinzendorf.¹¹¹ Even Leopold was apparently perplexed as to the reasons for Zinzendorf's dismissal. Perhaps Zinzendorf's failings as a financial manager counted against him. He was certainly unable to pay for Eleonora's extra expenses out of his own pocket as his predecessors Montecuccoli and Marradas were supposed to have done.¹¹²

However, Empress Claudia Felicitas died in April 1676. Eleonora's prospects improved with Leopold's third marriage to Eleonora of Pfalz-Neuburg. There was a certain irony at work. The 'appeaser' Lobkovic had always been suspected of partiality for the Neuburg family who happened to be cousins of his wife. Duke Philipp of Pfalz-Neuburg had been politically suspect as a fellow-traveller of Louis XIV or at least as a neutralist during the initial stages of the Dutch War. His daughter's marriage in 1676 ushered in a diplomatic revolution en miniature. The Neuburg family – who included a crowd of brothers who were avid collectors of prince-bishoprics – became steadfast allies of the Emperor. They also became allies of the Dowager Empress, with both exercising “no little weight”, each “in their particular manner”, as the Dutch envoy reported.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, fol. 516v (30 Sept. 1674) 523 (11 Nov. 1674); for Zinzendorf's and Sinelli's comments see fol. 514 (14 Sept.), 506 (1 July), 508v (28 July).

¹⁰⁷ HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 167 (3 Dec. 1671), 211v (6 Feb. 1672).

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem, fol. 516v (30 Sept. 1674); 521v (6 Nov. 1674); Rostislav Smíšek, *Česářské dvůr a dvorská kariéra Dietrichštejnů a Schwarzenberků za vlády Leopolda I.* (České Budějovice: Editio UBM, 2009), 341-371.

¹⁰⁹ HHStA, ÖGStR 57, Faszikel 43/1, no. 38, fol. 79 (Leopold to Thurn 27 Oct. 1674), no. 59, fol. 131 (31 Dec. 1674), no. 96, fol. 218 (9 March 1675).

¹¹⁰ HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 516v (30 Sept. 1674).

¹¹¹ Kirchberger, “Briefe Kaiser Leopold I. an P. Emmerich Sinelli,” 144 (23 Jan. 1675): “Ipse autem timeo imperatricem non facile de sua opinione cessuram, et tali casu ipse non libenter tali dominae inservirem, quam tantum scilicet amorem erga me haberet.” This time no background information to be found in Dispacci di Germania 144, no. 104 (10 Feb. 1675).

¹¹² HHStA, Pufendorf diary, fol. 507 (10 July 1674).

¹¹³ Antal & de Pater, eds., *Weensche Gezantschapsberichten*, 253 (18 May 1681).

The new Empress's eldest brother Johann Wilhelm, who was to inherit the Electoral Palatinate in 1690, married Eleonora's younger daughter Anna Maria in 1678. Her elder sister, the widowed Queen of Poland, was finally allowed to marry Charles V of Lorraine. Geographically, she stepped into the shoes of her erstwhile Medici rivals. Charles had refused to accept Louis XIV's conditions for his return to Nancy, as laid down by the Peace of Nijmegen. As a suitable alternative for an Imperial brother-in-law he was appointed governor of the Tyrol.¹¹⁴ While her husband only visited the Tyrol during the winter, the ex-Queen of Poland now resided in the Innsbruck Hofburg, right across from the Church where Maximilian as the founder of the family fortune had wanted to be buried.

IV. MANTUA AND THE MONFERRATO

Mantua also was the starting point for Eleonora's next major intervention in politics. Only this time the stakes were much higher. For a few crucial months she became a stalwart supporter – indeed a “boute-feu” – of the pro-Spanish faction that increasingly pushed the business-as-usual appeasers into the background. In 1680, Louis XIV started with his (in)famous ‘reunions’, expanding French suzerainty by no more than 5 villages a week, as his Minister of War Louvois quipped.¹¹⁵ This strategy culminated in the seizure of Strasbourg in September 1681 which created outrage in Germany. However, the aspect of Louis' expansionary moves that threatened Eleonora's interests had little to do with the Rhine and much more with the Po and her native Mantua.

The Duke of Mantua, young Ferdinando Carlo, did not take kindly to the treatment meted out to his mother. He made no secret of his aversion to the Imperial Court and to the Germans.¹¹⁶ The Gonzaga inheritance included the Monferrato; the Monferrato included the fortress of Casale. If Casale became French, Casale and Pinerolo formed a French vice against Savoy. As early as 1659, Eleonora had reacted violently to the possibility of a clause being inserted into the Peace of the Pyrenees that the fortress should be dismantled.¹¹⁷ To prevent Casale from falling into the wrong hands the Spanish were supposed to pay towards the upkeep of the garrison. Unfortunately, the payment of Spanish subsidies all over Europe was subject to severe delays. The money for Casale was supposed to be paid out of Sicilian revenues. Once the rebellion of Messina occurred, those funds dried up. To subsidize the high life (and “voluptuous pleasures”) of an Italian princeling did not rank high on Madrid's list of priorities.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Hans Kramer, “Herzog Karl V. von Lothringen und Königinwitwe Eleonore in Tirol,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 62 (1954): 460-489.

¹¹⁵ Camille Rousset, *Histoire de Louvois et son administration politique et militaire* (Paris: Didier, 1891), vol. III, 24 (10 Jan. 1680).

¹¹⁶ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 62 (6 Aug. 1682).

¹¹⁷ Pribram, ed., *Venetianische Berichte*, 247 (14 June 1659), 254 (28 June 1659), 298 (26 Sept. 1659).

¹¹⁸ HHStA, Vorträge 5, 1679, fol. 37 (conference conclusions 1 March 1679); Luis Ribot, *La Monarquía de España y la guerra de Mesina (1674-1678)* (Madrid: Actas, 2002), 381-3, Schoder, “Reichsitalien,” 37, 65-9, 184, 208, 254.

Even in Isabella Clara's days there had been rumours that she was putting out feelers to the French about Casale.¹¹⁹ Ferdinando Carlo chose to regard the delayed Spanish payments as a breach of contract that provided him with an excuse to start negotiating with the French about a lease of Casale. The first round of talks collapsed dramatically when his chief minister Ercole Mattioli tried to play both sides and was kidnapped by the French in 1679 (giving rise to rumours that he was the famous 'prisoner with the iron mask' incarcerated in Pinerolo).¹²⁰ Mattioli's manoeuvres served to delay the plan but did not prevent its final execution. In the autumn of 1681, the required sum was finally sent to Mantua in barrels of wine. On 30 September, the same day the French entered Strasbourg, they also marched into Casale.¹²¹

Austrian diplomats were alarmed, not just for the sake of Casale. On the one hand, the coup against Casale happened just at the time when the French-born Dowager Duchess of Savoy, Marie-Jeanne de Nemours, was trying to ship her sixteen-year-old son Vittorio Amadeo II off to Portugal where he was supposed to marry her niece, the Princess Isabella Luisa.¹²² Thus the House of Savoy would finally achieve royal rank – and his mother would be able to prolong her regency indefinitely. Unless a way could be found to encourage Vittorio Amadeo to defy his mother and stay at home, Savoy would thus be safely anchored within the orbit of French alliances for the foreseeable future. With France now able to put extra pressure on Savoy, the opportunity costs of Habsburg passivity could be high. As the Imperial ambassador in Venice, Francesco della Torre, put it in a highly dramatic fashion: The Dowager Empress needed to act before the young Duke was “violated” by his mother.¹²³

On the other hand, even closer at home, if Ferdinando Carlo was willing to barter away Casale, Eleonora was afraid the rake's progress might continue with handing over Guastalla to the French, thus threatening Spanish Milan from both East and West.¹²⁴ Even worse, he might as well exchange his native Mantua for some wealthier but strategically less crucial French principality.¹²⁵ Moreover, the Duke's rickety marriage had not yet been blessed with children. In that case, Eleonora – or her descendants – were next in line to inherit the Monferrato. The Dowager Empress was adamant: since her daughter, the ex-Queen of Poland, had married an exiled “lackland” prince, the Emperor must not allow her to be cheated out of this

¹¹⁹ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 139, no. 25 (17 Oct. 1671).

¹²⁰ For a contrary view see Jean-Christian Petitfils, “Le Masque de fer démasqué?” in *Les énigmes de l'histoire de France*, ed. Jean-Christian Petitfils (Paris: Perrin 2018), 153-172, here: 165.

¹²¹ Rousset, *Louvois* III, 102-140; Schoder, “Reichsitalien,” 94-104, 331-346; Malacarne, *I Gonzaga-Nevers*, 194-207, 224-230.

¹²² Robert Oresko, “Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours (1644-1724), daughter, consort and regent of Savoy,” in *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815. The Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarisse Campbell Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16-55; Rousset, *Louvois* III, 133, 153, 279; Carl A. Hanson, *Economy and Society in Baroque Portugal, 1668-1703* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 153.

¹²³ HHStA, ÖGStR 57, Faszikel 43/2, no. 117, fol. 75 (21 Feb. 1682).

¹²⁴ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, no. 46 (2 Nov. 1681).

¹²⁵ HHStA, Vorträge 5, IX-XII 1681, fol. 36v (30 Sept 1681); see della Torre's reports in HHStA, ÖGStR 57, Faszikel 43/2, no. 89, fol. 435v (4 Oct. 1681), no. 105, fol. 19v (6 Dec. 1681); HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1683, fol. 38v, 46 (1 April 1683) already produced a far more sceptical reactions to the rumours about French designs on Mantua.

inheritance.¹²⁶ At the same time, Ferdinando Carlo was said to be trying to legitimise one of his illegitimate sons.¹²⁷

Given such ample provocation, Eleonora – once again – assumed the leadership of the ‘war-hawks’. By comparison, even the Spanish ambassador, a fellow Italian, the Marquess of Borgomanero, sounded a note of caution.¹²⁸ The Dowager Empress advocated sending troops to Mantua as soon as possible. Venice was unwilling to let them pass through her territory, because of the recent outbreak of the plague in Vienna. Eleonora brushed all these objections away. After all, there had been no plague in the Tyrol, the province governed by her son-in-law.¹²⁹ When the crisis about Casale broke, Leopold I happened to be in Hungary, involved in delicate negotiations with the Hungarian diet in Sopron. Eleonora was not willing to wait for his return. The Venetian ambassador, Domenico Contarini, who was following events closely, wrote admiringly that she would not spare herself any exertions.¹³⁰

Eleonora had already been alerted when her nephew’s renewed contacts with Louis XIV became known in summer. As a precaution, the conference of ministers had asked the Dowager Empress to use her contacts to win over a number of officers of the Casale garrison.¹³¹ She was also supposed to tackle Contarini about the dangers facing Italy.¹³² She herself bombarded Leopold with messages and messengers, first dispatching her current mayordomo, Count Carl Waldstein, to Sopron, followed by a cleric, who was supposed to catch the ear of the Emperor more easily.¹³³ In the end, she herself travelled to meet him half-ways on his return journey to Vienna. As a result, the Emperor promised his step-mother that he would start re-arming once the diet was over. Re-arming affected Eleonora in more than one way. If a campaign were to be fought, her son-in-law Charles of Lorraine would be first in line to be nominated as Commander-in-Chief.¹³⁴

Eleonora and her followers were convinced that time was of the essence less Italy should be lost to the French without any resistance at all. Prince Johann Adolph Schwarzenberg – who in that respect had inherited Lobkovic’s mantle – and the indispensable Hocher, the team in charge of routine administration, did not share that sense of alarmism. They were none too sure about Ferdinando Carlo’s “evil intentions”. At any rate, nothing could be done about it right now.¹³⁵ It was already too late in the year to send any troops. In general, they fell back on the traditional evasive policy of Vienna: let others go ahead. If Italy was threatened, it was up to the Italians to make the first move – and up to the Spaniards to pay for it all. Maybe as a second best, the Venetians would be willing to supply a garrison to guarantee the neutrality of Mantua.

¹²⁶ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, no. 22 (14 Sept. 1681).

¹²⁷ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1683, fol. 39v (1 April 1683); Bianchi, *Al servizio del principe*, 75, 84.

¹²⁸ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, no. 46 (2 Nov. 1681), 49 (9 Nov. 1681).

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, no. 29 (28 Sept. 1681).

¹³⁰ *Ibidem*, no. 33 (12 Oct. 1681).

¹³¹ HHStA, Vorträge 5, I-VIII 1681, fol. 130 (25 Aug. 1681); Schoder, “Reichsitalien,” 117, 162.

¹³² HHStA, Vorträge 5, IX-XII 1681, fol. 3 (4 Sept. 1681).

¹³³ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, no. 37 (19 Oct. 1681), 52 (16 Nov. 1681).

¹³⁴ *Ibidem*, no. 55 (23 Nov. 1681), no. 72 (4 Jan. 1682).

¹³⁵ HHStA, Vorträge 5, IX-XII 1681, fol. 27v (30 Sept. 1681?).

Half a century ago Venice had done so to keep the Imperial troops away, maybe they could do so once more to pre-empt the French?¹³⁶

However, the conference quite officially decided to involve Eleonora in their plans: A private person should travel to Venice, in the name of the Dowager Empress.¹³⁷ Ambassador Della Torre raised the stakes.¹³⁸ He had no inhibitions about suggesting a mission by Eleonora herself. A famously pious lady like her could certainly travel to Italy under the pretext of a pilgrimage to Loreto “to give warmth to the league of Italian princes” – and in particular to encourage the adolescent Duke of Savoy! Once again, the Vienna mandarins backed off. That pretence would not fool the French – and should not be risked unless the success of the mission could be guaranteed. One must not expose the Empress to a rebuff. What if Ferdinando Carlo should refuse to welcome his aunt in true style? In the end, the ministers compromised by suggesting that perhaps Eleonora might take a first step by visiting her daughter in Innsbruck.¹³⁹

As usual, Eleonora chose a cleric, Father Herculaneum, as her emissary. He was to plead for a Venetian garrison but Schwarzenberg had his suspicions that he had been given rather far-ranging instructions. He was right. The good Father’s report about the state of affairs in Mantua ended with the unequivocal statement: the only way to deal with the Duke was “per forza”.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the Venetians had already come up with such a proposal, in a strictly confidential and unofficial manner, though. Contarini had forwarded a suggestion to Eleonora that the best way to deal with the crisis might be to kidnap the Duke on one of his hunting expeditions close to the Milan border. This time it was the staid ministers’ turn to be outraged. They went on record that those were matters “completely mal a propos and impractical”.¹⁴¹

But the appeasers were clearly fighting a losing battle. In the summer of 1682, once there was a prospect of roping in the Dutch and their German allies, like Count Waldeck, the ‘appeasers’ were swamped by hard-liners like Hermann von Baden and Zinzendorf (politically still an asset despite his former disagreement with Eleonora).¹⁴² On 23 July, a much-enlarged conference took a clear-cut decision to pursue a Western programme of resistance to the French, notwithstanding the dark clouds gathering in the East. The Turkish threat was only used to camouflage the planned diplomatic

¹³⁶ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 7f (23 Jan. 1682), 35, 38v (25 Feb. 1682).

¹³⁷ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 6-8 (23 Jan. 1682).

¹³⁸ Della Torre was one of Eleonora’s proteges but still on bad terms with her confidant Canossa; HHStA, Vorträge 5, fol. 110-130 (conference conclusions 25 Aug. 1681); for a time, Della Torre mainly blamed the Mantuan ministers and claimed the Duke had realized that he had been betrayed by the French; HHStA, ÖGStR 57, Faszikel 43/2, no. 107, fol. 26v (20 Dec. 1681), but: no. 112, fol. 55v (23 Jan. 1682); Müller, *Gesandtschaftswesen*, 59, 231; Schoder, “Reichsitalien,” 197, 274, 301, 306, 342.

¹³⁹ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 35 (25 Feb. 1682), 41-44 (minutes 2 March 1682); Redlich, *Weltmacht des Barock*, 157 mentions Eleonore’s willingness to undertake such a mission.

¹⁴⁰ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 35 (minutes 25 Feb. 1682), 41 (2 March 1682, discussing P. Herculaneum’s report from 21 Feb. 1682)

¹⁴¹ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 6 (23 Jan. 1682); Schoder, “Reichsitalien,” 410-418.

¹⁴² For the strategic options see Lothar Höbelt, “1683 and all that: Easterners, Westerners – or a War on Two Fronts,” *English Historical Review* (forthcoming); William Pull, *William III. From Prince of Orange to King of England. A History 1650-1689* (London: Unicorn, 2021), 458-465.

mission to Italy. The roving Ambassador was to canvass the Italian princes “pretendi subsidii pro imminente bello cum Turci”, while at the same time exaggerating the dangers emanating from France. He was explicitly ordered to stick to the line agreed to between Eleonora and the Emperor.¹⁴³

V. THE FINAL YEARS

Partly due to her influence with her step-son, partly due to her native Mantua’s strategic importance, Eleonora had achieved something like the status of a super-numerary Secretary of State for Italian affairs.¹⁴⁴ She did not direct foreign policy but whether she made use of the ‘Westerners’ to safeguard her inheritance or whether the ‘Westerners’ made use of her to advance their agenda, she had clearly been part of the vanguard of ‘hard-liners’ that decisively outflanked the old guard between the autumn of 1681 and the summer of 1682. Again, though, her allegiance to ‘party’ could not be taken for granted. Once again, her change of front can be traced to family links. As a prince of the Empire who had lost his duchy to French aggression, her son-in-law Charles of Lorraine “had every reason to be a ‘Westerner’”, as Thomas Barker rightly points out.¹⁴⁵ However, once Lorraine had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army fighting the Turks, he was almost bound to become an ‘Easterner’, at least in the short run. Any move to send troops to the West threatened to restrict his freedom of manoeuvre and harm his reputation as a great captain.

Moreover, Charles was at daggers drawn with Hermann von Baden, now President of the Aulic War Council – part of the classic rivalry between ‘minister of war’ and commanders in the field. Their views differed on almost everything: Baden had been in favour of a defensive strategy in the spring of 1683, Lorraine wanted to start a siege before the Grand Visir reached Hungary. Baden was in favour of using new-fangled bayonets; Lorraine preferred to rely on old-fashioned pikemen.¹⁴⁶ Lorraine wanted to start a commando raid on the famous bridge of Esseg crossing the Drava in winter; Baden wanted to postpone the operation until the spring.¹⁴⁷ To add insult to injury, the Spanish Ambassador, Borgomanero, got into a fight with Lorraine’s wife over a question of court ceremonial.¹⁴⁸ Eleonora charged him with an “esprit si brouillon”.¹⁴⁹

Thus, if Eleonora was part of the wave that carried the Westerners to their astonishing victories in spite of all odds in 1682, in late 1683 she was also clearly part of what Barker has described as “the victory of the ‘Easterners’.” She would defend

¹⁴³ HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 57 (11 July 1682), fol. 64v (23 July 1682).

¹⁴⁴ In late 1683, Eleonora was again asked to sound out the possibilities of Mantua accepting a pro-Habsburg garrison; HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1683, fol. 60 (21 Nov. 1683).

¹⁴⁵ Thomas M. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent. Vienna’s second Turkish Siege and its historical Setting* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967), 181.

¹⁴⁶ Kriegsarchiv, Alte Feldakten (AFA) 187, 1683/IV/9 & 12 (22 April).

¹⁴⁷ HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 158, no. 356 (26 Dec. 1683).

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, no. 354 (26 Dec. 1683), 357 (2 Jan. 1684).

¹⁴⁹ Rubén González Cuerva, “La última cruzada: España en la Guerra de la Liga Santa (1683-1699)” in *Tiempo de Cambios. Guerra, diplomacia y política internacional de la Monarquía Hispánica (1648-1700)*, ed. Porfirio Sanz Camañes (Madrid: Actas, 2012) 221-248, here: 225.

her son-in-law against all attempts to undermine his chances of success in the East. Easterners were bound to be exasperated at the pre-occupation of the Westerners with the Cold War against Louis XIV, when they were fighting a hot war along the Danube. At one point, it is said, Lorraine went so far as to say he preferred kow-towing to Louis XIV to all this half-heartedness in pursuing the campaign in the East. He could rely on the faction of the three Eleonoras (well, at least two of them: his wife and his mother-in-law).¹⁵⁰

In the long run, though, the pendulum was bound to swing back. Habsburgs were eager to clear up the mess in Hungary and cash in on the windfall profits made possible by the Turkish defeat in front of Vienna. But their eyes were still fixed on the West. In 1685 the inheritance of the Palatinate opened a new front for the reigning Empress and her Neuburg family to be worried about French designs. For the Dowager Empress it was still Mantua, the Monferrato and Italy that was uppermost in her mind. When Fernando Carlo reverted to his bad ways and had her confidant Luigi Canossa arrested, the Dowager Empress – a few months before her death – was her usual outspoken self: “che hore non sono piu li tempi passati di lasciarsi acciecare con minacci”. Once the Turkish War was over, the Emperor was resolved to put things right and then the Duke’s calls for help from France would be to no avail.¹⁵¹

Eleonora was a ‘swing vote’ in terms of the dichotomy between Easterners and Westerners. She did not consistently pursue a Western agenda either at the beginning of the 1670s or at the beginning of the 1680s. But her ‘hawkish’ determination to get things done did help to unleash a turn-around in both cases, even if later on she reverted to giving priority to Eastern goals like saving her Polish son-in-law or supporting the career of her Lorraine son-in-law in Hungary. But in the end the Italian connection, the Monferrato, could always be relied on to bring her back to opposing Louis XIV rather than pursuing any Eastern mirage.

¹⁵⁰ Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, 363, 412.

¹⁵¹ Bianchi, *Al servizio del principe*, 86; Vecchiato, “Canossa”.

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