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RUSSIAN ARMED INTERVENTION IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH IN THE YEARS 1733 -1736

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Abstract

From the mid-18th century, Russia had the largest armed forces in Europe, which created a solid foundation for building a position of power for this state. This work was begun by Peter I in the second decade of the 18th century. The wars he waged meant that Russia gained access to the Baltic Sea, and thanks to the control of Livonia, Estonia, and Ingria, it was impressive and profitable. However, Russia's attempts to gain a strong position in the western basin of the Baltic Sea were unsuccessful, because Pomerania, acquired from Sweden, and the mouth of the Elbe was given to allies, Denmark and Prussia, in the first half of the 1720s. The most expensive, although not the longest, armed intervention took place in the years 1733-1736, and was connected with the election of a new king of the Commonwealth after the death of Augustus II. The Russians had been preparing for this since the beginning of the 1730s. They did not intend to act alone but in alliances with other neighbors of the Commonwealth, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Kingdom of Prussia. The Russian protectorate over Courland and Semigalia was consolidated, with the favorite of Empress Anna, Ernst Johan Biron becoming its hereditary prince. The successful intervention increased Russia's importance in the international arena and the Russians' conviction of their country's military power and superpower role.

Key Words: Russia, Habsburg Monarchy, Polish-Lithuaniaian Commonwealth, Saxony, War of the Polish Succession 1733-1735

Since the reign of Tsar Ivan III, the army has been the most important tool for implementing plans to increase Russia's territory and significance in the international arena. In the mid-16th century, Ivan IV significantly enlarged and reformed the army, trying to adapt it to European standards so that it could fulfill his ambitions of raising Russia to the rank of a power in the Baltic Sea zone. During the reign of the first two rulers of the Romanov dynasty, Michael and Alexy, efforts were made to adapt the army to European standards. However, with little effect, because although Russia had an army of around 100,000 soldiers in the second half of the 17th century, it usually suffered defeats in confrontations with Swedish, Ottoman, or Polish-Lithuanian troops. It was not until the thorough military reforms carried out in the first decade of the 18th century by Peter I that Russia acquired numerous but also very well-organized, equipped, and relatively properly supplied armed forces. The implementation of military regulations based on Western European ones meant that the Russian army began to match the leading European armies in terms of training and discipline, and even surpassed them in terms of morale. Especially after the great military victory over the Swedish army of Charles XII, considered one of the best in Europe at the time, in the Battle of Poltava on 8 July 1709. This began almost 200 years of glory for the Tsarist army as one of the best in Europe⁽¹⁾. From 1701, the Russian armed forces gradually expanded, reaching a strength of over 220,000 men in 1720, more than 320,000 in the middle of 18 c, and about 420 000 in 1787. A significant proportion, more than 60%, were regular field armies. It was supplemented by garrison regiments, irregular cavalry (hussars, Cossacks, and Kalmyks), and land militia. Land artillery increased equally significantly: 480 guns in 1720, 1,000 guns in the mid-18th century, and more than 1,400 cannons and mortars in 1787. In addition, there were 8,000 sailors on about 35 ships (including 20 line-of-battle vessels) in the Baltic Fleet in the 1730s, and 14,000 sailors on 60 ships in two fleets, the Baltic and the Black Sea, in 1790⁽²⁾.

From the mid-18th century, Russia had the largest armed forces in Europe, which created a solid foundation for building a position of power for this state. This work was begun by Peter I in the second decade of the 18th century. In 1721 he declared himself Emperor of all Russia, but in reality, Russia was far from achieving the status of a European power. The wars he waged meant that Russia gained access to the Baltic Sea, and thanks to the control of Livonia, Estonia, and Ingria, it was impressive and profitable. However, Russia's attempts to gain a strong position in the western basin of the Baltic Sea were unsuccessful, because Pomerania, acquired from Sweden, and the mouth of the Elbe was given to allies, Denmark and Prussia, in the first half of the 1720s. Moreover, defeat in the war with Turkey in 1711 dismissed hopes for a quick control of the Black Sea steppes, the acquisition of which was considered a necessary condition for

1. Paweł Krokosz, „Armia Piotra I gwarantem mocarstwowej pozycji Rosji w Europie,” *Studia z dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 55 (2020): 9-49.

2. Anton Kersnovskij, *Istoria Russkoj Armii 1700-1881* (Smolensk: Rusič, 2004), 35-131; Ljubomir G. Beskrovnyj, *Russkaâ armia i flot v XVIII veke*, (Moskva: Voennoe izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, 2004), 22-24, 33-38, 293-302.

the growth of Russia's power⁽³⁾. Another crucial condition was gaining political influence in the countries of Central and Western Europe. This was to be achieved not only by concluding alliances but also by gaining influence on the foreign and domestic policies of the countries neighboring Russia. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth played a special role in these plans. Tsar Peter I recognized this at the beginning of the Great Northern War and gradually increased Russian political and military influence in the Polish-Lithuanian state. In 1709, Peter I helped Augustus II to regain the Polish throne, and, in return, Tsarist troops were allowed to stay in the Commonwealth until 1718. This allowed the Russians to effectively fight against the Swedes, but also to attempt to subjugate Danzig-Gdańsk [in the 18th century, the official name of the city was Danzig and is found in this form in literature and most historical works. In Poland we use the modern name of Gdańsk], the important port city⁽⁴⁾, or to expand their influence to some Northern German duchies, with temporary success in the case of the duchy of Mecklenburg-Schwerin⁽⁵⁾. However, King Augustus II, thanks to an alliance with Emperor Charles VI and Prince-Elector of Hanover George (King George I of Great Britain), managed to make the Commonwealth (and thus Gdańsk) independent from Russian tutelage. Moreover, the Tsar's advisors and troops were removed in the winter of 1719 from Meklenburg-Schwerin by so-called Holy Roman executive forces, composed primarily of Hanoverian and Brunswick regiments⁽⁶⁾. However, the Russians managed to maintain the territory they had taken in 1717 protectorate over Courland and Semigallia, and continuously until 1795. When in the years 1726-1727 attempts were made to take over the rule of this duchy by the illegitimate son of the Polish king Maurice of Saxony and then to incorporate Courland into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, this was prevented by an armed intervention undertaken by the Tsarist troops commanded by General Petr Lacy. It consolidated Russian influence in a principality that only officially remained a fief of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth⁽⁷⁾.

After 1719 the Russians abandoned their diplomatic activities in northern Germany for many years. However, they very quickly resumed their efforts to regain their political influence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lost at the end of the second decade of the 18th century, and then to make that state their protectorate. The territorially vast - 770,000 sq. km. - the Polish-Lithuanian state was a barrier separating Russia from Western Europe, limiting the possibilities for strategically advantageous alliances,

3. Krokosz, „Armia Piotra I”, 55 (2020): 18-24.

4. Edmund Cieślak, „W wirze wojny północnej,” in *Historia Gdańska*, edited by Edmund Cieślak, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1993), 3/1: 497-504.

5. Sergiej Efimow, „Rosyjska armia w Meklemburgii w latach 1712-1719,” in *Studia nad konfederacją tarnogrodzką i sejmem niemym*, ed. Tomasz Ciesielski, (Warszawa: Neriton, 2020), 147-164.

6. Efimow, „Rosyjska armia w Meklemburgii”, 164-171.

7. Klauspeter Strohm, *Die Kurländische Frage (1700-1763), Eine Studie zur Mächtepolitik im Ancien Régime* (Berlin: Verlag Diss. Publ., 1999), 93-117; Tomasz Ciesielski, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej. Piotr Lacy – feldmarszałek i general-gubernator Inflant,” in *Stać badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, vol 3, (Białystok: Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy, 2012), 234-237.

including one with the Habsburg Monarchy. It became obvious to Peter I and subsequent 18th-century Russian rulers and their ministers that taking control of the Black Sea and Danube areas, and in the longer term gaining a position of power, was not possible without subordinating the Commonwealth. These were realistic plans considering the military weakness and political system of the Polish-Lithuanian state. As for the armed forces of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, from 1717 they numbered just over 17,000 soldiers equipped with just over 300 cannons, most of them obsolete. The political and social system of the Commonwealth, the so-called nobility democracy, was conducive to gaining influence on its internal and external policy by creating a strong pro-Russian party. There was also more in that case. The attitude of the kings of the Wettin dynasty was also important. They, except in the 1720s, tried to maintain the best possible relations with Russia, guided by the dynastic interests and their hereditary duchy of Saxony. To strengthen their influence in the Commonwealth, the Russians used financial and material corruption, diplomatic pressure, and the threat of armed intervention. To this end, the Russian army prepared several times to undertake armed intervention in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, five of which were carried out.

The first time was in 1724, when Peter I, taking advantage of the wrath of European Protestants at the consequences of the Tumult of Thorn on 16-17 July 1724, attempted to bring about armed intervention in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to defend the rights of non-Catholics. Some historians believe that this was only prevented by the death of the Tsar on 8 February 1725⁽⁸⁾.

The armed intervention took place in the summer of 1727, when the introduction of 4 or 5 Tsar regiments to Courland allowed Russia to maintain its protectorate over this principality, and convinced the Polish king Augustus II that the Russians' plans to send an auxiliary corps through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth for Emperor Charles VI should not be opposed. This was only a modest introduction to four subsequent Russian military interventions in 1733–1736, 1763–1764, 1768–1772, and 1792, which allowed Russia to finally subjugate the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and ultimately take over a significant part of its territory.

The most expensive, although not the longest, armed intervention took place in the years 1733–1736, and was connected with the election of a new king of the Commonwealth after the death of Augustus II. The Russians had been preparing for this since the beginning of the 1730s. They did not intend to act alone but in alliances with other neighbors of the

8. Stanisław Kujot, „Sprawa toruńska z r. 1724,” *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, 20 (1894): 20–135; Stanisław Salmonowicz, *W staropolskim Toruniu XVI-XVIII w. Studia i szkice*, (Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe Organizacji i Kierownictwa „Dom Organizatora”, 2005), 74–105; Franz Jakobi, *Das Thorner Blutgericht 1724*, (Halle: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 1896), 1–143; Stefan Hartmann, „Die Polenpolitik König Friedrich Wilhelms I. von Preußen zur Zeit des „Thorner Blutgerichts“ (1724–1725),” *Forschungen zur brandenburgischen und preußischen Geschichte*, Neue Folge 5, (1995): 31–58; Tomasz Ciesielski, „When other Rulers defend Dissidents: The Situation of Protestants and Orthodox Christians in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Saxon Era,” *Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej*, 13 (2018): 141–145.

Commonwealth, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Kingdom of Prussia⁽⁹⁾. The conclusion of an agreement between these three countries was possible because they agreed that the new king should be neither Stanisław Leszczyński nor August II's son, Frederick August II Wettin. They also opposed any systemic reforms and the enlargement of the army of the Commonwealth. This allowed for the development of an agreement on a joint armed intervention in Poland after the death of August II in the autumn of 1732. It assumed the creation and co-financing of an intervention corps composed of equal military contingents of the three countries. The costs of the intervention were planned and would ultimately be reimbursed by the new ruler of the Commonwealth, and it was agreed that he would be the brother of the King of Portugal, John V, Dom Emanuel de Braganca. However, Empress Ann did not consent that, the equivalent of Prussia's participation in the intervention would be the throne of Courland for Prince Frederick Henry Louis of Prussia, the younger son of King Frederick William I Hohenzollern. Prussia withdrew from the agreement, which went down in history as the unrealized treaty of the Three Black Eagles (the official emblems of the three suzerainty states) or the Treaty of Lowenwold (after the Russian negotiator)⁽¹⁰⁾.

Austria and Russia, after the death of Augustus II on 1 February 1733, continued their cooperation to prevent Stanisław Leszczyński from taking the Polish-Lithuanian throne. In addition to diplomatic activities, in the winter of 1733, they began preparations for an armed intervention. An imperial corps of 10,000 soldiers gathered near Opole in May 1733. However, under diplomatic pressure from France and Great Britain, Austria withdrew from participating in the armed intervention in mid-July 1733⁽¹¹⁾.

This coincided with the agreement by both allied courts on a new candidate for the King of the Commonwealth. This leader was the previously unwanted Frederick Augustus II Wettin, who signed alliance treaties with Russia and Austria⁽¹²⁾. He also declared the participation of the Saxon army in an armed intervention in the Commonwealth.

9. Vladimir Ger'e, *Bor'ba za pol'skij prestol' v 1733 godu*, (Moskva: Tipografia V. Gračeva, 1862), 16-69.

10. Maren Köstner, *Russische Truppen für Prinz Eugen*, (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1986), 37-38; Urszula Kosińska, „Could a Portuguese prince become King of Poland? The candidacy of Don Manuel de Bragança for the Polish throne in the years 1729-1733, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 94/3 (2016): 502-505; Johann Gustav Droysen, *Geschichte der preußischen Politik*, vol. 4/3 (Leipzig: Verlag von Beit and Comp., 1869), 144-145; Ger'e, *Bor'ba za pol'skij prestol'*, 52-60; Jacek Staszewski Jacek, „*Jak Polskę przemienić w kraj kwitnący...*”. *Szkice i studia z czasów saskich* (Olsztyn: Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego, 1997), 134-140; Tomasz Ciesielski, „Ziemie Prus w trakcie polskiej wojny sukcesyjnej i wojny siedmioletniej,” in *Wielkie wojny w Prusach XIII-XX wiek*, ed. Witold Gieszczyński and alia, (Dąbrówno-Olsztyn: Oficyna Retman, 2021), 162-163.

11. John L. Sutton, *The King's Honor and the King's Cardinal. The War of the Polish Succession*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 4-42, 50-51; Edmund Cieślak, *W obronie tronu króla Stanisława Leszczyńskiego*, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1986), 31-32.

12. Rudolf Beyrich, *Kursachsen und die polnische Thronfolge 1733-1736* (Leipzig: Verlage von Quelle & Meyer, 1913), 14-48; Dagmar Vogel, *Heinrich Graf von Brühl. Eine Biografie*, t. 1 (Hamburg: Verlag dr. Kovač, 2003), 365-385; Tomasz Ciesielski, „Gorący koniec lata i początek jesieni 1733 roku. Początki rosyjskiej interwencji zbrojnej w Rzeczypospolitej,” in *Wokół wolnych elekcji w państwie polsko-litewskim XVI-XVIII wieku*, ed. Mariusz Markiewicz and alia, (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2016), 466-467.

However, it was not until the second half of November 1733 that the Saxon army was able to begin military operations in the Commonwealth, and initially only on the western border. In addition, the Imperial Intervention Corps was disbanded at the end of the summer of 1733. Most of its regiments and battalions marched west and then took part in the war with France, which declared war on the Habsburg Monarchy in November 1733. Only a few Imperial regiments remained in Silesia, which until early 1734 protected the borders with the Commonwealth⁽¹³⁾. This made it easier for the Saxon army to occupy the Polish voivodeships of Poznań, Kalisz, part of Sandomierz, and Kraków in November-December 1733, together with the strategically important cities of Poznań and Kraków. The latter also had important political significance, as it was the place of coronation and burial of the kings of the Republic of Poland. Thanks to the support of the Habsburg troops and the administration of the Silesian province, in January 1734 Elector Frederick Augustus II safely reached Kraków with his wife, son, and numerous courtiers⁽¹⁴⁾.

The main task of forcing the election of Wettin fell to the Tsar's army. The history of the Russian military intervention in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which lasted from the summer of 1733 to the summer of 1736, seems to have been well-researched. Several monographs have been written on the subject by Russian historians⁽¹⁵⁾, who have also published such important sources as the journal of operations conducted in the years 1733-1735 by Peter Lacy's corps⁽¹⁶⁾, or the reports of Field Marshal Munnich related to the siege of Gdańsk⁽¹⁷⁾. In addition, there are studies by Polish and German (Saxon) historians⁽¹⁸⁾, which describe the political and military aspects of the Russian intervention. However, extensive research conducted in archives and libraries in Russia (Moskva and St. Petersburg), Poland (mainly Warszawa, Kraków, Wrocław), Ukraine (mainly Kiev), Lithuania (Vilnius), Austria (Vienna), Germany (mainly Dresden in Saxon,

13. *Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen (Geschichte des Kämpfe Österreichs)*, Bd. XIX: *Polnische Thronfolge-Krieg. Feldzug 1733 und 1734*, ed. Raimund Gerba (Wien: Verlag des K. und K. Generalstabes, 1891), 15-17; Tomasz Ciesielski and Robert Slota, „Znaczenie militarne nadodrzańskich miast Śląska w XVI-XVIII wieku na przykładzie Opola i Koźla”, w *Zamki, twierdze i garnizony Opola, Śląska i dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, red. Tomasz Ciesielski (Zabrze: Inforteditions, 2010), 60-62; Ciesielski, „Gorący koniec lata”, 467.

14. Oskar W. Schuster and Friedrich A. Francke. *Geschichte der Sächsischen Armee von deren Errichtung bis auf die neueste Zeit*, vol. 1. Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humboldt, 1885, 212-213; Beyrich, *Kursachsen*, 48-62; Alfred Krell, *Herzog Johann Adolf II. von Sachsen-Weissenfels als sächsischer Feldmarschall: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des zweiten Schlesischen Krieges*, (Greifswald: Abel, 1911), 15-19; Ciesielski, „Gorący koniec lata”, 468-469.

15. Detail see Bibliography.

16. „Žurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.” in *Sbornik Voenno-Istoričeskikh’ material*, vol. 3, Sankt Peterburg: Voennaâ Tipografiâ 1893. This publication uses extensive excerpts, but not the entirety, of the combat diary compiled at Peter Lacy's headquarters. Full, manuscript versions of the diary written in German can be found in Wien, Kriegsarchiv, sign. KA FA AFA HR Akten 425: Operationsjournale der russischen Heeresleitung 1735-1736 and in Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Voenno-Istoričnyj Arhiv, Moskva, fond 114, no. 30.

17. *Ataka Gdanska feldmaršalom grafiom Miniom 1734 goda. Sbornik relácij grafa Miniha*, ed. Dmitrij F. Maslovskij (Moskva: Universitetskââ tipografiâ, 1888).

18. Detail see Bibliography.

Berlin and Potsdam in Prussia), but also in France and Great Britain⁽¹⁹⁾, has shown that many facts have been omitted, and many aspects require an in-depth examination of the aspects⁽²⁰⁾.

One of them is to explain why the Russians failed to take control of the situation in the autumn of 1733 and impose the Saxon elector as king on the Poles and Lithuanians. The Tsar's army had a numerical advantage over the Commonwealth's troops, had more modern weapons, and was better trained and disciplined. On the orders of Empress Anna and her ministers, two intervention corps numbering over 30,000 soldiers in total began to be formed near Riga and Smolensk in March. However, the concentration and preparation of the necessary war supplies proceeded very slowly⁽²¹⁾. Meanwhile, the efficiently conducted preparations for the election of the new king of the Commonwealth meant that the assembly that was to do this, the electoral Sejm, began in Warsaw on 25 August, and on 12 September Stanisław Leszczyński was proclaimed king by the votes of the vast majority of the nobility⁽²²⁾. Although this date had been known since May, the Russians managed to prepare only one intervention corps, which entered the Commonwealth from Courland on 13 August and had to cover about 600 km. Commanding it, General Peter Lacy knew the theatre of war and had almost 17 thousand soldiers at his disposal. He encountered no resistance from the Lithuanian and Polish armies, which weren't prepared to deal with war. The Russians moved slowly and did not reach Warsaw until 28 September. The Polish army occupied the line of the Vistula River and, in an atmosphere of political scandal, conquered the Russian embassy and the Saxon palace (28-30 September 1733). However, the Russians managed to gather a certain group of nobility within the time limit provided for by law, and on 5 October 1733, they elected Frederick Augustus II as king⁽²³⁾.

19. Source material useful for research into the course of military operations on the territory of the Republic is dispersed over many archives and libraries, as well as the archival and library collections that make up their holdings. For this reason, I have refrained from naming these libraries and archives.

20. An important source of information is also the European press of the time, for example published in Vienna „Wienierisches Diarium”, in Munich „Mercurii Relation, oder Wochentliche Ordinari Zeitungen” and „Wochentliche Ordinari Post-Zeitungen”, in Leipzig „Leipziger Post-Zeitungen”, in St. Petersburg „СанктПетербургскія Вѣдомости”, in Paris „Gazette de France”.

21. Ciesielski, „Gorący koniec lata”, 469-470; Michał Tomaszewski, „Marsz korpusu inflanckiego wojsk rosyjskich gen. Piotra Lacy'ego w kierunku Warszawy latem 1733 roku,” *Klio-Czasopismo Poświęcone Dziejom Polski i Powszechnym*, 63/3 (2022): 7-11.

22. Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 53-54; Ger'e, *Bor'ba za pol'skij prestol*, 462-464.

23. „Žurnal o voinskih” operaciâh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 58-64; Pierre Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente contenant Tout ce qui s'est passé d'important en Italie, sur le Rhin, en Pologne, & dans la plupart des Cours d'Europe*, (Amsterdam: François L'Honoré, 1737), 1/1: 18-29, 140-144; Dmitrij P. Buturlin, *Voennaâ istoriâ pohodov rossiân v XVIII stoletii*, 3, (Sanktpeterburg: Voennaâ Tipografiâ Glavnogo štaba Ego Imperatorskago Velicestva, 1823), 18-32; Ger'e, *Bor'ba za pol'skij prestol*, 467-469; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 59-60; Ciesielski, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej”, 238-239; idem, „Baâyâ dzelânni na terytorii Vâlikaga Knâstva Litoûskaga padčas vajny za pol'skuû spadčynu ũ 1733-1735 gg.”, *Arche*, no 6 (2012): 351-352; idem, „Gorący koniec lata”, 470-487; Michał Tomaszewski, „Marsz korpusu inflanckiego”, 11-24; idem, „Atak na Pałac Saski w dniach 29-30 września 1733 roku,” *Historia Slavorum Occidentis*, 36 (2023): 30-48.

Such a double election had already happened in the past, and the king was the candidate who managed to win over the majority of the nobility and the army. Wettin could not count on this, because only part of the Lithuanian army declared itself on his side, while the rest of the Commonwealth army recognized Leszczyński as the rightful ruler. The problem, however, was that the relatively strong Polish army, numbering over 13 thousand soldiers, avoided fighting the Russians and Saxons throughout the intervention. It enabled the latter to occupy Kraków at the end of December 1733 and to crown Wettin as King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth on 17 January 1734 under the name of Augustus III⁽²⁴⁾.

It was the second important moment of armed intervention in Poland, which ended the nearly 3-month stalemate and inaction of both sides of the conflict. The Saxons were successful primarily in the political and propaganda field, which therefore did not necessarily have much significance in the struggle itself, to consolidate power in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Leszczyński's supporters believed that their candidate had already been crowned in 1705, and in 1733 he had only been formally restored to the throne he had lost in 1709. Therefore, Leszczyński and his entourage decided in September 1733 to travel from Warsaw not to Kraków, but to Gdańsk and wait there for the arrival of French military aid. It was the most powerful fortress in the Commonwealth and was not a state fortress, but a city fortress. However, the city council and residents of Gdańsk enthusiastically welcomed Leszczyński in the autumn of 1733 and began preparations for defense, providing a city militia of about 4,000 men, reinforced by several hundred state soldiers, mainly from the royal guard⁽²⁵⁾.

The Russians, however, were in no hurry to launch an attack on Gdańsk, because the commander-in-chief of the Russian intervention forces, General Lacy, believed that even after the initial arrival of the second intervention corps near Warsaw, General Zagriajski had too few soldiers and no siege artillery. Therefore, in October 1733, he suspended offensive operations in the western part of the Commonwealth, deploying the troops to winter quarters. In the autumn of 1733, offensive operations were conducted only by two smaller corps operating in Lithuania, which occupied part of the north-eastern voivodeships of the Commonwealth (commanded by general Rudolph August von Bismarck and colonel Jurij Repnin). The third and strongest corps, commanded by General Lev Izamilov, secured in the western part of Lithuania the communication routes linking Lacy's forces with the depots in Inflants⁽²⁶⁾.

24. Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 144-145; Tomasz Ciesielski, „Działania zbrojne w rejonie Krakowa w trakcie polskiej wojny sukcesyjnej 1733-1735.” *Studia Historyczne*, no. 207-208 (2009): 207-212.

25. Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 60, 120; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 52-56; idem, „Druga elekcja Stanisława Leszczyńskiego, oblężenie Gdańska w 1734 r.,” in *Historia Gdańska*, ed. Edmund Cieślak (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1993), 3/1: 511-513.

26. Ciesielski, „Baavyà dzelànni”, 354.

It was not until late December 1733 that the main Russian corps set off from Warsaw towards Pommern. The siege of the Danzig (Gdańsk) began on 20 February 1734. The city of Gdańsk and King Stanisław Leszczyński had almost 5 months to prepare for defense. They then gained further weeks of hope, as the Russians initially confined themselves only to blockading Gdansk. General Lacy had less than 15,000 troops, and no siege artillery, and therefore chose not to attack the city's extensive, reasonably modern fortifications⁽²⁷⁾. Russian operations intensified after the arrival of reinforcements and the takeover of command in mid-March by general field marshal Burchardt Christoph von Münnich. The first major success was the capture of another fortress in Pomerania, Elbląg, whose garrison, consisting of a weak infantry regiment, capitulated without fight on 30 March 1734. The assault on the Gdańsk fortifications was undertaken on the night of 9/10 May 1734 ended in a fiasco and with great Russian human losses (more than 750 killed 700-800 soldiers wounded, 100 were taken prisoner in Gdańsk). During the siege of Gdańsk, the deficiencies in the preparation of the Russian intervention were revealed, because it was not until May that the siege artillery was brought there and the Russian fleet did not arrive near Gdańsk until mid-June. However, by bringing in most of the Russian troops operating in the western provinces of the Republic, including the Warsaw garrison, the Russians gained a significant numerical advantage over the city's defenders. This disproportion increased significantly when, at the end of May, the siege forces were reinforced by about 10,000 Saxon soldiers led by Field Marshal Prince Johann Adolph von Sachsen-Weissenfels⁽²⁸⁾.

The success of the siege of Gdańsk was contributed to by the inactivity of the main Polish forces, and only a corps set off to relieve the city composed of the forces from southern Poland commanded by Jan Tarło, supported by cavalry units operating in Pomerania. In total, Tarło managed to gather about 8 thousand men, many of them newly recruited. These forces were too weak to break the siege and were defeated by Lacy's Russian corps of a maximum of 4,200 (minimum 2,300) soldiers on 20 April 1734 at the Battle of Wyszęcin, about 60 km from Gdańsk. Although only less than 1,000 soldiers were killed and wounded on the Polish side, Tarło's corps ceased its march to the aid of Gdańsk⁽²⁹⁾. The hope for French help also failed, as only three regiments arrived by

27. „Żurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 64-74; Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 150-153; Buturlin, *Voennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 33-46; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 60-61, 120-122; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 56-69; idem, „Druga elekcja Stanisława Leszczyńskiego”, 3/1: 511, 514-517; Tomasz Ciesielski, „W obronie Gdańska – działania wojsk polskich na Pomorzu i Kujawach 1733-1734,” in *Studia Historyczno-Wojskowe*, (Zabrze: Inforteditions, 2008), 2:178-180; idem, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej”, 239-240.

28. *Ataka Gdanska*, 1-134; „Żurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 74-122; Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 154-165, 168-179; Buturlin, *Voennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 46-53, 59-73; Schuster and Francke, *Geschichte der Sächsischen Armee*, 214-215; Beyrich, *Kursachsen*, 84-89; Krell, *Herzog Johann Adolf II. von Sachsen-Weissenfels*, 21-25; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 69-78, 79-84, 134-153; idem, „Druga elekcja Stanisława Leszczyńskiego”, 3/1: 511, 518-524, 531-536; Ciesielski, „Ziemie Prus”, 168-171.

29. Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 165-166; Buturlin, *Voennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 53-59; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 122-123; Ciesielski, „W obronie Gdańska”, 180-194; idem, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej”, 240-241; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 78-79; Grzegorz Glabisz and Michał Zwierzykowski, *Z dziejów wojny o sukcesję polską. Listy Wielkopolan*

sea and were forced to capitulate by the Tsarist army on June 23, 1734. Formally, they were interned to prevent a state of war between France and Russia⁽³⁰⁾.

The lack of relief and the successes of the superior Russian forces meant that the key fortress of Wisłoujście, which was crucial for the defense from the sea, first capitulated on 23 June 1734. Then, on the night of 27–28 June, Stanisław Leszczyński fled Gdańsk. On 28 June, the city authorities asked the Russians for a truce, on 7 July he signed the act of capitulation, and on 9 July Russian and Saxon troops entered Gdańsk⁽³¹⁾.

Thus ended the 132-day siege of Gdańsk, which is the best-known episode in the armed struggles on the territory of the Republic during the War of Polish Succession. Its course was reported almost live by the European press of the time. The battle for Gdańsk was described in some detail by Pierre Massuet in his history of the Polish Succession War, which was published in Amsterdam in 1736 and 1737 *Histoire de la guerre présente contenant Tout ce qui s'est passé d'important en Italie, sur le Rhin, en Pologne, & dans la plupart des Cours d'Europe*. The siege of Gdańsk was also extensively presented by John L. Sutton in his work on the history of the Polish Succession War, as the only major war event that took place on Polish territory. Sutton concluded his reflections on the siege of Danzig in a way that left no doubt that other military actions within the Commonwealth were irrelevant to him. „Poland now recedes from view. The attention of the great powers and their diplomatic and military efforts move back toward the West”⁽³²⁾.

However, military operations in the Commonwealth lasted much longer and that started in the autumn of 1733 when Polish cavalry units undertook the so-called small war (anti-travel warfare) against the Russians. At the beginning of 1734, almost simultaneously with the Gdańsk operation, two major Russian corps began their operations. General Lev Izmailov's corps and units of Lithuanian supporters of Wettin, tried to calm down the western Lithuanian voivodeships but encountered strong resistance. Despite the military efforts undertaken, they were unable to defeat Leszczyński's supporters, or even permanently take over the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Vilnius. It was not until 19 August 1734, that the Russians managed to defeat Leszczyński's supporters in the Battle of Sielce. However, fighting on the Polish-Lithuanian border continued until the spring of 1734, and Leszczyński's supporters temporarily managed to take over part

do Jana Tarły wojewody lubelskiego z lat 1734–1735, (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2018), 19–20, 32–33.

30. Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 180–187; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 123–132; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 85–134; idem, „Druga elekcja Stanisława Leszczyńskiego”, 3/1: 524–531.

31. *Ataka Gdanska*, 134–191; „Żurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 122–154; Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/1, 187–218; Buturlin, *Woennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 74–84; Beyrich, *Kursachsen*, 89–92; Krell, *Herzog Johann Adolf II. von Sachsen-Weissenfels*, 25–26; Cieślak, *W obronie tronu*, 134–153; idem, „Druga elekcja Stanisława Leszczyńskiego”, 3/1: 531–536; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 133–134; Ciesielski, „Ziemie Prus”, 171.

32. Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 134.

of today's Belarus. In the spring of 1735, they even conducted a cavalry raid, during which they reached the vicinity of the Lithuanian-Russian border⁽³³⁾.

The second operation was undertaken at the end of 1733 by a Russian intervention corps of several thousand men, which entered the Kyiv region and took control of the only Polish fortress in Ukraine - Bila Tserkva - without a fight. However, it soon encountered resistance from Polish troops and as a result, it took a year to occupy the south-eastern voivodeships of the Commonwealth. It was not until January 1735 that this corps reached the Bug and San rivers. The Russians managed to take most of the fortified cities without a fight, with Lviv and the fortress in Brody at the fort. However, they did not attempt to attack the strongest Polish fortress in this region, Kamianets-Podilskyi, defended by more than 2000 Polish infantry and over 200 cannons. The Russian corps operating in Ukraine and Podolia was too small and did not have siege artillery, and above all, they feared provoking Turkey, for which Russia was not yet prepared for war. However, it was strong enough to force the Polish forces to retreat west. The Russians defeated the Poles in all the major battles in Podolia and Volhynia, most notably the battles of Werbka and Latyczów on February 17 or 18, 1734, and Sołobkowce on 21 April 1734 (both in Podolia)⁽³⁴⁾.

At the end of 1734, nearly 100,000 Russian and over 15,000 Saxon soldiers were involved in the armed intervention, but the Commonwealth was still not pacified. Leszczyński, who had been in Königsberg in Prussia after escaping from Gdańsk, called for a fight, and his supporters formed a political and military union (the Dzików Confederation) and tried to create a strong army. Wciąż liczyli na możliwość obronienia praw króla Stanisława do tronu Rzeczypospolitej. The situation was changed by an internal conflict in the camp of Leszczyński's supporters, as well as a concentric march of Russian and Saxon troops to the south of Poland, which led in the January and February of 1735 to the defection of part of the regular Polish army commanded by Józef Potocki to the side of Wettin. Then, the winter offensive of Leszczyński's supporters ended in total defeat. In mid-February 1735, they set off from Częstochowa towards the northwest, perhaps even planning to conduct a raid into Saxony. They managed to defeat several small Saxon units and capture one of the Wettin residences – the palace in Kargów, defended by a weak Saxon garrison. However, after initial successes on the Polish-Silesian border, Leszczyński's supporters were forced by the Saxon army to stop further marching. It was then decided that the political leaders of the Dzików confederation would go to King Stanisław in Königsberg, and the army commanded by the Lublin voivode Jan Tarło would continue the fight. Tarło's corps was quickly

33. Ciesielski, „Baàvyà dzelànni”, 354-371.

34. James Keith, *A fragment of a Memoir of field-marshal James Keith*, ed. Thomas Constable (Edinburgh, 1848), 46-62; Massuet, *Histoire de la guerre présente*, 1/2, 397-398; Tomasz Ciesielski, „Agresja rosyjska na Polskę 1733-1735. Walki na Ukrainie, Podoli i Wołyniu,” in *Trudne sąsiedztwo. Studia z dziejów stosunków polsko-rosyjsko-ukraińskich w XVI-XX wieku*, ed. Andrzej Szczepaniak (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2007), 107-130.

forced to retreat by the approaching Saxon units. Although he managed to escape from them, he then became the target of an encirclement operation conducted by Russian units commanded by Piotr Lacy. Leszczyński's supporters undertook a quick retreat towards the east. However, on the Vistula River, they were blockaded by the Russians and forced to capitulate in the first half of April 1735⁽³⁵⁾.

Over the next 7-8 weeks, the Tsar's troops managed to force all the larger armed groups of Leszczyński's supporters in Masovia, Lithuania, and Podolia to surrender or flee beyond the borders of the Republic. If we ignore the guerrilla warfare conducted by Leszczyński's supporters on the Polish-Prussian border in the Kurpie Forest until November 1735, peace reigned throughout the entire Polish-Lithuanian state⁽³⁶⁾. Already at the beginning of June 1735, a Russian auxiliary corps of over 12.5 thousand soldiers for the Habsburg Monarchy left Poland⁽³⁷⁾, and in the summer, the withdrawal of 50 thousand Tsar's soldiers to Russia began, whom the commander-in-chief of the Russian army, Munnich, intended to use in the prepared war with Turkey.

The Russian court recognized the situation in the Commonwealth at the end of 1735 when the peace preliminaries ending the war between France and the Habsburgs were signed⁽³⁸⁾. Only after Leszczyński signed the act of renunciation of the Polish throne on 26 January 1736⁽³⁹⁾, did the withdrawal of the Saxon and Russian intervention forces from Poland and Lithuania begin. The last tsarist soldiers left the Commonwealth only in August 1736.

The Russian intervention lasted 3 years, of which 2 years were a period of more or less intensive warfare. In the initial phase, over 17,000, from October 1733 over 30,000, and at its peak over 100,000 tsarist soldiers participated in it, including about 90,000 in infantry and regular cavalry regiments. This constituted about 50% of the Russian field's regular army. The units of Leszczyński's supporters fought against it, in which at its peak there were a maximum of 40,000 soldiers, many of them freshly recruited, poorly equipped, and trained. The Russian losses in men and equipment are not known. The financial costs of the intervention were also high, only partially mitigated by war contributions selected in the territory of the Commonwealth (they provided provisions for men and forage for horses, accommodation, and limited transport benefits). With

35. „Żurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 157-173; Buturlin, *Woennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 33-91-105; Ciesielski, „Działania zbrojne w rejonie Krakowa”, 220-221; idem, „Ziemie Prus”, 176-177; idem, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej”, 241-243; Glabisz and Zwierzykowski, *Z dziejów wojny o sukcesję polską*, 23-30, 206-212; Schuster and Francke, *Geschichte der Sächsischen Armee*, 216-218; Krell, *Herzog Johann Adolf II. von Sachsen-Weissenfels*, 26-30; Beyrich, *Kursachsen*, 101, 134-140.

36. Ciesielski, „Ziemie Prus”, 177-179.

37. „Żurnal o voinskih” operaciáh” s” 1733 g. po 1737 g.”, 173-184; Buturlin, *Woennaâ istoriâ pohodov* 3, 33-105-108; Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 183-185; Köstner, *Russische Truppen*, 68-71, 114-124; Ciesielski, „Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej”, 244-245.

38. Sutton, *The King's Honor*, 185-209.

39. Ciesielski, „Ziemie Prus”, 171.

such a significant expenditure of forces and resources, the Russians managed to secure the crown for Augustus III, preventing any changes to the political system in the Commonwealth or even the expansion of the Polish and Lithuanian armies. Russia's influence in the Commonwealth was strengthened [strengthened], which was reflected in the possibility of the tsar's troops marching through its territory during the future wars with Turkey and Prussia, or when sending auxiliary corps to the emperor. The Russian protectorate over Courland and Semigalia was consolidated, with the favorite of Empress Anna, Ernst Johan Biron becoming its hereditary prince. The successful intervention increased Russia's importance in the international arena and the Russians' conviction of their country's military power and superpower role. Still, it was quite illusory, as demonstrated by the war with Turkey in the years 1736-1739. The reasons for this cannot be fully explained without a more in-depth study of the history of Russian military intervention in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1733-1735. However, the course of the armed struggles of the Russians, supported not only by the Saxons but also by a large part of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, with the supporters of Stanisław Leszczyński is not widely known, not only to European historians but even to Polish, Russian and German historians. It is to be hoped that this state of affairs will change with research financed by a research grant funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education⁽⁴⁰⁾. The main aim of the project is to find and selectively publish the most important sources on the course of the Polish War, successively located in archives and libraries in Poland, Lithuania, Germany, France, and Great Britain. Sources collected by the team members before the winter of 2020 in archives and libraries in Russia and Ukraine will also be used.

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