


## JAN PLATER'S DIPLOMATIC MISSION IN LIVONIA IN 1710–1716

Mindaugas Šapoka

 0000-0002-9776-5290

---

This article explores the largely overlooked diplomatic mission of Jan Plater (1676–1757), an envoy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to Riga and Livonia in 1710–1716. It examines the negotiations with tsarist Russian authorities within the context of the complex and unstable political situation. Plater's mission highlights the diplomatic limitations of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and its efforts to navigate the crisis during the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The article addresses whether individual missions, not formally dispatched by the Sejm of the Commonwealth, could have been an effective means of addressing the diplomatic crisis that affected Poland and Lithuania in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*Keywords:* Jan Wilhelm Plater, Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Great Northern War, diplomatic history, Livonia

---

### Introduction

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (the Republic) experienced a crisis in diplomacy. The nature of diplomatic legations to other countries underwent a change. If earlier diplomatic missions were short-term, now the necessity arose to maintain permanent diplomatic legations, which would provide information about projects, plans, treaties, etc. devised by friends and enemies alike. The diplomatic service of Poland–Lithuania found it very difficult to adapt to the changed trends. If in the majority of European states decisions regarding foreign affairs would rest exclusively with the ruler or a narrow circle of his trusted advisers, then in the Republic it was only the Sejm that could decide on foreign policy. Indeed, this central organ of state life convened rarely

in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and there was no guarantee that the meetings would end successfully. It comes as little surprise that much of the Republic's foreign affairs were handled by diplomats from Saxony, whose elector also happened to be the Polish king. Augustus II, as the elector of Saxony, had sufficient financial resources at his disposal to be able to quickly and effectively solve foreign policy problems.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, the Republic was a unique state. It had its emergency mechanisms that would allow finding recourse in seemingly impossible situations. Given the paralytic state of the Sejm, its functions in the foreign policy field were taken over by the *Senatus Consilium*.<sup>2</sup> Even while Augustus II showed absolutely no concern for the Commonwealth's diplomatic service, around 30 diplomatic legations were sent out to various states between 1697–1720.<sup>3</sup> Some diplomatic functions would be assumed by confederations.<sup>4</sup> During the Great Northern War, the role of Poland's and Lithuania's grand hetmans increased. With the paralysis of the Sejm persisting for years, many diplomatic relations, especially with Russia, were transferred over to the hetmans, who held control of the military in their hands.<sup>5</sup>

When Augustus II invaded Livonia<sup>6</sup> in 1700 with his Saxon army, no one could have imagined that the war would last for 21 years. Augustus II, elected King of Poland in 1697 and hereditary Duke of Saxony, hoped to conquer Livonia, but neither the Polish nor the Lithuanian political elites supported this war. The Saxon army was defeated by the Swedes, who invaded Poland and deposed Augustus II. However, part of the nobility disapproved of the Swedish actions and, in 1704, formed a Polish–Russian alliance against Sweden, under which Livonia was to be granted to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. After 1709, when the Russian army defeated the Swedes, Augustus II returned to the throne, but Livonia remained occupied by Russia. The tsar had no intention of returning this territory either to the king – who had started the war over it – or to

---

1 Gierowski 1966, 369–379.

2 The meeting of senators. Such meetings could be convened by the king at any time. It had a function as an executive body to take necessary decisions between the Sejm sessions.

3 Gierowski 1966, 379.

4 Ibidem, 389. Confederations, or noble leagues, were regarded as an alternative and legitimate form of government that could be formed at any time by the nobility in response to internal or external crises.

5 Link-Lenczowski 1980, 197.

6 In this article the term 'Livonia' refers to the Swedish Livonia, which constituted the southern part of modern Estonia and the northern part of modern Latvia (Vidzeme).

the Commonwealth, to which the territory had been promised in the treaty of 1704. From that time until 1721, both the king and the Sejm or the senators of the Commonwealth made various attempts sometimes acting at cross-purposes and even undermining one another to regain Livonia, but without success. One such attempt was the mission of the *wojski* of Polish Livonia<sup>7</sup> Jan Plater,<sup>8</sup> which is the subject of this article.

This mission was a reflection of the Republic's diplomatic limitations and an attempt to experiment with overcoming them. Little is known about Jan Plater and his diplomatic mission. The Polish bibliographic dictionary contains Jan Plater's biography that mentions that in 1712, he was sent as the Lithuanians' envoy to the Muscovite army and the tsar. Plater's mission was one of the measures Augustus II took to increase pressure on Peter I of Russia, in the expectation that the latter would return the occupied Livonia to the Republic. In 1714, Plater was already sending reports to the court of Augustus II, urging the evacuation of the Saxon army from the Republic – that is, he was working against the king's policy.<sup>9</sup> Another historian, Józef Andrzej Gierowski, mentioned that in 1714, Plater began negotiations in Riga with Russian officials.<sup>10</sup> These negotiations were the Russian attempt to win the support of Poland and Lithuania for the Russian cause, in case the king, as the elector of Saxony, decided to attack Russia in Livonia. The Russian wanted the Republic to oppose such plans of the king, and in return, the tsar would return Livonia to the Republic.

This article is dedicated to a diplomatic legation that has never been explored in historiography. Until now, the historiographic record has looked at the Polish–Lithuanian diplomatic service from the positions of a centralised state. The country has most often been criticised for its inability to create an effective diplomatic service. Effective has largely been equalled to centralised. Nonetheless, one needs to pay attention to the fact that the diplomatic service's dependence on the sejms and sejmiks was the main goal of nobility, not the centralisation of this function. That is why this article will analyse whether individual diplomatic missions that did not have the mandate of the Sejm could have been an effective means of solving the diplomatic crisis that unravelled in Poland and Lithuania in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The descriptive and critical source analysis research methods are

---

7 *Wojski* was a titular office. Polish Livonia was a palatinate in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (Latgale). This should not be confused with the Swedish Livonia.

8 The hero of this article hardly used his second name Wilhelm. Hardly any document in which he identified himself as Jan Wilhelm Plater exists. He signed all his documents as Jan Plater.

9 Link-Lenczowski 1981, 661.

10 Gierowski 1965, 103.

applied in this article. The article is based on hitherto unutilised archival materials from Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Russia.

### **The dispatch of the mission**

In order to understand the nature of Plater's mission, one must look at several similar diplomatic missions in the late 17<sup>th</sup> – early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. On the eve of the Great Northern War, the Troki land deputy judge Jan Bokiej was sent to Russia. This mission was organised by Augustus II, the newly elected king of Poland. Bokiej was meant to ask Russia's officials (at the time there was no tsar in Russia) to send the Russian army into Lithuania, where it was to help overcome opponents of the election of Augustus II. The then Lithuanian field hetman, Józef Bogusław Słuszka,<sup>11</sup> was the only official from Lithuania who participated in organising this mission. The precedent of this envoy's appointment was exploited by the so-called Republican faction that had become established in Lithuania at the end of 1700. From the start of 1702, it had its representative in Moscow – the Vilnius canon Krzysztof Białozor. This mission was approved by Augustus II, but one of the Republican leaders, Lithuanian field hetman Hrehory Ogiński, contributed most to this envoy's dispatch. He wrote a letter to the tsar announcing Białozor's arrival. Later, the king distanced himself from the envoy, and the Russian side strictly demanded the envoy be sent credentials with the signatures of the Lithuanian senators. Białozor returned to Lithuania at the start of 1703 where, at the congress of the Lithuanian nobility held in March, he was again appointed as one of several envoys to the Russian tsar. He was also present at the camp of Peter I for the 1704 negotiations on the Treaty of Narva.<sup>12</sup> These missions showed that the private matters of Lithuania's ministers and officials with Russia could be handled without envoys appointed by the Sejm. Russia's officials were inclined to agree to such relations if they saw them as beneficial.

As in the cases of Bokiej and Białozor, it was a Lithuanian hetman who played a major role in Plater's dispatch. Appointed as Lithuanian grand hetman in October 1709, Ludwik Konstanty Pociąg sent Stefan Staniewicz, Lithuanian army officer, to the Russian military camp near Riga. He was probably referred

---

11 Sliesoriūnas 2004, 57–68.

12 Koroliuk 1954, 243–249, 255, 316, 332.

to as 'military representative' in Pocij's letter to the tsar.<sup>13</sup> In July 1710, the envoy was still at the camp and provided information about the siege of Riga. In one of the letters, he was called "the representative at the court of His Majesty the Tsar".<sup>14</sup> Later on, no other data about Staniewicz's activities exists.

Jan Plater turns up in historical sources in April 1710, that is, while Staniewicz was still in Livonia. There is no doubt that before the Russian military occupied Riga, Plater was already residing at the Russian military camp or nearby. In a letter written in April 1710 from Jelgava to one of Kazimierz Jan Sapieha's sons, Plater referred to himself as "the representative of districts to the allied leadership".<sup>15</sup> No accurate historical sources that could help reveal the circumstances behind Plater's dispatch could be found. Nonetheless, the sources mentioned above would suggest that Plater's dispatch could have been the personal initiative of the Lithuanian grand hetman Pocij, and later on Plater could have received wider authorisations.

It is likely that such authorisations could have been granted by the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania, whose marshal at the time was the hetman's younger brother, Kazimierz Pocij. In October 1711, Kazimierz Pocij appealed to the tsar in a letter asking him to withdraw the Russian army from Lithuania. Plater was meant to explain this in more detail in person to the tsar.<sup>16</sup> At the meeting of the Samogitian sejmik, on 10 September 1711, the local nobility allocated 300 thalers from the 16 zloty hearth tax levied by the 1710 Council of Warsaw to Jan Plater, because he "does a lot for the Duchy of Samogitia and facilitates many of our interests".<sup>17</sup> There is no evidence whether a meeting between Plater and the tsar ever took place. On 24 November 1711, the tsar arrived in Memel on his way back from Saxony, reaching Jelgava on 27 November and Riga on 29 November, where he remained until 18 December.<sup>18</sup>

---

13 L. Pocij to Peter I [in Russian], 23.12.1709. *Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*. Tom 9, vypusk 2 (1952). Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, pp. 1302–1303.

14 J. K. Biegański to K. S. Radziwiłł [in Polish], 30.7.1710. Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Radziwiłłów (hereinafter: AGAD AR), 723, fol. 8–10.

15 J. Plater to Sapieha, 13.4.1710. Biblioteka Narodowa, Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej, sygn. 940 (pages without numbers).

16 K. Pocij to Peter I [in Polish], 27.10.1711. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (hereinafter: RGADA), 79–1–1711, no. 7, fol. 7.

17 Samogitia's decision [in Polish], 10.9.1710. Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, Senieji aktai (hereinafter: LVIA SA), b. 14503, fol. 663.

18 Gistoriia Sveiskoi voiny (podennaia zapiska Petra Velikogo). Vypusk 1. Sost. T. S. Maikova. Moskva: Krug', 2004, p. 377.

During the course of his mission, Plater spent most of his time in Riga or nearby. The city of Riga was chosen for this mission for political, geographical, and economic reasons. Even though, when the Russian army occupied Riga, active hostilities of the Great Northern War moved from Livonia and Estonia to Swedish Pomerania, the Russian tsar still placed particular importance on Riga's fortress. A garrison of 10–20 thousand Russian soldiers was located in the city, which acted as a communications centre between the Russian court and Swedish Pomerania. The Riga port was very important economically to Lithuania, as along with Königsberg, it was the most significant point of export for agricultural production grown on Lithuanian farms. Finally, Riga was the capital of Livonia, and according to the 1704 Treaty of Narva between the Republic and Russia, this territory was to become part of Poland–Lithuania as war booty. There is no doubt that the importance of the city of Riga was an essential factor in choosing the envoy's personality. As a noble from the Polish Livonia, which belonged to the Republic and lay next to Riga and the Duchy of Courland, Jan Plater was an excellent candidate for the mission.

Plater delivered the first known memorial to Russia's officials at the end of November or early in December, as he only received a reply from these officials on 14 December 1711, that is, at the time when the tsar was in Riga. The preamble to the memorial states that Plater was authorised by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to submit requests and receive responses in writing. Incidentally, it was not detailed who in Lithuania had granted him these authorisations. Plater requested that the Russian army would not occupy winter quarters in Lithuania, and that it would not take livestock or horses as the land had already been severely ravaged. It was also requested that the occupied fortresses, including Riga, be returned to the Republic. Plater promised that if this were to happen, the Republic would provide the garrison at the Riga fortress with six thousand infantry. It was also requested to guarantee the safety of postal transport to Riga, and to grant the tsar's assistance in resolving Lithuania's merchants' disputes with the city of Riga. Finally, Plater expressed his wish to receive maintenance of the sort that is due to an official envoy of the Republic (i.e., as for one who had been dispatched by the Sejm). In its response, the Russian side stated that no Russian armed forces were in Lithuania. An admission was made that small units were positioned in the Duchy of Courland, who were monitoring the Baltic Sea coastline for a potential Swedish landing. Regarding the complaints of Lithuania's merchants, the response was that an instruction had been given to the tsar's representative to investigate this problem together with Plater. Regarding the return of Riga, reference was made to the response that had been given to the Lithuanian grand marshal Marcján Wołłowicz at the start of the year in Moscow.

It was repeated that Russia could not return Livonia or Riga at present because the Commonwealth was not capable of defending them. The question of the funding of Plater's personal expenses in Riga was subtly left unaddressed. The Russians only promised to help in the transfer of the envoy's letters. Plater's memorial contained one more point regarding the journeys of Russian envoys to the Commonwealth. He naively believed that such travel would be discussed and coordinated through him, while he would write out travel permits – passports. In its response, the Russian side ignored this request.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the response to Plater did not bear any official's signature. This kind of behaviour on Russia's side makes one think that the Russian administration must not have wanted to cooperate with Plater, yet nor could they drive him out lest they anger the Lithuanians who were disillusioned with the Russian depredations in Lithuania. It appears that Plater also understood that he needed some kind of document, an authorisation, that would force the Russian government to take his requests more seriously. The Lithuanians soon arranged such documents for Plater.

Credentials and an official set of instructions from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were given to Plater at the end of February 1712. All of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's elite, including the main ministers, officials, and district representatives, gathered in Vilnius in early 1712, where the sittings of the Fiscal and Supreme Tribunals took place.<sup>20</sup> Plater's credentials are dated 27 February 1712, i.e. immediately after the end of the Fiscal Tribunal (22 February). This document testified that he was being dispatched to the Russian tsar by the senators and ministers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The main goal of his mission was to inform the tsar of the immeasurable damages inflicted by the Russian army. Plater was meant to request that the tsar, in keeping with the conditions of the alliance and his previous promises, would withdraw his army from the Republic and the Duchy of Courland, and would carry out other conditions outlined in the Treaty of Narva. Remuneration for Plater's expenses during this mission were also foreseen in his credentials. He was allowed to collect a sum of 1000 thalers from Lithuania's merchants trading in Riga. The inclusion of remuneration in an official document intended for the Russian government is odd, but the Treaty of Perpetual Peace signed between the Republic and Russia

---

19 J. Plater's memorial and answer delivered to him [in Russian] 14.12.1711. *Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo* (1964). Tom 11, vypusk 2. Moskva: Nauka, pp. 270–274. Manuscript original: Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka (hereinafter: LMAVB), f. 198, b. 28, fol. 1–2.

20 Šapoka 2018, 112.

in 1686 guaranteed mutual maintenance for diplomatic envoys at the receiving side's expense.<sup>21</sup>

Plater was not an "official" envoy dispatched by the Sejm, which is why the inclusion of this point in an official document must have meant that the Russian administration in Riga was expected to cooperate in collecting the money.<sup>22</sup> Plater's credentials were signed by the most important Lithuanian senators of the day: Vilnius bishop Konstanty Brzostowski, Samogitian bishop Jan Zgierski, Smolensk bishop Aleksander Horain, Lithuanian grand marshal Marcján Wołłowicz, Lithuanian grand chancellor Karol Radziwiłł, Lithuanian treasurer Michał Kociej, Mińsk palatine Krzysztof Zienowicz, Witebsk castellan Marcin Ogiński, Lithuanian great hetman Ludwik Pociąg, and Lithuanian field hetman Stanisław Denhoff.<sup>23</sup> The instructions issued to Plater, dated 27 February 1712, contained only one point – to request for the Russian army to be sent out of both the Commonwealth and the Duchy of Courland and for the cessation of any sort of contributions to the Russian army.<sup>24</sup> A letter from the marshal of the Sandomierz Confederation, Lithuanian field hetman Stanisław Denhoff, was attached to all these documents.<sup>25</sup> This must have been done to allay any doubts the Russians may have had regarding the legality of Plater's mission and to create the impression that Plater was functioning as an envoy of the senators of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Sandomierz confederates.<sup>26</sup>

The mention of the Lithuanian merchants and Plater's remuneration demands greater attention. From the documents at hand, it is evident that his diplomatic mission had both a political and a trading aspect. When the Swedes controlled Riga, they had exploited the monopolistic situation of the Riga port for a long time, thereby unfairly treating Lithuania's merchants, who had no choice but to use the Riga port for exporting their goods. A 6 percent tax, imposed by the city, had to be paid on all exportable goods, which was too large in the Lithuanian

---

21 *Volumina legum Przedruk zbioru praw staraniem XX. Pijarów w Warszawie, od roku 1732 do roku 1782 wydanego*. T. 6. St. Petersburg: nakładem i drukiem Jozafata Ohryzki, 1860, p. 81.

22 In fact, Plater later asked Golovkin to order the Riga commandant Gen. Iakov Polonsk to collect the money for Plater. J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 27.04.1712. RGADA 79-1-1712, no. 31, fol. 12-15. As we see from Plater's other letter, general Polonskii refused to do this, saying it would harm the merchants, J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 07.06.1712. Ibidem, fol. 22-23.

23 J. Plater's credentials [in Russian], 27.02.1712. Ibidem, fol. 7-8.

24 J. Plater's instruction [in Russian], 27.02.1712. Ibidem, fol. 9-11.

25 The Sandomierz Confederation was established in 1704; it supported Augustus II and a military union with Russia.

26 S. Denhoff to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 07.03.1712. RGADA 79-1-1712, no. 10, fol. 1.

merchants' opinion. When the Russian army occupied Riga, Lithuania's merchants had grounds to expect that the Russian officials would be more lenient towards them. To this end, eight Lithuanian merchants made a promise to Plater in writing. The merchants stated that if Plater were to succeed in negotiating better conditions for the Lithuanian merchants to operate in Riga, that same year, given favourable conditions, they would pay Plater 1000 thalers. If trade proved to be poor, they would pay him 500 thalers that year and 500 the following year. If Plater were to succeed in recuperating what the city of Riga had collected from Lithuania's merchants over all those years, he would be able to keep that money as recompense.<sup>27</sup>

Yet getting redress for previous grievances proved to be an insurmountable task for Plater, who had presented his claims in Riga well before the undertaking of the Lithuanian merchants. All of Plater's accusations were dismissed as unfounded by Riga's officials, who were particularly angered by the accusation regarding the unjust use of scales for Lithuanian goods. Plater was told that he could not know how the weighing process was carried out, because no one had ever seen him at the scales (where anyone could make claims about the unjust usage); therefore, his accusations were declared to be unfounded and slanderous.<sup>28</sup>

These documents in hand, Plater intended to go to Saint Petersburg, but the major movement of the Russian army to Pomerania via Lithuania forced him to make a detour to Courland. Plater stopped at Jelgava so as to make a register of the damages inflicted by the Russians, which could be handed in to the tsar. To this end, Plater approached the Russian chancellor Gavriil Golovkin, asking him to cease all harm. He wrote that the tsar's generals were acting self-willingly in Lithuania and that he could not believe that this was happening with the tsar's knowledge.<sup>29</sup> There are in fact many historical documents about the Russian march. They raised large contributions from Lithuanian estates they encountered along the way. The army group commanded by Repnin marched from Smolensk towards Mińsk. Before commencing their march, an avant-garde of

---

27 Assignment of Lithuanian merchants to J. Plater [in Polish], undated. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 28, fol. 3.

28 Documents regarding Plater's accusations [in German], 1711–1712. Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs, Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs (hereinafter: LNA-LVVA), PA-67–31–404.

29 "Prosi tedy Księstwo Litt. i ichm. pp. ministrowie aby wojska auksiliarne które odpoczywając całą zimę w państwach naszych bawią się z Litwy, Kurlandii i innych Rzptej granic bez zabierania koni, agrawacji i innych akcji co zwykły żołnierz czyni za przelozieniem tego wszytkiego wm. pana u najj. cara jm. przeciwko nieprzyjacielowi wyniść chcieli", J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 02.04.1712. RGADA 79–1–1712, no. 31, fol. 1–2.

1500 soldiers was sent into Lithuania who were meant to prepare food and fodder stockpiles. Orders were given to take 1 barrel of flour, 4 *garcy* of grains, 1 *garcy* of salt, and 1 barrel of oats from each hearth in Vilnius, Mińsk, Oszmiana, Orsza, Wiłkomierz, and Rzeczyca districts and the Slutsk principality. Due to their greater distance, hearths of Wiłkomierz, Orsza, and Rzeczyca had to provide a barrel of oats instead of hay, as it was impractical and difficult to transport hay for longer distances. Meanwhile, households in Mińsk and Oszmiana districts had to provide hay instead of oats.<sup>30</sup>

During the march, the Russian army encountered serious problems as no one wanted to hand over the food and fodder they demanded.<sup>31</sup> Upon reaching Grodno, the Russian army was in a very difficult state. They could not take food or fodder by force because the spring melt had begun and it was not possible to send out groups of soldiers to execute these tasks. A solution was found by expropriating the ships that had stopped in Grodno, belonging to the Lithuanian nobility, which were filled with grain and headed for Königsberg. This caused outrage, and hence, compensation had to be paid.<sup>32</sup> Another one of Plater's requests addressed to Golovkin was to give orders to the governor of Riga that the Republic's merchants would not be harmed in Riga and that Russian soldiers would cease robbing merchants' ships near Witebsk, Połock, and Dyneburg (Daugavpils). Plater ended his letter stating that the Republic was so devastated that the local population had nothing left for their own survival and only desired the end of war.<sup>33</sup>

Plater mailed his instructions to Golovkin, as well as a copy of the credentials and also Denhoff's letter. Plater wanted to give the original credentials to the Russian chancellor in Riga in person.<sup>34</sup> This letter was sent by a courier to the commandant of the Riga fortress, Iakov Polonskii, who was asked to send the letter on to Saint Petersburg as quickly as possible. By the end of April, no response had been received from the tsar's officials yet, which is why Plater decided to go to Riga himself to facilitate a more rapid correspondence with Saint Petersburg.<sup>35</sup> Plater was most definitely in Riga on 25 May. That day he

---

30 I. Repnin to Peter I [in Russian], 23.02.1712. *Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*. Tom 12, vypusk 1. Moskva: Nauka, 1975, pp. 323–323.

31 I. Repnin to Peter I [in Russian], 01.04.1712. *Ibidem*, p. 377.

32 I. Repnin to Peter I [in Russian], 28.04.1712. *Ibidem*, pp. 411–412.

33 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 02.04.1712. RGADA 79–1–1712, no. 31, fol. 1–2.

34 *Ibidem*.

35 “Ja dla prętszej korespondencji dworu naszego i ministrów przeniosę się do Rygi abym mógł z najjaśn. carem jm. w naszych Rzptej kolligackich interessach przez wm. pana dobr. naszego korespondować”, J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 27.04.1712. *Ibidem*, fol. 12–15.

received Golovkin's response, dated 16 May from Saint Petersburg, to his first letter. The tsar's chancellor replied in a laconic fashion to all of the requests. It was explained to Plater that there was no need for him to go to Saint Petersburg because the tsar would soon arrive in Riga and would henceforth respond to Plater's instructions.<sup>36</sup>

There is no data about Plater's activities in the second half of 1712. He could have left Riga and returned to Lithuania briefly.<sup>37</sup> It is known that Peter I arrived in Riga on the eve of the third anniversary of the Battle of Poltava (8 July) where he received a pompastic reception from the officials and burghers present. A large banquet was organised to mark the occasion of the Battle of Poltava attended by "all the envoys, ministers, Count Golovkin and Löwenwolde, as well as Major General Polonskii with the headquarters officers; the captains of foreign trading ships also dined with them".<sup>38</sup> If Plater had been in Riga then, he must have certainly participated in this event. Nonetheless, there is no documentary evidence to confirm this. From Plater's later letter one may gather that during this visit, he had met with Golovkin (who arrived in Riga together with the tsar) over dinner with the Russian official Gerhard Johann Löwenwolde. During this dinner, the conversation turned to foreign policy. In the conversation, Plater tried to convince the tsar's officials that the king of Prussia was not a friend of either the Republic or Russia.<sup>39</sup>

Plater expressed his opinion that Russia should side with the Republic rather than with the king of Prussia.<sup>40</sup> Even though this would indicate Plater's insightfulness and understanding of the danger Poland–Lithuania would face if Brandenburg–Prussia and Russia were to side with one another, it was nevertheless a very naive attempt to change the Russian policy. In fact, rivalry between Russia and Sweden over the support of Brandenburg–Prussia had been ongoing ever since the start of the Great Northern War. Regardless of the friendly pact reached in October 1709 – according to which Frederick I of Prussia promised

36 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 07.06.1712. Ibidem, fol. 22–23; G. Golovkin to J. Plater [in Polish], 15.05.1712. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 38.

37 Nikolaj Bantysh-Kamenskii indicates that Plater arrived in Russia on 12 June (old style), see Bantysh-Kamenskii 1898, 205.

38 *Pokhodnyi zhurnal 1712 goda*. Pod red. i s primech. A. F. Bychkova. Sankt Petersburg 1854, p. 17.

39 "[...] jak mówilem wm. dzwi. na obiedzie u jm. pana Lewenwolda że on nie jest życzliwy carowi jm. ani Rzptej której jest wasalus podług opisów swoich antecessorów", J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 13.06.1713. RGADA 79–1–1713, no. 17, fol. 10.

40 "[...] trzeba najj. carowi jm. jako naszemu koligackiemu monarsze w tym szkody nam podług zawartego sojuszu nieczynić i życzliwych sobie nieodstępować", ibidem.

not to allow the Swedish army pass from Pomerania into the Republic, and where Peter I was obligated to occupy Elbląg where the Swedish garrison was still stationed – Brandenburg–Prussia's unwillingness to unequivocally side with one of the warring camps persisted. Only from 1713, when Frederick William I began to rule Brandenburg–Prussia, did this state change its foreign policy course. Russia's aim was to engage Brandenburg–Prussia in a war against Sweden, and the Republic's interests were of no concern to them.<sup>41</sup>

### Political intrigues

The Sejm of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth that had convened at the start of 1713 dissolved on 21 February, while by 5 April Plater had once again undoubtedly returned to Riga. In the city, Plater sent a new memorial to the Russian chancellor, Golovkin, in Saint Petersburg. The preamble to this memorial stated that Plater was authorised to present the document in the names of both the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Augustus II. Plater stated that the king had ordered him to go to Riga, from where he could announce news and developments to the tsar. For this purpose, the Russian administration was being asked to provide horses and couriers to facilitate sending such letters. Plater requested an answer to his earlier requests for Courland to be relieved of contributions to the benefit of the Russian duchess. Anna, the daughter of Ivan, step-brother of Peter I, had married Frederick William, the heir to the Duchy of Courland, in 1710. Frederick hoped to become the regent of Livonia, then ruled by Russia, so he, in effect, agreed with all the conditions of this marital contract. Soon after marrying, the groom passed away, and the governance of the Duchy of Courland was *de facto* taken over by Duchess Anna.

In mid-1712, Peter I appointed the special commissar Piotr Bestuzhev-Riumin, who was meant to forcibly collect 40 thousand rubles annually due to Anna according to the marital contract.<sup>42</sup> He diligently carried out this order, which led to strong discontent among the local nobility and Ferdinand, the *de facto* duke of Courland living in Gdansk, the uncle of the deceased Frederick William. In 1713, Peter I temporarily suspended this order, but offences by the Russian army's continued. In addition to this, Plater again requested solving the unfair treatment of Lithuania's merchants by the city of Riga, or to refer

---

41 Šapoka 2021, 165–166.

42 *Russkii biograficheskii slovar'*. T. 2: Aleksinskii – Bestuzhev-Riumin. St.-Petersburg: tip. Glavnogo upr. udelov, 1900, pp. 787–788.

a person with whom this matter could be discussed. There was also a request to relieve two Riga burghers of the duty to accommodate the Russian army, as the first would house arriving Poles and hold a Catholic mass there, while Plater was staying with the second.<sup>43</sup>

In early June, Plater wrote another letter to Golovkin. In this letter, the envoy reiterated that he was still awaiting an official response to his memorial and repeated the request regarding the unfair treatment of the Lithuanian merchants in Riga. Plater ended his letter with the statement that the Commonwealth wished to preserve the union with the tsar, yet also wanted the tsar to keep his promises.<sup>44</sup> The repeated request for a response to his earlier enquiries shows that his petitions were ignored by the Russian administration. This is also confirmed in Golovkin's letter to Plater, from Saint Petersburg, in early June. In it, the Russian chancellor claimed that he could not respond to Plater's earlier requests on account of being preoccupied with other tasks. Regarding Courland, Golovkin limited himself to replying that the tsar had already written an answer concerning this in his letter to Augustus II. It was also said that no Russian soldiers remained in Courland, except for several hundred dragoons that had been sent there to secure the tsar's safe passage.<sup>45</sup> In replying to Golovkin's letter, Plater repeated that the city of Riga continued its unfair treatment of the Lithuanian merchants. In his letter, Plater added a new request to release all the inhabitants of the Republic who had been arrested and transported to Russia during the war. Plater also informed Golovkin that he was leaving Riga for Szatejki, a manor close to Memel, so that he could receive letters from the Republic sooner.<sup>46</sup> At the end of June, Golovkin finally informed Plater of the start of action taken concerning the Lithuanian merchants in Riga by order of the tsar. Golovkin wrote that he passed on the tsar's orders to president Isaev to cease all unfair treatment of the merchants.<sup>47</sup>

In the second half of 1713, Plater gradually became involved in the political games played by the grand hetman Ludwik Pociiej. In his letter written at the end of August 1713 from Memel, Plater listed a whole swathe of recommendations

---

43 J. Plater's memorial [in Polish], 05.04.1713. RGADA 79-1-1713, no. 17, fol. 1. This memorial mentions that the king entrusted Plater with several letters to Russian officials, which indicates that Plater's mission had received the approval of the king. The memorial was signed by Plater as "Jan Plater rezydent Rzptej Polskiej i W. Ks. L.". Plater later would return to the signature "rezydent W. Ks. L." which he had used previously, see J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 25.09.1714. RGADA 79-1-1714, no. 10, fol. 9.

44 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 06.06.1713. RGADA 79-1-1713, no. 17, fol. 6-7.

45 G. Golovkin to J. Plater [in Russian], 02.06.1713. Ibidem, fol. 4a.

46 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 13.06.1713. Ibidem, fol. 9-10.

47 G. Golovkin to J. Plater [in Russian], 30.06.1713. Ibidem, fol. 11.

to Golovkin. First of all, the tsar was to write a letter to Augustus II warning him that the king's excessive kindness was, in fact, to his own detriment. It appeared that the king had decided to remove Pociiej from the grand hetmanship of Lithuania and wished to appoint Jan Kazimierz Sapieha, the *starosta* of Bobruisk, to this position. The tsar ought to be interested in preserving Pociiej as he was friendly to Russia.<sup>48</sup> Golovkin was also warned that Sweden could want to make a separate peace with Russia. In such a case, Sweden together with the former supporters of Stanisław Leszczyński could enact a coup in Poland–Lithuania, and then with the help of the Turks start a new war against Russia.<sup>49</sup> Even though no direct evidence exists, there is little doubt that it was Pociiej himself who “whispered” these recommendations to Plater.

By the autumn of 1713, the Commonwealth faced the real threat of war against the Ottoman Empire. The Republic's nobility did not want to give contributions to the Russian army in 1712, but if the war against the Turks broke out, the Russians could aid. This sense of ambiguity – to criticise the Russians for their offences or to ask for their assistance – is a distinct characteristic in Plater's letters. In a letter written on 29 August, the envoy informed the Russian chancellor that an army of 60 thousand Turks together with the Swedish king and Stanisław Leszczyński were moving towards Poland.<sup>50</sup> The Polish and Lithuanian armies were ready, and the army of Saxony was also on its way to help. Plater also informed Golovkin that fodder and food were being prepared for the Russian army. The Turks, Plater continued, wanted to break the Alliance between the Commonwealth and Russia, and then, having forced the Poles into the alliance with them, attack Russia.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, very soon it became apparent that the Turks were not inclined to go to war, and merely wanted to use this militant demonstration to test the position of Augustus II in the Republic. It was hoped that with the appearance of the Turkish army, the Poles and Lithuanians would revolt against Augustus II. Yet, this did not eventuate, and it was not Turkish soldiers who stepped into the Republic but envoys ready to negotiate a peace.

---

48 “[...] zbytnia dobroć najj. króla naszego i ufnosć barzo mu szkodzi, jako i teraz chce dwór nasz kontentować jm. pana Pociēja (życziwego Rzptej sobie i sojuzkim interessom) innemi honorami a buławę chcą dać i mimo prawa, bo już jest wielkim marszałkiem bywszy marszałek pan Sapieha, panu starościu bobrujskiemu, niespodziewać się dobra jeśli od pana Pociēja odejdzie buława na co i dworowi wm. panów trzeba mieć konsideracją”, J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 27.08.1713. Ibidem, fol. 12.

49 Ibidem.

50 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 29.08.1713. RGADA 79–1–1713, no. 17, fol. 15.

51 Ibidem.

With the Turkish threat gone, the desire to maintain the upkeep of the Russian army evaporated like spring snow. Plater expressed his apprehensions that if 35,000 Russian troops marched through Lithuania, the Lithuanian troops would be destroyed, because they would be deprived of alimentation. Plater stressed, however, that the Lithuanians were not reluctant to provide food for their allies; they only feared that there would not be enough food for everyone.<sup>52</sup>

Plater disappears from historical sources in late 1713. He reappears in mid-1714, at the height of the scandal of Pociiej's alleged conspiracy against Augustus II. A view has been established that the Lithuanian grand hetman was accused by the king's court for sending his envoys to the Russian tsar with a request to provide military assistance against the king. The Russian tsar was said to have agreed to satisfy this request.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, the latest research shows that this plan was a falsification intended to discredit Pociiej, while the tsar could not have offered any sort of assistance against Augustus II because the removal of the Polish king would not have benefited the tsar.<sup>54</sup>

Nonetheless, it is certain that Pociiej had sent his envoys to the tsar. It was Plater who helped the hetman's envoys to obtain an audience with the tsar in Saint Petersburg at the end of March 1714. On 25 March, Plater presented the tsar's administration with yet another memorial with the same demands that were outlined in June 1713: the repeated request that Riga should cease unfair treatment of the Lithuanian merchants and that all captives from Lithuania should be released. Plater added a third point to these two; he requested that the noble of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Sokoliński, who had suffered at the hands of the Russian army and the Kalmyks, should be paid compensation (the damages were valued at 20 thousand thalers).<sup>55</sup> The inclusion of a private individual's request is not surprising because it was commonplace among the nobility to bring their private matters to the fore, while pushing state affairs aside. Nonetheless, it seems like this request raised the ire of the Russian administration, which, even if it had not executed Plater's requests, had at least been polite enough to respond to his letters or had promised to enact certain requests. This time, the answer was that in the city of Riga, Lithuania's merchants were no longer suffering from the application of different mass measurements, and no other harm was forthcoming. The other two points received no explicit response. Instead, accusations were launched against Plater saying that it was the Lithuanians who were

---

52 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 09.09.1713. RGADA 79-1-1713, no. 17, fol. 19.

53 Gierowski 1965, 104-106.

54 Šapoka, Gerulaitienė 2021, 34-49.

55 J. Plater's memorial [in Polish], 25.03.1714. RGADA 79-1-1714, no. 10, fol. 1.

interfering in the trade of the Russian merchants by hindering their navigation along the Daugava River.<sup>56</sup>

The memorial presented in March was Plater's final deed during his diplomatic mission. He spent another one or two months in Saint Petersburg and probably participated in the Russian navy's voyage into the Baltic Sea. Plater was no doubt made to feel flattered, while the Russian navy left a strong impression, since after this event Plater promised Golovkin to "assist the tsar in Stockholm".<sup>57</sup> By June, Plater had already returned to Riga and raised demands that the Troki palatine Kazimierz Ogiński be provided with a dinner table with meals for 12 people, as well as fodder for his horses, for as long as he was living in Riga. The governor in Riga asked the tsar whether he had to satisfy such demands. The tsar knew how to flatter the Lithuanian magnates: all of Plater's requests regarding Ogiński were confirmed, and orders were given to provide Ogiński's court with several horned livestock and some fowl each week, white and red wine and beer, and to ensure that the magnate would not be short of anything.<sup>58</sup>

From the middle of 1714, Plater in effect functioned only in the capacity of passing on messages or news. He sent news from Russia to Poland and vice versa. Just how useful this function was to both the Polish court or the Russians is difficult to determine. The benefit was most probably minimal, as both sides had their own diplomats who were perfectly well informed. There exist several of Plater's letters, written in July and August of 1714 from Riga to Poland's chancellor Jan Szembek. Szembek was warned that the Russian court was suspicious of the Saxon army located in the Republic. Were they not preparing to take Livonia from the Russians by force? Plater urged to reject these plans, if they were indeed being made, because the tsar had tens of thousands of well-prepared men in his army, plus a strong navy. The king was urged to convene a Sejm as quickly as possible and dispatch an envoy to the tsar to negotiate Livonia's return to the Commonwealth.<sup>59</sup> In September 1714, Plater returned to Szatejki, where he wrote to Golovkin several more times, reminding him of the still, in Plater's mind, unresolved problem of the unfairness of Rigan officials towards

---

56 Response to J. Plater's memorial [in Russian], n. d. Ibidem, fol. 4–5.

57 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 25.09.1714. Ibidem, fol. 9. On 21 April 1714 Plater was still in Saint Petersburg. On that day he sent a letter, see copy of J. Plater's letter [in Polish], 21.04.1714. Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, Teki Sanguszkowie, sygn. 281/1, fol. 37.

58 Peter I to P. Golitsin [in Russian], 31.05.1714. *Sbornik materialov i statei po istorii Pribaltiiskogo kraia*. T. 1. Riga: Tipografia A. I. Lipinskago, 1876, p. 316.

59 J. Plater to J. Szembek [in Polish], 12.07.1714. MNK Biblioteka Czarotoryskich (hereinafter: BCzar), sygn. 468, fol. 199–204.

the Lithuanian merchants, and wished the tsar all the best in his conquests, adding certain news.<sup>60</sup>

### The end of the mission

The end of Plater's mission is veiled in as much secrecy as its start. There is no evidence to suggest when exactly Plater concluded his mission. In a letter written in July 1715, Plater was still referred to as the envoy to the tsar's court.<sup>61</sup> Plater's final letter to the Polish chancellor Jan Szembek is dated 1 July 1715, from Szatejki.<sup>62</sup> There is a letter by Plater to the tsar written on 7 August 1715.<sup>63</sup> In this letter Plater wrote that he had arrived in Memel with instructions to organise regular postal transport between the courts of the tsar and the king of Poland. The letter also gave news of military action near Stralsund and asked for the release of several individuals from Russian captivity. The main aim of this letter was probably the request to release the captives, while the news was merely a pretext to write the letter in the first place, as the tsar would have certainly had much better sources of information. In mid-1716, one of the letters mentions that Plater was "no longer in Riga".<sup>64</sup> Plater was present in Vilnius in April 1716, where a congress of the nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania took place and the Lithuanian Confederation was established.<sup>65</sup> Plater signed the Confederation Act.

During his mission, Plater also participated in other matters, such as the internal quarrels of the Lithuanian nobility and magnates over territories bordering Livonia. Incidentally, sources clearly point to just one such case, so it is difficult to say whether there were more. This dispute affected the Lithuanian chancellor Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł and one of the representatives of the Korff family. Radziwiłł had recognised Stanisław Leszczyński as the ruler, but after the Battle of Poltava, as did many Swedish supporters, he reconciled with Augustus II. The king held no grudges against Radziwiłł, as immediately after his return on 3 November 1709, he entrusted administration of the Rzeżyca

---

60 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 25.09.1714. RGADA 79-1-1714, no. 10, fol. 8-9; idem, 17.10.1714. Ibidem, fol. 10.

61 A. Trojanowski to J. Plater [in Polish], 09.07.1715. LVIA 1276-2-31, fol. 10.

62 J. Plater to J. Szembek [in Polish], 01.07.1715. BCzar, sygn. 470, fol. 1-3.

63 J. Plater to Peter I [in Polish], 07.08.1715. RGADA 79-1-1715, no. 24.

64 M. Butkiewicz to K. S. Radziwiłł [in Polish], 29.05.1716. AGAD AR V 1726, fol. 9.

65 News from Vilnius [in Polish], 05.04.1716. Biblioteka Jagiellońska, sygn. 101, fol. 192-194.

(Rēzekne) *starosty* to Radziwiłł after the death of Mikołaj Korff, the *skarbný* of Polish Livonia.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, Korff's successors were not keen to give up the *starosty*, and for several more years they continued the fight over its control. As one of the chancellor's servants noted, Radziwiłł had to write to Aleksandr Menshikov (who was the governor general of Riga in 1710–1713), asking him to protect the *starosty* from the Korff assaults. The chancellor was likewise advised to write to Plater, who had a good reputation with Menshikov.<sup>67</sup>

Plater maintained correspondence with a rather wide circle of Polish and Lithuanian ministers and other prominent figures. Not all letters have survived, though. As the sources presented above show, his main addressee in Russia was this country's chancellor, Gavriil Golovkin. Plater also sent letters to the Polish chancellor Jan Szembek. There is no doubt that there would have also been correspondence with the Lithuanian grand hetman Ludwik Pociej. Plater also must have kept correspondence with the Polish hetmans.<sup>68</sup> Plater also maintained correspondence with the chancellor of the Duchy of Courland and the Duke of Courland Ferdinand. It seems that these men thought that Plater could help in the conflict with Russia's administration, which was collecting money for the upkeep of the widowed Duchess of Courland.<sup>69</sup> Plater also once sent across a letter from the Duke of Courland.<sup>70</sup> In 1713, Plater passed on the king's letters to the Riga commandant Iakov Polonskii and Piotr Bestuzhev-Ryumin.<sup>71</sup> In 1713–1714, Plater sent on letters from the Troki palatine Kazimierz Ogiński, the Podole palatine Stefan Humiecki, the *starosta* of Bobruisk Jan Kazimierz Sapieha, and the letters of the secretary of the Russian embassy in the Republic, Piotr Golembowski.<sup>72</sup>

During the first year of Plater's mission, communication with him was carried out via a specially arranged postal service between Riga and Vilnius.<sup>73</sup>

66 *Metryka Litewska Księga Sigillat 1709–1719*. Oprac. A. Rachuba. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987, pp. 29, 203.

67 M. Butkiewicz to K. S. Radziwiłł [in Polish], 12.04.1711. AGAD AR V 1726, fol. 1–3. J. Plater maintained good relations with A. Menshikov many years after his mission, see J. Plater to A. Menshikov [in Polish], 22.12.1725. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 40.

68 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 27.04.1712. RGADA 79–1–1712, no. 31, fol. 12–15.

69 E. Sacken to J. Plater [in Polish], 20.10.1712. BCzar, sygn. 464, fol. 507–508.

70 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 07.06.1712. RGADA 79–1–1712, no. 31, fol. 22–23.

71 J. Plater's memorial [in Polish], 05.04.1713. RGADA 79–1–1713, no. 17, fol. 1.

72 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 06.06.1713. RGADA 79–1–1713, no. 17, fol. 6–7; J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 25.09.1714. RGADA 79–1–1714, no. 10, fol. 9.

73 K. Pociej to Peter I [in Polish], 27.10.1711. RGADA 79–1–1711, no. 7, fol. 7.

This postal connection really did function in 1711, but it is difficult to ascertain whether it remained in later years as there are no documents confirming this. In the middle of 1713, a postal connection was extended to Memel, close to where Plater lived for some time.<sup>74</sup> Normally, soldiers from the Lithuanian army would perform the functions of postal couriers as per the hetman's orders. While in Livonia, Plater made use of the Russian administration's postal connection, especially when sending letters to Saint Petersburg.<sup>75</sup> So, any transfer of confidential information would have been impossible.

Jan Plater's mission in Riga ended, but its echoes resonated for another few decades.<sup>76</sup> It appears that Plater spent most of this mission living off his own money or loans, which he hoped to recoup from the state. In 1717, the Sejm confirmed for Plater a public debt equal to 6000 thalers. Lithuanian districts had to think of ways how this debt could be returned to Plater.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, as the available data shows, sejmiks would avoid executing the Sejm's constitution. In 1717, the Lithuanian Fiscal Tribunal stated that the money had not been paid to Plater, and obligated the Candlemas sejmiks of the following year (1718) to think of ways of meeting this public debt.<sup>78</sup>

The Połock sejmik that met on 14 May 1725 promised that in accordance with the Silent Sejm's constitution, the next year the sejmik would pass the necessary resolutions based on which a proportional part of the public debt owed to Plater would be paid back. The sejmik noted that the Duchy of Samogitia and Polish Livonia had already paid out the parts of the debt they owed.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, it is likely that the latter sejmiks only passed resolutions that this money had to be collected for Plater, yet they were never realised, as was shown by Plater's subsequent efforts to recover the money.

Once he ended his diplomatic mission, Plater did not recede from active political activities and was elected several times as one of the envoys to the Sejm from the Polish Livonian. Whenever Plater would go to the Sejm, in their

---

74 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 13.06.1713. RGADA 79-1-1713, no. 17, fol. 10.

75 J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 27.04.1712. RGADA 79-1-1712, no. 31, fol. 12-15; J. Plater to G. Golovkin [in Polish], 13.06.1713. RGADA 79-1-1713, no. 17, fol. 10.

76 In his work, Edvards Seliška presented a reference to an instruction, supposedly given by the Sejm of 1718 to Plater, the envoy to Russia. However, the signature LMAVB, F. 198, b. 35 is a decision of the sejmik of Polish Livonia to levy a small tax for its delegates to the Lithuanian Fiscal Tribunal in 1736, see Seliška 2025, 24.

77 *Volumina legum*, p. 62.

78 Final Decree of the Lithuanian Fiscal Tribunal [in Polish], 23.10.1717. LMAVB, f. 17, b. 177, fol. 890.

79 Połock sejmik's decision [in Polish], 14.05.1725. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 32.

instructions, the nobility would enter a point regarding the public debt owed to him. The Sejm was asked to reconsider how the state could return the debt of 6000 thalers (one year of residence was equal to 1000 thalers) to Plater. This kind of instruction was given by the sejmik of Polish Livonia before 1724, 1730, 1732, and 1733 sejms.<sup>80</sup> As sejm-related documents show, only in 1726 was the debt owed to Plater mentioned, but this question was addressed to the next Sejm.<sup>81</sup> There are no historical documents confirming that this public debt was ever paid back to Plater.

If the nobility forgot the merits of their countrymen and avoided returning debts, then Augustus II did not. In 1724, the king gave his assurance that after the death of Mikołaj Korff, the *Rzeżyca starosty*, then in the latter's hands, would be granted to Plater or his heirs.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, this promise had little impact. Korff died in 1755, only two years before Plater himself passed away.<sup>83</sup> By that time, Augustus II was not among the living either, and the country was ruled by his son Augustus III. The *Rzeżyca starosty* thus never ended up being controlled by Plater or his heirs.<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusions

Jan Plater's mission was dispatched in accordance with the earlier experience of similar diplomatic missions that were not mandated by the Sejm. The political situation in 1710, however, was different compared to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The long internal war between supporters of the Swedes and the Russians meant that Russia's role in Lithuania's internal life had grown more prominent. In the persona of the Russian tsar, the Lithuanians saw not only a mediator for their own internal disputes but also a powerful protector of the nobility's rights. Nonetheless, this "friendship" was soured by the Russian military's self-willingness within Lithuania's territory, where the Russians acted as conquerors

---

80 Instructions by the sejmik of Polish Livonia [in Polish], 21.08.1724; 22.09.1732; 18.09.1732; 20.03.1733. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 15. Interestingly, the instructions for 1730 and 1732 record the sum of 6500 thalers instead of 6000 thalers, see *Ibidem*, ff. 11, 19. This shows that the instructions were drafted in a dismissive manner, or that not many people remembered the size of the public debt owed to Plater. In the 1733 instruction, the amount was again reduced to 6000 thalers.

81 *Volumina legum*, p. 252.

82 Augustus II's universal, 10.12.1724. LMAVB, f. 198, b. 31.

83 Link-Lenczowski 1981, 661–662.

84 *Urządnicy inflanccy XVI–XVIII wieku: spisy*. Oprac. Krzysztof Mikulski i Andrzej Rachuba. Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka, 1994, p. 202.

rather than allies. That is why the main goal of Plater's mission was the cessation of the Russian contributions, as well as the improvement of trading conditions in Riga for the Lithuanian merchants. In other words, this mission was the Lithuanian political elite's attempt at solving several dire problems in relations with Russia.

At one point, the king approved of this mission, but it was in effect initiated by the Lithuanian officials. As the conflict between Augustus II and the Lithuanian grand hetman Ludwik Pociąg intensified, the king had no need for Plater's services as he could dispatch his own envoys and use Saxony's diplomatic services. A diplomatic mission without the Sejm's mandate, as a measure, was suitable, but Plater failed in achieving the aims of this mission primarily due to the Polish–Lithuanian military weakness. Diplomatic negotiations with Russia that could not be backed up by any real military force proved to be ineffective. Jan Plater's mission should not be associated with the Lithuanian political independence or separatism. Rather, it may be deemed as completely normal practice given the conditions of paralysis of the central government.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY / BIBLIOGRĀFIJA

### Unpublished Sources / Nepublicētie avoti

- Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, Teki Sanguszkowie, sygn. 281/1.  
Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, V 723, 1726.  
Biblioteka Jagiellońska, sygn. 101.  
Biblioteka Narodowa, Biblioteka Ordynacji Zamojskiej, sygn. 940.  
Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs, Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs, PA-673–1–404.  
Lietuvos Mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka, f. 17, b. 177; f. 198, b. 15, 28, 31, 32, 38, 40.  
Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas, Senieji aktai, b. 14503; f. 1276, ap. 2, b. 31.  
MNK Biblioteka Czartoryskich, sygn. 464, 468, 470.  
Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov, f. 79, op. 1, 1711, no. 7; f. 79, op. 1, 1712, no. 10, 31; f. 79, op. 1, 1713, no. 17; f. 79, op. 1, 1714, no. 10; f. 79, op. 1, 1715, no. 24.

### Published Sources / Publicētie avoti

- Gistoriia Sveiskoi voiny (podennaia zapiska Petra Velikogo)*. Vypusk 1. Sost. T. S. Maikova. Moskva: Krug', 2004.  
*Metryka Litewska Księga Sigillat 1709–1719*. Oprac. A. Rachuba. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987.  
*Pokhodnyi zhurnal 1712 goda*. Pod red. i s primech. A. F. Bychkova. St. Petersburg 1854.

*Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*. T. 9, vypusk 2. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1952.

*Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*. T. 11, vypusk 2. Moskva: Nauka, 1964.

*Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*. T. 12, vypusk 1. Moskva: Nauka, 1975.

*Sbornik materialov i statei po istorii Pribaltiiskogo kraia*. T. 1. Riga: Tipografia A. I. Lipinskago, 1876.

*Volumina legum Przedruk zbioru praw staraniem XX. Pijarów w Warszawie, od roku 1732 do roku 1782 wydanego*. T. 6. St. Petersburg: nakładem i drukiem Jozafata Ohryzki, 1860.

### Secondary Sources / Literatūra

Bantysh-Kamenskii, Nikolai (1898). *Obzor vneshnikh snoshenii Rossii (po 1800 g.)*. Ch. 3: (Kurliandia, Liflandiia, Estlandiia, Finliandiia, Pol'sha i Portugaliia). Moskva: Tipografia E. Lissnera i Iu. Romana.

Link-Lenczowski, Andrzej (1980). *Dyplomacja hetmana wielkiego koronnego Adama Mikołaja Sieniawskiego w latach 1706–1725*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Uniwersytet Jagielloński.

Link-Lenczowski, Andrzej (1981). Jan Wilhelm Plater. *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. T. 26. Red. nac. Emanuel Rostworowski. Wrocław et al.: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, pp. 661–662.

Gierowski, Józef Andrzej (1965). *Traktat przyjazni Polski z Francją*. Warszawa: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe.

Gierowski, Józef Andrzej (1966). Dyplomacja polska w dobie unii personalnej polsko-saskiej. *Polska służba dyplomatyczna XVI–XVIII w.* Red. Z. Wojcik. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. 369–470.

Koroliuk, Vladimir (1954). Vsutplenie Rechi Pospolitoi v Severnuiu voinu. *Uchenye zapiski instituta slavianovedeniia*, 10, pp. 239–347.

*Russkii biograficheskii slovar'* (1900). T. 2 Aleksinskii – Bestuzhev-Riumin. St.-Peterburg': tip. Glavnogo upr. udelov.

Seliška, Edvards (2025). First Steps of Infantians in Foreign Policy – Example of Plater Family (1677–1700). *Jauno vēsturnieku zinātniskie lasījumi X*. Sast. Ginta Ieva Bikše. Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, pp. 17–27.

Sliesoriūnas, Gintautas (2004). Jono Bokiejaus pasiuntinybė į Maskvą 1697–1699 metais ir Rusijos karinės intervencijos į Lietuvos Didžiąją Kunigaikštystę 1697–1698 metais problema. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1, pp. 57–69.

Šapoka, Mindaugas (2021). *Didysis Šiaurės karas 1700–1721: karas, pakeitęs moderniąją Europą*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas.

Šapoka, Mindaugas; Gerulaitienė, Vilija (2021). Lietuvos didžiojo etmono Liudviko Pociėjaus planas pašalinti iš sosto Augustą II 1714 m.: tarp tikrovės ir fikcijos. *XVIII amžiaus studijos*, 7, pp. 34–49.

Šapoka, Mindaugas (2018). *Warfare, loyalty and rebellion: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Great Northern War, 1709–1717*. London and New York: Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group.

*Urzednicy inflanccy XVI-XVIII wieku: spisy* (1994). Oprac. Krzysztof Mikulski i Andrzej Rachuba. Kórnik: Biblioteka Kórnicka.

## JANA PLĀTERA DIPLOMĀTISKĀ MISIJA VIDZEMĒ 1710.–1716. GADĀ

### Mindaugas Šapoka

Rakstā tiek skatīta Lietuvas Lielkunigaitijas sūtņa Jana Plātera (1676–1757) diplomātiskā misija uz Rīgu un Vidzemi 1710.–1716. gadā, kas līdz šim ir nepietiekami pētīta. Tajā tiek analizētas sarunas ar Krievijas caristes varas pārstāvjiem sarežģītas un nestabilas politiskās situācijas kontekstā. Plātera misija uzsver Polijas-Lietuvas kopvalsts diplomātiskos ierobežojumus un tās centienus pārvarēt politisko krīzi Lielā Ziemeļu kara (1700–1721) laikā. Rakstā tiek aplūkots jautājums, vai atsevišķas misijas, kuras oficiāli nebija nosūtījis kopvalsts Seims, varēja būt efektīvs līdzeklis, lai risinātu diplomātisko krīzi, kas skāra Poliju un Lietuvu 18. gadsimta sākumā.

*Atslēgas vārdi:* Jans Vilhelms Plāters, Lietuvas Lielkunigaitija, Lielais Ziemeļu karš, diplomātijas vēsture, Vidzeme, Inflantija

### Kopsavilkums

Rakstā tiek analizēta Polijas Vidzemes jeb Inflantijas vojevodas (*wojski*) Jana Plātera diplomātiskā misija uz Rīgu un Vidzemi 1710.–1716. gadā un tās nozīme Polijas-Lietuvas kopvalsts ārpolitikas kontekstā. Izpēte tiek balstīta uz nepietiekami apzinātiem materiāliem no Lietuvas, Latvijas, Polijas un Krievijas arhīviem un bibliotēkām.

18. gadsimta sākumā Polijas-Lietuvas kopvalsts piedzīvoja diplomātisko krīzi, savukārt Eiropas valstis sāka praktizēt pastāvīgu diplomātisko pārstāvniecību uzturēšanu. Polijā ārpolitika bija Seima kompetencē, un valstij bija grūti pielāgoties šim pārmaiņām. Seims sanāca reti un daudzos gadījumos nepieņēma nekādus lēmumus. Polijas diplomātiskās lietas pārņēma Saksijas diplomāti, jo Saksijas kūrfirsts Augusts II valdīja arī Polijā-Lietuvā. Neskatoties uz to, kopvalstij izdevās saglabāt unikālu sistēmu, kurā, ņemot vērā Seima daļēju rīcības nespēju, tā funkcijas pārņēma *Senatus Consilium* un seimiki, kā arī dižciltīgo konfederācijas. Plātera misija bija viens no šādiem mēģinājumiem “apiet” tradicionālo diplomātijas modeli. Sākot savu misiju Rīgā 1710. gadā, Plāters rīkojās bez Seima oficiālas atļaujas.

Viņš iesniedza vairākus memorandus Krievijas amatpersonām, mudinot tās izvest cara armiju no Lietuvas un Kurzemes un uzlabot tirdzniecības apstākļus Lietuvas tirgotājiem. 1712. gadā Lietuvas senatori un ministri piešķīra Plāteram oficiālu pilnvaru risināt sarunas ar Krievijas caru Pēteri I. 27. februārī izdotajās instrukcijās Plāteram tika uzdots pieprasīt Krievijas armijas izvešanu un nodevu atcelšanu. Norādījumos bija paredzēts arī Plātera misijas uzturēšanas finansējums – viņam tika dota atļauja iekasēt 1000 dālderu no Lietuvas tirgotājiem, kuri tirgojās Rīgā. Šis lēmums liecina, ka misijai

bija gan politisks, gan ekonomisks raksturs – Lietuvas tirgotāji cerēja, ka Plāteram izdosies uzlabot viņu tirgošanās apstākļus Rīgā.

Tomēr pat ar šādām pilnvarām Plāteram nācās darboties sarežģītos apstākļos, un viņa attiecības ar Krievijas varas administrāciju palika saspīlētas. Lai gan cara amatpersonas atklāti neapšaubīja viņa misiju, tās nevēlējās atbildēt uz Plātera lūgumiem. Viņa situācija Rīgā bija apgrūtināta jo īpaši tad, kad Krievijas armija uzsāka savu maršu cauri Lietuvai.

Plātera misija nebija tikai Lietuvas iniciatīva, jo zināmā mērā tā atspoguļoja arī Augusta II intereses. Sākumā Polijas karalis centās izdarīt spiedienu uz Pēteri I Vidzemes jautājumā, taču vēlāk Plāters sāka rīkoties pret Saksijas armijas klātbūtni kopvalsts teritorijā. Šī nostāja bija pretrunā Augusta II politikai, bet krievi to izmantoja kā līdzekli, lai sagrautu Polijas iekšējo vienotību. 1714. gadā Rīgā sākās sarunas starp Plāteru un krieviem bija mēģinājums koncentrēties uz Lietuvas un Polijas atbalstu pret iespējamu Saksijas militāro intervenci Vidzemē. Pabeidzis savu misiju, Plāters saskārās ar Lietuvas sabiedrības divkosību, kad bija jāatmaksā viņa parāds, kaut arī Seims bija atzinis tā likumīgu dzēšanu.

Raksts atklāj, kā atsevišķas diplomātijas formas, piemēram, Plātera misija, varēja kļūt par alternatīvu līdzekli Polijas-Lietuvas kopvalsts ārpolitikas jautājumu risināšanai. Tāpēc tradicionālās historiogrāfijas tendence novērtēt diplomātiskās darbības efektivitāti, balstoties uz centralizētiem kritērijiem, daļēji ir kļūdaina. Polijas-Lietuvas kopvalstī svarīga bija nevis diplomātijas centralizācija, bet tās atkarība no Seima kā institūcijas. Tādējādi, pat ja Plātera misijai nebija oficiālas Seima pilnvaras, tā varēja būt nozīmīgs diplomātisko funkciju īstenošanas līdzeklis.

Iesniegts / Submitted 26.06.2025.

© 2025 Mindaugas Šapoka, Latvijas Universitāte

Raksts publicēts brīvpieejā saskaņā ar Creative Commons

Attiecinājuma-Nekomerciāls 4.0 Starptautisko licenci (CC BY-NC 4.0)

This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0

International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)