

## FIRST STEPS OF INFLANTIANS IN FOREIGN POLICY – EXAMPLE OF PLATER FAMILY (1677–1700)

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### ABSTRACT

The article examines the early activities of one of the best-known Inflantian families, the Platers, in the field of foreign policy of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Reczpospolita*). Based on the archive materials and the published sources, it is possible to trace the path of Platers and other Inflantians to becoming a part of the Polish-Lithuanian administration. An essential aspect was the patron-client relationship. Platers, manoeuvring among the ruler John III Sobieski and the families of magnates (Pacs, Radziwiłłs and Sapiehas), participated both in the formation of a foreign policy friendly to Prussia and in strengthening the European anti-Ottoman coalition in 1680s. Platers, like other Inflantians, believed that Livonian territories lost to Sweden in 1629 should be regained. They saw ancient Livonia (The Duchy of Courland and Inflantia, today – Vidzeme) as a politically united area that should be part of the Commonwealth. These views often determined the motivations of Platers' actions.

**Keywords:** Jan Andzej Henryk Plater, Jan Teofil Plater, Mikolaj Kazimierz Pac, Jan III Sobieski, Inflantia.

### INTRODUCTION

The activity of the Inflantian (Latgale) *szlachta* (nobility) in the political and specifically – foreign policy field is a little-studied issue. Especially it concerns early steps of Inflantians from the foundation of Inflantia voivodeship (1677) until the beginning of the Great Northern War (1700–1721), that opened new period in Polish-Lithuanian and thus Inflantian history. Platers are chosen for the study, as in the period of 1677–1700 they dominated

among other Inflantian families, it was manifested by holding the position of Dynaburg (Daugavpils) *starosta* (elder) and representation at state legislature – *Sejm* (UI 1994, 181; Fiscal Court of Lithuania, 1673, VL (5), 140, 637–638; Wasilewski 1981a, 653–654). Previous Inflantian leaders, Tyzenhauzs (Tiesenhausens) and Korffs, lost their influence, but nobles such as Borchs, Hylzens commenced activities in the foreign policy later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The dominance of Platers was challenged briefly only in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Borchs (Seliška 2021, 66, 69). The aim of the article is, through the activities of Platers, to characterise the Inflantian stance and activity in the main foreign policy questions of the last three decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczypospolita*). This period almost entirely correlates with the rule of John III (Jan III Sobieski, 1629–1696; on throne 1674–1696). The paramount issues of this period were the wars against Ottoman Empire for the primacy in Eastern Europe; choice between alliance with France and Sweden or with Habsburg Empire. The article traces the role of Platers in the aforementioned events.

This analysis is innovative, as it contributes to understanding the unstudied topic of factors behind beginnings of foreign policy positions and actions of Platers. Their leading position, also in shaping foreign policy positions locally, influenced all Inflantian *szlachta*. This stance was characterised by willingness to regain the control of Commonwealth over all Livonia and possibly Courland (LNA-LVVA, 712–1–70, 181; LMAVB, F-198–35, 2–2v), as they saw themselves as part of wider “Livonian heritage”; keeping close alliance with politically most influential families of Lithuania, thus, sharing their foreign policy views.

In Latvian history, Inflantians represent a specific group – the descendants of the Livonian nobility, who kept loyalty to the Polish-Lithuanian state rather than to Sweden or later – Russia, and brought the expertise of the Baltic matters into the Commonwealth. Their activity, in contrast to Courland or Swedish (later – Russian) Livonia (Livland, Vidzeme) Baltic German nobility’s role, is almost entirely unexplored by researchers.

In the literature so far, the topic was most fundamentally explored by the Polish specialist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Tadeusz Wasilewski, the individual biographies of the Platers (Wasilewski 1981a, 653–654; Wasilewski 1981b, 657–659; Wasilewski 1981c, 685–686) and in Latvia – by Edvards Seliška (Seliška 2021; Seliška 2024). In the last decades, this subject was slightly touched upon by Polish historian Konrad Bobiatyński in the context of Commonwealth’s political fractional fights (Bobiatyński 2007; Bobiatyński 2008; Bobiatyński 2014; Bobiatyński 2015), as well as Lithuanian historian Gintautas Sliesoriunas (Sliesoriunas 2000; Sliesoriunas 2003), and Belarusian

historian Dźmitrij Wićko (Wićko 2014) in the context of Lithuanian civil war of 1700.

The source base for the research is the Daugavpils (Dynaburg) court books (Fund 712) of the Latvian National Archives of the Latvian State History Archive (LNA-LVVA), which record all legal, political and economic documents of Inflantia, including the decisions of provincial *szlachta* meetings (*sejmiks*) and *sejmiks*' instructions to the envoys to the state legislature – *Sejm*. Documents of this type, along with the correspondence of the Inflantians with the most influential *szlachta* families (magnates) of the country, can be found in the Main Archive of Ancient Acts of Poland (AGAD) in Warsaw, especially in the Radziwiłł collection, in the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (LMAVB) in Vilnius and in the State History Archive of Lithuania (LVIA), especially in Fund 1276. Chronological framework of the article is from the establishment of Inflantian voivodship in 1677, when the Inflantians began to integrate into the political life of the country, until the beginning of the Great Northern War (1700–1721), which changed the geopolitics of the region, as well as affecting the foreign policy position of the Inflantians as a result of the Russian factor. Plater family has been selected as the research object, as it became the most influential in Inflantia, being active in the field of foreign policy, too.

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF INFLANTIANS DURING SECOND HALF OF 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Livonian Germans (Borchs, Hilzens, Korffs, Platers, Tiesenhausens) integrated into political life of the Commonwealth through military service, thus winning recognition of monarchs and stabilizing their social status (Rachuba 1997, 237–246). The Inflantians learned the Polish-Lithuanian political rules: political struggle between *szlachta* and the monarchs, as well as the patron-client relationship, when the socially lower *szlachta* politically supported magnates in exchange for career incentives. Another cornerstone of the Inflantians' career was the management of the crown estates (*starostwa*). It linked them to monarchs, who were often magnates themselves with their own clientele. Inflantians had real estates in Courland, thus, making them experts on the political realities of duchy. I.e., in 1680s and 1690s, Jan Andrzej Henryk Plater (Jan Andrzej Henryk Plater / Johann Andreas Heinrich Plater; 1626–1696) and Otto Fryderyk Felkersamb (d. 1705) represented Jan III in the *sejmik* (Landtag) of Piltene (Dybaś 2004, 136, 223; *Sejm* commission on Piltene, 1685, VL (5), 719–720). This facilitated the involvement of Inflantians in foreign policy.

Before Platers, the Tyzenhauz brothers – Andzej (d. 1673) and Jerzy (d. 1679) were the leading dignitaries in Inflantia. The Tyzenhauzs sidelined the Korffs (compare: AGAD, AT, VI, sygn. F-236, 1 and Ibidem, sygn. F-115, 1), and based their career on John II Casimir Vasa (Jan II Kazimierz Waza; 1609–1672; reigned 1648–1668) and on Jan III taking the pro-French foreign policy stance (Radziwiłł 1980, 290, 422; Kersten 1988, 253, 254, 360, 520, 534). They represented Inflantian legally non-binding non-recognition of 1660 peace of Oliva (*pokój oliwski*), as it was concluded without their consent to give up rights in favour of Sweden to most of Livonia (AGAD, AT, sygn. G-820, 2; LMAVB, F-198–9, 3). Legally and politically, Inflantia was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Inflantians emphasized it (LMAVB, F 9–6, 111). Until the 1660s. The dominating family was Radziwiłłs and their leader was Calvinist, Bogusław Radziwiłł (1620–1669; Biržai line). The Tyzenhauzs were his clients. Radziwiłłs were followed by B. Radziwiłł's enemies – the Pacs in 1670s, and the Sapiehas – in 1680–1690s. Although the Tyzenhauzs, criticized the 1677 decision on the creation of the voivodeship, (LVIA, SA, 21–1–46, 240; Regulation on Inflantia, 1598, VL (2), 1474)<sup>1</sup>, they supported the pro-France/Sweden policy against Brandenburg-Prussia of Jan III (endorsed by the Pacs). That was an exception for Lithuanian *szlachta* (Matwijewski 1985, 48–51, 68–69).

J. A. H. Plater also started the career under John II Casimir in wars against Sweden and Russia in 1660s (Chrapowicki 1988, 399; Wasilewski 1981b, 657). In 1668 and 1669, together with his brother Fabian Plater (Fabian Plater, 1628–1709), he was among the envoys of the Lithuanian army to the *Sejm* (Wasilewski 1981a, 653–654).

Inflantian transition from a military to civil career, and conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism, was part of integration into the state administration. J. A. H. Plater continued his career by supporting the commander of the Lithuanian army, grand hetman (since 1667), Michał Kazimierz Pac (1624–1682) (Bobiatyński 2014, 45). J. A. H. Plater was a supporter, same as the Pacs, of the monarch Michael I (Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki; 1640–1673; reigned 1669–1673). J. A. H. Plater's stance enabled him to buy the Daugavpils *starostwo* from M. K. Pac (Wasilewski 1981b, 658) and to surpass the Tyzenhauzs, who had a history of conflict with the Pacs (AGAD, AR, V, sygn. 16710, 88, 102). J. A. H. Plater and his son Jan Andrzej (d. 1735) converted to Catholicism only in 1694, earning the public condemnation of the Lutheran *starosta* of Rēzekne (Rzeżyca) Mikołaj Korff (d. 1709), who assessed Platers as purely career driven (Sarnecki 1958, 186, 288).

A client's career was determined on the prominence level of his patrons. The Radziwiłł Biržai male line ended with B. Radziwiłł, and thus his

clients, i.e., Tyzenhauzs (both childless), and Protestantism lost influence in Commonwealth. The conversion of Platers to Catholicism was a consequence of a successful choice of patron.

## PLATERS IN 1670S: SUPPORTERS OF PACS' ANTI-SWEDISH STANCES

In 1670s, John III was an ally of France and Sweden against the Habsburgs and the Brandenburg. Alliance with protestant Sweden was unpopular among *szlachta* as it was Baltic region archrival who just two decades earlier threatened the even existence of the Commonwealth. As a client of the Pacs, J. A. H. Plater was in opposition to John III. In 1670s, the Platers, who still were Lutherans, had conflicts with the Jesuits (LVIA, 1276–2–97 (a), 25–26, 42) and the commission of inquiry into these conflicts was formed (LVIA, 1276–2–97 (c), 59–59v.; *Sejm* commission on churches in Infantia, 1683, VL (5) 1738, 637–638). However, this did not affect the good relations of Platers with John III, who held J. A. H. Plater in high regard. The monarch even had an intention of appointing J. A. H. Plater to the influential post of Vilnius *starosta* (Niezubitowski 1998, 365). It is possible that the ruler tried to lure Platers away from the Sapiehas, successors of the Pacs in leading the opposition (Bobiatyński 2015a, 187).

In 1678, Swedish troops from Swedish Livonia, with the informal consent of John III, crossed into Lithuania to fight against Brandenburg. J. A. H. Plater received the order of M. K. Pac, Brandenburg supporter, to observe and report on Swedish and Brandenburg forces. Plater's information helped Pac to defeat Swedes (BCza, rkp. 1351, 169–171; LVIA, 1276–2–96 (c), 14v; LVIA, 1276–2–97 (b), 49–49v; Maron 1984, 179–180). J. A. H. Plater himself was considered an agent of Brandenburg's interests (AGAD, AR V, sygn. 11823, 1–2; Wasilewski 1981b, 657–658). Interestingly, in 1660s, the Tyzenhauzs as the clients of Radziwiłł, were sympathetic to Brandenburg (AGAD, AR, V, sygn. 16710, 90).

The perspectives of M. K. Pac and John III differed. The ruler was ready to give Daugavpils to Russia in exchange for its help against the Ottomans. Meanwhile, the anti-John III opposition led by the Pacs wanted, with Infantian assistance, to attack Sweden to regain all Livonia (Wójcik 1994, 128, 262; Bobiatyński 2008, 377–379; Bobiatyński 2007, 324–329). For Infantians, as for most of *szlachta*, Sweden was an enemy, not an ally (LVIA, 1276–2–96 (b), 25). Eventually John III reluctantly chose alliance with Habsburgs. Anti-French/Swedish foreign policy stance of the Platers and Infantians in general correlated with Pacs position and the aim to establish pre-1629 borders in Baltic region.

## JAN TEOFIL PLATER – ENVOY AT HABSBURG COURT AND ANTI-OTTOMAN COALITION 1679–1683

The Commonwealth of 1670–1680s was isolated in foreign policy, it lost Ukrainian territories to Ottomans, France's allies, and monarch's plans to subjugate Brandenburg failed. Ottoman expansion was an opportunity to improve relations with Vienna and return to the circle of great powers. Into this anti-French position fits also activities of Jan Andrzej's younger brother Jan Teofil. From 1679 to 1683, during the period of Ottoman Empire's aggression in Central Europe, he served at the Habsburg court as a diplomatic representative of the Lithuanian vice chancellor and one of most influential Lithuanian magnates Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł (Michał Kazimierz Radziwiłł, 1635–1680; from the family's non-protestant branch). J. T. Plater had diplomatic experience from Rome and Transylvania (BN, SD XVIII.3.2769 adl). He worked to create Commonwealth's alliance with Vienna against Ottomans, and tried to counter French influences in Habsburg court. J. T. Plater played important role as the informant of Polish-Lithuanian side. Still, his success depended on M. K. Radziwiłł's ability (or the lack thereof) to use this information (AGAD, AR V, sygn. 11825, 5–6, 13; BCza, rkp. 1376, 462–463, 467–469; Wasilewski 1981c, 685). The Habsburgs later accepted Commonwealth's alliance due to direct Ottoman threat.

In 1690s, the Sapiehas dominated Lithuanian politics. At that time, Inflantians and particularly the Platers were considered close allies of the Sapiehas, also supporting their pro-Habsburg stance (Wićko 2014, 49; LVIA, 1276–2–96 (a), 70, 83; Sliesoriūnas 2000, 212). Until late 1690s, the majority of Lithuanian nobility supported the pro-Habsburg position of the Sapiehas to continue the war against the Ottomans, contrary to peace plans of John III (Każmierczyk 1990, 28).

When the Saxon King Augustus II Wettin (1670–1733; the ruler of Commonwealth 1697–1706, 1709–1733) became the head of Rzeczpospolita in 1697, the Sapiehas quickly shifted from anti-Wettin position and supported the plans Augustus II to retake all of Livonia from the Swedes (Sliesoriūnas 2003, 234). It could have been sympathetic to the Inflantians (Seliška 2021, 52). The 1696 *sejmik*'s instruction to the *Sejm* is full of praises venerating J. P. Sapieha (AGAD, ZMN, sygn. 1220, 256–257, 259).

## CONCLUSIONS

One of the factors in foreign policy orientation of Inflantians, since the domination of Tyzenhauzs, was to recover the territory lost to Sweden with a view to regaining their "Livonian heritage". The Platers, by successfully

choosing the influential Pacs as their patrons, eliminated the Tyzenhauzs, who were Calvinist Radziwiłł line clients, as leading Infantian family. Thus, the Platers were engaged in anti-Swedish policy of the Pacs and proved their usefulness as clients in the Baltic region. Nevertheless, John III, pro-French/Swedish policy leader, highly regarded the Platers and tried to get them on his side. Possibly he was assessing them as career-driven (in line with M. Korff's allegation against the Platers in the conversation regarding the context of Catholicism). Due to their links with Courland, they were engaged as the ruler's envoys to duchy and Piltene. To serve the magnates and advance their foreign policy positions (Sapiehas, Radziwiłłs) was one of the main patterns of conduct characteristic to Platers. Jan Teofil Plater's example, when he served as a diplomat in Vienna during 1680s showed his skills, but also the limits of his success – he depended on his patron's readiness to use the information provided.

In general, foreign policy stances of the Platers in 1677–1700 were not challenged, as they always matched the patrons' position, and this helped the Platers to continue building successful careers later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AGAD – Archiwum Główne Akt dawnych

AR, V – AGAD, Archiwum Radziwiłłów, dział V

AT, VI – Archiwum Tyzenhauzów, dział VI

ZMN – Zbiór Muzeum Narodowego

Bcza – Biblioteka Czartoryskich

TN – Teki Naruszewicza

BN – Biblioteka Narodowa

LNA-LVVA – Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs

LMAVB – Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka

LVIA – Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas

SA – Senujų Archivos

VL – Volumina Legum

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J. A. H. Plater letter, 26.10.1685. AGAD, AR, V, sygn. 11823.

J. T. Plater letter to Radziwiłł, 22.02.1680. AGAD, AR, V, sygn. 11825.

M. Korff letter to W. Tyzenhauz, 30.01.1655. AGAD, AT, VI, sygn. F-115.

M. Korff letter to A. Tyzenhauz, 28.04.1671. AGAD, AT, VI, sygn. F-236.

#### **BCza:**

Letters to John Sobieski and his secretary Adam Sarnowski, 1659–1690. BCza, rkp. 1376.

Letters to Michał Pac, 1659–1693. BCza, rkp. 1351.

#### **BN:**

Głos Panski Łamiący Cedry Przy Starowiecznych Tramach [...]odgłos Prętkiej Śmierci [...] Ferdinanda De Broel Platera Starościca Inflantskiego, 24.03.1734. BN SD XVIII.3.2769 adl.

#### **LMAVB:**

Infantia sejmik instruction for Sejm of 1662. LMAVB, F-198 – 9.

Mowa na stojące alternate WXL, sejmik inflancki roku 1729. In: Silva rerum Jan Ludwik Plater. LMAVB, F 9 – 6.

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- <sup>1</sup> J. Tyzenhauz expressed the interests of his patrons, Radziwiłłs: all six deputies representing Infantia in *Sejm* (two from Poland, Lithuania and Infantia) should be elected *in absentia* and not from those present. It gave an option to the candidate who failed these elections to be elected in another *sejmik*, using Infantia as backup. In reality, the rule to be present was rarely observed.

## INFLANTIEŠU PIRMIE SOĻI ĀRPOLITIKĀ – PLĀTERU DZIMTAS PIEMĒRS (1677–1700)

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### ANOTĀCIJA

Rakstā, balstoties gan uz arhīvu, gan publicētajiem avotiem, aplūkota pazīstamās inflantiešu dzimtas – Plāteru – darbības pirmsākumi Žečpospolitas dienestā ārpolitikas jomā. Lai iekļautos valsts pārvaldē, būtiskas bija patrona-klienta attiecības. Plāteri, manevrējot starp valdnieku Janu III Sobeski un magnātu dzimtām (*Paci, Radziviļi un Sapiehas*), līdzdarbojās gan Prūsijai draudzīgas ārpolitikas veidošanā, gan Eiropas antiosmaņu koalīcijas stiprināšanā 17. gs. 70.–80. gados. Plāteru tāpat kā citu inflantiešu pārliecība bija, ka Žečpospolitai jāatgūst teritorijas, kas 1629. gadā bija zaudētas Zviedrijai, un ka Vidzeme, Kurzemes hercogiste un Inflantija ir viens kopums, kam jābūt Polijas-Lietuvas sastāvā. Šie uzskati noteica Plāteru rīcību.

**Atslēgvārdi:** Jans Andžejs Henriks Plāters, Jans Teofilis Plāters, Mikolajs Kazimirs Pacs, Jans III Sobeskis, Inflantija.

### KOPSAVILKUMS

Raksts veltīts Plāteru dzimtas darbībai 17. gs. beigās ārpolitikas jomā. Plāteri bija viena no livoniešu dzimtām, kura saglabāja lojalitāti Polijas-Lietuvas valstij (Žečpospolitai). Tēma ir maz pētīta, un galvenais informācijas avots ir Latvijas, Lietuvas un Polijas vēstures arhīvi. Inflantijas (mūsdienu Latgale) muižnieki (šļahta) bija jaunpienācēji Žečpospolitas politiskajā dzīvē. Viņi ātri apguva valsts funkcionēšanas principu: patrona-klienta attiecības. Tās bija sociālu un finansiālu pakalpojumu apmaiņa starp sociāli zemāko un sociāli elitāro šļahtu (magnātiem). Inflantiešu karjeras ceļš bieži aizsākās militārajā dienestā. 17. gs. vidū, būdami protestanti, viņi bija saistīti ar Radziviļu magnātu dzimtas Biržu līniju un saglabāja apziņu, ka ir livoniešu pēcteči. Tādēļ tie uztvēra Kurzemi, Vidzemi un Inflantiju kā vienotu politiski-kulturālu veselumu, kuram jābūt Žečpospolitas pakļautībā, atkarojot Vidzemi zviedriem. Plāteri kā lokālo apstākļu zinātāji tika iesaistīti misijās Kurzēmē un Piltenē. Viņi 17. gs. beigās aizvietoja Tīzenhauzenus kā provinces ievērojamākā dzimta. Jans Andžejs Henriks Plāters (1626–1696) bija tipisks piemērs manevrēšanai starp magnātiem. Viņš bija 17. gs. 60.–70. gadu Lietuvas varenākās dzimtas – Pacu – klients un

opozīcijā valdnieka Jana III Sobeska profranciskai/prozviedriskai ārpolitikai. Inflantietis sniedza palīdzību Paciem un Prūsijai karā pret Zviedriju, kuru uzskatīja par ienaidnieku. Taču Jans III respektēja J. A. H. Plāteru, pat neraugoties uz viņa konfliktiem ar Romas Katoļu baznīcu. 1696. gadā Sobeskis bija gatavs izvirzīt J. A. H. Plāteru ietekmīgajam Viļņas vojevodas amatam, lai pārvilinātu inflantieti savā politiskajā nometnē.

1679.–1683. gadā J. A. H. Plātera brālis Jans Teofils (1627–1697) bija iesaistīts anti-osmaņu savienības veidošanā, Hābsburgu galmā pārstāvēdams Lietuvas vicekancleru Mihalu Kazimiru Radzivilu (1625–1680) un pretdarbojoties franču mēģinājumiem bloķēt antiosmaņu koalīciju.

Plāteru uzskatus ārpolitikā ietekmēja pārliecība, ka Žečpospolitai jāatgūst visa Livonija. Taču Plāteri bija gatavi pielāgot savus ārpolitiskos uzskatus iekšpolitiskajam spēku samēram.