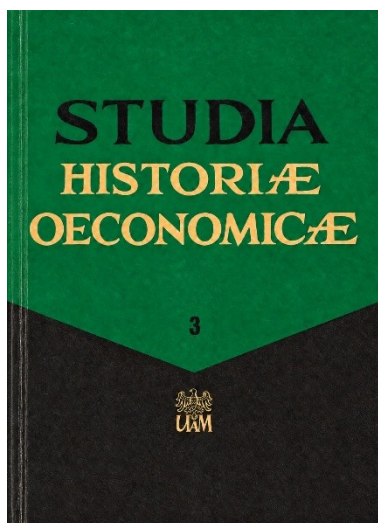




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THE ROLE OF POLISH TERRITORIES IN THE EUROPEAN TRADE IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

There is a generally accepted view among the historians, that in the overall picture of economic transformations, which Europe underwent in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries period, of paramount importance were the changes in the trade relationships. The process of accumulation of trade capital blew up the local markets, demolished the then prevailing social structure of the European countries, paved the way for capitalist ways and means of production, prepared the bourgeois society to play its new historical role.

The European commodity turnover in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries period had constituted one of the important component elements of the then existing economic conjuncture and was subjected to the same fluctuations, which determined the rhythm of European economic life as whole. Even more, it could have represented in some cases the driving force of economic changes in the other spheres of activity. This was quite noticeable in economic relations between countries of different degree of economic development and particularly true in regard to the sphere of East-West trade.

The high rate of growth in trade turnover in the sixteenth century was somehow slowed down at the beginning of the next one. A new intensive period of trade development began at the middle of the eighteenth century. It constituted one of the characteristic features of breakthrough, which had then gradually taken place in the European economy.

The directions of transformations had been marked practically already in the sixteenth century, and precisely for this reason that century mostly attracted attention of scholars. This finds its reflections in the broader, European literature of the subject as well as in Polish historiography. On the other hand the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries have not been examined so thoroughly.

The historical literature underlines mostly the following changes in the trade relations which got under way in the sixteenth century:

- (1) the shift of the gravitation of trade turnover to the Atlantic coast,
- (2) the gradually diminishing importance of the Mediterranean Sea route in the Levantine trade,
- (3) the transformation of the commodity structure of trade which resulted from the influx of overseas products to European markets,
- (4) the intensification of trade between countries of Western and Eastern Europe resulting from:

a. a faster economic growth of Western countries, and especially the growth of their industrial output,

b. Europe's population growth from the beginning of the sixteenth till the end of the eighteenth century — bringing with it a growth in the global demand,

c. the improvements in transportation conditions which enlarged the range of trade,

d. the growing importance of cash-credit turnover and the gradual perfection in mutual account clearings.

The research studies on West-East trade relations in Europe became more animated in the last few years. In 1961, A. Soom published the results of studies in the Baltic grain trade in the seventeenth century¹; this work in a way sums up the achievements of his proceeding studies². It should be also recalled that during the last world war a thorough work by A. E. Christensen on the Dutch trade on the Baltic Sea at the turn of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries³ was published in Denmark; in the following years an outline by E. Dunsdorf's dealing with the Baltic merchant navigation in the seventeenth century⁴ was published, moreover a series of shorter contributions of other authors were printed⁵. Up to the present, however, there are no synthetic studies which would show the total volume of European goods'

¹ A. Soom, *Der baltische Getreidehandel im 17. Jahrhundert*. Stockholm 1961.

² Among others: A. Soom, *Die Politik Schwedens bezüglich des russischen Transithandels über die estnischen Städte in den Jahren 1636—1656*. Tartu 1940.

³ A. E. Christensen, *Dutch Trade to the Baltic about 1600. Studies in the Sound Toll Register and Dutch Shipping Records*. Copenhagen 1941.

⁴ E. Dunsdorfs, *Merchant Shipping in the Baltic during the 17th Century*. Contributions of Baltic University, No 40, Pinneberg 1947.

⁵ Among others: S. E. Aström, *The English Navigation Laws and the Baltic Trade, 1660—1700*. „Scandinavian Economic History Review”. 1962, 12; A. Öhberg, *Russia and the World Market in the Seventeenth Century*. „Scandinavian Economic History Review”, 1955, 2; G. Olsen, *Studier i Danmarks Kornavlog Kornhandelspolitik 1610—1660*. „Historisk Tidskrift”, VI, 1943, 4; W. S. Unger, *Trade Through Sound in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. „Economic History Review”, 1955, 2.

exchange (on land just as well as on sea) and the changes in the zone structure of European trade. There is still a gap to be filled in the field of price formation in the East and West of Europe.

The Polish territories took an active part in the European trade turnover, as a supplier as well as a customer. Moreover, they constituted a kind of bridge, by which the goods were passing the East and West as well as North and South directions. It seems, that the majority of goods was passing only through the Polish territories, but taking into consideration the then prevailing trade organization — it is very difficult to distinguish between the transit (or rather reexport) and home consumption. A clear picture in that respect is being further blurred by the shortage and inaccuracies of original records and entries. Of course, already a mere comparison of quantities and kinds of merchandise coming to and leaving the Polish territories, can lead to some interesting conclusions.

Of special significance was the trade exchange on the East-West line. We shall begin our survey with the Baltic Sea route. The general characteristics of the trade contacts between the Polish Kingdom and the rest of Europe in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, as outlined by S. Hoszowski at the Stockholm congress in 1960⁶ has not lost its significance, nevertheless recent research broadened the scope of the informations it contained. This applies especially to the seventeenth century. On the other hand the eighteenth century (with the exception of the last three decades) belongs to the least known periods in the history of the Baltic trade.

It will not be out of place to recall at this moment the fundamental facts concerning the Baltic navigation from the sixteenth till the eighteenth century. As is generally known, already from the beginnings of the sixteenth century started a decline of the influences exerted till then by the German Hanse; the Dutch who took over the heritage, gradually eliminated the other partners, especially the English. The process of elimination of the latter competitors from the Baltic found its finale wind-up in 1673, when the English East Company formally lost its trade privileges in that region — privileges which it was unable to exercise and defend already for a long time. The Dutch navigation monopoly on the Baltic was broken only in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the English slowly reappeared. At the same time also Swedish and French vessels — not to mention the

⁶ S. Hoszowski, *The Polish Baltic Trade in the 15th—18th Centuries*. Poland at the XIth International Congress of Historical Sciences in Stockholm, Warszawa 1960, p. 117—54.

Lübeck registered tonnage — made frequent appearances on the Baltic. Taking into consideration the development of the Dutch navigation, a quite special role in trade with mid-eastern Europe was apportioned to Amsterdam and some other Dutch ports and municipalities⁷. The key to the Dutch success on the Baltic should be seen in the fact, that they did not confine themselves to the role of a mere middleman, but developed on their homeland a vast refining trade and took to re-export business on a massive scale. Thank to this they were able to intercept an important share of the southern deliveries to Eastern Europe.

Till the end of the eighteenth century, the Baltic trade — much in common with the general East-West commodity turnover — had one characteristic trait: it was to a large extent a stream of finished and semifinished products going to the East and shipments of raw materials travelling in the opposite direction. In sea transport this rule was less conspicuous than in land transport.

The initiation of systematic research on Baltic trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was made possible thanks to the publications of data contained in the Sound registers⁸. Although they do not reflect the full volume of the Baltic trade⁹, they do constitute a valuable and unique continuum of original records covering the whole Baltic region, thus allowing to apply to the studies the scientific, comparative methods. The results of studies published up to now (based on the above mentioned registers) comprise the first half of the seventeenth century¹⁰. Only fragmentary information and data have

⁷ E. g. Harlingen. See J. A. Faber, *De buitenlandse scheepvaart en handel van Harlingen in de jaren 1654 en 1655*. A. A. G. Bijdragen, 14, Wageningen 1967, p.34—71; idem, *Het problem van de dalende graanaanvoer uit de oostzeelanden in de tweede helf van de zeventiende eeuw*, A. A. G. Bijdragen, 9, Wageningen 1963, p. 3—28.

⁸ Cf. A. E. Christensen, *Der handelsgeschichtliche Wert der Sundzollregister. Ein Beitrag zu seiner Beurteilung*. „Hansische Geschichtsblätter”, 59, 1934, p. 23—142. See also: P. Jeannin, *Les comptes du Sund comme source pour la construction d'indices généraux de l'activité économique en Europe (XVI^e—XVII^e siècles)*. „Revue historique” vol. 88 t. 231, 1964, p. 55—102 and 307—40. The publication of tables originated in 1906 has not been brought to an end yet (7 volumes up to 1953).

⁹ In D. Krannhals' opinion (*Danzig und der Weichselhandel in seiner Blütezeit vom 16. bis 17. Jh.*, Leipzig 1942, p. 30, 63—65) the Sound register checked off about 3/4 of the loads leaving Gdańsk in the beginning of the XVIIth century. Certainly, the records fall short of the exports not passing through Sound, e.g. going directly to Sweden.

¹⁰ See the above mentioned works of Christensen, Dunsdorfs and Soom. Krannhals also confined his inquiry mainly to this period.

been published in regard of the second half of that century and the first of the next one. On the other hand, more precise materials have been published on the basis of records kept in particular ports. By far the most elaborate papers are those dealing with the port of Gdańsk. In the last years the volume and the structure of turnover in that port became a theme of detailed studies for Polish historians: S. Hoszowski¹¹, C. Biernat¹² and other authors¹³. These publications enlarged and also to some extent corrected the views expressed by earlier literature of the subject.

The peak turnover in the port of Gdańsk had taken place in the second decade of the seventeenth century. In the following years — up to the middle of that century — the export through the port of Gdańsk, in spite of great price fluctuations, developed on only slightly lower, but reasonably even level. A sharp decline in transactions had been noticeable only after 1655, then they again gradually increased until the eighties — however they were remaining far behind the level reached in the first half of that century. In the next years there was again a decline, which reached its lowest level about 1715. In the following few decades the turnover rose quite considerably, but already after 1729 the stagnation signs reappeared again. A new and intensive rise in turnover occurred after 1760. It was slowed down by the severance of Gdańsk from Poland in the first partition (although the formal annexation by Prussia took place later). On the other hand the cargo volume handled by the ports of Elbląg and Królewiec (Königsberg) rose at that time quite substantially. When we look at that matter from the commodity structure point of view — the greatest fluctuations were to be found in the grain export¹⁴, the traffic volume in

¹¹ S. Hoszowski, *Handel Gdańska w okresie XV—XVIII w. (Gdańsk Trade in the XVth—XVIIIth Centuries)*. Kraków 1960, „Zeszyty Naukowe WSE w Krakowie”, no 11, p. 3—67. Idem, *Polski eksport wioślany w 1784 r. (Polish export on Vistula in 1784)*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny” XLIII, 1956, no. 4, p. 64—80.

¹² Cz. Biernat, *Statystyka obrotu towarowego Gdańska w latach 1651—1815. (Statistics of Gdańsk Trade Turnover in 1651—1815)*. Warszawa 1962.

¹³ Among others H. Samsonowicz, *Materiały do dziejów żeglugi morskiej w XVII w. Ruch w porcie gdańskim w 1688 r. (Materials on the History of Sea Navigation in the XVIIth Century. Traffic in the Gdańsk Harbour in 1688)*, in: „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej”, VIII, 1960, no. 3, p. 299—311, and the discussion remarks of S. Gierszewski, *Zegluga gdańska w 1688 r. (Gdańsk Navigation in 1688)*, „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej”, XI, 1963, p. 101—16.

¹⁴ Cf. Cz. Biernat, *Statystyka obrotu zbożowego Gdańska od połowy XVII w. do 1795 r. (Statistics of Gdańsk Corn Turnover from the Middle of the XVIIth Century to 1795)*, „Zapiski Historyczne”, XXIII, 1957, 4, p. 126—30. See also the above mentioned particular „Statistics of Gdańsk Trade Turnover...” of this author.

wood and forest products being at that time much more stabilized. Maritime wars strongly reduced the volume of exports and imports. As can be deduced from A. Soom's research, the fluctuations mentioned above were also typical, albeit in various intensity, in the other Baltic ports¹⁵.

Among the merchandise exported through Gdańsk the most important one was definitely grain¹⁶.

Year	The percentage of the global export of the four principal grains from Baltic ports		
	Gdańsk	Królewiec (Königsberg)	Ryga (Riga)
1600	74,1	6,7	8,2
1621	67,3	13,0	1,5
1636	63,1	10,9	6,3
1644	65,4	15,8	7,6
1655	56,0	15,1	2,8
1685	61,6	17,1	6,3

Source: A. Soom, *Der baltische Getreidehandel*, p. 16 - 18 (on the basis of the Sound Tables). Similar figures, though relating to other years are given by A. E. Christensen, *Dutch Trade to the Baltic*, p. 415.

If we take into consideration the fact that the grain exported by Królewiec was also provided mainly by territories belonging to the then existing Polish Kingdom (the same applies also to the grain export by other eastern Baltic ports), then it can be fairly stated that at least 3/4th of the grain exported from the Baltic region had been supplied by Polish territories¹⁷. To this should be further added the export of grain and its products by land transport (mostly in the western direction).

The data and materials for the whole Baltic region in the eighteenth century have not yet been worked out, but there seems to be no doubt that, in terms of the tonnage of grain handled, Gdańsk had maintained its leading position on the Baltic, although — as it has been already stated — the volume of its export was reduced and in some years even fell to a bare minimum¹⁸. The position of Gdańsk had been

¹⁵ A. Soom, *Der baltische Getreidehandel* ..., p. 16—19 (table).

¹⁶ A characterization of the corn export in the XVIth century can be found in the paper of M. Małowist, prepared for the 9th International Congress of Historians (IX^e Congrès Internationale des Sciences Historiques, I: Rapports, Paris 1950, p. 307 et seqq.).

¹⁷ Only in the case of corn manufacturing (flour, groats) the exports from West Pomerania and Mecklenburg were quite large.

¹⁸ For instance in 1737 the corn exports via Gdańsk amounted barely to 2400 lasts (Cz. Biernat, *Statistics of Gdańsk Trade Turnover* ..., p. 129).

further weakened by the competition of Russian grain. It should be remembered that the grain supplied by Northern Russia was exported to the West partially by way of Archangielsk, thus bypassing the Baltic region. The volume of that export was gradually growing already from the first half of the seventeenth century¹⁹. In the second half of the eighteenth century the Polish grain export surpassed again 100 000 lasts. It had been shipped by way of Gdańsk, Elbląg, Królewiec and some other ports of eastern Baltic and temporarily even by way of Black Sea²⁰.

The predominance of Gdańsk as the main outlet for Polish exports was even more pronounced when we come to consider the second most important item, namely wood. We have at our disposal, however, more precise comparable data only for the period covering the first half of the seventeenth century. At the time wood and wooden products shipped from Gdańsk constituted as a rule about 80–90 per cent of all wood shipments registered in the Sound Straits²¹. The fragmentary data from the eighteenth century do not permit (with the exception

¹⁹ See A. Ö h b e r g, op. cit., p. 123 et seqq.; the view that already in the second quarter of the XVIIth century the Polish corn was being dislodged from the Dutch markets by the Russian corn supported with several arguments M. B o g u c k a, *Zboże rosyjskie na rynku amsterdamskim w pierwszej połowie XVII w.*, (*Russian Corn on the Amsterdam Market in the First Half of the XVIIth Century*), „Przegląd Historyczny”, LIII, 1962, fasc. 4, p. 611–28. But S. H o s z o w s k i demurred at this point, see his: *W sprawie konkurencji zboża rosyjskiego na rynku holenderskim w pierwszej połowie XVII w.* (*On the Competition of Russian Corn on the Dutch Market in the First Half of the XVIIth Century*), *Przegląd Historyczny*, LIV, 1963, fasc. 4, 688–99. About the situation in the XVIIIth century informs J. W o j t o w i c z, *Z problematyki stosunków handlowych Rosji z Bałtykiem i Europą zachodnią w XVIII stuleciu*, (*Problems of Russia Trade Relations with the Baltic and Western Europe in the XVIIIth Century*), „Zapiski Historyczne”, XXX, 1965, fasc. 4, p. 37–70.

²⁰ According to older estimations by T. K o r z o n, *Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta*, (*Poland's Internal History during the Reign of Stanisław August*), Kraków-Warszawa 1897, vol. II, p. 114–21 — the corn export via Królewiec in 1773–1780 averaged to above 17 000 lasts yearly, via Riga and other East-Baltic harbours to about 11 000 lasts and via Cherson (Black Sea) to at least 2000 lasts. However, those quantities deal with an abnormal trade situation caused by the first partition of Poland (1772). The result of this situation was a fast growing importance of Elbląg competing with Gdańsk after the first partition. S. G i e r s z e w s k i, *Elbląski cech armatorski w XVIII w.*, (*The Elbląg Shipowner Guild in the XVIIIth Century*), „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XV, 1953, p. 242 — estimates that in 1790–1793 more than 50 per cent of the Polish corn exports went to Elbląg.

²¹ A. E. C h r i s t e n s e n, *Der handelsgeschichtliche Wert der Sundzollregister...*, p. 95–96.

of Gdańsk) more precise computation. The fact remains, however, that the wood and other forest products exported from Polish territories (by way of Gdańsk, Królewiec and Szczecin) played an important role in the commodity turnover between eastern and western Europe. From the assortment point of view the export of wood and forest products in the eighteenth century did not undergo any noticeable changes. Most essential was the shipbuilding timber (oak and pine logs), deals and staves as well as small goods, e.g. wooden nails. The export of potash (produced mainly in Gdańsk) had also shown upward tendency²². Gdańsk's share in the wood processing industry had been already quite considerable in the seventeenth century. The most common items consisted of barrels, cases and all kinds of wooden gallantry, which were also partially destined for export. The principal importing countries among others consisted of Portugal, Spain²³, Italy, England²⁴. Another noteworthy export item consisted of furniture (e.g. chairs).

The importance of wood export by way of Królewiec and Szczecin increased, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century, when some difficulties of shipments through the port of Gdańsk had taken place. Oak logs (among others) were rafted mainly to Szczecin, peeled tree trunks as well as small forest goods to Królewiec. Grain and other merchandise were transported to Królewiec by waterways (raft) as well as overland, especially in winter time (on sledges)²⁵.

Whereas with regard to grain and wood the Polish territories were one of the main suppliers on the European markets, the supplies of other products (mainly of agricultural origin) sent by sea route were of much less size and importance. The records dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, note such products as: bacon, tallow, lard, bristles, feathers, wool, wax, ox hide, hop, nuts, flax, hem (from Lithuania), anise, caraway, starch, beef, honey, beer, cheeses, fish (sturgeon), antimony, amber (especially after 1770). The sources originating from the beginnings of the eighteenth century mention also

²² Cz. Biernat, *Statistics of Gdańsk Trade Turnover...*, p. 203; T. Korzon (op. cit., p. 126) shows that e.g. in 1783 9/10 of the via Gdańsk exported potash was produced by the Gdańsk people itself (19 000 barrels).

²³ M. Bogucka, *Handel Gdańska z Półwyspem Iberyjskim w pierwszej połowie XVII wieku. (The Trade of Gdańsk with the Iberian Peninsula in the First Half of the XVIIth Century)*. „Przegląd Historyczny” 1969, fasc. 2, p. 1—21.

²⁴ M. Bogucka, *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV—XVII w. (Gdańsk as a Production Center in the XIVth—XVIIth Centuries)*. Warszawa 1962, p. 227.

²⁵ In „Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny” („The Historical and Political Diary”), 1782, p. 323, there is information that in some days there were arriving in Królewiec 500—600 sledges loaded with all kinds of commodities and that all sledges standing there together amounted sometimes to 3000—4000.

prunes, tobacco, millets and sporadically also small amounts of other items²⁶. For the period after 1745 a detailed list can be found at „Starytystyka” published by C. Biernat. The volume of this export declined substantially after the first partition of Poland (1772), when Prussia got hold of the Vistula estuary. It seems probable that part of the above mentioned merchandise found markets in the Baltic region. Thus e.g. our wool could not find outlets on the western markets and flax as well as hem were inferior to those exported by way of Riga.

The export of Polish industrial goods by waterways did not have greater importance. Besides the already mentioned wood products and forest products (such as pitch, tar and potash), small quantities of saltpeter and gunpowder and pottery found their outlets through Gdańsk; more sizable was the export of coarse cloth and all kinds of cords²⁷; small amounts of cloth destined for exports were chiefly of Gdańsk origin²⁸. As a matter of fact, Gdańsk exported sporadically some textile articles already in the first half of the seventeenth century²⁹. From that time we have also information of the Gdańsk glassware exports³⁰. Most certainly also some quantities of vodka rafted to Gdańsk on the Vistula found their way to foreign markets. Parts of that merchandise were directed to the East, to Petersburg and some other ports in this region. The products exported there consisted mainly of textiles (of Gdańsk origin and imported from England and Holland), various spirits and other items³¹.

Poland participated in the Baltic trade also as a great importer. The quantities and values of that import in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have not yet been fully examined — except for the deliveries by way of Gdańsk. We do know, however, that salt and

²⁶ J. Burszta, *Handel magnacki i kupiecki między Sieniawą nad Sanem a Gdańskiem od końca XVII do połowy XVIII w.*, (*Magnate and Commercial Trade between Sieniawa on San and Gdańsk from the End of the XVIIth to the Middle of the XVIIIth Century*), „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XVI, 1954, p. 201 et seqq.

²⁷ It concerned mainly cloth floated to Gdańsk from the Little Poland area. In some years the quantities could have been quite large. Cf. J. Burszta, op. cit., p. 202—03 and H. Obuchowska-Pysiowa, *Handel wiślany w pierwszej połowie XVII w.*, (*Trade on the Vistula in the First Half of the XVIIth Century*). Wrocław 1964, p. 108.

²⁸ See T. Furtak, *Ceny w Gdańsku w l. 1701—1815*, (*Prices in Gdańsk in 1701—1815*), Lwów 1935, p. 29.

²⁹ M. Bogucka, *Gdańskie rzemiosło tekstylne od XVI do połowy XVII w.* (*Gdańsk Textile Craftsmanship from the XVIth to the Mid-XVIIth Century*), Wrocław 1956, p. 270.

³⁰ M. Bogucka, *Gdańsk as a Production Center...*, p. 231.

³¹ J. Wojtowicz, *Problems of Russia Trade...*, p. 54—55.

herrings constituted the lion's share of that import. The research in that respect is not easy, as some original sources give information only on the number of incoming ships without any specification as to their cargo. Taking into account the various sizes of ships and the different degree of their tonnage being effectively exploited, the above mentioned references are only of a very limited assistance, especially when it is remembered that the average loading capacity of sea going vessels in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries systematically increased³². The percentage relations of main cargoes (in mass units) passing through the Danish Straits in the eastern direction in the first half of the seventeenth century are as follows:

Year	Total shipment	Items					
		salt	herrings	wine	spices	textiles	others
1595	100	72	17	9	1	1/2	1/2
1605	100	51	20	20	6	2	1
1615	100	67	19	9	2	2	1
1625	100	40	22	14	12	8	4
1635	100	48	16	6	20	7	3

Source: A. E. Christensen, *Dutch Trade to the Baltic*, p. 466.

It goes without saying that from the value point of view the situation must have been quite different, taking into consideration the big disparities in prices of these goods.

We also do not know what amount of the Straits shipments were effectively directed to the Polish territories. Besides Gdańsk — it should be remembered — an important destination point on the Baltic was Lubeck. There should, however, be no exaggeration if we assume that at least half of that merchandise reached the Polish regions³³.

³² Cf. J. Jeannin, *Le tonnage des navires utilisés dans La Baltique de 1550 à 1640 d'après les sources prussiennes*, in: „Le navire et l'économie maritime du Nord de l'Europe du moyen-âge au XVIIIe s.” Paris 1960, p. 45—69; according to Faber (*De buitenlandse scheepvaart*, p. 44), in 1654 ca 4/5 of the total number of Dutch ships from Harlingen, cruising on the Baltic Sea (*Grote Oost*) did not surpass a 100 lasts loading capacity. See also: M. Bogucka, *Handel niderlandzko-gdański w latach 1597—1651 w świetle amsterdamskich kontraktów frachtowych* (*The Trade between the Netherlands and Gdańsk in the Light of the Amsterdam Freight Contracts*), „Zapiski Historyczne” vol. XXXIII, 1968, fasc. 3. p. 177—78.

³³ The exports to Russia through the North-Baltic harbours were very low because of the difficulties brought about by Sweden. E. g. the transit of salt and herrings from Riga and Narew to Russia was liable to high duty and in some years the transit was even completely prohibited. Cf. A. Soom, *Die Politik Schwedens...*, p. 79 et seqq.

A great many vessels kept shuttle courses — after unloading merchandise at Gdańsk they carried back grain or other cargo.

The most stable character had the salt and fish transports. As was the case before, the shipments consisted mainly of French salt (from Baie de Bourgneuf)³⁴ and other French, mainly luxury goods³⁵. The beverage transports consisted chiefly of French and Rhine wines. An essential role played also the import of sugar, condiments and fruits from the South. Among the textiles of greatest importance were the Dutch and English cloth. The list of "other" items was very diversified. A great share in it had all kinds of fancy goods, table accessories metal vessels (of tin, brass, silver), harness, armour, tools and so on³⁶. Apart from merchandise passing through the Danish Straits there were some deliveries of arms, iron and steel from Sweden (among others at the beginnings of the seventeenth century armour steel-plates)³⁷ and flax seeds from Riga³⁸. Another assortment of products reached Gdańsk from Germany by way of Lubeck (knives, nails etc.). A substantial percentage of "other" shipments constituted luxury goods "from carriages up to needles"³⁹. To that type of goods should be classified the wines mentioned before, textiles and gallantry — especially from France. In the eighteenth century Gdańsk kept also very active contacts with Russia, particularly with Petersburg. The main items imported from that direction were: furs, tallow, tallow candles, oil and tobacco, flax, hem and even coffee and tea. A part of that import was then rerouted overland from Gdańsk to Germany⁴⁰.

Let us now turn to the Polish trade contacts by land. The number of frequented trade routes increased in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — although the intensity of land transports declined in com-

³⁴ See M. Komarzyński, *Transakcja solą dworu francuskiego w Gdańsku, 1636—1637 (The Salt Transaction of the French Court in Gdańsk, 1636—1637)*, „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XXIV, 1963, p. 89—112.

³⁵ An interesting light upon the French-Polish trade relations sheds the publication of E. Cieślak, *Memoriał z r. 1772 o handlu Polski z Francją (Memorial from 1772 about Poland's Trade with France)*, „Zapiski Historyczne”, XXVII, 1962, Fasc. 1, p. 79—97.

³⁶ A very interesting role of commodities bought in Gdańsk during 1741—1745 for the needs of the Rzewuski latifundia in the Ukraine is quoted by Z. Guldón, *Związki handlowe dóbr magnackich na prawobrzeżnej Ukrainie z Gdańskiem w XVIII w. (Trade Relations of the Magnate Estates on the Right-Bank Ukraine with Gdańsk in the XVIIIth Century)*, Toruń 1966, p. 116—21. See also: Obuchowska-Pysiowa, op. cit., p. 112 et seqq.

³⁷ M. Bogucka, *Gdańsk as a Production Center...*, p. 222.

³⁸ E. Dunsdorfs, *Der Außenhandel Rigas im 17. Jahrhundert*. Riga 1938.

³⁹ T. Korzon, op. cit., II, p. 140.

⁴⁰ J. Wojtowicz. *Problems of Russia Trade...*, p. 54 et seqq.

parison with that in the sixteenth century as a result of a general economic stagnation which on the territories east of Elbe assumed all signs of an acute crisis. The western trade route to Wrocław and further on to Leipzig was being maintained, irrespectively of that the trade contacts between Poznań and Frankfurt/O. Oder became more animated. In the south-eastern direction Kraków, as was the case before, remained the central starting point. The south-eastern trade routes lead through Lwów and from there bifurcated in the directions of Kiev and Hungarian towns. In the second half of the eighteenth century Brody became an important point on that route — from there started a bifurcation leading to the south (to Košice). Also the central trunk road coming from the east by way of Lublin and from there to Warsaw and then to Toruń and Gdańsk grew even more important.

It can fairly well be stated, that the diversified but small goods' traffic on land routes never assumed such proportions in respect of its volume and value as the sea transports — but it is impossible to arrive at any precise comparisons because the data for land trade are very imperfect. This pertains particularly to the very fragmentary customs office and toll registers. Neither have there been undertaken up to now any complex efforts of a comprehensive use of the fragmentary information which can be found in municipal and court-of-law records. Some rough idea in that respect is suggested by the stock accounts kept by the owners of shops and storehouses. Unfortunately they do not contain any information of how and when the specific goods reached the merchant. The period till the middle of the seventeenth century and the time after 1760 is relatively better known.

The goods' traffic on the western frontier of Poland has the best documentation. This we owe to investigators of the trade contacts between Silesia and Poland, chiefly to M. Wolański⁴¹.

The merchandise recorded in all those sources came probably mostly from Silesia, but some of it most certainly travelled longer distances. On the other hand the products sent to Silesia had come partly from transit or re-export.

The transactions with foreign merchandise on a larger scale took place on fairs and markets. Some of them participated very actively in

⁴¹ M. Wolański, *Statystyka handlu Śląska z Rzeczpospolitą w XVII w. Tablice i materiały statystyczne (Statistics of the Silesia Trade with Poland in the XVIIth Century. Tables and Statistical Materials)*, Wrocław 1963, Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Archiwum Historyczne, vol. III. Cf. also: S. Inglot, *Związki gospodarcze Śląska z Rzeczpospolitą od XVI do początków XVIII w. (Silesia Economic Relations with Poland from the XVIth to the Beginning of the XVIIIth Century)*, „*Annales Silesiae*”, vol. I, Wrocław 1960, p. 137—52.

this trade. We should mention here in the first place the St. John's fairs in Poznań (wool), the Lwów fairs⁴² in the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, also the Gniezno fairs⁴³. In the eighteenth century the fairs of Dubno and Berdyczów in the Ukraine⁴⁴ played an ever greater role in the East-West trade.

The principal export item in the western direction was livestock, skins and leather. The livestock comprised mainly oxen, rams and sheep as well as pigs (chiefly from Great Poland). There was a substantial export of raw hides, less so of curry leather (mainly Russian leather and suède), the sales comprised also calf skin, calabers, minks, otters a.s.o. To Silesia and probably also to more distant places were sent transports of grain, flour⁴⁵ and great quantities of salt from the Kraków salt mines⁴⁶. To the western direction went also alcohols, wool and wax, bacon, fish. The transports in the first half of the seventeenth century comprised also small deliveries of minerals (copper, iron, sulfur). In the second half of the eighteenth century they increased again and iron ore from the frontier regions of Great Poland was exported (by the Warta river)⁴⁷. The textiles which went west (in modest quantities) were mostly of overseas import origin, just like sugar, spice, condiments and paints sent to Silesia. The Silesian merchants very often went personally to Gdańsk to fetch their goods. To this list should be added an ample assortment of other commodities, mainly raw materials and semi-finished goods, which, however, did not play any important role in

⁴² S. Lewicki, *Targi lwowskie od XIV do XIX w. (Lwów Fair from the XIVth to the XIXth Century)*, Lwów 1923.

⁴³ J. Topolski, Gniezno miejscem wielkich jarmarków, w: „Dzieje Gniezna”. (*Gniezno — the Place of Great Fairs*, in: „*The History of Gniezno*”), Warszawa 1965, p.292—303.

⁴⁴ After the first partition of Poland they replaced the Lwów-Fair.

⁴⁵ In consequence of difficulties created by Prussia to Polish commodities on the western border these exports in the second half of the XVIIIth century (see the continuation of this inference) settled into smuggling and therefore eluded any record. E. g. the Kalisz Civil-Rules Committee called into existence in 1790 by the constitutional reforms which took place in Poland during the Enlightenment period checked off that peasants from villages of the Odolanów subprefecture, situated in the neighbourhood of the then Silesian border, smuggled over to Silesia crops on waggons (Archiwum Państwowe, Poznań, a.gr. kaliskie, varia no 7, k, p. 99—100).

⁴⁶ M. Wolański, *Organizacja i technika handlu śląskiego w XVII w. (Organization and Technique of Silesia Trade in the XVIIth Century)*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego”, Historia, IV, 1960, p. 59.

⁴⁷ Nax (a remarkable Polish economist in the XVIIIth Century) complained of it in his work: *Wykład początkowych prawideł ekonomiki politycznej (Lecture on the Beginning Rules of Political Economics)*, Warszawa 1790 p. 54—55, 204.

the overall trade picture. To that assortment belonged goods of home as well as foreign origin.

Yet in the land foreign trade of Poland import played the most important role. The import from the West comprised a broad assortment of commodities. In the first place should be mentioned all kinds of textiles of Silesian and Saxonian origin, English cloth, parts of garments, besides this metal articles (scythes, knives a.s.o.); parts of the import constituted tools, wooden pots, paper, books, indigo, candles, gunpowder, huckstery goods, wines, beer, great quantities of spices and other grocery goods (by way of Lubeck), alum, chalk and many other items. Parts of those transports went by way of transit further to the south, to the east, some Silesian textiles to Gdańsk ⁴⁸. An important intermediary point in that direction was Toruń ⁴⁹.

Import predominated also decidedly on the southern border. It was in part goods' transit directed to the north and to the west. An important trade center on that road (south-north) was the city of Kraków ⁵⁰. The character and intensity of goods' exchange with the southern parts of Europe, which were then a region of almost permanent conflicts with the Turkish state, depended to a large extent on the actually prevailing interplay of political forces. In that context, however, the hitherto existing views that the Turks hampered to a high degree the Polish trade contacts with the south-eastern Europe and the Near and Far East — cannot be maintained any longer. Great herds of oxen from Eastern Galicia, Moldavia and Walachia were driven through to Poland ⁵¹. There was also a rather considerable import of Moravian cloth at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — which then partly went on to White Russia and Lithuania ⁵². Hungarian and Greek wines, south-

⁴⁸ M. Wolański, *Statystyka handlu Śląska z Rzeczpospolitą w XVII w. Tablice i materiały statystyczne (Statistics of Silesia's Trade with the Republic of Poland in the Seventeenth Century. Tables and Statistic Materials)*. Wrocław 1963, p. 177 et seqq.

⁴⁹ See J. Wojtowicz, op. cit., p. 166 et seqq.

⁵⁰ His role in the XVIth century was presented by J. Małecki, *Handel zewnętrzny Krakowa w XVI w. (The Exterior Trade of Kraków in the XVIth Century)*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomicznej w Krakowie”, 1960, no. 11, p. 73—150.

⁵¹ M. Horn, *Handel wołami na Rusi Czerwonej w XVII w., (Oxen Trade in Eastern Galicia in the XVIIth Century)*, „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XXIV, 1963, p. 73—86.

⁵² A. V. Florovski, *České sukno na východoevropském trhu v XVI až XVIII věku (Czech Cloth on the East-European Market in the XVIth till the XVIIIth centuries)*, Praha 1947. Cf. also: J. Topolski, *Rola Gniezna w handlu europejskim od XV do XVII w. (The Role of Gniezno in the European Trade*

ern fruits, spices and dressings, steel from Austria, Hungarian horses, Turk and Persian textiles (silks, muslins, kilims, carpets), eastern weapons, gold articles also reached the Polish territories. The still great in the sixteenth century copper import from Hungary gradually lost its importance in the next century. Sometimes the mere name of the commodity gives a good clue as to the place of its origin or expedition. Thus there were the well known in Poland Hungarian wines and prunes, Turkish currants, oil from Venice, Canarian sugar.

The Polish export to the south was rather modest. The main export items consisted of wax, alcohols, some salt and small quantities of other goods⁵³. The bulk of the transports were products crossing the Polish territories (transit) from the west and the north: linen and cloth from Silesia and Saxony, metal articles and other industrial goods and last but not least the eastern commodities, which by way of Gdańsk and Lubeck and the Polish territories reached all way round the Czecho-Moravian and Hungarian regions.

Also on the east-west line the goods crossing Poland by way of transit were predominant. From Russia came mostly furs, skins and leather, wax. Also some Chinese silks and tea reached Polish frontiers — in the opposite direction went chiefly textiles, metal articles and an ample assortment of industrial goods.

The export business from Poland as well as import to Poland was in the hands of both Polish and foreign merchants and traders. The native merchants active in foreign trade belonged as a rule to the richest representatives of local bourgeoisie. Some of them formed within their specific field special trade guilds (e.g. wine merchants). On the borderlines of Silesia trade was mainly concentrated in the hands of merchants of Jewish origin. The most privileged merchants were in fact those in big towns which traditionally had been linked with foreign trade transactions. As a matter of fact in the first half of the eighteenth century, there was even considered a project which would guarantee the Gdańsk and Toruń merchants a monopoly position in the East-West land trade⁵⁴. Fortunately that project never materialized.

from the XVth to the XVIIth Centuries), „*Studia i Materiały do dziejów Wielkopolski i Pomorza*”, VII, 1962, Vol. 2, p. 34.

⁵³ At the end of the XVIth century one exported to Hungary lead, cloth, fish (from Lwów). K. Pieradzka, *Handel Krakowa z Węgrami w XVI w.*, (*Cracow Trade with Hungary in the XVIth Century*), Kraków 1935, p. 24. The author finds that the Turkish expansion destroying Hungary broke the trade relations in Middle-Europe: „Hungary found itself outside the world trade ways” (p. 13). It is obvious that in this situation the importance of connections between Hungary and Poland were bound to increase.

⁵⁴ J. Wojtowicz, *Studia nad kształtowaniem się układu kapitalistycznego*

The merchants from the periphery regions of Poland had to undertake sometimes long journeys in order to get the needed merchandise. For instance the merchants from White Russia and Lithuania made their purchases in Gdańsk, Toruń and Gniezno⁵⁵. To Gdańsk came also merchants from southern Poland. Thus the foreign merchandise before it reached the final consumer, had to pass through many hands, to make long and complicated journeys on Polish territories and sometimes it had to change directions and was heading back to the point of previous entry to Poland. This fact constitutes another factor which makes the assessment of goods' traffic passing through Polish territories very difficult.

Representatives of many nationalities could be found among the foreign merchants; an intermediary group formed the merchants of foreign origin who made Poland their permanent domicile. They underwent the process of spontaneous polonization. In that particular foreign group we can distinguish a few, more coherent national groups. In the seventeenth century the urban registers quite often mention the Scotch (called sometimes the *Szots*)⁵⁶. Rybarski estimates the number of Scottish merchants in Poland in the middle of the seventeenth century up to 800 families⁵⁷. Most probably to that specific group belonged also other representatives of Great Britain. The said group got almost entirely assimilated in the eighteenth century. The same can be said of the Armenians who came in the sixteenth century. They managed to control a large proportion of the eastern trade⁵⁸. In the seventeenth century there still existed at Zamość a numerous and prosperous colony of Armenian merchants⁵⁹. From the sixteenth century on the Greek

w Toruniu (*Studies on the Shaping of Capitalist Pattern in Toruń*), Toruń 1960, p. 173—74.

⁵⁵ J. Topolski, *The Role of Gniezno...*, p. 39—48.

⁵⁶ J. Tomkowicz, *Przyczynek do historii Szkotów w Krakowie i w Polsce* (*Contribution to the History of Scotchmen in Cracow and in Poland*), „Rocznik Krakowski”, II, 1899, p. 157 et seqq. See also: J. Wojtowicz, *Toruńskie przedsiębiorstwo handlowe Samuela Edwardsa w XVII w. (Toruń Commercial Enterprise of Samuel Edwards in the XVIIth Century)*, „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XIV, 1952, p. 204—05.

⁵⁷ R. Rybarski, *Handel i polityka handlowa Polski w XVI stuleciu (Poland's Trade and Trade Policy in the XVIth Century)*, vol. I, Warszawa 1958, p. 228.

⁵⁸ Z. Świtalski, *Cło od pieniędzy wywożonych za granicę Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1598—1659 (Tax on Money Exported beyond the Republic-Border in 1598—1659)*, „Przegląd Historyczny”, LI, 1960, p. 24—25.

⁵⁹ M. Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, *Ormanie zamojscy i ich rola w wymianie handlowej i kulturalnej między Polską i Wschodem, (Armenians from Zamość and their Role in Commercial and Cultural Exchange between Poland and the East)*, Lublin 1965.

merchants played also an important role in the trade with the East. About the middle of the eighteenth century in some western and central towns of Poland appeared new, coherent groups of Greek merchants. They were probably refugees from the northern parts of Greece (mainly from Macedonia). They can be found for instance at Kalisz⁶⁰. These groups specialized in trade with specific goods of foreign origin. The Scotch were busy in small trade business (mostly hawker's trade). The Armenian merchants favoured all kinds of soft skins and leather (marocco and cordovan), they dealt also with "eastern goods", which they brought over from Turkey and Persia. The Greeks were busy in wine trade. They imported it mostly from Hungary — therefore they were sometimes erroneously called — Hungarians (*Węgrzyni*).

The foreign merchants proper represented a very diversified group — although not so numerous and colourful as in the sixteenth century⁶¹. From the east came the merchants from Moscow, Moldavia and Turkey, from the south and west — Hungarians⁶², Czechs⁶³, Greeks⁶⁴, Italians⁶⁵, Frenchmen, Englishmen and Dutchmen⁶⁶, but above all the Germans⁶⁷. There were also some Jewish merchants from abroad — mainly from Turkey. They controlled a large part of the eastern trade till the end of the sixteenth century⁶⁸ — later their share in that business decreased⁶⁹.

⁶⁰ See W. Rusiński, *Kalisz od połowy XVII w. do schyłku XVIII w.* W: „Osiemnaście wieków Kalisza”, (*Kalisz from the Mid-XVIIth to the end of the XVIIIth Century*, in: „Eighteen Centuries of Kalisz”), vol. II, p. 160.

⁶¹ A great number of foreign brokers was evident especially in the beginning of the XVIIth century. Cf. M. Wolański, *Organization and Technique...*, p. 75.

⁶² A. Divéky, *Stosunki handlowe północnych Węgier z Polską, głównie w XVI i XVII w.*, (*North-Hungary Trade Relations with Poland, mainly in the XVIth and XVIIth Centuries*), „Przegląd Historyczny” XII, 1911.

⁶³ Cf. A. V. Florovski, *Czech Cloth...*

⁶⁴ See e.g. P. P. Panaitescu, *La route commerciale de Pologne à la Mer Noire au moyen-âge*, Bucuresti 1934, p. 24. In the records of the Wiszneński-Seym (Council) one can read: „The Greeks importing secretly various commodities from Turkey... are avoiding the custom houses and deprive the Republic of taxes” (*Akta Grodzkie i Ziemskie we Lwowie*, vol. XX. p. 488).

⁶⁵ S. Tomkowicz, *Włoscy kupcy w Krakowie w XVII i XVIII w.* (*Italian Merchants in Cracow in the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*), „Rocznik Krakowski”, III, 1900.

⁶⁶ Inter alia the source-material from the beginning of the XVIIth century states their presence in Gniezno (J. Topolski, *The Role of Gniezno...*, p. 28).

⁶⁷ Mainly from Silesia and West Pomerania but also from farther regions, among others from Hamburg. Cf. J. Topolski, as above, p. 27—28.

⁶⁸ I. Schipper, *Dzieje handlu żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich* (*History of Jewish Trade on Polish Territories*), Warszawa 1937, p. 90.

⁶⁹ Z. Switalski, *Przyczyny wycofania się żydów tureckich, uchodźców z Hiszpanii, z handlu lewantyńskiego Reczypospolitej w ostatnich latach XVI w.* (*Causes*

The merchants from the Western countries were under protection of their respective governments. In the mercantile period, when export of goods to foreign countries was looked upon as a central problem of the economic policies and Poland was still under the spell of a primitive fiscal and liberal system — its internal market represented an attractive outlet for foreign production. Thus in that context the endeavours of the Western countries to preserve free navigation and permanent consuls in Gdańsk can be better understood. With that particular aim in view — acted the following countries: England, France, Holland, Prussia, Sweden and temporarily also Spain. In the eighteenth century also Russia maintained in Gdańsk its resident ⁷⁰.

Of course the merchants themselves played the role of unofficial ambassadors of their respective countries. Besides concluding all kinds of sale-purchase transactions, they gathered various data and information which could facilitate the penetration of their goods on foreign markets. Some of them were in Poland only as transients — passing on their way to Moscow, others went still further: to Astrakhan, to Persia and even to the Far East. France for example, which was the main supplier of salt, wines and other luxury goods — sent them readily to the east European markets.

Great efforts in that respect were undertaken especially under the rule of Louis the XIVth. Though the attempts to break the prevailing Dutch monopoly on the Baltic failed — so nevertheless the French products ultimately found their way to central and eastern Europe, both by sea and land way. Also the German and Dutch traders who travelled to Smoleńsk and other Russian points — passed through Polish territories ⁷¹.

During the whole seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a certain percentage of those foreign merchants made Poland their permanent domicile. Thus for example during the above mentioned period about 12 merchant families of French origin settled down in Gdańsk ⁷², and German merchants also settled readily in other Polish towns.

Thus, taking all into consideration it can be said that the Polish territories formed in the European trade system a rather important link. Their importance as a European grain granary diminished some-

of Withdrawing of the Turkish Jews, being Spanish Refugees, from the Republic's Levantine Trade in the last Years of the XVIth Century), „Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego”, 1961, no 1, p. 59—65.

⁷⁰ J. Wojtowicz, *Problems of Russia Trade...*, p. 53.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁷² M. Komarzyński, *Działalność kupców francuskich w Gdańsku w XVII—XVIII w. (Activity of French Merchants in Gdańsk in the XVIIth—XVIIIth Centuries)*, „Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych”, XVI, 1954, p. 249.

what during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — but increased again at the end of the latter.

Poland was not, however, in this trade business a partner of an equal rank. The deterioration of its opportunities in that respect went parallel with the deepening crisis in its big land-ownership economy based on serfs' labour — and proceeding political crisis. Whereas other countries, animated by mercantile ideas were trying to develop their economy and were striving after a surplus balance of trade — the trade policies of Poland served only the actual interests of the noble class, mostly to the detriment of the bourgeois class, which was very much interested in the development of trade. The commodity structure of Polish foreign trade was typical for underdeveloped countries. It comprised on the export side exclusively raw materials and on the import side industrial goods and consumer articles (to a large extent luxury goods). Whereas the volume of foreign trade turnover in the countries of Central and Western Europe increased in the period of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries very considerably⁷³ — in Poland there was a visible decline as compared to the sixteenth century. The mere fact, that transport in the Baltic trade remained exclusively in the hands of foreign shipowners — led to price growth and influenced unfavourably Poland's balance of payment.

The changes for better, which made themselves felt in the period of Enlightenment covered also at the beginning the field of Polish foreign trade. This found its expression in the overall growth of foreign trade turnover after 1765. This process of restoration was severed by the disaster of the partitions of Poland. After the first partition (1772) the three partitioning powers imposed on Poland unfavourable trade agreements. The most aggressive character had in particular the trade convention imposed by Prussia. After getting under their control the Vistula estuary they tried to take advantage of the situation of Polish territories in Europe — by reaping all the commercial benefits. In the same year of 1772 the king of Prussia called to life the *Seehandlungsgesellschaft* (Company for Sea Trade) in order to bring economic damage to Gdańsk which was then still under Polish domination and to get under control the Polish salt import (it should be remembered

⁷³ It seems that the Thirty Years' war and the recession related to this war in some countries did not restrain remarkably the weakening of the European trade. Cf. in this matter the observations of J. Topolski, *Narodziny kapitalizmu w Europie w XIV—XVII w. (The Rise of Capitalism in Europe in the XIV—XVIIth Centuries)*, Warszawa 1965, p. 141 et seqq. See also: J. A. Faber, *The Decline of the Baltic Grain Trade in the Second Half of the 17th Century*. Leiden, Acta Historiae Neerlandica vol. I.

that in the first partition Austria got hold of the only Polish salt mines — Poland was thus compelled to buy for high prices its own salt and simultaneously to import by sea salt for its northern territories). The export of grain and its products to Silesia through the western frontier — has been totally forbidden, the export of livestock seriously curtailed. The foreign goods imported by Poland had been heavily taxed, in order to compell the Polish authorities to switch to Prussian substitute products (which were often kinds of counterfeits). The duties on goods exported from Poland were differentiated; by heavy taxation of products exported to the West which were at the same time scarce on the Prussian markets, the Prussians wanted to induce Poland to sell these products to Prussia on better terms. These machinations led directly to the reduction of the flow of goods through the Polish northern and western territories and as a result brought about heavy financial losses to the Polish treasury.

Also Russia and Austria imposed duties on goods passing through the eastern and southern frontier. All this led to a substantial augmentation of prices on imported goods and limited their demand. Though in the shops of Tepper in Warsaw regarded as having the best supply of goods one could at any time find „draps d'Angleterre”, „toile d'Hollande” and „chapeaux de Paris”, their prices were soaring and the lists of debtors so long that it finally brought the enterprise to a bankruptcy.

Of course the political debacles had not and could not completely eliminate the natural trade functions which the Polish territories performed by sheer fact of their geographical situation in Europe. Already during the Napoleonic wars new changes in the trade pattern crept in, which accentuated a new role of Polish territories as a kind of a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe. This, however, opens already a new page in the history of trade relations between Poland and the rest of Europe, but just is outside the scope of the present article.

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