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## **The English and the French in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Białystok**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is a time when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, just like the majority of countries in the East-Central Europe, became a place often visited by foreigners. The foreigners visiting the Commonwealth were mainly representatives of Western Europe, coming to Poland for tourist purposes or in search of career opportunities in the royal court or in numerous magnates' mansions. The first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time when it was predominantly the Saxons who came to stay permanently in the Commonwealth. The elections of the two consecutive representatives of the House of Wettin to the Polish throne made some inhabitants of Saxony arrive in Poland, mainly in Warsaw, to look for new career or political opportunities. As Friedrich Schulz observed, it was mainly artists and craftsmen who were coming to Poland at that time, and chiefly the Saxons. "They were coming on request or out of their own will, settled, married and stayed for good; it could easily be said that the two-thirds of the local German artists and craftsmen were of Saxon origin" (SCHULZ 1956 : 616).

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a time of massive influx of foreigners into Poland. All this was connected with the reign of the last king of Poland, Stanislaus Augustus. Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski was a privileged representative of the Polish higher nobility for whom one of the essential elements of education was a journey abroad. Normally, such journeys did not only result in the completion of education but also enabled closer contact with the representatives of cultural and intellectual life of the countries visited. The journeys of the future Polish monarch abroad resulted in the fascination with western culture and increased influx of foreigners into Poland.

The rule of Stanislaus Augustus was to bring, according to the policy pursued by the “House” at the end of the reign of Augustus III and by the convocation and election sejm, the multidimensional reconstruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, then on the brink of collapse. The young monarch had to face the task of highest complexity. It appeared that in order to strengthen the system of authority the state’s legal system should be first restructured, its economic foundations propped up and mentality of the noble part of society totally remodelled since the majority feared the absolutist threat to their “golden freedom “. In these circumstances foreigners’ presence started to become especially significant as they were new people unrelated to the local traditions, outside the noble breed and possessing the qualities that could be useful for reform. The Commonwealth of Stanislaus Augustus opened widely to foreigners and their presence became somehow politically justified as part of the process of constructing the modern state and nation. On the other hand, however, all this was supposed to happen in the way that would not evidently infringe the “noble state of possession”.

(ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 23)

Let us have a closer look at the intentions of foreign visitors coming to Poland. What made the representatives of West European culture visit our land? It seems that the main reasons were job and career opportunities offered by the receptive market of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Commonwealth. Another cause of foreign travellers’ visits to Poland was tourist values of its capital:

One of the most fundamental reasons for coming of so many prominent foreign visitors to Warsaw was a permanent presence of the royal court. [...] A visit to the royal court was permanently included in the itinerary of foreign travellers, and Warsaw, being the location of the court, started to offer more and more attractions to newcomers and became a city worth seeing and savouring.

(ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 64)

The royal court seemed to have particularly strong magnetic powers. Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski had an ambition to create a court modelled on the Western European courts known to him. For this purpose he needed foreign visitors, especially those related to the broadly understood cultural and scientific life.

The newly opened royal court craved glamour and freshness as it was to become the main centre of reform. It was commonly known in Europe that the Warsaw court in the recreation stage after the Saxon period was exceptionally receptive and in need of talented and energetic people. Hence, it was not only as a result

of the king's efforts that numerous representatives of the broadly defined world of culture and art came to Poland.

(ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 64)

However, it was not only the royal court that attracted foreign visitors. In the 18<sup>th</sup>- century Commonwealth it was fashionable among aristocracy to have foreign servants, which was described, with evident sarcasm, by Hubert Vautrin residing in Poland for a couple of years.

The capital city, especially in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, became a place frequently visited by foreigners, but it was not only Warsaw that attracted foreign visitors. An extremely relevant factor in the foreigners' reception was wealthy magnates' manor houses scattered around the territory of the whole Commonwealth. Their essential culture-making role observed by many scholars (KOSTKIEWICZOWA / ROĆKO 2005) became one of the significant factors attracting foreigners. On the map of the 18<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth we can find the Radziwiłł, Potocki, Lubomirski, Sanguszeko, Sapieha, Branicki, Jabłonowski or Ogiński mansions as well as those belonging to other representatives of magnates' families. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century each of those manor houses employed from a few to even a few dozen foreigners. As Marek Grzegorz Zieliński found, "Magnates' manor houses swarmed with foreigners and Jan Klemens Branicki's Białystok mansion was in the lead in this respect" (ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 82).

Undoubtedly, Izabela and Jan Klemens Branicki's mansion played a big role in the geography of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Hetman Branicki and his wife, Izabela, a sister of the last king of Poland, belonged to a narrow circle of wealthy magnates who aspired to a mansion modelled on the European aristocratic courts. The high social position and excellent financial standing helped to fulfil these aspirations. One of the essential factors determining the noble family's affiliations with the magnates' social class was also the fact of owning a magnificent family estate (CZAPLIŃSKI / DŁUGOSZ 1976).

The Branicki family, like other families, chose one of their private towns to transform it into a superb family residence. Their choice was Białystok and the decision made by Stefan Mikołaj Branicki had for years a considerable effect upon the growth of Białystok.

As it seems, the first few foreigners started to appear in Białystok towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The arrival of foreigners was connected with the activity of Podlachian voivode, Stefan Mikołaj Branicki, who decided to rebuild the fortified castle founded approximately in 1570 by

Piotr Wiesiołowski. The architectural projects by Stefan Mikołaj Branicki were implemented by a well-known architect of Dutch origin, Tylman de Gameren (DOBROŃSKI 2001 : 22-23). It is rather impossible that the works were conducted by the local craftsmen since skilled artisans were scarce. Thus, the first group of foreigners coming to Białystok must have arrived before the year 1697. Another reconstruction of the palace started around the year 1726. At the initiative of Jan Klemens Branicki, a Saxon architect, Zygmunt Deybel, came to Białystok accompanied by a number of artisans who were to deal with further implementation of the projects related to the palace reconstruction.

Therefore, from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of foreigners in Białystok became indispensable. As highly qualified professionals and specialists they occupied an important position in the life of the mansion and the town. How necessary and wanted the employees of foreign origin were, especially the French, could be illustrated by the fact that, when unable to find adequate professionals in the territory of the Commonwealth, Jan Klemens Branicki commissioned his special agent in Paris, Mr Matisse, to employ specialists keen to serve in the mansion. They were sent to Poland via a merchant, Jean Rousseau, who co-operated with Branicki for years (KOWECKA 1993 : 49).

In the Commonwealth, like elsewhere in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, French chefs were especially valued. French cuisine was regarded as the most exquisite and was present in aristocratic houses as a manifestation of subtle tastes of the European elite. Therefore, among the specialists of French origin, the most valued and wanted employees were cooks. The magnates' mansions tried to ensure their guests' exquisite meals were prepared according to French recipes, which caused a great popularity of French cuisine masters. There was a similar situation in the mansion of the Branicki family, whose point of honour was to have the best cooks.

Despite already having some excellent cooks, Jan Klemens Branicki was in constant search for others. On many occasions he asked his acquaintances and officials to find him a cook, preferably a Frenchman and he often succeeded in employing one. In the years 1756–1765 the chef of the Branickis' kitchen was a Roux, so much valued by his employer that he ordered to bring special utensils from Paris in 1756 to make the French master's work easier (KOWECKA 1993 : 49).

In the year 1760 two more French cooks came, but unfortunately we do not know their names – one of them came on Branicki's commission and the other was ordered by his sister, Elżbieta Lubomirska (KOWECKA 1993 : 49).

In the year 1766 Branicki's agent in Paris, the above-mentioned Matisse, informed the hetman that he persuaded one of the best French masters, known for a great talent for preparing delicious desserts, to come to Poland. The great cook was accompanied in his way to the Commonwealth by the merchant and old supplier for the Branickis' house, J. Rousseau (KOWECKA 1993 : 49).

It was not, however, only Matisse who looked for French cooks for the Branicki family. Also, count de Broglie sent a cook from France to the Branickis' house (TEKI GLINKI 320 : 231)<sup>1</sup>. The cook recommended by the count brought with him a *pâté* maker, pastry maker and a cook for preparing hot dishes (TEKI GLINKI 320 : 80, 81). The team of French cooks was brought to prepare dishes for the visit of Augustus III in Białystok (TEKI GLINKI 321 : 22). These endeavours to bring a French cook to the mansion are clearly evident of how much French cuisine masters were valued. The Branickis, who did their best to give a wonderful reception to Augustus III in Białystok, could not imagine giving the monarch a dignified reception without the "participation" of French cooks.

French cooks often engaged in the functioning of the kitchen in the mansion. An example may be the cook La Rose (Larosa, La Rossa), who in the year 1750 used his own money to pay for certain products needed in hetman Jan Klemens Branicki's mansion (TEKI GLINKI 320 : 35, 36). Not only did he specialize in the preparation of exquisite dishes but also knew about wine production. It can be illustrated by the fact that he gave a Białystok gardener some instructions on how to make wine (TEKI GLINKI 397 : 4).

Just like the French cooks, also French servants were held in great esteem by Polish magnates. Having a French footman, hairdresser or private tutor was a kind of social requirement. That is why servants of French origin appeared so often in magnates' mansions. Also, the Białystok mansion of Jan Klemens and Izabela Branicki was a place where foreigners were often employed.

1 *Teki Glinki (Glinka Files)* is a collection of archival records and notes made by dr Jan Glinka, who gathered them for years to prepare a research paper devoted to the patronage of Jan Klemens Branicki. A large proportion of the material collected by Jan Glinka is currently unavailable in original as it burned during the World War II. That is why the survived records are so valuable, especially to the scholars dealing with the activity of the Branicki family. The number of file and page the quoted material comes from is given in brackets.

The most important figure among Branickis' household servants was a *valet de chambre*. The major *valet de chambre* in Białystok was a Frenchman, Gerard. As it transpires from the correspondence, he was a man with high qualifications. He was attractive, intelligent and, what is important, well-travelled. He was supposed to serve mainly hetman Branicki's wife, but his qualifications and the level of trust for him were so high that he was often sent to do shopping in Paris. High assessment of his qualifications could also be observed in his salary. He received a yearly income of 800 złoty and on top of that he was given 10 ells of French fabric for his servant's outfit (KOWECKA 1993 : 48). Gerard's work was acknowledged by hetman Branicki who mentioned him in his last will as one of the long-term servants who were endowed by a dying magnate (TEKI GLINKI 363 : 3, 11).

A special place among Izabela Branicka's house dwellers was occupied by a Frenchman, Pascal de Hayes. He had the title of "*attache de la maison*" and enjoyed a privileged position of resident. He died in Białystok in the year 1805 leaving a considerable bequest to his relative living in France (TEKI GLINKI 388 : 1).

How much foreign servants were appreciated by Polish magnates could be illustrated by the words of Elisabet von Anspach travelling to Poland:

I found a maid in Warsaw I had once recommended to duchess Czartoryska. Ten years of loyal excellent service brought her a salary of 100 luidors a year and the life usufruct of 60 *morgas* of land, which made her the happiest person in the world. I must say in praise of the Polish aristocracy that it rarely happens for a magnate's house servants not to receive a considerable pension after eight or ten years of work.

(ANSPACH 1963 : 789)

A significant place in Branickis' house was occupied by artists and craftsmen. In the year 1771, when Białystok had 1,845 permanent residents, about 200 of them were craftsmen and artists (KOWECKA 1993 : 53). Frenchmen were an especially large group. A few of them deserve mentioning.

Pierre Courday, a French sculptor, was engaged by Branicki to work on the monument commemorating Stefan Czarniecki. The progress of work conducted was reported in the letters to the hetman (TEKI GLINKI 315 : 55, 56) The work on the monument took a long time, lasted as many as three years (1762–1765) and the result may still be admired in Tykocin.

Also, a French painter du Viviers created his works of art in Białystok. His aquaforte called “Vocluse pres de Biallystok” can be found in the collection of Anna Potocka née Tyszkiewicz (TEKI GLINKI 95 : 55, 68).

A French artist connected with Białystok was also a master of pastel portrait, Louis Mareteau (1715–1804). In the year 1752 he was employed by Branicki to make portraits. For this purpose he stayed in the Branickis’ palace in Podwale in Warsaw and despite the fact that he did not later provide any more services to Branicki, he refused to leave a comfortable abode since he liked the hetman’s palace so much.

Another painter who came to Poland attracted by the glamour of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski’s court was Jean Baptista Pillement. This painter and designer valued for his subtle and delicate landscapes made an exceptionally cosmopolitan career. He was born in the year 1728 in Lyon. Next, in order to continue his education he moved to Paris, and then to Lisbon. It was in Lisbon that he made contacts so important for his later career. He worked there for a Dutch consul, connoisseur and collector of art, Jan Gildemeester. From Lisbon he went to London where he spent eight years. There he practiced his painting skill to render the subtle English landscape and made contacts in the world of artists and art collectors. After that he went to Vienna and in the year 1765 came to Warsaw to the court of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. Commissioned by the Polish monarch, he decorated the Royal Castle and Ujazdowski Castle. And it was via the monarch that Pillement made contacts with the Branickis. It was as early as in the year 1766 that he made three landscape paintings commissioned by the hetman (KOWECKA 1993 : 119). In this way the works by the artist well-known in Europe could also be found in Białystok. Jean Baptista, however, went to continue his European career. He worked in Petersburg, Milan, Venice, Rome and Piemont. Next, he returned to France where, commissioned by Queen Marie Antoinette, he decorated the Petit Trianon. At the end of his life he returned to Lyon where he became a lecturer in the academy of art founded by Emperor Napoleon and worked for the silk industry. He was also the author of an important invention. In 1764 he invented a new method of printing permanent colours on silk. He died in 1808 in Lyon leaving his beautiful landscape paintings in different parts of Europe.

The group of French artists working in Jan Klemens Branicki’s palace also included Andre Le Brun (1737–1811). In the years 1768–1795 he was a court sculptor of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. Andre Le Brun came to Poland thanks to the protection of the king’s friend, Madame Geoffrin.

Earlier he had been granted an award from the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, which was an evident proof of the artist's high skills, and then he went to study in Rome (LEŚNIEWSKI 1965 : 82). During his stay in Poland he received a scholarship funded by the king. Commissioned by the king, he stayed in Rome in the years 1775–1778, where he copied ancient statues. From the year 1795 he stayed with Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski in Petersburg. After the monarch's death, he moved to Vilnius, where in the year 1802 he started working at Vilnius University. In Vilnius he became professor in the Chair of Sculpture. He died in Vilnius in the year 1811 (MIKOCKA-RACHUBOWA 2010).

Undoubtedly, a French engineer and architect, Pierre Ricaud de Tirreguille (born 1725, died after the year 1772) had the greatest influence on technical improvements made to the Białystok palace. He came at the invitation of Polish king, Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski in 1752 and in that year he attached his future life and career to hetman Jan Klemens Branicki. It is difficult to determine the circumstances in which cooperation between the two men began, but as early as in 1752 Pierre Ricaud de Tirreguille got promoted to lieutenant in the foot regiment of hetman Branicki (TEKI GLINKI 321 : 26). At that time he also attached his personal life to the Commonwealth by marrying, in 1753, Miss Cieciewiczówna, a daughter of the Old Warsaw writer (TEKI GLINKI 320 : 162). The first mention of works by the French engineer in Białystok goes back to the year 1753. In that year Ricaud de Tirreguille began supervising water works connected with water installations, that is water pump machines, ponds and fountains (TEKI GLINKI 330 : 1-2; TEKI GLINKI 353 : 1). On numerous occasions in the years 1753–1760 Pierre Ricaud de Tirreguille came to Białystok from Warsaw to supervise water works in the Białystok residence. The engineer supervised the works in person since the hetman did not trust his less skilled workers (TEKI GLINKI 342 : 35, 38, 40, 41). At the same time Ricaud de Tirreguille worked on the plan of the city of Warsaw. In the year 1761, thanks to hetman Branicki, he was promoted to colonel (TEKI GLINKI 353 : 2, 3). It was in the year 1765, when already in Berlin, that Ricaud de Tirreguille received via banker Piotr Teppe money from hetman Branicki (TEKI GLINKI 315 : 323) and this was the last time the French engineer was in touch with the Branickis. Pierre Ricaud de Tirreguille left the Commonwealth having made numerous technical improvements and the famous plan of the city of Warsaw.

Sylwester August Mirys, a well-known 18<sup>th</sup>-century painter attached his life and career to Białystok for good (1700–1790). He was Scottish by birth,



but a Frenchman by choice. Born and raised in France, he started his artistic work in Italy. Despite his western European pedigree he was not well-known in the West and is often mistaken for his son, David. Mirys came to Poland in 1730. Initially, he was connected with the Jabłonowski, Przebendowski, Wielopolski, Tarło and Bieliński families (SZYMAŃSKI 1964 : 37). He came to Podlachia around the year 1750 and in 1752 he certainly worked in Białystok. In that year he was reported to have finished his last painting in Białystok and leave for Warsaw (TEKI GLINKI 358 : 22, 23). Mirys also painted interiors of the Białystok palace, which was thus commented in the diaries by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: “court painter Mirys, a Frenchman, was quite a good artist” (NIEMCEWICZ 1957 : 51). Apart from painting the palace walls, Mirys also made paintings for the churches in Białystok and Tyczyn (TEKI GLINKI 342 : 43). He also painted small everyday household items such as a sniff-box (TEKI GLINKI 318 : 3). He kept permanent ties with Białystok and the Commonwealth. In Białystok he received from the hetman a business apartment in the manorial building (TEKI GLINKI 107 : 102) and also became an owner of the city’s square and garden (TEKI GLINKI 118 : 2, 17, 23). He was provided a workshop or a studio in a building built for him in Białystok (TEKI GLINKI 316 : 80). Apart from his artistic activity, he was also an active educator teaching, for instance, his son David and other painter apprentices. Old documents point to the education given to the young painter in 1780 (TEKI GLINKI 315 : 25, 259).

We do not know much about the painter’s private life. However, it transpires from his correspondence that he cared about the future of his family and he attached their fate to the Commonwealth. In one of his letters he asked Izabela Branicka to support his attempt to gain Polish citizenship to secure his children’s future. Izabela Branicka replied that she would take adequate endeavours in that matter in the nearest session of parliament (TEKI GLINKI 315 : 288).

Before coming to Białystok, he married his second wife, Apolonia, and his children Sylwester Dawid and daughter Elżbieta were born. The son, with his father’s help, developed his painting talent and his daughter was sent to gain education at the house of Podlachian voivode’s wife, J. Rzewuska. Rzewuska took charge of the young lady’s education and in 1774 she arranged for her to marry Franciszek Zawadzki in Lvov (SZYMAŃSKI 1964 : 71). The Zawadzki first lived in Rozdół and then moved to Laszki. What is interesting, just like her father and brother, Elżbieta showed artistic talents (SZYMAŃSKI 1964 : 72). It is likely that Mirys had yet another, third child

Joanna (Johanna) since the surviving documents mention congratulations he received in 1790 on the occasion of his daughter's wedding (TEKI GLINKI 316 : 75). Mirys died in 1790 and was buried in Białystok.

In the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Commonwealth each of the magnates' mansions employed doctors and medical assistants whose task was to take care of the magnate's, his courtiers' and servants' health. More often than not the positions of medics and medical assistants were taken by foreigners. The employment of foreigners was a result of assumption that doctors educated abroad were better professionals than those educated in Poland. It was not infrequent indeed that the lack of adequate specialists in the country created favourable conditions for the employment of foreigners. Also, in Branickis' mansion doctors of foreign origin found employment. For years the Branicki palace medics were Michał Klement who came from Hungary and Jakub Feliks de Michelis who arrived from Prussia. Also, medicine adepts from France came and practiced medicine in the Branicki palace in Białystok. A renowned and honourable medic working in Białystok was Antoni Issauarat, first the doctor of the Branicki family and then the court doctor of king Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. He was one of few specialists in smallpox prevention. He took part in a consilium devoted to the issue of smallpox vaccination and also carried out those vaccinations himself (ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 164).

Also, school pupils in Białystok were taught by teachers of foreign origin. Initially, they were employed in the mansion school run for the children of nobility employed in the house. In 1777, to implement the decisions of the Commission of National Education, a district school was founded in Białystok employing teachers of German and French (TEOFILEWICZ 1971; 1972). As it transpires from the reports of supervising visitors from the Commission of National Education, in 1785 a Frenchman, Joseph de Chamant, was employed as a teacher of French (TRYNKOWSKI 2002 : 16).

An important role in the history of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Białystok was played by the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. The sisters were brought here in 1769 by Jan Klemens Branicki. Their task was to create and run a hospital for the poor. Initially, there were only 12 beds in hospital. In the year 1784, thanks to the endeavours of Izabela Branicka, a French sister, Marianna de Brock, came to Białystok. It was thanks to her efforts and devotion that the hospital became a big institution which could hold even a hundred patients. As Sister Superior of the Congregation, Marianna de Brock remained in Białystok until her death on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 1817 (ROSIĄK 1933 : 83-93).

The French came to Białystok not only as qualified employees and excellent professionals but also as tourists. Especially in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Białystok attracted Polish and foreign tourists who came here encouraged by the famous palace and garden. “Białystok gained a new name at that time as a ‘hotel of crowned heads’ on the way from Paris and Vienna to Hrodna, Vilnius and Petersburg” (DOBROŃSKI 2001 : 34).

One of the first representatives of French aristocracy who came to Białystok eager to see the “Versailles de Podlachie” was a French member of parliament, L’ Hospital. He was a guest at the Branickis’ residence in the year 1757 (TEKI GLINKI 101 : 1).

Another Frenchman who at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century arrived in Białystok was Louis Stanislas Xavier de Bourbon (1755–1824), *comte de Provence* and a later king of France, Louis XVIII (since 1814). He was one of the eight children born of Louis Ferdinand de Bourbon and Maria Josepha Wettin. His grandparents were Louis XV, king of France and Augustus II Wettin, king of Poland and Saxon elect. The turmoil of the French Revolution made him leave France in fear of his life and in 1794 together with his court he settled down in Verona. Expelled from Verona in 1796, he started wandering from one European court to another and in that way he also reached Poland. He was a guest at Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski’s court and in 1792 a guest of his sister, Izabela Branicka in Białystok.

Not in such large numbers as the French, but Englishmen also found employment in the Branicki mansion in Białystok. Some members of the Lindsay family worked in the Branicki palace and were permanently attached to Białystok. A. Lindsay, a lieutenant and then colonel, was an official in Branickis’ estate and in 1762 was appointed steward of the estate in the Bohusław Starosty and on account of his military rank he became a commander of the local garrison. In 1772 he lived in Białystok, which can be proven by the description of the house occupied by him and owned by the Branicki family (TEKI GLINKI 107 : 37-38). Ludwik Lindsay, mentioned in the Białystok town records, was related to him (1798–1801) (PUCHALSKA 1994 : 8).

Jan Lindsay may have been A. Lindsay’s son (1759–1822) who, after completing his education in Poland was sent to study in Italy. He studied painting and architecture there. He used the knowledge and skills he gained there to work, for instance, for king Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski. His brother, Michał, who showed similar artistic talents, was one of the best pupils in the district school in Białystok. As a painter apprentice of Sylwester Mirys he

was regarded a very talented miniature-maker. However, he left his artistic career and chose to work as a jurist (PUCHALSKA 1994 : 7-8).

A charming English woman, Miss Melfort, employed as a governess of Anna Tyszkiewiczówna, lived for some time in Izabela Branicka's mansion. The young Tyszkiewiczówna, raised under the supervision of Izabela Branicka, often stayed in Białystok together with her governess.

The English would come to Białystok mainly as tourists. In 1758 Białystok was visited by an English member of parliament, George Keith. The purpose of his visit was to see the sights of the town and it was not just a courtesy visit since the hosts were staying in Warsaw at that time. The MP stayed, as it was typical of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century tourist, with the Białystok postmaster, Mr Daszkowski. The MP's guide in the palace was the Branicki mansion architect, Jan Henryk Klemm who, in his letter of 16 February thus related the MP's stay in Białystok:

(...) let me inform you that Mr Keyth, an English member of parliament stayed with Daszkowski yesterday in the afternoon, then came to the palace and watched all the palace suites. Having returned to his lodging (...) today at around three o'clock in the morning he moved on.

(TEKI GLINKI 339 : 11)

Unfortunately, this is the only account left of the MP's stay in Białystok.

Twenty years later, in 1778, Białystok was visited by an English historian, William Coxe. Coxe arrived here in the company of his apprentice, George August Herbert, Earl of Pembroke and captain John Floyd. Between 1775 and 1780 the English travellers went on an educational journey to visit some interesting sights in France, Austria, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Russia and Poland. William Coxe's stay in Poland resulted in the creation of the most popular compendium of the Polish matters in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe (PUCHALSKA 1994 : 3). The *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark. Interspersed with historical relations and political inquiries* was first published in London in 1784. All in all, there were as many as five English, three French, one German, Swedish and Dutch editions. Coxe and his companions tried hard to get to know the visited countries well. When in Poland, they proceeded to Cracow in the first place. They saw the Wawel Castle there, which led to the description of the line of Polish monarchs being added to the study. Apart from historical facts, the kings' characteristics included also the anecdotal material, which was an effect of multiple interests of the author. From

Cracow the travellers went to Warsaw where they were mainly attracted by the royal court. As noticed by Marek Grzegorz Zieliński, the royal court was a place which especially drew foreigners and visiting the royal court was an indispensable element of their stay in the capital (ZIELIŃSKI 2004 : 64). The English travellers who came to the capital were driven by a similar motivation. They paid a visit to the royal court of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, visited the Załuski Library and Wilanów Palace. After the visit at the court and receiving recommendation letters, Coxe and his companions went on a trip to Hrodna. Białystok, at that time already renowned all over the country for its fabulous palace and gardens, was on the way to Hrodna. On 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1778 the travellers reached Białystok. It made a really big impression against other less affluent and often neglected towns, which Coxe recorded in his memoirs:

Late in the evening we arrived in Białystok, a clean and well-arranged town. Its streets are wide and houses mostly covered in plaster, built at even intervals from each other. Białystok owes its remarkable cleanliness to the Branicki family, whose palace stands near the town, and who to a large extent contributed to the decoration of their place of residence.

(COXE 1963 : 678)

As it transpires from the above quoted excerpt, the town left a tremendous impression on the foreigners. Its aesthetic and architectural appeal was emphasized. The foreign guests were impressed both by the palace itself and hospitality of its hostess, Izabela Branicka, who showed her guests round the residence in person : “(...) she showed us around all the suites in the palace, which is an edifice in Italian style and thanks to its opulence it is commonly called the Polish Versailles” (COXE 1963 : 680). Izabela Branicka did not only show her guests the palace but also its most valuable collections. As Coxe points out, the items displayed included “a golden cup held by hetman Czarniecki, according to the local tradition, attached to the belt (...), an embroidered sash found among the war trophies after the victory over Charles X, probably the monarch’s belongings” (COXE 1963 : 680). The hostess’ pride was also the palace suites. A special importance was attached to the one in which king Augustus III Wettin stayed when visiting Białystok (COXE 1963 : 680). In this suite there was a “(...) splendid portrait of Augustus in the royal apparel with his hair styled according to the Polish fashion (...)” (COXE 1963 : 680). Białystok sightseeing finished with a ride around the Branickis’ estate. The park in the English style earned special recognition of

the visiting guests. The last element of the visit in the mansion was a festive dinner the travellers had in the company of countess Izabela Branicka and other mansion dwellers.

Another traveller who visited Białystok was Jan Jerzy Forster. This well-known doctor, traveller and author participated at a very young age together with his father in the round-the-world expedition organised in 1772 by James Cook. The description of this journey, translated into several languages, brought him fame all over Europe. In 1784 primate Michał Poniatowski made a proposal to Forster to take the Chair of Natural History at Vilnius University. Jan Jerzy Forster accepted Poniatowski's proposal and left Germany for Vilnius. He recorded his impressions from the journey in the form of a diary in which he gave an account of the whole route. While travelling across Poland, he visited Cracow, Warsaw, Brańsk and Białystok. Jan Jerzy Forster arrived in Białystok on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup>, 1784. He wrote on that day in his diary:

Nice place. When you leave the forest, you are driven to the town by alleys lined with lime-trees. From the distance you can see the magnificent Branicki palace with its beautiful park, well-kept flower garden surrounded by firs, etc. The town has a number of well-constructed houses opposite of which nice trees have been planted: something I did not have a chance to see anywhere in Poland.

(FORSTER 1958 : 298)

Forster met doctors working in Izabela Branicka's mansion. At that time the manor medics were Dunker, Isaurat and Kijeński. Jan Klemens Branicki's mansion doctor, Michał Klement, was still professionally active then. It was the elderly and respectable medic that was Forster's guide in the palace gardens:

(...) regardless of the cloudy weather and all day rain, we went for a walk in the park which was somewhat bigger than the one in Wilanów and definitely in a much better taste. (...) In the park a theatre, some shrines as well as nice ponds can be found (...).

(FORSTER 1958 : 298)

His attention was also drawn to the mansion dwellers and residents of different nationalities staying permanently or temporarily in Izabela Branicka's house. Apart from the above-mentioned doctors, the house dwell-

ers included a papal envoy, Jan Andrzej Archetti, countess Melfort as well as an engineer and officer of French origin, de Pauli. Such a numerous body of prominent foreigners made a clear impression on the traveller. He expressed his favourable opinion about his hostess as well: "She is a quite tall, a bit thin lady of about 50, with a kind, gentle and also a masculine face of several messages" (FORSTER 1958 : 299). Such positive impressions of Białystok left in Forster's diary, just like Coxe's opinion, contributed to a large extent to the fame of Białystok and its inhabitants.

As it transpires from the above, in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, Białystok was one of the private towns which owed its fast growth largely to the investments of magnates in their residential estates. The constructions, renovations and improvements of magnates' residential estates entailed hiring a number of qualified craftsmen and artists whose major task was to create an admirable gem of architecture. These magnificent and admirable estates attracted other foreign visitors in search of aesthetic sensations and eager to learn about the material culture of the visited countries.

Also, 18<sup>th</sup>-century Białystok, despite its peripheral location, became a place which foreign visitors were glad to see. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was mainly foreign artists and craftsmen whose aim was to work on the renovation and improvement of the magnificent palace and park estate established thanks to the endeavours of Jan Klemens and Izabela Branicki. In this group of foreign visitors an important position was occupied by the French. They were high class specialists in architecture and building techniques as well as painters and sculptors known and appreciated not only in Poland but all over Europe. Their works became a lasting cultural heritage of Białystok and the whole territory of Podlachia as well as current evidence of the exceptional growth of the town.

The situation was subject to change in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The works on construction and improvement of the palace were largely finished and the Branickis' residential estate gained the name of Versailles de Podlachie, becoming a kind of tourist attraction of the time. Białystok started to be visited by diplomats and travellers encouraged by the fame of the magnificent residence. The dominant group were the visitors from the British Isles and it is them who left valuable records to contribute to the fame of Białystok town outside the Commonwealth. And so it is to the French artists that Białystok owes its unique architectural style, and to the English travellers – fame reaching the whole of Europe.

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