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ROADS, TRAVELLING AND COMMUNICATION IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH IN THE 18TH CENTURY. RUSSIAN AND WEST EUROPEAN VISITORS' PERSPECTIVE

Communication routes operated by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became of great importance for the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the context of access to Europe and establishing diplomatic contacts with the Holy Roman Empire and later with other countries of Western Europe in the XVI and even the end of the XV century. Their role increased tremendously in the last decades of the XVII century, first when Russia became a part of the Holy League, a political and military coalition of anti-Ottoman countries and then during the process of instant and intense Europeanization (of the tsarist state under the reign of Peter I. The most convenient communication and travel routes passed through the Commonwealth, even after after Russia acquired the Baltic coasts and St. Petersburg became the administrative centre of the country. Official tsarist diplomatic missions and numerous messenger crossed Polish and Lithuanian lands, diplomatic and “normal” post was sent¹, and young Russians travelled to the west of Europe for education². Peter I visited the Commonwealth as a traveller and commander of the army on a number of occasions. The first time was when he hastily travelled across Polish Pomerania in 1697 on his way to the west of Europe during the so-called Grand Embassy [Великое посольство]. On his way back, he travelled through the territories of Lesser Poland (Małopolska), Red Ruthenia and Belarus from Olkusz via Rawa Ruska, Brest (Brześć Litewski) and Minsk, visiting towns, magnate residences and even the salt mine in Wieliczka³. During his subsequent visits, Peter

¹ In July 1718 was drawn a project of the course by Polish-Lithuanian the mail connection between Moscow and Saxon and other West Europa countries, SHD (Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden), 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 3663/4, 184-188.

² For example, in 1774 two sons of Russian field marshal Petr Alexandrovich Rumiantsev Zadunaiskii traveled – to Western Europe through Poland: see “Nowiny de [d]ie 5. Junij. 1774”, *Korespondencja i gazetki rękopiśmienne Jędrzeja Kitowicza*, eds. T. Ciesielski, S. Górzyński, F. Wolański, Wydawnictwo Dig and edition La Rama, Warszawa-Bellerive-sur-Allier 2017, 248.

³ W.A. Serczyk, *Piotr I Wielki*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, Wrocław 1990, 59-60, 78-79, 122-128, 143, 155, 161, 180. M.A. Venevitinov, *Russkie v” Gollandii. Velikoe posols’to 1697-1698 gg.*, Tip. i Slovolitnia O.O. Gerbeka, Moskva 1897, 53-55; A.G. Brikner, *Puteshestviia Petra Velikogo za granitsu v 1711 i v 1717 gg.*, “Russkii vestnik” Dec. 1880, 151, 16, 26-28.

I had the opportunity to become acquainted with other parts of Poland and Lithuania, thus becoming the foreign ruler with the greatest knowledge of the Commonwealth and issues related not only to travelling across its territory, but also to using it as the scene of military operation and operational background for armies operating in the Baltic coastal areas, in Germany or Moldavia⁴. These were important experiences, because for Russia, which was aspiring to increase its role in Europe, it was becoming increasingly crucial to tame the vast lands of the Commonwealth and turn them into safe communication routes that could be used for diplomatic and military purposes. Tsarist diplomacy, which was operating ever more actively in the international arena, used them on an increasingly large scale, especially after the so-called alliance of the two eagles with the Habsburg monarchy was concluded on 6 August 1726. For the next 36 years it gave direction to the regional policy of Russia, which maintained very close contacts with its Austrian ally and, since 1744, also with Saxony. As early as in 1727, tsarist authorities were planning to provide military assistance to the Habsburgs through the territory of Poland and Lithuania, and then they did so during the wars of the Polish succession (1735-1736) and the Austrian succession (1748-1749).⁵ This was the only time Russian armies marched across the Commonwealth, although during the Seven Years' War they used its northern and western voivodeships as an operational background during the war with Prussia in 1757-1762.⁶ The Russians used south-eastern Polish territories (mainly Podolia and the Braclaw voivodeship)

⁴ Russian military forces within the area of the Commonwealth participated in military operations against the Swedes in 1703-1709. Between 1711 and 1718 they used western and northern voivodeships of Poland in operations against the Swedes in Pomerania and Mecklenburg; the unfortunate Danube campaign against the Ottoman Empire was begun in 1711 from Podolia and Pokuttia – for information on these issues see e.g. D.F. Maslovskii, *Zapiski po istorii voennogo iskusstva v Rossii*, vyp. 1, Tip. V. Bezobrazov i Komp., Moskva 1894, 106-144; *Istoriia russkoi armii i flota*, Tip. Russkago Obshchestva, Moskva 1911, vol. 1, 109-173; L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armii i flot v XVIII veke*, Voenizdat, Moskva 1958, 193-223; A.A. Kersnovskii, *Istoriia russkoi armii: 1700-1881*, Rusich, Smolensk 2004, 23-41; P. Krokosz, *Rosyjskie sily zbrojne za panowania Piotra I*, Arcana, Kraków 2010, 319-367.

⁵ S.G. Nelipovich, *Soiuz dvuglavykh orlov: russko-avstriiskii voennyi al'ians vtoroi chetverti XVIII v.*, Kvadriga – Ob'edinennaia redaktsiia MVD Rossii, Moskva 2010, s. 30-32, 38-46, 135-173, 343-366; E.N. Shchepkin, *Russko-avstriiskii soiuz vo vremia Semiletnei voiny, 1746-1758*, Tipografiia V.S. Valashev i Ko, Sankt Peterburg 1902, 3-121; M.I. Anisimov, *Rossiiskaia diplomatiia v Evrope v seredine XVIII veka (ot Abenskogo mira do nachala Semiletnei voiny)*, Tovarischestvo narychnykh izdaniy KMK, Moskva 2012, 44-107, 235, 263-264; M. Köster, *Russische Truppen für Prinz Eugen*, Österreichischer Bundesverlag, Wien 1986, 28-30, 41-248; T. Ciesielski, *Irlandczyk na służbie carskiej. Piotr Lacy – feldmarszałek i generał-gubernator Inflant*, [In:] *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, eds. W. Walczak, K. Łopatecki, vol. 3: *Inflanty Polskie*, Instytut Badań nad Dziedzictwem Kulturowym Europy, Białystok 2012, 234-235, 244-246, 259-262; T. Ciesielski, *Pol'sko-litovskie niti voennoi kar'ery feldmarszala Petra Lassi (Pitera Latsy)*, [In:] *Voina i oruzhie. Novye issledovaniia i materialy. Trudy Sed'moi Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii 18-20 maia 2016 goda*, ed. S.V. Efimov, VIMAIvVS, Sankt-Peterburg 2016, ch. V, 265, 272-274.

⁶ D.F. Maslovskii, *Russkaia armii v" semiletniuiu voinu*, Tip. Shtaba voisk" Moskovskago voennago okruga, Moskva 1888, vyp. 1, 83-113, vyp. 2, 100-417, vyp. 3, 193-206, 296-301; J. Keep, *Feeding*

on three occasions while fighting the Turks (1738-1739, 1768-1774, 1787-1791). There were also armed interventions in the Commonwealth performed in order to secure their own interests in 1716-1718, 1733-1736, 1764 and 1767. The latter turned into permanent presence of Russian armies in Poland up to the beginning of the 1780s. The last stage of that instance of the tsarist army's presence started with the Russo-Polish war in spring – summer 1792, which initiated the process that ultimately led to the collapse of the Commonwealth in 1795 after two subsequent partitions and the Kościuszko Uprising.⁷

In the 18th century, the territory of the Commonwealth was used by Russia very intensely for diplomatic and military purposes. Therefore, it was not uncommon that the court and tsarist ministers, while planning further political and military ventures in the central or southern Europe, had to take road and communication barriers present in Poland and Lithuania into consideration. As the military operations, the most significant obstacle was the poor condition of the road infrastructure, for which there was a number of factors contributing to that, including the actual land routes, their surfaces, and engineering structures over various terrain obstacles (trenches, swamps, watercourses and water reservoirs).

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had a relatively dense road network, allowing for both latitudinal and longitudinal travel across its vast territory. The density of this network decreased eastwards, and was least advanced in voivodeships that bordered with Russia and the Ottoman Empire and its feudal countries. Most routes were defined naturally, connecting towns or more significant land centres, and were of local importance. Greater importance was attributed to roads connecting towns constituting significant national administrative and trading centres. At the beginning of the XVII century, roads leading to Warsaw, the communication centre of the country, acquired special significance. There were routes coming out and leading to other important towns and cities: Cracow (Kraków), Vilnius (Wilno), Piotrków, Lublin, Poznań, Toruń, Gdańsk, Lviv (Lwów), Kamianets-Podilskyi (Kamieniec Podolski), Luts'k (Łuck), Kiev (Kijów), Minsk and Smolensk. Other important roads bypassed Warsaw and led from Silesia to Spisz (Spisz) and Hungary via Cracow; to Moldavia via Cracow, Lublin, Lviv, Kamianets-Podilskyi or Sniatyn (Śniatyń). They constituted a part of a route that had been important for a few centuries, connecting Europe with the towns of the Ottoman Empire (most importantly with Istanbul,

the Troops: Russian Army Supply Policies during the Seven War, "Canadian Slavonic Papers" March 1987, Vol. XXIX, No 1, 26-44.

⁷ For information on these issues see e.g. D.F. Maslovskii, *Zapiski po istorii voennogo iskusstva v Rosii*, vyp. 1, 190-342; *Istoriia russkoi armii i flota*, vol. 2, 3-118; L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armii i flot v XVIII veke*, 244-258, 264-287, 465, 462-596; A.A. Kersnovskii, *Istoriia russkoi armii: 1700-1881*, 62-72-94, 101-113, 124-131, 133-136.

Adrianopol (Edirne), Ankara and Bursa) and Persia (Isfahan), used for trading with the Orient.⁸ However, in the middle of the XVII century, it lost its importance, similarly to the oxen transhumance route from Danubian Principalities and Podolia via Volhynia, Lesser Poland to Silesia and Germany, or tottrading routes to Moscow (via Lublin – Kiev or Brest [Brześć Litewski] – Minsk – Smolensk). The significance of roads connecting Warsaw and Dresden increased after the personal Polish-Saxon union. Following the orders of king Augustus II at the beginning of XVIII century, Adam Friedrich Zürner inspected and measured the roads the connect both of those cities, defining two routes of a similar length of 600–620 km.⁹ The south route went through Bautzen (Budyšin), Silesia (Liegnitz – Legnica, Breslau – Wrocław), Kępno, Wieruszów, Sokolniki, Widawa, Piotrków, Mszczonów, Ujazdów and Nadarzyn. The shorter but slightly worse north route led via Hoyeswerde, Bad Muskau, Silesian towns of Żary (Sorau), Żagań (Sagan) and Głogów (Glogau), and on the Polish side via Leszno, Gostyń, Pleszew, Kalisz, Łęczycza, Piątek, Łowicz and Błonie. In 1710, the royal-electoral court put forward a plan – probably uncashed – of creating the postal road linking Dresden with Gdańsk through Hoyeswerda, Żary (Sorau), Krzystkowice (eighteen-century Christianstad, now part of Nowogród Bobrzański), Zielona Góra (Grünberg), Piła (Schneidemühl), Chojnice (Konitz) and Stargard.¹⁰ In 1714, following the orders of Augustus II, a new permanent postal connection was launched, thus establishing a travelling route from Leszno via Poznań to Toruń. New route to Warsaw was established in 1732 through Hoyeswerda, Krzystkowice and Kargowa. It was allegedly approx. 150 km shorter than the “Breslau” route (in fact approx. 50 km shorter). It included the following locations on the Polish side: Kargowa, Wolsztyn, Poznań, Kleczew, Lubień, Sochaczew and Błonie. It was put to use in 1736 and initially designated to the messenger relay. In the following years, during the rule of Augustus III, its Poznań – Lubień part became country’s the main north ward route. One could travel from Saxony to Poznań taking either the new or the old road, which both went via Leszno. The route forked in Lubień – one road led to Warsaw via Sochaczew and Błonie and the other via Kutno and Sochaczew or Łowicz.¹¹ After the Polish-Saxon

⁸ A. Dziubiński, *Na szlakach Orientu. Handel między Polską a Imperium Osmańskim w XVI-XVIII wieku*, Wydawnictwo Leopoldinum, Wrocław 1997.

⁹ A.F. Zürner, *Kurze Anleitung zur gewöhnlichen Reise von Dreyßden nach Warschau*, Nürnberg 1738.

¹⁰ SHD 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 1326/1.

¹¹ SHD 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 1326/6, loc. 3663/3, loc. 3663/4, loc. 3663/5, loc. 3663/11; R. Zgorzelski, *Miedzy Dreznem a Warszawą; rola Augusta II w rozwoju poczty*, http://www.wilanow-palac.art.pl/miedzy_dreznem_a_warszawa_rola_augusta_ii_w_rozwoju_poczty.html [access 10.08.2017]; R. Zgorzelski, *Polska Poczta w dobie saskiej – panowanie Augusta III Wettina*, <http://www.pocztowokurier.pl/uslugi-pocztowe/szkice-z-historii-poczty/art,14,polska-poczta-w-dobie-saskiej-panowanie-augusta-iii-wettina.html> [access 10.08.2017]; L. Zimowski, *Geneza i rozwój komunikacji pocztowej na ziemiach polskich*, Wydawnictwo Komunikacji i Łączności, Warszawa 1972, 43; K. Bartkiewicz, *Podróżowanie*

union was broken, during the reign of Stanisław II Augustus, the main communication route was the one connecting Warsaw via Grodno with Vilnius and further on via Jelgava (Mitawa) with Riga, and via Daugavpils (Dyneburg), Pskov with St. Petersburg. It was of great importance for both Polish and Russian authorities.

As the importance of roads increased, their infrastructure improved, resulting in faster postal service but also an increase in the speed and comfort of travelling. However, this was not due to the quality of road surfaces, bridges, leveés or other technical structures facilitating the journey the roads remained in really bad condition until the end of the Commonwealth, and were made by means of raising mounds, setting poles or wooden or stone crosses, or thinning forests. The proper routes were defined by subsequent travellers, which resulted in most of the actual roads being narrow, rutted, with natural soil surface, mostly clay – or sand – based, not only unpaved but also unlevelled.¹² Ruts were an integral part of Polish and Lithuanian roads. There were frequently also obstacles such as tree roots, stones, various holes or even transverse ditches capable of damaging or stopping not only wheel vehicles but also sledge.¹³ The lack of engineering structures, stone or wooden bridges or – viaducts over such obstacles, constituted a serious problem. Natural wetlands and cavities were at best secured by means of placing down wooden beams, but usually they would be just covered with sticks, tree branches, or soil, which was highly ineffective and dangerous during thaw or heavy rainfall seasons, creating patches of mud that made carts fall over.¹⁴

Until the reign of Stanisław II Augustus, the responsibility for the roads lay on authorities from the local nobles, parliament, towns, and most of all on private individuals – the land owners. The latter were not interested in improving the condition of the roads. Although they could collect road toll, the sums were quite insignificant.¹⁵ It was more profitable to build passages across swamps, water reservoirs and rivers, as so-called “leveé” and “bridge”, taxes-provided stable income and were guaranteed by custom law. More precautionous “entrepreneurs” made sure there were appropriate acts of

między Dreznem i Warszawą w czasach saskich, [In:] *Polska-Saksonia w czasach Unii (1697-1763). Próba nowego spojrzenia*, ed. K. Bartkiewicz, Lubuskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Zielona Góra 1998, 80-82; T. Bernatowicz, *Czekając na króla Barokowe rezydencje między Warszawą a Dreznem przy traktie pocztowym Augusta III z 1750 roku*, „Quart”, no 2 (56), 2020, s. 70-74.

¹² J.S. Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce. Wiek XVI-XVIII*, PIW, Warszawa 1976, 553-555.

¹³ E. von Anspach, *Wrażenia z Polski*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, ed. W. Zawadzki, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1963, 727.

¹⁴ N.W. Wraxall, *Wspomnienia z Polski*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, ed. W. Zawadzki, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1963, 491; W. Coxe, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, 653; G. Forster, *Dziennik podróży po Polsce*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 73.

¹⁵ *Volumina Legum. Przedruk zbioru praw staraniem XX. Pijarów w Warszawie, od roku 1732 do roku 1782*, wydane go, ed. J. Ohryzko, Petersburg 1859-1860, vol. 5, 187, 196, 241; vol. 6, 230; vol. 7, 22.

parliament working in their favour and stipulated bridge tax charges which amounted 3 grosch in 1726, 1-3 grosch in 1764, 2-4 grosch in 1775¹⁶ per person, horse or bovine animal. Country authorities did not engage in the condition of roads or finance their maintenance almost until the end of the Commonwealth. Only in 1768 the Sejm enacted a fixed annual budget of 200 000 zloty, allocated to the maintenance of roads and bridges along with river regulation and to the inspection of their condition.¹⁷ However, this did not change much, and during the Great Sejm voivodeship, land and district civil – upkeeping committees established in December 1789 were tasked with performing inspections of all land roads and riverways along with bridge and levee passage fees, and they were entitled to modify the latter. Moreover, the committees were supposed to take care of improving the quality of waterways by means of cleaning the river beds and banks and constructing the necessary hydrotechnical devices. Land roads leading to the country's borders were to be widened and straightened up, bridges and levees were to be renovated (and if necessary, new ones were to be constructed), and trees planted along the roads were placed under protection.¹⁸

There was not enough time to execute those plans and, as a result, the technical condition of the roads in the Commonwealth did not significantly improve in the 17th century. Only in, where the land owners were concerned enough, the surface was hardened and trees were planted along the roads. Friederich Schulz, travelling across Lithuania at the beginning of the 1790s, stated that there were no “paved” routes, however, on the route between Joniszki and Grodno there were only 4-5 places where he noticed sections of the road that one could get stuck in during the winter or a rainy period.¹⁹ William Coxe was more strict in his evaluation of Lithuanian roads – he viewed them as absolutely neglected: paths meandering “whimsically through thick woods”, sometimes so narrow that a carriage could hardly take them. Most of them had an “extremely” sandy surface, and there were a number of obstacles in the form of tree trunks and roots.²⁰

There was a severe lack of, among others bridge passages across both minor and major rivers, including the Daugava (Western Dvina), Neman, Neris or Vistula. In Warsaw, the capital of the country, a new bridge was built in 1775 by the Crown Grand Treasurer Adam Poniński²¹ after the one built in 1568-1573 was destroyed by

¹⁶ *Volumina Legum*, ed. J. Ohryzko, vol. 2, 287; vol. 3, 91, 394; 422; vol. 5, 187, 196, 241, 287; vol. 4, 230; vol. 7, 22; vol. 8, 126, 178.

¹⁷ *Volumina Legum*, ed. J. Ohryzko, vol. 7, 303-304.

¹⁸ *Volumina Legum*, vol. 9, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1889, 154-155.

¹⁹ F. Schulz, *Podróże Inflantczyka z Rygi do Warszawy i po Polsce w latach 1791-1793*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 404.

²⁰ N.W. Wraxall, *op. cit.*, 556; W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 694.

²¹ J. Kitowicz, “Nowiny”, Warszawa 26.10.1775, [In:] *Korespondencja i gazetki...*, 318; *Volumina Legum*, vol. 7, 146-147, vol. 8, 125-126; J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska*

ice in 1603. Until then, the passage across the Vistula between Warsaw and Praga, had been only possible using boats and ferries, except during royal election periods, when temporary bridges were constructed.²² There were many areas in the Commonwealth where rivers could be crossed only by ford or by means of special “transports”, i.e. crossings serviced depending on the width and depth of the river along with the intensity of passenger and cargo traffic, by boats, ferries or wide flat – bottomed river vessels.²³ There was a specific fee and the quality of ferries was far from satisfactory; this concerns especially the ones in Lithuania that operated across the Neris and the Neman, which were, according to Schultz made of two dugouts with wooden beams or planks placed across, allowing the water to pass freely.²⁴ Meanwhile, taking the Mitawa – Grodno route, which included the passage in Kaunas located at the mouth of the Neris River, one had to cross the Neman River twice. However it should be emphasized, that both fords and ferry passages were quite well-marked and some of them had their water and boat access landings reinforced with stones. The condition of bridges was far from satisfactory. Although the owners were obliged to keep them in good shape in return for a bridge fee,²⁵ they usually failed to meet their obligations. It came as no surprise then that in Europe there existed the term “pons polonicus” or “eine polnische Brücke” and a saying: “Polish bridge, German fast, Italian church service, all that is foolery”²⁶. Towards the end of the 17th century Gaspar de Tende-Hauteville warned by that travellers taking bridges in the Commonwealth should remain particularly cautious, as their technical condition was very poor, and “the Poles took little care of their maintenance or repair”.²⁷ Nathaniel Wraxall found out just how dangerous Polish bridges really were in 1778, when the wooden planks broke and his carriage fell in the river near Żerków; fortunately the river was narrow and shallow. The traveller was unscathed, but a glass panel and a wheel of the carriage broke.²⁸ It is interesting that the day before, Wraxall was viewing a bridge on the Vistula River in Toruń – poorly constructed, narrow, without railings or barriers, with loosely arranged

w oczach cudzoziemców, vol. 1, 354-355; J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce*, [In:] *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*, vol. 2, *Wiek XVII-XIX*, ed. J. Gintel, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1971, 61; J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 557.

²² For information on a bridge constructed in 1697 see: M. Kołodziej, *Podróż stolnika Piotra Toksoja przez Polskę i Austrię do Włoch 1697-1699*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1991, s. 96.

²³ J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 555-556.

²⁴ F. Schulz, *Podróże Inflanckie...*, 396.

²⁵ This was ordered by acts of parliament granting the right to build bridges and levees and charge fees for crossing them.

²⁶ J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 557.

²⁷ Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *Relacja historyczna o Polsce*, [In:] *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*, vol. 1: *Wiek X-XVII*, ed. J. Gintel, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1971, 330-331.

²⁸ N.W. Wraxall, *op. cit.*, 556.

wooden planks. His opinion on the construction and condition of other wooden bridges on the Vistula – which connected Cracow, Kazimierz and Pogorze, was also very low.²⁹ Johann Kausch, travelling there 13 years later, shared a similar opinion on the latter.³⁰ Coxe saw the bridges in Lithuania he was crossing in 1788 as “very old and of construction so poor that it seemed the weight of the carriage would collapse them”³¹. Georg Forster, travelling from Cracow to Warsaw, came upon bridges near Końskie and in Mazovia that were constructed of tree trunks which “played like the piano keys when you passed”³².

In 18th century the number of water and river crossings in the Commonwealth increased, especially in Poland on the Vistula, Bug and Narew rivers. Unquestionably, the most important investment in this area was the aforementioned bridge on the Vistula in Warsaw. Its construction was based on boats, which enabled its removal from the river in bad weather conditions. In return for financing it, Adam Poniński obtained the privilege to collect passage fees for a period of 10 years, and after that time he was to receive 50 000 zloty yearly for the rest of his life.³³ His contemporaries doubted that the bridge would be maintained in appropriate condition, however, that scepticism proved to be unfounded, as all damage was repaired and Poniński's bridge lasted until November 1794, when it was destroyed by the Poles in order to prevent the Russian army from passing onto the left bank of the Vistula. In the second half of the XVIII century, many bridges had a solid structure and were kept in good technical shape, for example the ones located on relatively minor rivers such as the Wełna River near Oborniki or the Biebrza River near Białystok. According to count Ernst von Lehndorff, the latter was 1.9 km long.³⁴ On the other side of Białystok, on the route to Grodno, there was a solid structure made of a levee and a bridge, which made it possible to cross the vast, muddy valley.³⁵

Using the fords and ferry crossings (“passages”) made travelling across the Commonwealth, already quite sluggish due to the poor quality of road surface even slower. In early spring and during the long, rainy autumn entire road sections, es-

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 480, 481, 555. For a bridge on the Vistula River in Toruń see also: J.E. Biester, *Kilka listów o Polsce pisanych latem 1791 roku*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 241-242.

³⁰ J.J. Kausch, *Opis podróży ze Śląska do Krakowa w Małopolsce*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 364-365; *idem*, *Wiadomości o Polsce*, [In:] *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*, vol. 2, 154-155.

³¹ W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 694.

³² G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 58, 99.

³³ J. Kitowicz, “Nowiny”, Warszawa 26.10.1775, [In:] *Korespondencje i gazetki...*, 318; *Volumina Legum*, ed. J. Ohryzko, vol. 7, 146-147, vol. 8, 125-126.

³⁴ E. Ahasverus von Lehndorff, *Dzienniki*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 6; J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 202.

³⁵ J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, 344.

pecially those with a clay surface, turned into large, impassable mud bogs. This was also the case with the main routes, e.g. those connecting Warsaw and Poznań, Toruń or Cracow.³⁶ During hot summers and in periods without any rainfall, travelling on such roads was made difficult by dust. Regardless of the season, roads with a sand surface were extremely inconvenient, which made travelling really slow;³⁷ there were quite a few of such roads in Lithuania and northern Poland. Late autumn, winter and the beginning of spring were relatively good times for travelling, as sub-zero temperatures at least made the uneven roads, with their numerous hollows and pits, hard. Unfortunately, snow and blizzards made the roads impassable in many places, and it was simply impossible to travel without road signs or marks. Another natural phenomenon that impeded or even prevented road use was black ice. Boris Petrovich Sheremetev, a Russian diplomat and soldier, experienced this when his journey across Polish lands at the end of 1698 was seriously delayed as his stop in Zamość, halfway between Breslau and Kiev, and extended to two weeks because the "road was difficult and unfit for travelling because of black ice". As soon as the weather improved, Sheremetev continued his journey, but his suit struggled with rain and black ice on the way to Kiev.³⁸ It should be emphasized, however, that such weather conditions significantly impeded transport even on good roads nowadays.

The quality of roads was not uniform throughout the country, and it deteriorated in the eastern regions, especially in Polesie and Belarus. This could sometimes take even drastic forms. King Charles XII of Sweden, whose army in the first years of the Northern War operated mainly within the territory of Poland, west of the line of the Bug and Neman rivers, began a war campaign in Lithuania in 1708. The further his army went east, the harder the marching conditions became, not only due to rainfall. In a letter to his sister, Charles XII complained that "marching this summer was very tedious due to the weather and despicable roads".³⁹ A combination of unfavourable weather and the condition of the roads constituted a barrier that significantly impeded the march of large military troops. This was especially the case in eastern and south-eastern voivodeships of the Commonwealth. Even Polish and Lithuanian troops that

³⁶ J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 295; Fortia de Piles and Boisseglin de Keru, "Podróż dwóch Francuzów", [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 703; J.S. Bystron, *op. cit.*, 558.

³⁷ Forster calculated that it took an hour to travel two miles on a soil road, and 2.5 h on a sandy road: G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 97.

³⁸ "Opisanie podróży generała feldmarszałka wojsk rosyjskich, tajnego radcy i kawalera maltańskiego, Św. Apostoła Andrzeja, Orła Białego i Orderu Pruskiego hrabiego Borysa Pietrowicza Szeremietiewa [...] do państw europejskich: do Krakowa, do Wiednia, do Wenecji, do Rzymu i na wyspę Maltę...", in F. Sielicki, *Podróż bojarzyna Borysa Szeremietiewa przez Polskę i Austrię do Rzymu oraz na Maltę 1697-1698. Z dziejów kontaktów kulturalnych Rusi Moskiewskiej z Polską i Zachodem*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, Wrocław 1975, 318.

³⁹ Z. Anusik, *Karol XII*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, Wrocław 2006, 186.

were well – familiar with local conditions had difficulty moving along the roads, despite the fact that most of their supplies were left behind in the camp for the purposes of short military operations and they were carrying only small food and ammunition rations when they performed cavalry rides, covering up to 150 km per day (e.g. in the spring of 1709 Lithuanian troops commanded by Great Hetman of Grand Duchy of Lithuania Jan Kazimierz Sapieha in Volhynia).⁴⁰ When burdened with artillery and carts carrying camp equipment and supplies for a campaign the lasted several weeks, the marching pace of a Commonwealth's army decreased to 20 km, or even 10-12 km per day on particularly hard terrain. As it was necessary to give the army an entire day to rest every 3-4 days, the average pace of marching decreased to even less than 10 km daily, just like e.g. during the Zhvanets campaign in 1653.⁴¹ In the XVIII century the Russian army had numerous occasions to find out how difficult the vast lands of the Commonwealth really were to cover in unfavourable weather conditions. Even the military corps executing an armed intervention in August-October 1733 – under time pressure, as it involved preventing the election of Stanisław Leszczyński a candidate to the throne of the Commonwealth who was unfavourable to Russia – commanded by gen. Peter Lacy (Piotr Lassy), consisting of approx. 13 thousand soldiers and without too much artillery or military supplies, took 49 days to march from Jęglava to Warsaw, with the average marching pace of under 15 km per day.⁴² It was much slower for Russian field marshal Stepan Apraksin, whose army of 60 thousand soldiers marched through Lithuania in spring – summer 1757. It took 22 days to get from Jęglava to Kaunas (Kowno) with at daily average of only 10 km. Then it took 17 days of marching to cover 100 km between Kaunas and Virbalis (Wierzbołów) located at the border with East Prussia, meaning that the average marching pace decreased to six km per day. Forcing the way across the Neman River had a significant influence on this pace, as

⁴⁰ T. Ciesielski, *Ostatnie tryumfy bitewne oręża Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego – bitwy pod Lachowcami i Nakwaszą*, [In:] *Vaennýá tryymfy epohi Válikaga Knástva Litoŭskaga. Zbornik naukovykh artykulaŭ*, ed. M.N. Gał'párovič, Muzej "Zamkavy kompleks –Mir", "Mir" 2018, 266-268, see also 256-258; *idem*, *Poslednie boevye tryumfy Velikogo Kniazhestva Litovskogo – bitvy pod Liabovtsami i Nakvashei*, [In:] *Voina i oruzhe. Novye issledovaniia i materialy. Trudy Vošmoi Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii 17-19 maia 2017 goda*, ed. S.V. Sergei, V. Efimov, VIMAIViVS, Sankt-Peterburg 2017, ch. IV, 446-447.

⁴¹ T. Ciesielski, *Od Batołu do Żwańca, Wojna na Ukrainie, Podolu i o Mołdawię 1652-1653*, Inforteditons, Zabrze 2007, 213-217.

⁴² *Zhurnal" o voinskikh" operatsiiakh" s" 1733 g. po 1737 g.*, [In:] *Sbornik" Voenno-istoricheskikh" materialov*, ed. N.O. Dubrovin, vyp. III, Voennaia Tipografiia, S.-Peterburg 1893, 58-63; D. Petrovich Buturlin, *Voennaia istoriia pobodov' Rossiian' v" XVIII stoletii*, t. 4, ch. 3: *Zakliuchaiushchaia v" sebe opisanie Pol'skoi voiny s" 1733-go po 1735-i god*, Voennaia Tipografiia Glavnago Shtaba, Sankt Peterburg 1823, 19-20; T. Ciesielski, *"Gorący" koniec lata i początek jesieni 1733 roku. Początki rosyjskiej interwencji zbrojnej w Rzeczypospolitej*, [In:] *Wokół wolnych elekcji w państwie polsko-litewskim XVI-XVIII wieku*, eds M. Markiewicz, D. Rolnik, F. Wolański, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2016, 470, 478, 483.

it lasted four days. Taking into account the ten day rest halfway through, the Russian army reached the Prussian border in 27 days whole – with an average marching pace of only 3.7 km per day.⁴³ The pace of military operations in May – July 1792 was slightly faster, when it took two Russian armies two months to reach the Bug River via Belarus, Podolia and Volhynia – one army covered the distance of 480 km and the other of 650 km, which gives 7.4-10.7 km daily.⁴⁴ It should be emphasized here that when military necessity arose, Russian dragoons and light cavalry were capable of performing rides, covering 60 or more kilometres daily, equalling the pace of Polish troops, in April 1735 or during the fights with the Bar confederates in 1768-1772.⁴⁵

Mass transport of goods via land roads was underdeveloped. Most roads were unsuitable as means of transport were lacking – peasant carts were most frequently acquired in return for feudal duties rented, or part of war contributions in the case of the army. In eastern voivodeships it was quite common to wait until winter and only then transport crops to their destination, most frequently by sledge.⁴⁶ Therefore, river transport was of particular significance. There were many rivers on the territory of the Commonwealth, however none of them were regulated, and only some rivers were used for transporting goods and people.

Transport was only carried out along the course of the river and on an intermittent basis – most frequently between March-April and October-November.⁴⁷ On smaller rivers the transport period lasted only between spring and autumn, moreover, vessels and raft traffic were impeded by leveés, weirs and mills, often constructed contrary to bans issued during Sejms. In his description of Poland from 1585 the apostolic nuncio, Fulvio Ruggieri listed the only rivers used for transport: the Vistula River from Cracow to Gdansk, to its right-bank tributary the San, the Neman, the Dnieper in its upper and middle course to Kiev, and, in spring and autumn, the Styr.⁴⁸ In subsequent centuries, the Daugava, the Warta, and the aboveall the Bug and the Narew were also used on a larger scale, with river vessels cruising intensely down stream in both direc-

⁴³ T. Ciesielski, *Prusy Wschodnie w trakcie polskiej wojny sukcesyjnej i wojny siedmioletniej*, [In:] *Wielkie wojny w Prusach. Działania militarne między Wisłą a Niemnem na przestrzeni wieków*, eds W. Gieszczyński, N. Kasparek, Oficyna Retman, Dąbrówno 2010, 135-136, 138-139.

⁴⁴ A. Wolański, *Wojna polsko-rosyjska 1792 r.*, vol. 1, Wielkopolska Księgarnia Nakładowa Karola Rzepeckiego, Poznań 1924, 73-320, vol. 2, 74-377.

⁴⁵ *Zhurnal” o voinskih” operatsiiah*, 159-172; T. Ciesielski, *Działania zbrojne w rejonie Krakowa w trakcie polskiej wojny sukcesyjnej 1733-1735*, “*Studia Historyczne*” 2009, R. LII, z. 3-4, 220-221; W. Szczygielski, *Konfederacja barska w Wielkopolsce 1768-1770*, PAX, Warszawa 1970, many examples, see f.e. 52-54, 61-63, 103-104 or 269-272; W. Konopczyński, *Konfederacja barska*, vol. 1-2, Volumen, Warszawa 1991, many examples, see e.g. 83-84, 190-193, 228-230, 301-305, 446-468, 490-497, 551-552, 849.

⁴⁶ J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 553.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 568-569, 576.

⁴⁸ F. Ruggieri, *Opisanie Królestwa Polskiego*, [In:] *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*, vol. 1, 129.

tions in the 18th century thanks to the implementation of technical advances.⁴⁹ In the 18th century the Daugava began to be used in quite a particular way, apart from floating agricultural and forestry goods from noble estates from Polish Livonia, Vitebsk and Polock voivodeships to Riga (a port outside the borders of the Commonwealth), the Russians used it to transport supplies for military troops deployed in the Riga Governorate (Russian Livonia). In the 1780s, along with opening the Black Sea and the Turkish straits for commercial traffic, the Polish nobility's interest in the Dnieper and the Dniester as waterways for floating grain and timber to Kherson, Ochakov or Akkerman increased. However, very difficult sailing conditions made using both rivers impossible on a larger scale. Only the Dnieper was used for a few years to float timber to Kherson, mainly for the Russian Black Sea Admiralty.⁵⁰ The Commonwealth became interested in constructing canals connecting more important navigable rivers in the second half of the 18th century, much later than the rest of Europe. A few ambitious projects were designed, including ones that were to connect the Vistula (and thus the Baltic Sea) with the Black Sea; two of them were implemented. The Oginski Canal (named after the investor, the Great Lithuanian Hetman Michał Kazimierz Oginski) was constructed in 1765-1783. It was 46 km long and connected the Shchara (Szczara) and Jasiolda rivers, thus connecting the Neman and the Prypiat. The other canal – The Royal Canal (Muchawiecki Canal), 92.8 km long built, in 1784, connected the Muchawiec – a tributary to the Bug River – with a tributary of the Pripiat River, the Pina, thus connecting the Vistula with the Prypiat.⁵¹ In theory both canals enabled goods to float down the Dnieper, however, the middle course of the Prypiat was not regulated which made it impossible. Nevertheless they connected areas located on Neman, the Shchara, the Prypiat and the Sluch with the Vistula, thereby creating a connection with Warsaw and Gdansk. The creation of both canals (and a third – the Bydgoszcz Canal, built by the Prussian authorities in 1773-1774 between the Brda and the Notec and further on a long the Oder⁵²) strengthened the position of the Vistula as the main communicating artery and the most important way of transporting bulk

⁴⁹ H. Vautrin, *Obserwator w Polsce*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, 738; W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 606; F. Schulz, *op. cit.*, 395; J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 235; A. Kucharski, *Żegluga przybrzeżna i śródlądowa jako sposób komunikacji staropolskich podróżników w XVII wieku*, [In:] *Samotrzcę, w kompanii czy z orszakiem? Społeczne aspekty podróżowania w średniowieczu i w czasach nowożytnych*, eds M. Sacyńska, E. Wólkiewicz, Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, Warszawa 2012, 415.

⁵⁰ H. Vautrin, *op. cit.*, 737, 739; M. Mądzik, *Polskie inicjatywy handlowe w rosyjskich portach czarnomorskich na przełomie XVIII i XIX wieku*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 1984, 28-100.

⁵¹ H. Vautrin, *op. cit.*, 737; *Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych ziem słowiańskich*, eds B. Chlebowski, W. Walewski, F. Sulimierski, Druk "Wieku", Warszawa 1885-1886, vol. 5, 790, vol. 7, 403-405; J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 577.

⁵² There were a few projects to build canals drawn up through the Polish authorities in 18 c., but not realized: J.A. Wilder, *Polski projekt budowy Kanalu Bydgoskiego*, "Przegląd Bydgoski. Czasopismo Regionalne Naukowo-Literackie" 1936, no 4, z. 1-2, 3-20. See also W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 607.

goods in the Commonwealth. The main destination port of the Commonwealth, as far as floating grain and timber was concerned, was Gdansk, which did not change even with customs barriers were introduced on the Vistula by the Prussian authorities after seizing Polish Pomerania was seized as a result of the first partition in 1772.

Luxurious goods and imported foods (wine, beer, spices, etc) were transported from Gdańsk further into the country, predominantly for aristocratic and noble houses.⁵³ The goods were transported downstream on rafts and a few other types of river vessels (sails – “szkuta”, “dubas”, “baidak”; punts: “komiega”, “kobamiaska”, “dubas”, “galar”, “szuchaleja”), some of which were capable of making a cruise up the stream of the Vistula, the Bug and the Narew.⁵⁴ This resulted in the increased significance of Warsaw as a river port located in the largest consumer centre in Poland. The importance of smaller ports e.g. Tykocin which serviced vast Białystok estate of the Branicki family⁵⁵ also increased. Vistula vessels were also used for passenger traffic and by Polish aristocrats and kings travelling to Prussia and Gdansk: Sigismund III Vasa in 1594, Jan Kazimierz in 1651 or Jan III Sobieski in 1677.⁵⁶ Tsar Peter I used them twice: travelling to Torun in the autumn of 1709 and in the summer of 1711. The cruises as such did not last long; in 1709 it took 8 days to cover the distance of 370 km (1-8 October, including two one – day stops), and 12 days to cover 550 km in 1711 (29 August – 9 September, including one – day stops). This gives approx. 46 km per day (nights were spent at a shore).⁵⁷

This was a really decent result, considering that the subject literature assumes at daily average of between 25 up to 30 km⁵⁸ for the land journey of a magnate, noble or messenger suite using their own means of transport all the way (horses, carriages, servants). Only on short, day-long distances could it be twice as high as experienced by the tsarist diplomats, Paweł Tolstoj and Boris Sheremetev on their journey across

⁵³ E. Kowicka, *Dwór “Najrzędniejszego w Polsce magnata”*, Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN, Warszawa 1993, 62-66, 200-201.

⁵⁴ J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 569-575.

⁵⁵ Franciszek Janiszewski to Jan Klemens Branicki, Białystok 17.04.1749, Gdańsk 6.05.1752, 20.05.1752, Białystok 5.11.1755, Gdańsk 14.05.1757, Gdańsk 20.05.1758, AGAD, Archiwum Roskie Korespondencja, pudło (box) VIII, no 55, 4, 22-24, 27-30, 45, 61-62, 69; E. Kowicka, *op. cit.*, 62, 66, 199-200.

⁵⁶ A. Sajkowski, *Diariusz podróży Jana Kazimierza do Gdańska w roku 1651*, “Rocznik Gdański” 1956/1957, no 15/16, 453-454; A. Sierakowski, *Pobyty Jana III w Prusiech Królewskich w latach 1677 i 1678*, “Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu” 1912, no 19, 226-235; S. Oświęcim, *Diariusz (1643-1651)*, ed. W. Czermak, Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 1907, 81-82; A. Kucharski, *op. cit.*, 415-416.

⁵⁷ *Jurnal’ 1709 godu*, [In:] *Pohodnye zhurnaly 1706, 1707, 1708 i 1709 godov*, Sankt Peterburg 1854, 14-16; *Pohodnyi zhurnal 1711 goda*, Sankt Peterburg 1854, 23-26, 86-87; *Pis'ma i bumagi Imperatora Petra Velikogo*, Izd. Akademii Nauk SSSR, Nauka, Moskva 1952, 1964, vol. 9, vyp. 2, 1250-1251, vol. 11, vyp. 2, 96-117, 406-410.

⁵⁸ *Obyczaje w Polsce. Od średniowiecza do czasów współczesnych* ed. A. Chwalba, PWN, Warszawa 2004, 126.

the Commonwealth in the 1690s. They travelled from two to up to 6.5 miles per day, i.e. 14.9-48.2 km.⁵⁹

It was difficult to maintain an average daily pace above 25.5 km for a longer distance. Although Sheremetiev's suite moved at such a pace in September 1670 on their way from Chernobyl to Zamość – despite having to make two overnight stops in order to shoe the horses and carry out necessary repairs, and the road being “very wobbly” and “muddy”⁶⁰ for over 59 km they failed to achieve the same pace on the way from Zamość to Cracow, where the daily average was only 19 km (crossing the Vistula hindered the journey).⁶¹ It comes as no surprise that after including all official and social duties, Sheremetiev's over-820 km journey across Poland to the Silesian border took whole 82 days, including a 110 miles stretch that took 34 days to cover thus resulting in daily average of 24 km.

Travelling via waterways was not only faster, but also more comfortable. Accounts of some stages of Peter I's Vistula cruise in 1709 and 1711 suggest that the Tsar's punt offered not only the possibility of spending the night there but also of hosting an elegant dinner for 12 guests during which the canvas stretched from the mast protected the guests from the sun.⁶² Moreover, river vessels could easily carry tableware and other necessary household appliances, including beds with bedding, food supplies or military equipment, without having to over-expand the size of the travel fleet. A large, two-masted river vessel launched in 1770 for the carver of the Crown Krajczy⁶³ Joseph (Józef) Potocki even included an option of separate rooms for “people of upper class”.⁶⁴ This could not be achieved when travelling by road, neither in large and heavy coaches or in lighter, open vehicles, equipped with springs and suitable for short distances such as the vis-à-vis, désoblignete or phaeton. They were used only by the most wealthy nobles, less well-off travellers had to settle for so-called calèches, i.e. simple passenger country carts without springs pulled by 2 horses.⁶⁵ They were often

⁵⁹ M. Kołodziej, *op. cit.*, 83-102; F. Sielicki, *op. cit.*, 58-72, 92, 172-176, 212-232, 318; M. Dąbrowska, *Podróże Rosjan po Europie Zachodniej w ostatnich latach XVII wieku (cele i przebieg w świetle wybranych relacji)*, [In:] *Samotrzeć, w kompanii czy z orszakiem?*, 215-318.

⁶⁰ “Opisanie podróży generała feldmarszałka wojsk rosyjskich, tajnego radcy i kawalera maltańskiego, Św. Apostoła Andrzeja, Orła Białego i Orderu Pruskiego hrabiego Borysa Pietrowicza Szeremietiewa”, 214.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, s. 219-221.

⁶² *Pamiętnik Felicjana Junoszy-Piaskowskiego podstolego podlaskiego, majora J.K. Mości, począwszy do roku 1690*, ed. M.F. Poremba, Nakładem K. Jabłońskiego, Lwów 1865.

⁶³ A Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth court officials, responsible for cutting dishes, trying them, and serving them to the Master during feasts.

⁶⁴ J.S. Bystron, *op. cit.*, 570-571.

⁶⁵ J. Kitowicz, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, Wirtualna Biblioteka Literatury Polskiej, Gdańsk 2012, 329-335; J.S. Bystron, *op. cit.*, 559-564; *Obyczaje w Polsce...*, 126; T. Żurawska, *Polskie powozy*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1982, 111-132; H.S. Zawadzki, *Konecka fabrykacja powozów w XVIII i XIX wieku*, Art Grat, Końskie 1994.

rented from Jews, though only on short distances up to 150 km.⁶⁶ Towards the end of the 18th century spring vehicles of the britzka type appeared, despite their small size they were used for longer distances, as they were well – suited for Polish roads, especially the sandy ones. In winter, when snow fell and waters froze, people used sledges or carriages and carts on skids.⁶⁷ None of those vehicles had room for larger luggage, which was necessary for longer journeys in larger company. The only remaining option was to rent freight carts, which made the travelling party larger.⁶⁸ This was not a problem for Polish and Lithuanian aristocrats, who usually travelled in an ostentatiously lavish way assisted by at least a few dozen, or sometimes a few thousand friends, servants and soldiers. Their suits were made up of even a few hundred vehicles, and the cost could amount to even 400 thousand zloty, i.e. 70 thousand rubel.⁶⁹

The reason behind taking a lot of equipment was the fact there was no suitable infrastructure facilitating travelling in the Commonwealth: foremostly, there were no inns, common in other countries, to provide food and quite comfortable accommodation in separate rooms or at least in bed. The Polish “karczmas” were not a good substitute one could not really count on a meal there, not to mention decent accommodation. A karczma (inn) was usually a building with only one room, full of insects, filthy, reeking and terribly equipped.⁷⁰ A lot of 17th and 18th century travellers, such as the Frenchman Gaspard de Tende, the British diplomat George Woodward, the chamberlain of the Prussian queen, count Ernst Ahasverus von Lehndorff, and natural scientist and traveller Georg Forster and Silesian doctor Johann Joseph Kausch, were very critical of the condition of Polish inns. They described a typical Polish “karczma” as a wooden building with a residential room with a stove in, and right next to it a large stable connected with a barn. In his 1729 report to the Under-Secretary of State for the Northern Department (British Foreign Office) George Tilson, Woodward wrote, that “there is not an Inn in Poland, that I have yet seen, fit to lodge a Dog. I’ll only compare them to the worst in Westphalia”.⁷¹ Forster even stated that Polish inns had “more facilities for carts and cattle than for people”.⁷² The dwelling rooms were al-

⁶⁶ J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 206.

⁶⁷ Tende recommended that in winter travellers should have vodka and a fur sack to keep their legs warm, and if travelling on horse – long boots with chopped straw inside. He added that both riders and cart drivers should drink a glass of vodka before setting off “thus protecting themselves from the cold”: Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *op. cit.*, 331.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 331.

⁶⁹ E. Kowecka, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁷⁰ J.S. Bystroń, *op. cit.*, 565-567.

⁷¹ George Woodward to George Tilson, Warsaw 28 May 1729, quoted by B. Krysztopa-Czupryńska, *Rzeczpospolita w oczach dyplomatów brytyjskich w pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku*, Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne, Oddział w Olsztynie, Olsztyn 2013, 39.

⁷² G. Forster, *op. cit.*, s. 59.

ways really stuffy, as windows remained closed even in summer, the inn's owner lived there with their family and kept all food, including barrels of sauerkraut, which in de Tende's opinion, was the source of these room's bad smell.⁷³

Therefore, it was recommended that during warm seasons travellers should spend the night not in the inn chamber, but in a shed right next to the inn. During his journey to Warsaw in May 1781, Count Lehndorf chose stables instead of "the so-called dwelling room", and it was hastily prepared for him by means of removing manure left behind by wintering calves incensing; airing; and even furnishing it with an old bench, a plank for a table and a travel bed owned by the count.⁷⁴ In winter there was no choice. One had to be prepared for the company of the inn keeper, travellers, and peasants who gathered in warm inns in large numbers on festive days, getting drunk on vodka or beer, dancing and signing all through the night. The inns' equipment did not include beds, and travellers slept on straw.⁷⁵ Tende recommended that travellers should make sure they had fresh straw, as the inn keepers offered bedding used by previous guests. He believed it was similar to sleeping in bedsheets "used by many people".⁷⁶ In fact, Polish inns did not provide sheets, so travellers had to bring them themselves, preferably along with a bed and a mattress.⁷⁷ The wealthiest Polish travellers also brought upholstery fabrics so that they could fence sleeping areas in the inns.⁷⁸ After spending the night in a random room on straw, more picky travellers preferred travelling on without stops or staying the night anywhere. For instance 1778, William Coxe and his companions travelled along a short, but less frequented road without any inns between Cracow and Warsaw.⁷⁹

The quality of accommodation services offered by inns was really low, and there were not so many of them, so Polish people stopped by at their families', friends' or in monasteries. Foreigners could only hope for being hosted at a noble household or renting accommodation in a village or a town, provided that they could reach it before nightfall. Otherwise, they could sleep in a field, which was often more likely than finding an inn. A Tziaristdiplomat, Sheremetev, on his way from Chernobyl, via Korets, Olyka, and Lutsk to Zamość only came across three inns; on 7 occasions he spent the night in some town or village and 9 times in a field, "near a village", "at a well", "in an oak forest", "in the steppe", "at a swamp". Further on during his

⁷³ Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *op. cit.*, 329.

⁷⁴ E. Ahasverus von Lehndorff, *op. cit.*, s. 7-8.

⁷⁵ J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, 333; *idem*, *Podróż po Polsce*, 55.

⁷⁶ Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *op. cit.*, 330.

⁷⁷ H. Vautrin, *op. cit.*, 813.

⁷⁸ J.J. Kausch, *op. cit.*, 361.

⁷⁹ W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 653.

journey which led via Cracow to Tarnowskie Góry in Silesia, the suite encountered a settlement every day.⁸⁰

If the journey was longer, it was necessary to prepare food supplies, as one frequently could not buy anything to eat in the country inns. In Tende's opinion, this was caused by the fact that Polish nobles did not pay for the food, and foreign travellers who were willing to pay constituted such rarity that it was not profitable for the inn keepers to keep food for the guests. Therefore, he recommended that travellers restock their food and horse food supplies wherever possible, especially in towns, so that there were always 6-8 bottles of beer, wine and vodka, bread, roast meat, candles, oats for horses and wheel grease. However, he added that food (if available) and accommodation in Polish inns were really inexpensive.⁸¹ Kausch, a Silesian doctor who experienced the reality of travelling across Lesser Poland over one hundred years later, stated briefly and explicitly: "Whoever brings good supply of food and other necessary objects, may of course count on other petty needs to be satisfied; whoever does not, however, will be severely affected by their lack every step of the way. In the country one cannot even get straw for bedding or bread, beer is also hard to get".⁸² Nathaniel Wraxall experienced this situation in Koźmin (today Koźmin Wielkopolski), while he was leaving Poland in 1778, where as there was no food or bed at the inn, was only given clean straw.⁸³ Johann Bernoulli, travelling in Lithuania in the same year, had far fewer problems, and he stated that in each settlement along his route he could buy a chicken, eggs, milk or straw. However, he complained about the lack of silverware, and likecount Lehndorff he found out that most inns were run by Jews and it was difficult to be served well on Friday and – Saturday night because of the Shabbat.⁸⁴

At the end of the 17th century hotels started functioning in the most important towns, offering considerably higher quality of service. The first hotel in Warsaw was called the "Marywill".⁸⁵ In the second half of the 18th century the highest number of such facilities was in Gdansk, but they also began appearing in smaller towns, along

⁸⁰ "Opisanie podróży generała feldmarszałka wojsk rosyjskich, tajnego radcy i kawalera maltańskiego, Św. Apostoła Andrzeja, Orła Białego i Orderu Pruskiego hrabiego Borysa Pietrowicza Szeremietiewa", s. 213-232.

⁸¹ Hauteville [Gaspar de Tende], *op. cit.*, 329-331.

⁸² J.J. Kausch, *op. cit.*, 361. Forster also appreciated the advantages of having food supplies: G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 96; A. White, *Przybycze z Wysp Brytyjskich w podróży przez Rzeczypospolitą doby baroku*, [In:] *Samotrzeć, w kompanii czy z orszakim?*, 441-442.

⁸³ N.W. Wraxall, *op. cit.*, 556.

⁸⁴ J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, 331-333; *idem*, *Podróż po Polsce*, 54-55; E. Ahasverus von Lehndorff, *op. cit.*, 7-8, 22, 23. See also: W. Coxe, *op. cit.*, 679, 694; J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 188-189.

⁸⁵ *Obyczaje w Polsce...*, 127.

with a total novelty coffee shops.⁸⁶ The comfort of travelling rose significantly in provincial areas, mostly thanks to postal stations established after the reign of Augustus II initially on routes that connected Saxony with Warsaw and with Grodno further east. Approximately 50 such stations were established, some of them grand enough to be named postal manors or palaces, like the one built in 1750 in Kutno, where the royal family of Augustus III stayed four times.⁸⁷ In the time of Stanisław Augustus the postal station network was expanded, especially on main routes leading from Warsaw to Vilnius (via Białystok and Grodno) and Cracow (via Małogoszcz). Postal stations provided meals and accommodation in quite comfortable conditions, in nice rooms, according to Forster's description.⁸⁸ Apart from postal stations, "beautiful inns" were established on main routes leading to Warsaw and on the estates owned by the Czartoryski family.⁸⁹

Postal stations and some inns offered not only meals and accommodation, but also exchange of cart drivers and horses, which significantly impacted the pace of travelling. Although foreigners had numerous objections regarding the horses, as they did not resemble the Arab breed the Poles took pride in, massive, weather resistant animals capable of covering long distances (although still only up to 50 km per day).⁹⁰ Postal horses in Lithuania were quite small, and they were only slightly bigger in Poland. However, they were agile, lively and capable of galloping for long distances.⁹¹ Travellers also had objections regarding the appearance of the drivers – postillions, many of whom were Jews. However, they were polite, prompt to provide various services, and, above all skilled driver. Schulz valued Lithuanian postillions more, as the Polish were more sparing to the horses, which slowed down the journey.⁹²

Using the services of postal stations significantly increased the pace of travelling across the Commonwealth. For example, in the autumn of 1767 James Harris travelled nearly 350 km from Śmigiel to Warsaw in 2.5 days, faster than on the route between Berlin and Glogau (Głogów), which was half the distance.⁹³ In 1770 Joseph Marshal

⁸⁶ J. Kitowicz, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, 287; G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 103; E. Wendland, *Kawa, herbata i czekolada. Nowe napoje w osiemnastowiecznej Rzeczypospolitej – ich wpływ na życie codzienne*, Dom Wydawniczy Duet, Toruń 2008, 244-268.

⁸⁷ T. Bernatowicz, *op. cit.*, 75-77; R. Zgorzelski, *Między Dreznem a Warszawą...; idem, Polska Poczta w dobie saskiej...*; K. Bartkiewicz, *op. cit.*, 80-82; A. Kruk, *Historia Pałacu Saskiego*, <http://palacsaski.kutno.pl/> [access 10.08.2017].

⁸⁸ G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 59, 71-73, 93; F. Schulz, *op. cit.*, 398.

⁸⁹ J.J. Kausch, *op. cit.*, 361.

⁹⁰ More information in f.e.: Z. Sawicka, *Koń w życiu szlachty polskiej w XVI-XVIII w.*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2004, 15-18.

⁹¹ F. Schulz, *op. cit.*, 403, 666; W. Coxo, *op. cit.*, 694; J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 205.

⁹² N.W. Wroxall, *op. cit.*, 491-492; F. Schulz, *op. cit.*, 384-385, 387, 403-404, 666.

⁹³ J. Harris, *Dziennik pobytu w Polsce 1767*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, 287, 288.

travelled 50-70 km per day through Samogitia and along the Gdansk-Warsaw-Sieradz route.⁹⁴ In 1778 Johann Bernoulli wrote that in Lithuania he travelled between 57 and 86 km per day, and in Poland (between Warsaw and Poznan) even 100 km.⁹⁵ In the summer of 1785, George Forster travelled 300 km from Vilnius to Białystok in 2 days, and 200 km from Białystok to Warsaw in 26.5 hours.⁹⁶ In the winter of 1788, Lars Engeström travelled 4 days from Cracow to Warsaw in 4 days (399 km, average 75 km daily).⁹⁷ Friedrich Schulz, who managed to cover 115 km in 13 hours, and 690 km in 6 days and two nights, wrote "I doubt that in other countries who see this world as wild, I would be able to cover a land as vast as quickly". It should be mentioned here that travel expenses were slightly lower than in the neighbouring Kingdom of Prussia.⁹⁸

Sending letters and small parcels was even quicker. Postal service, which had been operating in the Polish lands since the mid 16th century, was modernized in the Saxon era, and the most fundamental reform was implemented based on a royal universal issued by Stanisław Augustus on 18 December 1764. A network of postal offices was established in the entire Commonwealth, (quite high) of postal fees and charges were stipulated, and security and confidentiality of consignment were ensured along with swiftness and punctuality of service. The junction point of the Polish postal service in the 18th century was Warsaw, where the following routes had their beginnings.

The Prussian route to Toruń, Bydgoszcz and Gdańsk, the Greater Poland route to Bydgoszcz, Poznań, Leszno and Wschowa (further on to Berlin and Dresden), the Breslau route to Rawa, Piotrków, Wieruszów and Breslau (also to Dresden and other German cities, thus also called the German route; further to: Holland, France and England); the Cracow route to Kielce, Cracow, Częstochowa and Tarnowskie Góry (and Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, Italy); the Brest (Minsk) route Lithuanian Brest and Minsk (further on to St. Petersburg and Moscow); the Russian route to Lublin and Krasnystaw, splitting to Lutsk in Volhynia and further on to Kiev and Lviv, Letychiv, Bila Tserkva and Kamianets Podilskyi. Moreover, Vilnius had a separate connection with Lithuanian and Belarusian towns, and so did Cracow with towns in Lesser Poland.⁹⁹ Supplementary to national postal services, there was military postal service that provided shipment of parcels between postal stations and garrisons or places where troops were stationing, it also provided services for local nobility. If necessary,

⁹⁴ J. Marshal, *Podróż przez Polskę 1770*, [In:] *Polska stanislawska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, 310-311, 318-321, 323-324.

⁹⁵ J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, 329-331, 343, 457-458.

⁹⁶ G. Forster, *op. cit.*, 96-100.

⁹⁷ L. Engeström, *Pamiętniki*, [In:] *Polska stanislawska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 2, 112, 178.

⁹⁸ F. Schulz, *op. cit.*, 387, 398, 403.

⁹⁹ J.S. Bystron, *op. cit.*, 577-580; R. Zgorzelski, *Między Drezniem a Warszawą...*

a military post was stationed between Dresden or Warsaw and the temporary seats of the king, headquarters of large military formations and the seats of the hetmans in the Saxon era, and Military Committees in the Stanisław Augustus era. The Russians applied the same solutions during the deployment of their army in the Commonwealth which already had its beginning during the Northern War.¹⁰⁰

The factor with the greatest impact on postal package delivery time was the dispatchment term. Delivery time was shortest when the package departed or arrived in Warsaw. In the Saxon era, post was dispatched and received from specific directions once a week or every two weeks, depending on the importance of the route, and for the Breslau (Wrocław) – the so called German route – or Cracow even twice a week (in 1735 and 1754 first on Monday and Friday, in 1754 “Cracow post” on Wednesday and Saturday). During the reign of Stanisław Augustus, the frequency of dispatchment increased to twice a week on the most important national routes.¹⁰¹ Once the mail was dispatched, it arrived at the destination post station. During the reign of Augustus II it was assumed that “regular” post and messengers should get from Warsaw to Dresden (approx. 600-620 km) within 135.5-136.5 hours, or six days (passenger transport took 14-16 days). In 1732 thanks to the launch of a messenger relay via Kargowa and Wschowa, that time decreased to three days.¹⁰² Timeliness and punctuality were not the only merits of the Polish postal service. These also included safety of delivery and continuous operation during wartime. The postal system operated quite efficiently during the Polish succession war of 1733-1735 and the Bar Confederation in 1768-1774. During the Polish-Russian war in 1792 it was even possible to send letters between Warsaw and St. Petersburg.¹⁰³ It should be mentioned here, that it was also safe to travel around the Commonwealth. A fact foreign travellers emphasized since as early as the 17th century. This as a result of the Polish law treating road robbery as one of the most serious crimes, included in the so – called municipal articles (*Quatuor*

¹⁰⁰ SHD, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 2097/26, loc. 3663/3; T. Ciesielski, *Funkcjonowanie poczty wojskowej w czasach Augusta III*, [In:] *Komunikacja i komunikowanie w dawnej Polsce*, eds K. Stępnia, M. Rajewski, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2008, 321-332.

¹⁰¹ Voenno-istoricheskii muzei artillerii, inzhenernykh voisk i voisk svyazi, Sankt Petersburg – arhiv, f. 2, op. ShGF (Shtab general-fel'dtseihmeistera), d. 540, no 30; Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, Archiwum Rodziny Bartoszewiczów, ms 509, 219; “Ordynacya Generalnego Postamptu Koron y W X Lit w Warszawie względem przychodzących y odchodzących Poczty ordynaryjnych”, Biblioteka Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Kórniku, [old] print 36147; AGAD, Zbiór Popielów, ms 299, 182-185; R. Zgorzelski, *Polska Poczta w dobie saskiej...*

¹⁰² SHD, 10026 Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 3663/5; R. Zgorzelski, *Między Dreznem a Warszawą...*; L. Zimowski, *op. cit.*, 43, 158; K. Bartkiewicz, *op. cit.*, 80-82.

¹⁰³ J. Łojek, *Misja Debolego w Petersburgu w latach 1787-1792. Z dziejów stosunków polsko-rosyjskich w czasach Sejmu Czteroletniego*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, Wrocław 1962, 142-157.

articuli iudicii castrensis) and punished by death.¹⁰⁴ In the 18th century both local and military authorities reacted to road robbery immediately, sending starost and voivodeship militia or even regular military troops (in Greater Poland Gypsies were usually the accused)¹⁰⁵. Road safety decreased during war operations. In his description of conditions of travelling between Dresden and Warsaw Adam Friedrich Zürner warned that in Poland one should be prepared for robbers and other threats, but this description was based on experiences from the time of the Northern war. Also the periods of the Polish succession war (1733-1735, but the last Russian military units left territory of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid of 1736), the Russian intervention in Poland or the Bar Confederation (1768¹⁰⁶-1772) were quite uncomfortable in this respect, and interestingly enough the greatest threat at that time came from tsarist army troops, especially the irregular cavalry.¹⁰⁷

In the 18th century, the Commonwealth was a country full of paradoxes also in terms of travelling and communication. On the one hand, it was poor and underdeveloped, not only in the eyes of visitors from western Europe, but also of 18th century Russians who travelled as diplomats, scientists, military officers, or were simply travellers curious of the world. They witnessed the poverty among the peasants and were forced to use really bad roads and even worse inns. On the other hand, however, on the road one could see the ostentatious lavishness shown off by Polish and Lithuanian aristocrats travelling by expensive coaches in large suites. What was the most surprising, however, was the safety of travelling and extraordinary swiftness of the postal service in Poland and Lithuania. It met the highest contemporary standards as far as quality and promptness of service were concerned, and even went beyond them in terms of ensuring postal confidentiality. It was eagerly used by the Russians, who used the Polish postal service without hesitation to send diplomatic reports, although they themselves were more than eager to control the correspondence of diplomats accredited at the court in Petersburg.

¹⁰⁴ J.E. Biester, *op. cit.*, 206-207; A. White, *op. cit.*, 443.

¹⁰⁵ T. Ciesielski, *Armia koronna w czasach Augusta III*, Wydawnictwo DiG, Warszawa 2009, 493, 516, 518; *idem*, *Pogranicze polsko-pruskie w dobie wojny siedmioletniej*, "Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie" 2008, 259, nr 1, 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ The Russian army was stationed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth almost uninterruptedly from 1757, from 1764 as intervention forces to ensure the choice of Stanisław August as a for king, and then to safeguard the interests of Russia and its empress, Catherine II.

¹⁰⁷ J.-H. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Opowiadanie o tym, co się wydarzyło od czasu mego wyjazdu z Warszawy 1764*, [In:] *Polska stanisławowska w oczach cudzoziemców*, vol. 1, 213; J. Bernoulli, *Podróż po Polsce 1778*, 323.

ROADS, TRAVELLING AND COMMUNICATION IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN
COMMONWEALTH IN THE 18TH CENTURY. RUSSIAN
AND WEST EUROPEAN VISITORS' PERSPECTIVE

S u m m a r y

The article presents the technical condition of roads, waterways, bridges, levees and other engineering structures in Poland based on accounts of visitors from Russia and other foreign countries. It discusses land and water means of transport were discussed along with the quality of service offered by Polish and Lithuanian inns which were valued very poorly by all foreigners. In the 18th century, travelling and communication in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a truly fascinating issue. Both Russian and West European visitors saw the country as full of paradoxes, and encountered many obstacles during their journeys. The dramatically bad condition of roads, terrible inns, and poverty of the peasants contrasted with the ostentatious lavishness of travelling Polish and Lithuanian aristocrats. However, the roads were surprisingly safe and the postal service was extraordinarily efficient and swift even during wartime, going beyond contemporary standards by means of ensuring confidentiality of sent documents. In the 18th century, thanks to the expansion of the system of postal station, travelling around Poland and Lithuania became not only more comfortable, but also much faster. It was possible to make 60-100 km per day. However, transport of goods or marching the army was very troublesome, as then the average pace was approx. 10, max. 15 km per day.

Keywords: The Eighteenth Century, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Roads, Travelling, Communication, Post, Travels, Russian visitors in Poland and Lithuania; visitors from countries of western Europe in Poland and Lithuania

DROGI, PODRÓŻOWANIE I FUNKCJONOWANIE POCZTY
W RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ OBOJGA NARODÓW W XVIII W.
Z PERSPEKTYWY PRZYBYSZY Z ROSJI I PAŃSTW EUROPY ZACHODNIEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule przedstawiony został stan techniczny dróg lądowych i rzecznych, mostów, grobli oraz pozostałej infrastruktury komunikacyjnej w Polsce na podstawie relacji podróżników z zagranicy, w tym Rosjan. Stan oraz jakość lądowych i rzecznych środków transportu był oceniany przez cudzoziemców bardzo nisko, podobnie jak jakość usług oferowanych w przydrożnych karczmach w Polsce i na Litwie. W rezultacie podróżowanie w XVIII w. po Rzeczypospolitej mogło stanowić interesujące doświadczenie. Tak goście z Rosji, jak i z krajów zachodniej Europy natrafiali na wiele przeszkód w trakcie podróży, postrzegając przy tym kraj jako pełen paradoksów. Fatalny stan dróg, przerażające swoim standardem karczmy czy ubóstwo chłopstwa zestawiali z ostentacyjnym przepychem, z jakim podróżowali polscy i litewscy magnaci. Dostrzegali jednak też, że stan bezpieczeństwa na drogach był dobry, a poczta działała sprawnie nawet w okresach działań zbrojnych toczących się w Rzeczypospolitej, zapewniając wysokie standardy, jeżeli chodzi o szybkość dostarczania, jak i zabezpieczanie przesyłek. Na podstawie relacji cudzoziemców można stwierdzić, że dzięki rozwojowi sieci stacji pocztowych podróżowanie po Polsce i Litwie w XVIII w. stawało się stopniowo coraz wygodniejsze i szybsze. Wykorzystując infrastrukturę pocztową można było pokonywać nawet 60-100 km dziennie, ale przewóz towarów czy przemarsz wojsk sprawiał znacznie większe problemy, co powodowało, że dziennie można było pokonać 10, maksimum 15 km.

Słowa kluczowe: wiek osiemnasty; Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów, drogi, podróżowanie, komunikacja, poczta, podróżnicy, Rosjanie w Polsce i na Litwie; przybysze z zachodniej Europy w Polsce i na Litwie