

# **For Emperor, King and Country. Bohemian Embassy at the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg and Envoy Franz Karl Wratistlaw von Mitrowitz (1709-1723)**

## Theses of the Doctoral Dissertation

My doctoral dissertation is focused on the Bohemian envoy Franz Karl count Wratistlaw von Mitrowitz (1679-1750) and his diplomatic mission to the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg (1709-1723). Much more than the plain description of political meetings we were concerned on cultural-historical aspects of diplomat's life – arrival to the city and beginning of his work, politics, ceremonial, festivities, relations to other colleagues, housing, travelling, plague of 1713/14 and of course the private issues, which had a special influence to his working life. Originally, the dissertation should be a comparison with another Bohemian envoy Franz Philipp von Sternberg (1708-1786, in office 1745-1748). But, because of the great amount of archival sources and absence of almost any research about Sternberg, it was finally decided to focus the theme “only” to the mission of count Wratistlaw. Important in this decision was also the fact, that Wratistlaw's mission to Regensburg was by far the longest of every Bohemian envoy to the Perpetual Diet.

Of many theoretical approaches we finally chose combination of two: symbolic actions and early modern ceremonial in the way Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger understand it and history of real people connected to anthropology and diplomacy (*Akteurszentrierte Geschichte*) by Hillard von Thiesen. On this foundation and thorough analyse of primary sources (mainly diplomatic correspondence and other documents) a story about life and work of Bohemian envoy to the Perpetual Imperial Diet was built. At the same time, it is a story about the Diet and its functioning, because this type of institution was not only a significant political power in the Reich; it was primarily made up of living people, which formed and to some extent also determined, how the Diet looked like.

The text is divided into five main chapters. First is about primary sources, literature and methodology. Second one is about general information about the Perpetual Imperial Diet and its functioning, third is about Habsburg envoys, with special consideration to the Bohemian envoys. Fourth chapter is about general information about Franz Karl Wratistlaw, while the crucial part of the dissertation is the fifth chapter - it brings information about the diplomatic mission of F. K. Wratistlaw to Regensburg and it is based on thorough archival research. It deal with several phenomena – as written above – because the aim is to discuss as broader and complex picture of life of the Bohemian envoy in Regensburg as possible. The work has several

goals: firstly, detailly clarify Wratislaw's diplomatic mission to Regensburg, because we do not know anything about it. It was the first mission of young Bohemian aristocrat and was followed by successful whole-life career in Habsburg diplomatic service. His further career is relatively well known, the more visible is the blank space in historiography, covering the mission to the Diet. Secondly – my dissertation is not only description of a career of one diplomat, but on his example, it shows, how the Perpetual Imperial Diet functioned, mainly from the decision-making process and envoy's everyday life point of view. In other words – what the diplomat had to do, with whom and where he met and eventually, which benefits and feelings he had about it.

Count Wratislaw introduces to us as a young, hardly 30 years old, son from an old noble family of Bohemian origin, only recently raised to the status of counts. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, his family experienced unprecedented growth. It was possible, because of a splendid career of his distant kinsman Johann Wenzel Wratislaw (1670-1712) and related family Kinský. Young Franz Karl could soon contribute to this rise by being nominated to replace his brother-in-law Franz Ferdinand Kinský (1678-1741) as a Bohemian envoy to the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg. He was later well known for his lifelong service in Habsburg diplomacy and thus he confirmed the position of his family between significant families of the monarchy. But at the same time, he stood at the beginning of the fall of the family, mainly because enormous debts, which he partially inherited, partially created himself and also because his relatives from his own and the next generation, failed to produce a male heir (including himself). That is why, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, any member of the family stand for the highest offices in the country, monarchy, church, or diplomacy.

Franz Karl Wratislaw arrived to the city of Regensburg in the uneasy time of the Wars of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). He was only the second envoy to hold this position after count Kinský, which spent there only few months. The function was brand new (because of the so called *readmission* of the Bohemian vote from the year 1708) and it was his work to fulfil it with a purport and imprint to its important contours, which it should have. Simultaneously, it was necessary to convince other diplomats to the Diet, mainly the prince-electors, to accept him as a rightful member of their college (i.e. group, from the Latin *collegium*). None of these tasks was an easy one and Franz Karl could be given credit for successfully establishing the office of the Bohemian envoy. We can say that, because of the analyse of the reports, he sent to Vienna, the length of his stay (14 years in total) and behaviour of his successors. The process of acceptance by other diplomats was the tough one and lasted at least the whole first year of his mission. This concrete problem had several roots – foremost,

he was sent by the emperor, as the only one in the college of prince-electors. Prince-electors were traditionally strongly opposing emperor's interference into their prerogatives. Next – as it was already said, the office was newly established and therefore it was important, that others get used to, that there will be a new colleague sitting and voting by their side. Last but not least, it was his youth and the fact, that his position at the Diet was one of the highest. Higher stand, according to ceremonial, only principal commissioner (*Prinzipalkommisar*), concommisioner (*Konkommisar*) – if he was appointed – and three representatives of Rhineland archbishops from Mainz, Cologne and Trier. In the group of secular prince-electors was his position even higher – from historical point of view, Bohemian king was the most senior secular prince-electors. In the time of Wratisslaw's mission, hierarchical differences among prince-electors became to diminish, nevertheless he still occupied the most honourable seat right from the chairman.

The Perpetual Imperial Diet was a top-ranking institution in the Reichs policy and attracted in fact attention of the whole Europe. It was made up of the community of 40 to 50 envoys from the imperial estates with the right to sit and vote (*Sitz und Stimme*) and some other diplomats from European countries (e.g. from France). Envoys at the Diet were divided into special groups according to which subject they represented – if prince-electors, princes or free and imperial cities. To general chaos contributed the fact, that there were approximately 45 envoys, which represented around 150 estates! It necessarily follows, that the majority of envoys represented more than one master; it applied mainly to the members of the colleges of princes and cities, but also some representatives of prince-electors acted like that. It caused problems mainly in cases, when a certain diplomat held votes in more than one college or in relatively banal case, when this envoy was not present at the Diet, so it suddenly lost ten votes, for instance. The most votes at the same time hold baron Friedrich Karl Karg von Bebenburg (1709-1773). In 1758 in the short-term he represented 19 to 21 subjects in total. Even in long-term it was not less than 15 votes. We can say, that the envoy of the Bohemian king was an exception, because for the whole 14 years of his service in Regensburg, he held only this one vote. However, the Bohemian envoy could not sit at the Diet until so called *readmission* of the Bohemian vote, which was finalised in 1708. It meant, that the Bohemian elector was fully invested with his partly lost medieval rights.

Besides official structures like college of prince-electors, Wratisslaw was member of the group of Habsburg diplomats at the Diet - together with Austrian envoy (he sat in the college of princes), principal commissioner (the highest-ranking diplomat at the Diet) and concommisioner (his deputy). There were three principal commissioners during Wratisslaw's

stay and with every one of them he had a special relationship. While cardinal Johann Philip von Lamberg (1651/52-1712) was his friend, with prince Maximilian Karl von Löwenstein (1656-1718) they were not so close and cardinal Christian August von Sachsen-Weitz (1666-1725) often made up modifications of ceremonial, which caused problems and envoys (mainly the prince-electors) had to solve it. With Bohemian envoy gained emperor his man in the college of prince-electors. This was of high importance, because it was this college, which in many cases initiated and accepted decisions, which affected the whole Diet – e.g. in the case of the transfer of the Diet to Augsburg (1713), because of the plague epidemic.

There was an instruction for the Bohemian envoy, issued before his arrival. Two main tasks were connected to Palatinate: one was about transfer of the old rights of the elector Palatine, which were in meantime exercised by the Bavarian prince-electors, back to Palatinate – this was in fact mainly resolved before his arrival and he had only to make it to an end. Second “Palatinate task” was connected to the hypothetical question of extinction of the current elector’s family, which did not happen during Wratislaw’s mission. Other tasks were more practical and were fully completed: make contacts with certain people, do ceremonial visits, know right addressing, write regular reports and care of Bohemian envoy’s archive.

His time divided the Bohemian diplomat between the working part of the year and holiday. The regular holidays were mainly connected to the important festivals of the liturgical year – Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Dożynki (harvest festival) and an autumn holiday, which date was not specifically fixed – when the Diet did not sit. At this time, and usually also during the summer months, many of the envoys left the city for up to several weeks. We had to add other ecclesiastical holidays to it, when people did not work. Interesting is, that according to F. K. Wratislaw’s itinerary, which we can reconstruct from his sent correspondence, he did not leave the city for a longer period of time, even in the summer. At the same time, we should add, that because of his South Bohemian estates were too close to Regensburg, his absence does not have to show up in the absence of correspondence. When there were regular meetings of the Diet, Franz Karl attended it twice or thrice a week, plus there could be an unspecified number of irregular meetings. Besides official meetings at the old townhall of Regensburg, which took place in special rooms – either in the standard meeting room of the college of prince-electors or in so called secondary room (*Nebenzimmer*) – the diplomats met during less formal or even informal meetings at different places and different circumstances. It were mostly meetings in the houses of individual diplomats, in monasteries or during the festivities and feasts. The only significant change happened during the years 1713/14, when the Diet sat in Augsburg due to the plague epidemic.

The Diet was relocated to Augsburg because a plague occurred in Regensburg in the summer of 1713. It was very special situation, because it happened for the first time in the history of the Diet. There were several inconveniences – the disease, different economic conditions at the new place and French troops almost at the gates. They even thought about dissolution of the Diet. But it showed certain toughness and after a year, it came back to Regensburg. However, some things were changed forever, e.g. the number of sessions in a week (two instead of three).

Very important place in the lives of envoys took the baroque ceremonial, which show up at the very beginning of their mission. At the Perpetual Imperial Diet, a specific ceremonial at the first audiences with the deputy of the emperor, the principal commissioner, was developed. It was very accommodating mainly to the prince-electors' envoys – the commissioner walked towards them to the second antechamber, which could never happen, if there was the emperor, or any other monarch, personally. Maybe it was because of the fact, that even principal commissioner was only a diplomat, who represented his master. Different ceremonial quarrels were daily routine and it happened also to the Bohemian envoy. Potentially very serious precedence problem could happen in December 1709. Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736) came in the city and the Bohemian envoy should have theoretical precedence right, according to the ceremonial – he was an envoy of the king and prince-electors, while Eugene was “only” prince. Because of Eugene's reputation at the court, it cannot be solved easily. It was the principal commissioner, who helped. They agreed, that Wratislav will not attend the planned banquet, but he will join the company later to play cards, which was identified as much less formal occasion.

Central European ceremonial at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was present every day in the group of high-ranking people. But today, we know the ceremonial especially from uncommon situations, it means festivities and conflicts, which occurred at these circumstances. Conflicts mainly occurred in situations when a bigger group of people should meet. And this was the case of festivities. Many people, even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, realised, that this ceremonial makes everything harder and therefore there were several ideas on how it could work without it. So why they did not cancel it? Older literature perceived this discrepancy as the evidence of weakness and immaturity of premodern society and ceremonially conditioned behaviour was therefore often ironized. Answer to this question is relatively simple and it is connected to another question – what was actually ceremonial? It was not only an external means of behaviour. On the contrary, ceremonial was deeply deposited in the very heart of society and therefore it was not easy to eliminate it, even if it caused so much trouble. Every single attempt

to diminish the ceremonial was therefore seen as an attack to the whole social system and order and could not last long. On the other hand, it does not mean, they do not try to change it. One of the most successful experiment was the so called *pêle-mêle* method. It simply meant, that in precise moment, the ceremonial will not exist. This system was especially liked by the principal commissioner cardinal Sachsen-Weitz; he used it mainly during feasts. On several occasions it functioned really well, especially during his first year in office. In this way he – without major problems – organised spectacular celebrations of the recapture of Belgrade by prince Eugene in September 1717 and the subsequent emperor's nameday and birthday (November 1717). However, in long term perspective, this procedure was rejected from above mentioned reasons. That is why, already in 1719, envoys of prince-electors protested against further implementation of *pêle-mêle* and the next year (1720) they achieved a victory – during emperor's festivities there was no feast, because at the feast the *pêle-mêle* method was mainly used.

In fact, the only way, how to change or at least modify the ceremonial, was a broad agreement of majority of the diplomats. After long negotiations, they agreed before 1720 to so called *parification* of the Austrian envoy as a head of the college of princes, which meant, that he should be from now ceremonially equal to the envoys of prince-electors. It was connected to long time efforts of the emperor to strengthen position of his diplomats at the Diet. In praxis it was manifested e.g. by the right of the Austrian envoy to sit in the church pew together with prince-electors' envoys during the mass. Festive masses in the cathedral of St. Peter in Regensburg (but also in different churches, such as the cloister church of St. Emmeram) were one of the most problematic parts of festivities and *parification* seemed to solve it. But it happened, that less and less diplomats attended these events (mainly the prince-electors' envoys), so the outcome was somehow devalued. In other cases, e.g. when heir apparent to the Habsburg empire Leopold Johann was born in 1716 and it was more than appropriate to celebrate it peacefully, the change of ceremonial was strictly refused and instead of it, another solution had been searched (division the participants into separate groups).

It was already said that ceremonial was strongly bond to festivities. Festivities of any kind were really important to the baroque period. It was not only a lavish theatre, but it mirrored the soul of baroque men. Moreover, envoys had to fully represent their masters and there was a direct proportion in it – the higher status of the master, the bigger and richer festivities. It is clear now, that representatives of the emperor had to spend a great deal of money and effort in representation of their master and of course of themselves.

With only a few exceptions, the Bohemian envoy stayed the whole time in Regensburg. First exception was the plague epidemic of 1713/14, when the Diet was transferred to Augsburg,

second was in 1718, when he was in Bohemia because of inheritance issues in his family and third was in 1722, when he travelled to Vienna and Bohemia, because of his further career. In Regensburg he lived in one grand palace, called Pürkel's. It was really spacious and sufficiently representative building. And it was quite close to the townhall, where the Diet meets and also to St. Emmeram Closter, where the principal commissioner lived.

Franz Karl had to solve several personal issues during his stay in Regensburg. He was a guardian of his younger kinsman, who was also named Franz Karl Wratistlaw (1688-1716), because the mighty Johann Wenzel was not satisfied with the choice of his bride. Other incidents made his live and work harder – such as the case of one of his servants, who borrowed money in Wratistlaw's name, but without his knowledge, or his defence against the prohibited selling of beer.

Count Wratistlaw demonstrate a certain talent and sense for political negotiations. He stand for clearly pro-imperial attitude and became an important support of Habsburg policy in Regensburg. Despite the fact, he had to consult important decisions with Vienna, there was still relatively broad space for negotiations of his own, which can be seen mainly in later years of his mission, when he already gained enough experience. Everything, what is said on previous pages, we know from his own letters and also from minutes from meetings of the Diet's colleges. Simultaneously, we cannot overestimate his influence – he had only one vote in the group of seven (nine) prince-electors envoys.

Franz Karl Wratistlaw filled up every role, we would expect from the early modern baroque diplomat. He attended every official meeting connected to his work, which was far from common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century reality; he personally attended almost every significant festivity connected to the Habsburg family (namedays and birthdays of the ruling emperor, military victories, funerals) and some of them he also (co)organised, which supported other task of early modern diplomacy – (self)presentation. When we consider the contacts, he made in Regensburg, it is no wonder, further career in diplomatic corps awaited him. He spent the rest of his adult life as a diplomat in Polish-Saxon union and in Russia. This career was not a typical one, it was more likely, that he – according to his family background and personal abilities – took some high offices at the imperial court or in Bohemian Lands. Never of this happened, but it should not devalue this type of career. On the example of count Wratistlaw we can reconstruct not only a career of one emperor's diplomat, but also the history of Bohemian embassy in Regensburg and functioning of the Diet itself.

List of relevant publication:

1. *Jídlo a slavnosti na císařské ambasádě v Petrohradě ve 30. letech 18. století* [Food and Festivities at the Imperial Embassy in Saint Petersburg in the 1730's], in: Blanka Jedličková – Milena Lenderová – Miroslav Kouba – Ivo Říha (edd.), *Krajiny prostřených i prázdných stolů I.: Evropská gastronomie v proměnách staletí* [Landscapes of Full and Empty Tables I.: European Gastronomy in the Change of Centuries], Pardubice 2016, pp. 93-108 (with Vítězslav Prchal).
2. *V hlavní roli ambasáda: Diplomátův dům a problematika jeho držby na příkladu ruské mise Františka Karla hraběte Vratislava z Mitrovic v letech 1728–1733* [Starring: Embassy. The Diplomats' House and Problematics of its Possession on the Example of the Russian Mission of Franz Karl Wratislaw von Mitrowitz in the years 1728-1733], in: Jaroslav Dibelka – Jan Šimánek (edd.), *Historie 2016/2017: Sborník prací z 22. celostátní studentské vědecké konference konané 6. a 7. dubna 2017 v Českých Budějovicích* [History 2016/2017: Proceedings from the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Student Scientific Conference, which took place on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 in České Budějovice], České Budějovice 2018, pp. 159-186.
3. *Regensburg or Augsburg? The Perpetual Imperial Diet and the last plague epidemic in 1713/1714 through the eyes of the Bohemian envoy Franz Karl Wratislaw von Mitrowitz*, *Opera historica* 24, No. 1, 2023, pp. 110-130.