

REVIEWS

Peter Paul Bajer

*Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,
16th-18th Centuries.
The Formation and Disappearance of an Ethnic Group*

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THE history of the Scottish diaspora in Poland-Lithuania during the early modern period is an extremely interesting, yet only partially researched, issue. Although one can trace a number of works, mainly articles on local Scottish communities in Poland and different aspects of their activities, scattered throughout various journals and collected volumes, there has been to date no study dealing with the subject on a more general scale from a longer chronological perspective. Peter Paul Bajer's attempt to provide his readers with such a work has resulted in an impressive volume of nearly 600 pages. Although there is no doubt that he spared no effort to deliver, and in some areas succeeds marvellously in doing so, there are points at which this success is only partial.

The book consists of a short introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, 15 appendices and a bibliography. There is also a glossary which is very useful for non-Polish readers. The first chapter appropriately presents an overview of primary sources and previous research on the Scottish diaspora in Poland-Lithuania during the early modern period. The subsequent chapters cover the reasons for the Scots' decisions to migrate and settle in Poland-Lithuania (ch.2), the scale and chronology of this phenomenon (ch.3), as well as the motives, social make-up, and activities of the diaspora (ch.4). Chapter 5 focusses on the life of the Scottish migrants, that is, their position in society, financial status and organisations, while chapter 6 deals with the role of

the Kirk and interactions between Scottish Protestants and people of other confessions. Finally, chapter seven discusses the fascinating question of some Scots' inclusion into the Polish-Lithuanian noble elite.

The research integrates material from many sources, including an impressive range of manuscripts preserved in Polish, Lithuanian, German, Ukrainian, Russian and even Irish collections. Bajer also uses the latest literature by both Polish and foreign authors extensively. There is, however, a striking lack of German secondary sources, which is a serious drawback considering the fact that there was a significant number of Britons (including Scots) in Danzig and Ducal Prussia and their presence has been documented and analysed by authors writing in German, most recently by Almut Hillebrand.

When it comes to the book's contents, there is no doubt that Bajer has presented very plausible arguments for recognising that the number of Scots in Poland-Lithuania was lower than has been claimed in the past. According to his assessment, the number should be estimated at 5000 to 7000 individuals, reaching its peak in the late 16th-early 17th century. This is not a completely new discovery, as the fact that the Scottish diaspora was in fact much smaller than argued by some early-modern sources (with estimates between 30,000 and 50,000 people), has already been put forward by some historians. Nonetheless, Bajer deserves acclaim for his meticulous analysis of the sources which made it possible to support this thesis with solid statistical data as well as his editorial work on the Subsidy of 1651 (Appendix I) and compilation of lists of Scottish names appearing in various records (Appendices II-XI), British officers in Polish service, and Scottish families included into the Polish nobility (Appendices XIII-XV).

He also included in his research the hitherto neglected issue of the role of women in the diaspora. He clearly proves that they were not only more numerous than previously believed, but also much more involved and active in the life of the Scottish communities.

While the sections in which he analyses municipal and Church records or tries to trace the origins of the migrants are nothing but first-rate, there are some parts which, in spite of all indications that the author had worked equally hard on them, are clearly below his usual standard. This can be illustrated by the section of chapter four focusing on diplomats and agents. Bajer, as he informs his readers, puts together 'diplomats, envoys, negotiators, factors, agents, financiers and businessmen', but does not explain how he defines the differences between those groups or what criteria he uses for placing a person into any one of them. This results in a confusing mix-up, where individuals who had never held any official diplomatic position are described as 'British ambassador in Warsaw' (Sir Robert Steward, p.169) or Englishmen appearing

as Elizabethan or Stuart diplomats being mentioned in a way that suggests they were actually Scottish (such as John Rogers, John Denham). Nothing is said either about the post-1603 changes in the Stuart diplomatic service and foreign policy, which were crucial for the question of the Scots presence in the British diplomatic corps, not only in Poland-Lithuania, but also in northern Europe in general.

There are also some clear mistakes. For example, there is no proof that Henry Lyall remained in the post of ambassador in Poland-Lithuania 'for the next five years' after he had received the nomination for ambassador extraordinary in 1604 (p.166). Similarly, Sir Patrick Gordon of Braco never was 'James's envoy in Gdansk 1635, [where he] played a vital role in the peace mediation that eventually led to the Stolbova treaty' (p.169), as by then he had already returned to Scotland (he had left his position as a Stuart diplomatic agent in the mid 1620s and was replaced by his nephew Francis). Furthermore, he definitely could not have been involved in the Stolbova mediation as James VI/I's representative in the mid 1630s, as the treaty was signed in 1617 and the king died in 1625. Similar problems can be pointed out when analysing the appendix listing British diplomats in Poland-Lithuania (Appendix XII, pp. 458-61).

This may lead to the observation that the book's main problem is its broad scope; if the author had decided to focus, for example, on one main group of migrants, such as merchants, and treat the others in a more general way, he would still have been able to present arguments supporting his main theses and write a very good book. At the same time, it would have been much easier to avoid mistakes such as those mentioned above, which clearly result not from lack of knowledge, but from the difficulties that arise when dealing with such a mass of information and sources. The same can be said about the impressive, almost 50-page-long bibliography, where Bajer lists many publications and dissertations that were actually never cited in his book. At the same time, there is at least one case concerning the late Professor Teresa Zielinska, in which he attributes the author's works to somebody else. Consequently, one is tempted to conclude that in some cases, more does not necessarily mean better.

In spite of these shortcomings, the publication of *Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* is good news. Bajer has provided his fellow historians with a massive dose of information and new sources that will be appreciated by current and future researchers of Scottish-Polish relations in the early modern period, and that is something he should definitely be thanked for.

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