



Napoleon Mateusz Tadeusz Orda (1807–1883), Alojzy Misierowicz (1825–1905), "Grodno", the end of the 19th c., Lithuanian Art Museum, LDM G-515

POLITICAL FIGURE

When choosing his life path M. K. Oginskis was greatly influenced not only by his parents, but also by other relatives, especially by the distant relative, the Voivode of Vilnius (1764–1768), the Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1768–1793), poet, painter, musician, book publisher Mykolas Kazimieras Oginskis (1730–1800). In some written sources, he is often erroneously called the uncle of Mykolas Kleopas. Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis involved into the political affairs of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the full age. In his childhood memoirs, M. K. Oginskis vividly describes the first steps as a politician and the circumstances, under which he found himself in this path and what was happening in Lithuania at the beginning of the Seimas election campaign. Andrzej Żaluskі the grand-grand-grandchild of Mykolas Kleopas in his book "Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis. The Life, Work and His Creations"⁶⁸ briefly retells the memories of M. K. Oginskis from this period. He writes⁶⁹:

"Mykolas Kleopas was 19 years old, when his father, in 1784, sent him to the Seimelis in Trakai. By that time, six members of Oginskiai family already were the Voivodes of Trakai. Andrius was the last one. He did not have the strength to go there, so he sent Mykolas to replace him. M. K. Oginskis became the deputy of the Seimas two years later – in 1786. As the Seimas member – as requested by his father – Mykolas Kleopas was elected to the institution regulating the state finances. That institution was the Treasury Commission of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth supported his candidacy. After the Seimas – under Andrius Oginskis' request and the approval of the

king – Mykolas Kleopas became the Commissioner of the Treasury Commission of the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian. He left Guzow and went to Grodno with two horses, given by his uncle, and a crew, having a relatively small amount of money. He did not want to stand out of his colleagues. Oginskis began to work with youthful enthusiasm. The most interested he was in economics, however, legal affairs he did not like. Intrigue, suspicious relationships, dishonesty, snares, and corruption prevailed in Grodno. Deliberations of cases dragged on as lawyers talked too much. This teased Mykolas Kleopas, and he wrote the epigram on this topic. The work was anonymous, but everyone recognized the author. Lawyers appealed against him, even so the epigram exhilarated the others.

In the Commission M. K. Oginskis dealt with the verification and reorganization of customs network, prepared and submitted to the Seimas his proposals on the improvement of tax collection, the port of Dventoji regeneration and concerned on various economy stimulation issues of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania."

M. K. Oginskis as a commissioner was highly valued not only by his colleagues but also by the heads of the state. In 1788, for the merits for the state he was awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus, and a year later, in 1789, the Order of the White Eagle. On 2nd of March 1789, shortly after the Four-Year Seimas (1788–1792) adopted a decision on raising the army, M. K. Oginskis was granted with the rittmeister degree of the Cavalry 10th Flag Army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and a few months later he became the Sword Bearer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to A. Żaluskі:

⁶⁸ Andrzej Żaluskі, *Michai Kleofas Oginski: Ÿycie, dziaalnai i twórczoai* ("Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis: Life, Activity and Creation Works"), London: Polska fundacja kulturalna, 2009.

⁶⁹ Andbejus Żaluskis, *Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis. Gyvenimas, veikla ir kūryba* ("Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis: Life, Activity and Creation Works"), Vilnius: Regionø kultūrinio iniciatyvø centras (Regional Cultural Initiatives center), 2015, p. 26, 27.



Robert Bowyer (1758–1834), "Amsterdam: Royal Palace. The New Church. Market Square", 1814.
 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam> (site previewed on: 07-09-2015)

"When Mykolas Kleopas has chosen diplomatic career is not known yet. It might be that he made that decision after his father's death. On 15th of December 1788, someone from the Seimas proposed to appoint him as an envoy to Saxony, someone else proposed that Oginskis has to be sent to Stockholm. For the past years, he had been offered to go to Constantinople, London or Stockholm. In his "Memoirs" Mykolas Kleopas writes that then he declined due to the fact that there was still little of changes made in Poland, therefore, he as an envoy would not be capable of doing something important for the country. At the time, he had also to take care of the administration of recently inherited manors. At the end of 1789, a number of envoys were sent to the foreign countries for diplomatic service. For some of them it was a fateful assignment. Jerzy Potocki⁷⁰ was stuck in Stockholm because of debts and only after the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Catherine II "redeemed" him from Sweden. Piotr Potocki⁷¹ – according to Szymon Askenazy⁷², very unreasonable person – arrived in Constantinople with a large retinue making a negative impression for the locals. Bukaty was the more appropriate envoy in London⁷³.

M. K. Oginskis became an envoy in Hague. For Poland, it was a time full of optimism. In March and April 1790, the agreement between Poland and Prussia was signed, giving hope that the state will be rescued from the Russia's dependence. In the "Memoirs" M. K. Oginskis writes that, despite the subsequent traitorous relations with Poland, at the time Friedrich Wilhelm⁷⁴ was in a good mood and ready to cooperate."⁷⁵

Dr. Ramunė Ėmigelskytė-Stukienė in her study "Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis: Politician, Diplomat, Minister and His Passport Collection" described political and diplomatic work of M. K. Oginskis. In the text for the international mobile stands exhibition "Mykolas Kleopas Oginskis. Return to the Motherland"⁷⁶, she states:

"In 1790, after the union agreement with Prussia was signed, M. K. Oginskis was appointed as a special envoy and authorized minister of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the United Provinces of Netherlands. His diplomatic path went from Warsaw through Reichenbach, Dresden, Leipzig, and Hanover lead to Hague, Amsterdam, and London. The Republic at the ti-



Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697–1768), "Knights' procession by the Westminster Abbey in London", 1749.
 Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaletto> (site reviewed on: 07-09-2015)

⁷⁰ Jerzy Potocki joined diplomatic corps in 1789 years. Then he was designated as a last envoy of Stockholm.

⁷¹ Piotr Franciszek Potocki (1745–1829).

⁷² Szymon Askenazy – Polish (origin of Jewish) historian, who mainly investigated international relations of 18th–19th c. Born on 24th of December 1865, died on 22nd of June 1935.

⁷³ Franciszek Bukaty – diplomat of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Born in August 1747, died on 15th of June 1797.

⁷⁴ Frederick William II – first of the Holy Roman Empire and a King of Prussia (from the 17th of August 1786 till his death). He came from the Hohenzollern dynasty, was the eldest son of the prince August Wilhelm (1772–1758) and the Duchess Luise Amalie of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. Born on 25th of September 1744 in Berlin, died on 16th of November 1797 in Potsdam.

⁷⁵ A. Zaluskis, Vilnius, 2015, p. 28.

⁷⁶ An exhibition was prepared by the Cultural History Museum of Rietavas, in partnership with the Lithuanian Art Museum, Regionø kultūrinio iniciatyvø centras (Regional initiatives cultural centre), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania and Dr. Ramunė Ūmigelskytė-Stukiene.

me was struggling to implement the reforms attracted the attention of whole Europe. The impact of the French Revolution, the Prussian-British rivalry for influence in the region, Prussia's intentions to occupy Danzig and Torun and other circumstances made Hague the diplomatic center of Europe.

25 years old Count M. K. Oginskis was a sociable erudite so he easily integrated into this environment and successfully acted in order to ensure the support of the reforms in the Republic. On his efforts, the Amsterdam bankers have been successfully contracted and the Treasury of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was supplemented by the credit value of three million florins. Protecting the interests of the Republic M. K. Oginskis negotiated with the British ambassador Lord Auckland (William Eden), the Prussian envoy Count Keller (Dorothea Ludwig Christoph von Keller), affiliate a close relations with the British envoy in Prussia Joseph Ewart⁷⁷, the Portuguese envoy Anthony de Araujo (Antonio Araujo e Azevedo) and other diplomats. Having realized that the course of Hague policy is determined by the British position, M. K. Oginskis at the turn from 1790 to 1791 went to a special diplomatic mission to London. The main task of this mission was to ensure the political support of the British government, also to engage the enhancement of trade relations with the Republic, and try to achieve the trade agreement. Negotiations with the Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger⁷⁸ revealed that the United Kingdom supports the claims of Prussia to the Polish cities of Gdansk and Torun. Only if the Republic had accepted territorial concessions, it would guarantee free trading in the Baltic Sea. As the Republic could not

agree with the requirement to violate its territorial integrity, the diplomatic mission of M. K. Oginskis has become meaningless – it did not have any chances to change the geopolitical situation in Europe. On his return from Hague to Warsaw, M. K. Oginskis stayed in Berlin. There were arranged several informal meetings with the ruler Frederick William II, other persons of the royal environment, and the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg⁷⁹. M. K. Oginskis due to the difficult personal issues had to refuse envoy's duty. In December 1791, his authority was officially canceled."

Many historians notice (which is obvious from M. K. Oginskis' "Memoirs") that often his political moves were influenced not only by love for the motherland but also by the desire to see it independent, the responsibility for manors and there working people on his behalf, relatives, friends and acquaintances with whom he was related in various ways.

In order to recover the sequestered manors by the direction of the Targowica Confederates, M. K. Oginskis had to ask for help in St. Petersburg. The property has been restored on the condition that under the scenario of the Republic reorganization, which was built by the Russian Empress Catherine II, M. K. Oginskis would become the Treasurer of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. M. K. Oginskis did not desire to be the Treasurer, which is consistent with the current day finance minister; so he reluctantly started to work and refused it at the first days of the 1794 Uprising in Lithuania. After that, Mykolas Kleopas joined the rebel ranks.

⁷⁷ Joseph Ewart – Scottish diplomat. In 1787–1788, he was an extraordinary envoy and authorized minister of the King of Prussia. Born on 30th of April 1759, died on 27th of January 1792.

⁷⁸ William Pitt the Younger – the politician of the Great Britain from the end of 18th c. till the beginning of 19th c. Born on 28th of May, 1759, died on 23rd of January 1806.

⁷⁹ Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg – Count, Prussian minister of Foreign Affairs.



Adolphe Jean-Baptiste Bayot (1810–1866), Philippe Benoist (1813–1879), Jan Kazimierz Wilczynski (1806–1885), "The Grand Courtyard of Vilnius University", 1850, Lithuanian Art Museum, LDM G-2612