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Joannes Georgius Adamus Forster, his voyages and Polish relations

ABSTRACT: J. G. A. Forster, member of J. Cook's expedition towards South Pole, spent the majority of his life in Poland. In the years 1784—1787 he was professor of natural history at the Wilno University. Born near Gdańsk, he never lost the consciousness of his Polish citizenship. Forster's publications have enriched the culture and science of England, France, Germany, Poland and other countries.

Key words: Antarctica, history, Forster's biography.

Introduction

The activities of Joannes Georgius Adamus Forster (1754—1794) are fairly well documented in bibliography. Recently, particular attention to his publications concerning the IInd Cook's expedition around the world was paid by German and Polish historians, and some papers on this subject have also appeared in the USSR (*e.g.* Merkys 1960), France and other countries (*see* Fiedler 1970). After the World War II, fundamental Forster's papers have been published in the GDR as *Georg Forsters Werke*. The first volumes of this series were devoted mainly to the reports from his voyages, including that of essential importance for German literature — the description of his common travel with Alexander von Humboldt entitled *Ansichten von Niederrhein, von Brabant, Flandern, Holland, England und Frankreich im April, Mai und Juni 1790* (9th volume of this series).

As a rule, in the majority of books and papers devoted to J. G. A. Forster, there are references as to his birth within the Kingdom of Poland and to his professorship at the Polish University of Wilno (called at that time The Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). The problem of nationality of this eminent voyager is treated rather marginally, even in more specialistic studies (*e.g.* Honsza 1962, Hübner and Thaler 1981). Consequently, we have to mention here only extreme opinions. So, *e.g.* one of the papers of a Polish historian of geographic voyages is entitled: "Jerzy Forster — the first Polish traveller around the world" (Ślabczyński 1952). On the other hand, the An-

tartic Station of GDR bears the name of Georg Forster — “the first German who crossed the southern polar circle and is the author of the first report on this expedition (1777)”.

Nearly in all Polish scientific and popular-scientific publications we find the following Forster's own statement:

Urodziłem się na ziemi polskiej o milę od Gdańska; opuściłem tę ziemię rodzinną w chwili, gdy przeszła pod panowanie pruskie, a więc nie jestem pruskim poddanym (Anonym 1858, p. 282).

Translation: “I was born in the Polish territory, a mile from Gdańsk, and I have left my motherland when it passed under the Prussian rule. Therefore, I am not a Prussian citizen” (Anonym 1858 p. 282). However, this sentence is taken from a context and is not precise. Forster has left his motherland in 1766, while Gdańsk with its surroundings were incorporated to Prussia as late as 1793; in 1772, after the first partition of Poland, only the so-called Polish Prussia was occupied by the Kingdom of Prussia. The above sentence was written by Forster in 1792 and, unquestionably, till that time he considered himself to be the subject of the Polish King.

In the XIXth century Polish publications, the problem of J. G. A. Forster's nationality had been treated ambiguously. One of the first papers on him published in “Biblioteka Warszawska” (“Warsaw Library”) in 1858 is, in fact, a summary from an article in “Westminster Review” (see Anonym 1858). An unknown author of this report considers Forster to be German, since this report has been based on a previous German publication. The same was the source of W. Ochenkowski's (1879) book *Letters of a foreigner on Wilno (1784—1787)* presenting Forster's correspondence concerning this town.

From later Polish bibliography I have selected only the more important remarks of several authors on the relations of J. G. A. Forster with Poland, as the country of his birth. In his biogram published in the Polish Biographic Dictionary we find the following note (translated from Polish): “as far as the nationality is concerned, Forster did not declare himself clearly. All the possible subjects were evenly close to him...” (Birkenmajer 1948 p. 66). Słabczyński (1952) has added several new informations on supposed Forster's Polish provenance. In his later publication (Słabczyński 1973), mainly as a result of critical remarks by B. Olszewicz, we find no remarks on Forster's nationality; however the author did not correct his earlier opinion.

In 1958, W. Zawadzki has published Polish translation of originally German J. G. A. Forster's book *The diary of a travel across Poland*. Some fragments of this diary appeared also in Zawadzki's book *Stanisław August's Poland as viewed by foreigners* (Zawadzki 1963). Zawadzki has described Forster as “a famous German scientist to whom was entrusted the Department of Natural History in Wilno” (Zawadzki 1963 p. 22).

Z. Fedorowicz (1960, 1961) presented the most detailed characteristics of Forster's achievements in natural sciences. He followed I. Seydel's words



Fig. 1. George Forster. Portrait by A. Graff, 1784

published in 1920: “[...] as far as the origin, education and character are concerned, George Forster is a phenomenon *sui generis* — he should not be assigned to any existing schemes and stereotypes [...]” (translation from Fedorowicz 1960, p. 23). However, a little later, we find a comment that “the whole scientific and literary achievements of Jerzy (George) Forster — because of the language he used — belongs to Germany”. This opinion is not correct, since Forster has published many papers in English, French, Latin and even in Polish (under his father’s cryptonym).

K. Augustowska (1975), following Słabczyński’s opinion, characterized Forster as a Pole on the ground of some sentences selected from his papers. She paid attention to the fact that Forster had spent in Poland the longest period of his 40-years only long life, as compared with his much shorter

stays in Russia, France, Germany, England and on the board of Cook's ship *Resolution* (over three years).

Summing up these remarks, it seems reasonable to quote a fragment of introduction to the Polish translation of *The voyage around the world* (1977):

Jerzy Adam Forster urodził się jako poddany króla polskiego, babką jego była Polka, język polski znał, lecz Polakiem nie był, gdyż nim się nie czuł. Niemcem również nie był, kategorycznie odżegnywał się od Prusactwa, natomiast jego poważny dorobek naukowy należy do Niemiec, bo pisany był w języku niemieckim (Rakusa-Suszczewski 1977, p. 13).

Translation: "Jerzy Adam Forster was born as a subject of the Polish King, his grandmother was Polish. He knew the Polish language but cannot be considered a Pole since he did not feel himself to be of our nationality. However, he cannot also be called a German, since his relation to Prussia was definitely negative. On the other hand, his most important scientific achievements, written in German, belong to Germany (Rakusa-Suszczewski 1977, p. 13).

In view of the above considerations on J. G. A. Forster's nationality, the latter sentence is rather incorrect but, in general, Rakusa-Suszczewski's opinion seems to be very close to the truth. Nevertheless, the problem is far from being solved, since till now we have no proper biography of Forster which could satisfy the needs of a modern historical approach, as already emphasized by A. Birkenmajer (1948). The older biograms are rather biased, and the sources of fundamental importance -- first of all his correspondence -- were falsified by the first editors: Forster's wife and her second husband L. Huber. It should be stressed that German editors of these letters contained in *Georg Forsters' Werke* could not find all the original copies. Therefore, I am going to present here a view on Forster as a professor of the Wilno University (1784--1787), based on Polish archival sources, largely unknown to German historians.

Relations of George Forster with Poland

Joannes Georgius (Jan Jerzy also Johann Georg or John George) Adamus Forster was born on November 25, 1754, in Mokry Dwór (German name: Nassenhuben)¹ near Gdańsk as the son of Jan Rajnold (Johan Reinhold), clergyman and naturalist, and Elżbieta (Elisabeth) née Nikolai. His family was of Scotch origin, it settled in Poland in the XVIIth century. The grandfather of George (it was the only name used by our voyager) was the town

¹ W. Ślabczyński (1973), followed by K. Augustowska (1975), give Forster's birth place as Wiślna village on Żuławy. This village is closest to Nowy Dwór (or Nowy Dół) known also under German name Nassenhuben, now non-existent.

mayor of Tczew, married to a Polish woman. From his childhood Jan Rajnold was speaking Polish at home where this language was in use, along with German, also after the birth of George.

In March 1765 J. R. Forster has got a proposal from Catherine the II of Russia to investigate the relations in German colonies at the Volga River. He went to Russia for nearly one year together with his son Jerzy, whom he taught, first of all, natural sciences and languages. They both spent winter-time 1765/66 in St. Petersburg where George has, most probably, attended a school. The Forsters had returned home after having received good money for their research. J. R. Forster had ceased to be a clergyman and decided to go with his son to England. He took a teacher's job in an English school and brought his wife and the other children to England. His son George took to teach private persons the French and German languages.

In 1772 John Reinhold, by protection of Lord Sandwich, was engaged as a member of J. Cook's expedition around the world. He participated in it together with his son from June 26, 1772 to July 30, 1775. This expedition resulted in numerous natural collections and, first of all, in George Forster's monograph *A voyage towards the South Pole and round the World* edited in London in 1777. It was later translated into many languages, bringing well merited fame to the author. His father could not publish his observations because of his conflict with the Admiralty and, for that reason, was even imprisoned. Thanks to his son's activity, John Reinhold was ransomed and even got the professorship at the University of Halle where he was staying till his death (on December 9, 1778).

It should be remembered that between November 1772 and March 1773 the Cook's expedition has penetrated the ocean and islands of the southern hemisphere, crossing on January 17, 1773 the South Polar Circle. The attempts to go further to the south were not successful due to abundant pack ice cover. Thus, both Forsters were the first voyagers born in Poland to reach so distant areas of the southern hemisphere.

Fragments of George Forster's reports from this expedition with some biographic data on their author were published in Polish already in 1784 in the Cracow journal "Zbiór Tygodniowy Wiadomości Uczonych" ("Weekly Collection of Scientific Informations"), under the title *Wypisy z obserwacji pana J. R. Forstera² względem różnych okoliczności ściągających się do fizycznej geografii i historii naturalnej które uczynił podczas swej podróży naokoło świata z kapitanem Cook* (Free translation of old-Polish text: "Some observations of Mr. J. R. Forster concerning physical geography and natural history carried

² George Forster, in his early publications, sometimes has used his father's cryptonym: J. R.

out during his voyage around the world with Captain Cook”). The same year, this text was reprinted by “Magazyn Warszawski” (“Warsaw Magazine”). As follows from this publication, George Forster, while going to Wilno to get the professorship at the University, was thinking to find a similar job for his father, first of all at the University of Cracow. It is supposed (Słabczyński 1973) that this problem was also discussed earlier by G. Forster with Jan Jaśkiewicz, the professor of natural history at the University of Cracow. These talks had resulted in the purchase of collections from Harz and from Cook’s expedition (*e.g.* nephrites from New Zealand) with the funds given by the Polish Primate Michał Poniąkowski, the brother of the Polish King Stanisław August.

The reports of George Forster from Cook’s expedition 1772--1775 were very highly appreciated and the author was elected the member of several academies and scientific societies, such as: Royal Society of London, Academies of Sciences in Berlin, Naples, Madrid *etc.* However, these distinctions could not give him adequate financial basis to maintain the whole family after imprisonment of his father. Therefore, in 1778, George Forster went to Holland and Germany to get job for himself and for his father. In the years 1779--1784 he lived in Kassel, being employed as a professor of natural history in the Carolineum, and also teaching geography in a military school. Nevertheless his salary was rather low and G. Forster fell into serious financial troubles, no matter of selling a part of collections from Cook’s expedition, and other samples (collected in Germany). Because of these troubles, he at once offered himself as a candidate for professorship at the Department of Natural History at the University in Wilno when this-post was vacated. M. Poniąkowski, the Primate of Poland, who was also the president of the Commission of National Education, ordered Paweł Czenpiński to negotiate this problem. As a result, the Polish authorities decided to repay all the Forsters debts, the costs of the transport from Kassel to Wilno (including the transport of natural collections and books), and have granted him a salary amounting to 400 ducates per year plus 200 ducates as a supplement for special needs.

In May 1784, Forster left Kassel and via Bohemia and Vienna, arrived to Poland. In the Austrian capital he was granted the Emperor’s audience and apparently said the following sentence: “I was born near Gdańsk in Polish Prussia but I have never been to Poland and I do not know the Polish language” (Forster 1963, p. 45). However, these words are certainly not true since, nearly simultaneously, in a report from the environs of Ostrava and Cieszyn he stated: “In all these localities the population is speaking incorrect Polish which is a mixture of Polish, Czech, Moravian and Slovak languages and is called “wasserpolnisch” (*ibidem*, p. 47) and, after passing Skawina: “[...] I was particularly moved to see the Vistula River which I have not seen for twenty years” (*ibidem*, p. 48).

The Forsters had left Poland in the Autumn of 1766 and George has returned to the country of his birth on September 18, 1784. In Cracow, the old capital of Poland, he visited the University, then he stayed for some time at Pińczów where, together with professors of this higher school Jan Jaśkiewicz, Franciszek Scheidt, and Jan niadecki and Jędrzej niadecki, he took part in several excursions, *i.a.* to salt-works at Busko. Afterwards, he visited Warsaw (where he examined natural collections) and Grodno, where he was introduced to the Polish King Stanislas August Poniatowski and his officials of high rank. In November 1784, he arrived to Wilno and soon started to work at the Department of Natural History. His inauguration lecture in Latin entitled *Limites historiae naturalis* was delivered on February 2, 1785. Forster was later lecturing in Latin and, thus, students who knew this language insufficiently were listening to other lectures translated into Polish by Jan Czenpiński. In the introductory part of his inauguration lecture, Forster, probably not only because of courtesy, stated as follows:

Ut enim ad me ipse redeam, jure quidem et merito inter gratulationis meae causas, easdemque non minimas, quis non retulerit hanc secundissimam mihi sortem cecidisse, post viginti annorum spatium, ingenti circa orbem terrarum periplo ceterisque itineribus absolutis, revisendi patrios lares, ut tandem in hac alma nostra academia genuinus naturae mysta, eius numinis sacra facerem, quibus peragendis totum me a teneris inde dicaveram? (Forster 1961, p. 12).

Translation: "Taking into account myself, one of the fundamental reasons of my satisfaction is that, thanks to very fortunate fate, having voyaged over huge areas of our globe and visited numerous countries, I have the pleasure to see again my mother country. I am very glad that just in this venerable Alma Mater, being experienced in discovering the mysteries of nature, I can realize the dreams of my youth -- to be a priest of this vocation" (Forster 1961, p. 12).

The initial stage of his stay in Wilno was very pleasant as is visible from an interesting not published at the end of 1784 in the already mentioned "Magazyn Warszawski" ("Warsaw Magazine"):

Pan Jerzy Forster zatrzymawszy się dla choroby swojej w Wiedniu przybył na koniec na początku novembra do Wilna i rozpoczął w Tamtejszej Akademii lekcje swoje historii naturalnej. Przejeżdżając przez Grodno podczas Sejmu, prezentował się Najjaśniejszemu Panu, Ks-ciu Jmci Prymasowi, i był od nich mile przyjęty. Ponieważ paki jego podczas transportu były pozamakały, rozumiał z początku ten sławny człowiek, że miała zginąć wielka część owych szacownych, a bardzo rzadkich płonów, które z taką żmudną pracą i tysiącnymi niebezpieczeństwami wydarł prawie nieznanomej i dzikiej naturze, podczas wiekopomnej podróży swojej na około świata z kapitanem Cook, a których strata była, przynajmniej, póki nie nastanie inny jaki Cook, niepowetowana. Ale przecież obfitości owe nie popsuly się tak, jak się nasz profesor obawiał.

Pisząc już z Wilna do jednego z przyjaciół nie może się wychwalić nowych współkolegów swoich, profesorów wileńskich. Ale nade wszystko zdziwił się, gdy ujrzał obserwatorium tamtejsze, jakiego, mówi, nigdzie prócz królewskiego w Londynie nie widział. Zdanie męża tego, jest niemalym dowodem kwitnącego stanu, który winna ta Główna szkoła mądrym zarządzeniom Prześwietnej Komisji Edukacyjnej i patriotycznej gorliwości Poczobuta, rektora swego (pp. 973—974).

Translation: “Mr. George Forster, after having stopped in Vienna to cure his illness, arrived at the beginning of November to Wilno and started to lecture in natural history at the Academy. When passing Grodno, just during the meeting of the parliament, he was presented to His Majesty the King, and to the Prince Primate, and was gently received by them. During transport, his crates containing valuable collections from voyages with Captain Cook round the world, got soaked and Forster was afraid of eventual losses which could be irreparable. Fortunately, they were but weakly damaged. When writing from Wilno to one of his friends, he was praising his colleagues, the professors of the Wilno University, and describing with astonishment and admiration the astronomic observatory which, in his opinion, was comparable only with that of London. Forster stated that this flourishing state of the Main School was due to excellent activity of the Commission on National Education and patriotic devotion of Rector Poczobut”.

This enthusiasm of a young professor was inconsistent with rather poor equipment of the Gabinet of Natural History. Forster's collections from Cook's expedition represented a material for scientific studies carried out by him in Wilno rather than for teaching purposes. In the Polish libraries two of these treatises are preserved: *Florulae Insularum Australium Prodrumum auctore Georgio Forster M. D. Serenissimo Regi Poloniae a Consilis Intimis Historiae Naturalis et Botanices in Academia Vilmensi, Göttingae 1786*, and *De plantis esculentis insularum Oceani Australis commentatio botanica, Berlin 1786*. In the mentioned “Magazyn Warszawski” of 1785 we find the following note:

Aż do dziś dnia nie masz w Wilnie, jak podobno i w innych szkołach większych naszych, żadnego gabinetu czyli kolekcji dokładnej historii naturalnej. Pan Forster za przybyciem swoim do Wilna zastał tam tylko jedną nie dokładną kolekcję owadów [...] Pan Forster przedsięwziął tedy chwalebnie założyć dokładny gabinet historii naturalnej i ogród botaniczny dla wygody Akademii. Można się spodziewać, iż naród nie odmówi kosztów na tak użyteczne i godne wieku tego ustanowienie (p. 514).

Translation: “Till now neither in Wilno nor in other higher schools there are proper collections on natural history. Mr. Forster, when arrived here, has found but one detailed collection of insects [...]. Therefore, he intended to found a cabinet of natural history and botanic garden for this Academy.

It is hoped that the Nation will not refuse to cover the costs of such useful and important institutions”.

It is difficult to say what were the effects of these good intentions. Unquestionably, Primate Poniatowski has ordered to purchase in Dresden a collection of minerals for the Wilno University, whilst Forster has sold to this university a collection of shells from southern hemisphere, as well as of American insects (Jundziłł 1850). Besides, he succeeded in purchasing ground for a new botanic garden which, unfortunately, he had no time to manage.

As follows from preserved programmes of lectures and from diarist's notes, Forster paid particular attention to the natural problems of southern hemisphere. Besides, he was carrying out field works in the environs of Wilno, tending to recognize the physiography of this region (Wójcik 1975). Apart from lectures and practical works, he was carrying out additionally paid lectures for women and students (Jundziłł 1905). His public lectures were in Latin, whilst private ones also in other languages. This is evidenced by his letter of February 16, 1785, written to his future wife Teresa Heyne in Göttingen:

Ich spreche zwar mit der grössten Leichtigkeit, und die Polen sage, vollkommen; — aber ich bin ja in Polen, bei Danzig geboren, und die Nahrung und Luft, die man zehn Jahre lang genossen hat, mag doch wenigstens Anlage machen; aber Fremden wird es schwer (Forster 1978, p. 281; see Augustowska 1975, p. 165).

In the first year of his stay in Wilno, Forster made friends with professors of medicine J. Langmayer, and chemistry J. Sartoris, particularly with the latter. The former inclined him to medical practice which was rather profitable in Poland. In 1785 Forster got the Ph. D. degree in Halle, and returned from Germany already accompanied by his wife Teresa Heyne.

Despite high salary, profits from medical practice and private lessons, the financial situation of Forsters in Wilno started to get worse. George was gradually getting discouraged due to monotonous didactic work and to difficulties in carrying out researches (lack of modern literature). His letters addressed to friends in 1786 are full of despair. Even the affection of his pupils (e.g. J. Czenpiński, S. B. Jundziłł, S. Malawski), and the doctorate in natural history of K. Kluk (February 17, 1786), supervised by him, could not change his feelings. Once again Forster desired to go abroad, and in this situation the Russian legate in Warsaw has proposed, on behalf of the Empress Catherine the IInd, his participation in another expedition round the world. This proposal was enthusiastically accepted, since the organizers have repaid all the Forster's debts. However, the Russian expedition was miscarried and Forster remained jobless once more. In one of the letters, proposing his services, he presented himself as follows:

Ich bin 33 Jahre alt, und gesund. Mein Gesicht, ohne anzuziehen, stösst wenigstens nicht zurück. Mit Cook habe ich seine zweyte Reise um die Welt gehtan, und sie hernach beschrieben. Das Fach der Wissenschaft, auf welches ich mich vorzüglich gelegt habe, ist die Kenntniss der Natur, in ihrem weitesten Umfange, mit Inbegrif von etwas Physik und Chemie. Ich kann Thiere und Pflanzen erträglich zeichnen. Von Philosophie, schönen Wissenschaft und Künsten habe ich einigen Vorschmack. Geographie, Geschichte, Politik, Statistick, Handlungsgeschichte sind Lieblingsfächer, womit ich meine Nebenstunden von je her ausgefüllt habe. Ich kann soviel Lateinisch, als man heutzutage von einem Gelehrten fordert, dessen eigentliches Fach nicht Philologie ist. Deutsch, Französisch und Englisch spreche und schreibe ich geläufig. Holländisch, Italienisch, Spanisch, Portugiesisch, Schwedisch, lese ich, und kann es verstehen. Vom polnischen habe ich einige Kenntniss, und vom russischen die Anfangsgründe (Forster 1981, pp. 73—74; see Zawadzki 1963, p. 25).

It is rather strange that such abilities were not sufficient for employment in a higher school other than Wilno University. We do not know why the Academy of Sciences in Petersbourg did not propose Forster a job. Since 1780, his father was a foreign honorary member of this Academy, and in 1784, while thanking for this diploma to its president Catherine Dashkova, has sent her his monograph "*Geschichte der Entdeckungen und Schiffahrten in Nord*", dedicated to the Empress Catherine the IInd (Correspondance scientifique 1987); it seems that he could back his son's proposal.

Thanks to the help of good friends, George Forster has finally settled in Mainz, being employed merely as a librarian. His attempts to publish in Germany the results of scientific observations collected during the Cook's expedition in 1772—1775 failed. He could not even find an editor in England. The effect of his stay in Mainz was the already mentioned monograph *Ansichten von Niederrhein*, a classic for German bibliography.

As already mentioned, a part of materials collected during the Cook's expedition was elaborated in Wilno. We have to mention here two manuscripts, actually deposited in Göttingen, entitled: *Hortus botanicus Vilniensis inde ab. a 1785* and *Diarium fannae floriaeque Vilniensis* (see Birkenmajer 1948). Particularly important are also Forster's letters reporting on his teaching activity in Poland. A number of these are still preserved and have been correctly edited in Berlin. Actually, their Lithuanian edition is in print, too.

The period of Forster's stay in Mains is well documented by historians. He was active there more as a written than as naturalist. As advocate of revolutionary ideas originated in France, he was for some time connected with Jacobins and thus considered as "traitor of Prussian Germany". George Forster, suffering from lung disease, died in Paris on January 11, 1794. As follows from Forster's letters to his wife, his only curator in Paris was Julian Maliczewski, a Polish friend from Wilno, himself probably a teacher

of secondary school in Lithuania (*see* Jundziłł 1905); Maliczewski had even hired a Polish boy as a servant to help Forster in his illness.

Forster's stay in Mainz was rather accidental. While working in this town as librarian he was corresponding with the Prussian Academy in Berlin (as its member), and had prepared some elaborations for the Berlin Court which were distinguished by a medal and financial prize. All these events took place just before the invasion of Napoleon's forces. On this occasion, E. F. von Hertzberg, the Minister of Prussia, sent to Forster a letter hopeful that he will behave as a good Prussian. This letter has provoked the already mentioned Forster's famous anti-Prussian reply which, however, should be treated in the context of sentences written by him. Forster's reply published in Poland in 1858 by the journal "Biblioteka Warszawska" ("Warsaw Library") reads:

Jeżeli pana dobrze zrozumiałem, życzenia pańskie niezgodne są z moimi zasadami i z myślą, jaką objawiałem stale w moich pismach. Urodziłem się na ziemi polskiej o milę od Gdańska; opuściłem też ziemię rodzinną w chwili, gdy przeszła pod panowanie pruskie, a więc nie jestem pruskim poddanym. Pobierałem nauki w Anglii, stamtąd odbyłem podróż wokół świata. Miałem powierzone sobie obowiązki w Kassel, Wilnie i Moguncji. Całe życie starałem się być dobrym obywatelem i pracowałem uczciwie na kawałek chleba. Ubi bene, ibi patria; to zdanie powinno być godłem człowieka nauki, człowieka, który pragnie zachować osobistą swobodę w krajach bezkonstytucyjnych. Jeżeli zowiąc mnie dobrym Prusakiem, chcesz pan powiedzieć, że w Moguncji pod panowaniem francuskich legionów, powinienem pragnąć rychłego końca klęsk wojennych, w takim razie jestem dobrym Prusakiem i byłbym zarówno dobrym Turkiem lub Chińczykiem; lecz jeżeli pan żądasz, abym z tego tytułu zaparł się moich opinii politycznych, utyskiwał nad tryumfem swobody, wstrzymał się (w razie gdyby mnie powołano) od udziału w sprawie konstytucyjnej; abym pozostał neutralnym lub wahającym się w chwili przesilenia, abym przedkładał ludowi mogunckiemu, iż powinien raczej trzymać się istniejącego stanu rzeczy, niż odzyskiwać swobodę za współudziałem Francuzów; jeżeli jako dobry Prusak mam przyjąć wstrętą mi doktrynę i sprzyniewierzyć się z gabinetami dworów niemieckich; upewniam pana, że to nigdy nie nastąpi. Pojmie pan po takim oświadczeniu, że nie powinienem przyjmować ofiarowanych mi pieniędzy, lubo nigdy nie byłem w takim jak dziś niedostatku; albo gotów jestem znieść raczej ostateczną nędzę, niż zaprzeczyć się zasad, którem zawsze wyznawał. Mógłbym się dać złudzić ofiarą kilku tysięcy talarów, skoro miliony nie zdołałyby zachować mego przekonania (Anonym 1858, pp. 282—283).

Translation: "If I have understood you correctly, your wishes are not concordant with my principles and ideas which I have always declared in my publications. I was born within the Polish territory, a mile from Gdańsk, and I have left my motherland when it was occupied by Prussians, so I am not a Prussian subject. I have studied in England, and from that country

I have participated in the expedition round the world. I was employed in Kassel, Wilno and Mainz. All my life through I tended to be a good citizen, honestly working for a piece of bread. *Ubi bene, ibi patria*; this sentence should be the emblem of a scientist, a man who desires to preserve personal freedom in unconstitutional countries. If you, calling me a good Prussian, intend to say that in Mainz under the rule of French legions I have to desire a rapid end of military defeats, so I really am a good Prussian. Similarly, I could be a good Turk or Chinese. However, if you require me to deny my political opinions, to claim against the triumph of freedom, to dissociate myself from constitutional cause (if I am called for), to be neutral or hesitating at the moment of crisis, to persuade the people of Mainz to maintain the existing system instead of gaining freedom with the French help; if, as a good Prussian, I have to accept a doctrine hateful to me and to associate myself with governments of German Courts -- I assure you that it will never happen. In the spirit of this declaration, you would understand that I should never accept the money you are offering me, no matter the fact that I was never in such a poor financial condition. I am ready to suffer extreme poverty rather than to deny the principles I was always professing. Could I be deluded by accepting these several thousands tallers, if millions would not change my conviction" (Anonym 1858, pp. 282 - 283).

The above presented materials are of different cognitive value. Nevertheless one conclusion is unquestionable: Jerzy (George) Forster has never lost the consciousness of his Polish citizenship. His conduct in the last years of life seems to indicate that he was not considering himself to be of a German nationality as he intended to incorporate the German principalities situated along the Rhine river to France. As a consequence of his actions, Forster was called traitor of Prussia, who even imposed a prize for his head.

The Scholar of several countries

In XVIIIth century, the consciousness of nationality was different from that of the present time. Education, religion, place of residence, and the language used -- all these cultural elements were decisive in defining the nationality of a given person. For scientists, changing their place of work in different countries, the expression *ubi bene, ibi patria* seems to present the essence of the problem. Unquestionably, the term *bene* should correspond to proper conditions of work. Such conditions were not created for Forster in German countries. He found them only once, in Wilno, but he was too impatient and restless what, stimulated by this traveller's syndrome, forced Forster to resign teaching at the university.

In the above presented documents we have no precise data concerning Forster's knowledge of the Polish language. Unquestionably, he knew this

language well but, it seems, had some difficulties in writing Polish. To solve this problem, it would be necessary to examine more archival materials preserved in Wilno. Forster's comments on Czech, Slovak and Moravian loan words in Polish language of Cieszyn Silesia indicate his fairly good knowledge of Slavonic nomenclature. As follows from Forster's diary written during his travel through Poland, the Polish language was everyday use in his parental house near Gdańsk as was the German and, probably, also English and French.

Finally, we have to touch the last, probably the most important, problem: to what country belong Forster's scientific and literary achievements? The international fame was brought on him by his participation in Cook's expedition round the world. His monograph on this expedition, published in England in 1777, gives the merit to the English science. Natural treatises, originated in Wilno, are an integral part of Polish science. Besides, in Wilno, he elaborated the materials collected during the Cook's expedition in the years 1772—1775. Therefore, though edited later in Germany, they have also enriched Polish natural sciences. During his stay in Mainz, Forster contributed significantly to German culture and science, whilst in the last years of life has was the author of, predominantly, French political pamphlets. It is thus concluded that J. G. A. Forster, an outstanding traveller and scholar, has considerably contributed to the science and culture of several European countries. As an academic teacher he has educated not only several eminent Polish scholars, but also German scientists — first of all Alexander von Humboldt.

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Streszczenie

Jan Jerzy (John George) Adam Forster (1754—1794) uczestniczył ze swoim ojcem Janem Rajnoldem w II wyprawie J. Cooka dookoła świata, podczas której w 1773 r. przekroczone po raz pierwszy południowe koło podbiegunowe. Forsterowie urodzeni w Polsce, pozostający

wówczas w służbie angielskiej, byli pierwszymi poddanymi króla polskiego, którzy pływali po wodach mórz w pobliżu Antarktydy. Wydane w 1777 r. w Londynie przez Jerzego (bo takiego imienia głównie używał) sprawozdanie z tej podróży *A voyage towards the South Pole and round the World* jest pierwszą relacją na ten temat opublikowaną przez obywatela polskiego. Jerzy Forster używając kryptonimu ojca (J. R.) część tej relacji wydał w tłumaczeniu polskim w periodykach w Krakowie i w Warszawie w 1784 r. („Zbiór Tygodniowy Wiadomości Uczonych”, „Magazyn Warszawski”).

J. J. A. Forster większość życia spędził na ziemiach polskich, początkowo w Nowym Dworze koło Gdańska, a w latach 1784—1787 w Wilnie, gdzie był profesorem historii naturalnej Szkoły Głównej Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Tam też przygotowywał do druku niektóre opracowania z wyprawy odbytej z J. Cookiem oraz materiały z badań fizjograficznych w okolicy Wilna. Jego zbiory geologiczne i inne przywiezione z półkuli południowej (m.in. nefryty z Nowej Zelandii) trafiły do gabinetów uniwersyteckich w Krakowie i Wilnie.

Od dziecka nawykły do podróży (był m. in. rok w Rosji) w 1787 r. zaangażował się na rosyjską wyprawę dookoła świata. Gdy ta nie doszła do skutku osiadł w Moguncji, czynnie uczestnicząc w życiu kulturalnym Niemiec. Uważał się za liberała i to — w dużym stopniu — skłoniło go do uczestnictwa w wydarzeniach rewolucyjnych we Francji. Zmarł w Paryżu, wyklęty wcześniej przez Prusaków.

Twórczość przyrodnicza i humanistyczna J. J. A. Forstera jest składnikiem kultury europejskiej. Rozpoczął ją w Londynie, a następnie kontynuował w Kassel, Wilnie, w Moguncji i w Paryżu. Pisał wieloma językami (łacina, angielski, francuski, niemiecki). Niewątpliwie znał język polski, który w domu rodzinnym był używany na równi z angielskim i niemieckim.

W polskiej literaturze historycznej popularne jest wyznanie Forstera z 1792 r.: *Urodziłem się na ziemi polskiej o milę od Gdańska; opuściłem też ziemię rodzinną w chwili, gdy przeszła pod panowanie pruskie, a więc nie jestem pruskim poddanym.*