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Brothers Berens. A contribution to the history of Polish Lutheranism in the 17th century

Key words: Berens, family, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polish Lutheranism

The Lutheran family of Berens (Behrens) came from Denmark, probably had peasant or bourgeois roots, while in the 16th century its members lived in the area of Ducal Prussia. In the mid-17th century, four brothers were identified – Jan, Jakub, Jerzy, also Paweł, who served in the Polish army and who, thanks to their own abilities and royal protection, reached high military levels. We know that some of them have remained in the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, but their traces also lead us to Prussia, to Sweden, to Denmark and Russia, where we will find relatives of our heroes. And here are our heroes¹.

Jan received in his youth a thorough education in the field of fortification and engineering, probably at the University of Leiden, but already in the 1740s, he fought in the ranks of the Swedish army supported by the Dutch fleet with Danish and Spanish forces in the Baltic Sea (1643-1645).

The privilege indygenat of Jan was emphasized by his military service from a simple soldier in the crown army during the reign of Jan Kazimierz (r. 1648-1668), probably from 1659, when he was taken as the Polish prisoner in the time of Swedish invasion in 1655, known as the Deluge, and then he was promoted to officer rank in various infantry regiments. In 1664 he was a major in the Stefan Czarnecki unit and during the Khmelnytsky Uprising he managed the fortification works in Korsuń and in the Biała Cerkiew. In 1667, he went to Jakub Potocki's dragoons regiment as a lieutenant colonel and the actual commander of the unit. During the interregnum of 1668-1669 he commanded two regiments of dragoons left in Warsaw to secure order during the election. In 1669, he was a lieutenant colonel, and a general engineer in the artillery corps, and he was still in the years 1681-1683. At the beginning of 1681, he was promoted to the colone and to the actual commander of the infantry regiment of Stanisław Jabłonowski² and the head of his own infantry regiment – he held it in Crown *komput* until 1703. In August 1683 he was appointed the commandant of the Lviv garrison, which he held until 1704. In the 1980s, Jan Berens directed the fortification works in Podolia, including Bar, Jazłowiec and Trembowla.

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¹ KUKIEL 1935: 448; WAGNER 2003: 8-9.

² WAGNER 1997.

At the beginning of 1690, he was nominated the major general, lasting until his death in 1704³.

On 5 August 1669, in Królewiec, Jan received from the Elector Frederic Wilhelm the act of Prussian indigenou, confirmed by Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki (r. 1669-1673) on 5 December 1669. He obtained the Polish act of ennoblement only during the Warsaw Diet in 1683, together with the brothers, for war merit and for the fortification work as *generalis machinatorum praefectus vulgo ingenieur*⁴.

Let us add that this Jakub was a lieutenant colonel in the infantry regiment of hetman Jabłonowski, in turn Jerzy was a lieutenant in the corps of the Crown artillery, and Paweł probably served there as well⁵.

In the years 1674-1652, on the order of King Jan III Sobieski (r. 1674-1696), he carried out fortification works in Lviv, strengthening the buildings of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* and *Ordo Fratrum Beatae Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmel* churches and monasteries, also surrounding them with ground embankments and walls, and in the High Castle he restored buildings and dug a new well with earth ramparts and continued construction of the Great Beluard. Until 1695-1696, at the behest of Jan III, he realized the project of "Third Walls" (high ground embankments), surrounding the former eastern network of city fortifications in the Halicz Suburb, stretching from the monastery of the *Ordo Fratrum Beatae Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmel* to the monastery of the *Fratres Carmelitae calceati* (unfinished). During the operation, many burgher houses were demolished and manors with gardens were destroyed, in addition Berens imposed a new tax on residents, so he met with the opposition of Lviv citizens, partially paying them some financial compensation. Numerous citizens' complaints against the general come from this period for the ruthless execution of royal regulations regarding their obligations to expand and renovate city fortifications⁶.

During the Tatar invasion of Lviv in 1695⁷, he stationed in the High Castle with infantry and artillery subunits constituting the reserve of forces of the Hetman Stanisław Jabłonowski⁸. After the repulsion of the Tatar attack, he was criticized for the terrible preparation of the garrison and the city for defense, so on February 16 that year he wrote a special letter to Jan III, excusing him from charges and blaming Stanisław Jabłonowski and the citizens of Lviv⁹.

Jan Berens was the author of the project of modernization of the Lviv fortification system, created after 1692, commissioned by Jan III Sobieski and hetman Stanisław Jabłonowski. His project assumed the surrounding of the entire city by a ring of irregular fortifications, partly bastion, partially tick, with external works.

³ Based on – WIMMER 1965; WAGNER 2015a; WAGNER 2015b.

⁴ Przywilej, Warszawa 5 XII 1669, AGAD, Metryka Koronna nr 206 k.687-702, nr 209 k.254,261-262v; AGAD, Sigillaty nr 14 s.79,117

⁵ Materials for the military activities of the Berens brothers – Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie, Zbiór Rusieckich nr 11, 14, 15, 34, 36; Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie nr 2589, 2598, 2640, 2563, 2566, 2715

⁶ TOMKIEWICZ, WITWICKI 1971: 128-132.

⁷ FINKEL 1890: 464.

⁸ MAJEWSKI 1963: 151-164.

⁹ J.Berens do Jana III Sobieskiego, Lwów 16 II 1695, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin-Dahlem, I. HA Rep. 9 Polen nr 47.1 k.3-5.

From the north-east, where the hills with the High Castle were the natural defenses of the city, the fortifications were not continuous, and from the west – they touched the medieval fortifications, and on further sections he intended to use the existing buildings of monasteries and churches in Lviv. The Berens project has not been implemented, probably due to lack of financial resources¹⁰.

In 1695, after the Tartar invasion, on the orders of Hetman Jabłonowski, the French engineer Desraux made a new project for the city's fortifications, similar to the Berens concept. Both projects, preserved in the form of iconographic messages, may indicate the fact that in Lviv in the 90-ies of the 17th century, competitions for the modernization of fortifications, similar to those organized at that time in Gdańsk, were carried out.

The role of Berens in the process of organizing the “military academy” in 1674 in Jarosław, undertaken by Jan III and Stanisław Jabłonowski, is still unclear. In November 1666, he was elected deputy for the army for the Warsaw Diet of 1667, presenting to the Chamber of Deputies the financial and personnel demands of the Crown Army. Between 1688-1694? he styled himself as a *miecznik* of Novogrod – Siewierz¹¹.

From 1689, he leased from the Rzewuski and Łużecki families, villages in the Lviv region – Podborka and Kamieniopol, which he gave to Atanazy Miączyński, in 1694 for leasing. In addition, he kept the village of Domażyr (Lviv powiat) in a pledge from Jabłonowski's. Jan Berens had considerable financial sums, leading significant property transactions, supporting the expansion of Lviv fortifications from his own funds and maintaining the regiment of infantry, constituting the garrison of Lviv.

He died in 1704 in Lviv, with his wife Maria Wysocka, a Lviv townswoman people, he did not leave children – his unknown relative was a Lieutenant of the Lithuanian Guards in 1744-1745¹².

What we know only is about Jerzy and Paweł, that they served in the corps of the Crown artillery in 1683-1689, while Jakub in his youth, probably together with his brother Jan, studied fortification and engineering in Leiden, later served in the Dutch and Swedish armies. In 1659, Jakub was taken prisoner by the Polish captivity and took up service in the crown army. In (1673) 1674 he was the captain and major in the infantry regiment of Stanisław Jabłonowski, and in 1683-1689 he was a lieutenant colonel and commander of the hetman unit and a participant in the fighting with Turkish and Tatar army, for example in the Chocim battle of 1673 and Vienna in 1683¹³.

With the privilege of April 21, 1683, together with Jan, he received the Polish ennoblement on the condition of converting to Catholic religion – for war merit, on the recommendation of both Crown Hetmans. In 1687, he gave up the well-known Górski family with his rights to the village council in Borszczów, in the Ruthenian Province. He is sometimes identified with Jakub as a lieutenant in the regiment of the Swedish guard of the Swedish King Charles XI in 1691, which may indicate

¹⁰ DYBAŚ 1998: 162-163.

¹¹ *Urządnicy województw kijowskiego i czernihowskiego XV-XVIII wieku. Spisy*, p. 218, nr 1751.

¹² WAGNER 2003: 9.

¹³ WIMMER 1983.

a transfer from Poland to Sweden and the fact of staying at the Lutheran denomination. Jakub died after 1689-1691, his family unions are unknown¹⁴.

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Summary

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¹⁴ WAGNER 2013: 15-16.