

auch dadurch, dass mehrere Straßen von lokaler Bedeutung gesperrt wurden. Hierzu zählten die Straßen entlang der Düna und weiter über den Fluss nach Livland. Den Einwohnern vor Ort wurden dadurch große Unannehmlichkeiten bei der Kommunikation mit ihren Nachbarn bereitet. Für eine detaillierte Auswertung der Auswirkungen der Konvention auf das Herzogtum Kurland wären jedoch weitere Untersuchungen nötig.

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SUMMARY

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*A Simple Annexation? The Trade and  
Border Convention Concluded between  
the Duchy of Courland and the Russian  
Empire on 10/21 May 1783*

Representatives of the Russian Empire and the Duchy of Courland signed a trade and border convention on 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1783 in Riga. Although historically this convention was merely of local significance, it provides a colourful example for the methods Empress Catherine II sought to achieve her political goals with. In other words, it was an almost classical case of diplomacy conducted from a position of power. Russia from the onset made it very clear to its small neighbour that it felt entitled to trade freely on the Duchy's territory. Without the Duke's knowledge, in March 1783 a Russian military unit penetrated Courland with the order to search for deserters and peasants who had fled from Livonia and other parts of the Empire. Additionally, this unit was obliged to count the subjects of Russia (temporarily) residing in the Duchy.

Among the demands Catherine II addressed to Courland we find the abolition of all transit duties and fees on the roads leading through the Duchy to Riga, and the liquidation of wrecking. Moreover the Empress justified Russia's claims to the region of Sloka near Riga at the coast of the Baltic Sea in terms of history: the Empire considered itself to be the legal successor to Sweden. The negotiations between both sides started in Riga

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litauischen Waren den Transitzoll in Bauske, Friedrichstadt und Jakobstadt nicht mehr zu erheben. Die Brücken- und Landungsbrückengebühren waren davon jedoch nicht betroffen. Diarium des dieses Jahr einfalligen ordinären und zur Continuation des durch den Landtags-Schluss de dato Mitau den 12ten October 1778 toto cum suo effectu et robore limitirten und von SHD auf den 17ten Julii 1780 bestimmten und ausgeschriebenen Landtages, nebst dazu gehörigen Beylagen, Mitau o. J., S. 92. Doch damals hatte dieses Verbot in Kurland nur einen vorläufigen Status; es ist auch nicht gewiss, ob es überhaupt befolgt wurde. Infolge der Konvention waren die erwähnten Gebühren und Kosten künftig gesetzwidrig.

on 11<sup>th</sup> of May. However, the pressure exercised on Courland already before the talks started was not reduced. Without any preparation or discussion on the very first day of their meeting the Russian representatives presented the Duke's delegates with a draft of the convention to be signed. Remarks and protests from the Courland delegation were not even discussed. Consequently, the document was signed almost without any changes on 21<sup>st</sup> of May. The only thing the Duke's delegates achieved was that Libau and Windau retained their right as port cities. However, their movement of goods was limited considerably.

The Duchy of Courland lost some parts of its territory (Sloka and some other lands); the rights of the inhabitants to profit from transit duties and trade were limited especially concerning goods from Poland-Lithuania. During negotiations about the new border in July the Russian representatives presented their colleagues a map drawn in St Petersburg where the exact border line already was fixed. Again all protests were rejected simply because the Empress herself had already approved of the map. However, the incorporation of Sloka into the Empire did not mean any changes for the land owners: it was only a change of subordination. So far we do not know how and to what extent this convention really affected the Duchy's trade as there are no detailed investigations.