

# Andrzej Korytko

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## "Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter brevväxling", Stockholm 2007 : [recenzja]

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Echa Przeszłości 12, 207-209

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Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Many Voices/) discuss the ceremony of unveiling tsarina Catherine's monument in Vilnius in 1904 which was attended by Lithuanian nobility. This event stirred outrage in the Polish community<sup>3</sup>, and it provoked a discussion on the Polish elites' right to participate in the ceremony. Although they provide for an interesting reading, the above articles seem to be weakly connected to the primary subject of the book.

The books include bibliographic notes, and the entire text is augmented with footnotes. As emphasized by the authors, the texts were deliberately left without comments for an unbiased presentation of political, historical and cultural thought in Poland and Lithuania at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reviewed publication has immense academic value owing to the excellent choice of source materials. It is a helpful tool for researchers investigating the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations.

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***Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling, Senare avdelningen, Bd. 13: Brev från Jacob Spens och Jan Rutgers, utgivna av Arne Jönsson, Stockholm 2007, pp. 643.***

The thirteenth volume of the second series of the monumental collection of Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna's diplomatic correspondence is a much-awaited publication. The collection dates back to 1888 when volume one of the first series of letters written by the chancellor himself came out in print<sup>1</sup>. In the most recent body of work, the letters to the chancellor authored by Sir James Spens and Jan Rutgers have been edited by Arne Jönsson, professor of classical languages at Lund University.

It is highly unlikely that the thirteenth volume will be the last part of the impressive publishing effort spanning more than 120 years. The collection of letters written and received by the chancellor during his 40-year reign comprises 500 volumes. The previous publication accounted for the letters authored by Axel Oxenstierna until 1636, while the correspondence addressed to the chancellor included letters from King Gustav II Adolf and

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<sup>3</sup> For further information about this event in contemporary literature, see: R. Jurkowski, *Ziemiaństwo polskie Kresów Północno-Wschodnich 1864–1904. Działalność społeczno-gospodarcza*, Warsaw 2001, pp. 515–536; idem, Aleksander Meysztowicz, „Fragment Wspomnień – Książę Mirski”, *Białoruskie Zeszyty Historyczne*, vol. 21 (2004), pp. 218–249.

<sup>1</sup> Sixteen volumes have been published as part of the first series, the most recent being *Rikskansleren Axel Oxenstiernas skrifter och brevväxling*. Avd. 1, Bd. 16: *Brev 1636–1654*, Del 1 och 2, utg. av H. Backhaus, Stockholm 2009. I would like to thank Ms. Ewa Berndtsson of Riksarkivet in Stockholm for providing me a copy of the reviewed publication.

key figures in the state, among them pfalzgraf Jan Kazimierz, Johan Skytte, the chancellor's brother – Gabriel Gustavsson Oxenstierna, Per Brahe, Swedish army commanders Johan Banér, Gustav Horn, Lennart Torstenson, Carl Gustav Wrangl, as well as Herman Wrangl and Hugo Grotius. As indicated by the Publisher (page 10), this list is also inclusive of “two important figures in Oxenstierna's diplomatic network”, namely Sir James Spens and Jan Rutgers.

Spens was a Scottish officer and a military entrepreneur who served as Swedish ambassador to London and British ambassador to Stockholm. He embarked on his diplomatic career in 1612–1613 as ambassador to James I Stuart during peace talks between Christian IV and Gustav II Adolf. Commissioned by the Swedish king, Spens served two diplomatic missions in London in 1613–1620 and 1623–1626. In 1627, he was appointed British ambassador to Prussia, and he fought in the Swedish army during the Polish-Swedish war of 1626–1629. His last task was to recruit Scottish soldiers for the Swedish army and transport the troops to the theater of the Thirty Years' War in Germany.

Jan Rutgers was a Dutch philologist and a lawyer who became a diplomat. As a Swedish representative, he served as emissary to the Dutch Republic and the Czech Republic (1620), and he participated in peace talks with Poland in Riga (1622–1623). Rutgers' sudden death in the Hague in 1625 put an abrupt end to his promising career. He was 36. Both diplomats played an important role in Sweden's diplomatic activities in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their letters to the chancellor provide readers with an insight into Sweden's diplomatic policies and methods of the time.

In addition to the diplomats' correspondence, the publication features a foreword, an introduction, publishing principles, biographical notes, references and an index of terms. A short foreword by Helmut Backhaus, Arne Jönsson and Per-Gunnar Ottoson delivers information about Axel Oxenstierna and both series of *Rikskansleren...* In the Introduction (pages 10–20), the Editor provides biographical sketches of Spens and Rutgers with an indication of the referenced sources.

In publishing the collection of letters, A. Jönsson relied mostly on the principles developed by Herman Brulin in 1907 with modernized and updated Swedish and Latin spelling. The format of previous publications has been preserved: every letter begins with an indication of the place and the date on which it was written (giving the letter an informal title), it is followed by an English abstract and the text of the original letter. In line with the formula of the series, letters are published in the old style, i.e. according to the Julian calendar. As regards letters written between 1 January and 25 March, marked as “stilo Anglico”, their dates were changed by the Publisher in line with the principles of the Julian calendar. For example, a letter written by Spens on 7 March 1618 according to the English style was dated 7 March 1619 in the Julian calendar. The latest publication has been written in

English, whereas the preceding parts of the series were developed for the benefit of Swedish-speaking readers.

The edited source materials comprise 86 letters written by James Spens in 1613–1630 and 185 letters addressed by Jan Rutgers to Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna in 1615–1625. Succinct reviews do not support an analysis of the entire body of correspondence, nevertheless, A. Jönsson has edited his sources carefully by adhering to the good practices of his predecessors. The letters written by Spens and Rutgers constitute a valuable supplement to the previously published correspondence. They throw more light on diplomatic campaigns in Europe and Sweden's international relations at the outbreak of and during the Thirty Years' War. As professional diplomats who found themselves at the heart of turbulent events, Spens and Rutgers were not only effective informants, but also excellent observers of reality. The letters contain many encrypted details which have been deciphered by A. Jönsson. The letters written by Spens in 1627 during his stay in Prussia – Elbing and Pillau (pages 204–212), are particularly valuable for Polish researchers. The latest addition to the collection of the chancellor's letters also explores the intricate methods of building a diplomatic network in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

The publication is supplemented by several hundred short biographical notes, some with an indication of the referenced sources. An index of the terms used in the text is found at the back of the book. My only critical remark is that the Editor has failed to indicate the present names of the discussed geographical locations and that he was not very consistent as regards their spelling. The vast majority of place names are given in English, although on some occasions, the authentic spelling is provided, such as “Kraków”.

The reviewed publication significantly expands our knowledge about diplomatic policies in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Until now, the letters of Spens and Rutgers have been accessible to few researchers, mostly those exploring the Riksarkivet in Stockholm. The latest addition to the series will provide historians world-wide with an insight into the meanders of Sweden's diplomatic relations in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is our sincere hope that the project to publish Axel Oxenstierna's correspondence will be continued.

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