

AIRPORT



REVIEW



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GDANSK-TROJMIASTO AIRPORT

BEZPIECZNE
LOTNISKO
Safe Airport



Sopot in Berlin

SOPOT W BERLINIE



Fot. Janusz Rycharowski

Gdańsk was from the beginning a melting pot of different cultures, languages, religions and traditions. Scandinavian people (mostly Danes and Swedes) have never been a large group there and they have formed no more than 1% of the whole population. Yet they have left here some of their documents, buildings, chapels and names, as well as their graves and epitaphs. The most famous epitaphs belong to the families of Posse and Gyllenstierna.

Posse family has achieved high position in Sweden in the second half of XVI century. Goran Posse was one of Sigismundus Vasa supporters in his fight for Swedish throne. He was caught by Vasa's competitor, prince Charles IX. The Prince condemned him and four other captured Vasa's supporters to death. But Posse

was lucky – he was pardoned and he came to Gdańsk in 1603. Here he became a leader of an opposition against Charles IX rule and later against his son, Gustav II Adolph. Posse died in 1616 and one of his sons founded an epitaph in Virgin Mary Basilica, in the Chapel of Saint Catherine. The epitaph survived to tell us about the tragic fate of this proud Baron who dedicated his life and wealth to the just cause.

In Virgin Mary Basilica there is one more Swedish epitaph. Above the entrance to the former Saint Reinhold Chapel (where Memling's famous painting is now being presented) there is an epitaph devoted to four Swedes who lived and died in Gdańsk. One of great Swedish families – Gyllenstierna had two members living in the XVII century Gdańsk. Johan Nilsson Gyllenstierna was well known in Sweden because of his scandalous marriage. He secretly married Sigrid Brahe because she had been promised to someone else. They were in a great hurry so they got married on Wednesday and the whole affair was called „Wednesday Wedding”. Johan also was active in Sigismundus III Vasa's restitution to the Swedish throne. In 1599 he led Vasa's fleet against Charles IX's ships and the battle ended in a defeat. There are three other Swedish names in the epitaph: Arvid Stenbock, Gustav Brahe and Sigmundus Guldenstern (Johan Gyllenstierna's son). The name „Guldenstern” is a German version of Swedish name „Gyllenstierna” („Golden star”). On the epitaph

there is a heraldic sign of 'golden star' at the chapel's entrance. In the second half of XVII century it used to be a place of Swedish funerals in Gdańsk.

The third well known Swedish epitaph is to be found in Saint Brigida's church. Gabriel Posse – the older son of Goran, founded the epitaph. Gabriel was a trusted ally of Sigismundus III Vasa who put him in charge of rebuilding Polish navy after 1623. Three years later Gabriel was the Head of Maritime Committee appointed by the King in Gdańsk. King Sigismundus called him „intimus amicus meus” – „my trusted friend”.

Gabriel was not successful in his private life. He married Beata Sparre in 1622. She came from a rich and dignified family – her uncle, Erik Sparre delivered an important speech in Polish parliament during 1587 election after which the members of parliament elected Sigismundus to be a king of Poland. A year after their marriage the first daughter Constance died and in 1627 Beata died in labour together with her infant daughter Brigida. Many contemporaries in Gdańsk believed that it was a God-send punishment for Gabriel had kidnapped Beata from a monastery in Chelmno. They were both Catholics. Gabriel died in 1632 and he was buried next to his nearest and dearest in Saint Brigida's church. From the Latin epitaph located near the main altar there we can learn about their tragic lives and death.

Wojciech Eygosa