

The Peace of Altranstädt

The Peace of Altranstädt was an important intermediate stage in the Great Northern War (1700-1721), which dealt with the imperial domination of the Baltic region between the Russian Tsarist Kingdom and the Kingdom of Sweden.

In 1697, the Saxon Elector August II (the Strong) was crowned Polish-Lithuanian king. He became not only one of the richest and most powerful European rulers, but also a factor in any European conflict constellation because of the geographical location of his empire. Since Poland-Lithuania was traditionally regarded as the antipole to Sweden, Tsar Peter I forged an alliance with this country and Denmark and initiated a war for supremacy in the Baltic Sea region (Great Northern War 1700-1721). But Russia suffered a severe defeat at Narva (1700), and Poland proved from the outset as the military far inferior ally. The Swedish king Karl XII. occupied Poland and in 1704 forced August to relinquish the Polish crown. In 1706 he also occupied Saxony and set up his quarters in Altranstädt. This was provocative symbolic politics, because not far away is Lützen, where the legendary Swedish king and "patron of Protestantism", Gustav Adolf, had fallen. Since Karl had crossed over Silesia, ie, on Reich territory, threatened the conflict participation of the emperor and thus a possible link with the Spanish War of Succession, which could have led to a pan-European war. Thus not only the English general John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, but also the ambassadors of the Emperor, Prussia and Holland arrived in Altranstädt to bring about a peace. The financially exhausted Saxon estates wanted peace as much as Karl, who wanted to move against Russia.

On September 24, 1706 August let a separate peace in Altranstädt negotiations. In it he renounced the Polish crown and the alliance with Russia and swore "eternal friendship" with Sweden. He was dissatisfied with that and hoped for backing from the European powers, but in November he had to sign and ratify the original version. The guarantor powers were Brandenburg-Prussia, Great Britain and the Netherlands.

Closely related to peace is the Altranstadt Convention of 1707. The Catholic emperor, who at this time was at war with France and Hungary, did not want a permanent conflict with Sweden. Thus, in Silesia, six "Gandenkirchen" were granted to the Protestants in order to ward off intervention pretexts on the part of the Protestant powers. At the same time it was possible to prevent a possible link between the wars and the Swedish invasion of the Reich. Immediately thereafter, extensive tax and administrative reforms were carried out in Saxony for consolidation. In 1709, August recanted the peace of Altranstädt and he was also able to regain the Polish crown. The importance of the peace of Altranstädt, which is a classic example of early modern peace treaties in form and content, is that it could - albeit for a short time - bring about a European peace order and successfully prevent the "globalization" of wars.

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