

= Georg Forster =

Johann Georg Adam Forster (German pronunciation : [ʤe??k ʔf??st?] ; November 27 , 1754 ? January 10 , 1794) was a naturalist , ethnologist , travel writer , journalist , and revolutionary . At an early age , he accompanied his father , Johann Reinhold Forster , on several scientific expeditions , including James Cook 's second voyage to the Pacific . His report of that journey , *A Voyage Round the World* , contributed significantly to the ethnology of the people of Polynesia and remains a respected work . As a result of the report , Forster was admitted to the Royal Society at the early age of twenty @-@ two and came to be considered one of the founders of modern scientific travel literature .

After returning to continental Europe , Forster turned toward academia . He traveled to Paris to seek out a discussion with the American revolutionary Benjamin Franklin in 1777 . He taught natural history at the Collegium Carolinum in the Ottoneum , Kassel (1778 ? 84) , and later at the Academy of Vilna (Vilnius University) (1784 ? 87) . In 1788 , he became head librarian at the University of Mainz . Most of his scientific work during this time consisted of essays on botany and ethnology , but he also prefaced and translated many books about travel and exploration , including a German translation of Cook 's diaries .

Forster was a central figure of the Enlightenment in Germany , and corresponded with most of its adherents , including his close friend Georg Christoph Lichtenberg . His ideas and personality influenced Alexander von Humboldt , one of the great scientists of the 19th century . When the French took control of Mainz in 1792 , Forster became one of the founders of the city 's Jacobin Club and went on to play a leading role in the Mainz Republic , the earliest republican state in Germany . During July 1793 and while he was in Paris as a delegate of the young Mainz Republic , Prussian and Austrian coalition forces regained control of the city and Forster was declared an outlaw . Unable to return to Germany and separated from his friends and family , he died in Paris of illness in early 1794 .

= = Early life = =

Georg Forster was born in the small village of Nassenhuben (Mokry Dwór) near Danzig (Gda?sk) , in the province of Royal Prussia , in the Polish @-@ Lithuanian Commonwealth . He was the oldest of seven surviving children of Johann Reinhold Forster and Justina Elisabeth (née Nicolai) . His father was a naturalist , scientist and Reformed pastor . In 1765 , the Russian empress Catherine II commissioned the pastor to travel through Russia on a research journey and investigate the situation of a German colony on the Volga River . Georg , then ten years old , joined him . On the journey , which reached the Kalmyk steppe on the lower Volga , they discovered several new species , and the young Forster learned how to conduct scientific research and practice cartography . He also became fluent in Russian .

The report of the journey , which included sharp criticism of the governor of Saratov , was not well received at court . The Forsters claimed they had not received fair payment for their work and had to move house . They chose to settle in England in 1766 . The father took up teaching at the Dissenter 's Academy in Warrington and also translation work . At the age of only thirteen , the young Forster published his first book : an English translation of Lomonosov 's history of Russia , which was well received in scientific circles .

= = Around the world with Captain Cook = =

In 1772 , Forster 's father became a member of the Royal Society . This and the withdrawal of Joseph Banks resulted in his invitation by the British admiralty to join James Cook 's second expedition to the Pacific (1772 ? 75) . Georg Forster joined his father in the expedition again and was appointed as a draughtsman to his father . Johann Reinhold Forster 's task was to work on a scientific report of the journey 's discoveries that was to be published after their return .

They embarked HMS Resolution on July 13 , 1772 , in Plymouth . The ship 's route led first to the

South Atlantic , then through the Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean to the islands of Polynesia and finally around Cape Horn back to England , returning on July 30 , 1775 . During the three @-@ year journey , the explorers visited New Zealand , the Tonga islands , New Caledonia , Tahiti , the Marquesas Islands and Easter Island . They went further south than anybody before them , almost discovering Antarctica . The journey conclusively disproved the Terra Australis Incognita theory , which claimed there was a big , habitable continent in the South .

Supervised by his father , Georg Forster first undertook studies of the zoology and botanics of the southern seas , mostly by drawing animals and plants . However , Georg also pursued his own interests , which led to completely independent explorations in comparative geography and ethnology . He quickly learned the languages of the Polynesian islands . His reports on the people of Polynesia are well regarded today , as they describe the inhabitants of the southern islands with empathy , sympathy and largely without Western or Christian bias .

Unlike Louis Antoine de Bougainville , whose reports from a journey to Tahiti a few years earlier had initiated uncritical noble savage romanticism , Forster developed a sophisticated picture of the societies of the South Pacific islands . He described various social structures and religions that he encountered on the Society Islands , Easter Island and in Tonga and New Zealand , and ascribed this diversity to the difference in living conditions of these people . At the same time , he also observed that the languages of these fairly widely scattered islands were similar . About the inhabitants of the Nomuka islands (in the Ha 'apai island group of present @-@ day Tonga) , he wrote that their languages , vehicles , weapons , furniture , clothes , tattoos , style of beard , in short all of their being matched perfectly with what he had already seen while studying tribes on Tongatapu . However , he wrote , " we could not observe any subordination among them , though this had strongly characterised the natives of Tonga @-@ Tabboo , who seemed to descend even to servility in their obeisance to the king . "

The journey was rich in scientific results . However , the relationship between the Forsters and Cook and his officers was often problematic , due to the elder Forster 's fractious temperament as well as Cook 's refusal to allow more time for botanical and other scientific observation . Cook refused scientists on his third journey after his experiences with the Forsters .

= = Founder of modern travel literature = =

These conflicts continued after the journey with the problem of who should write the official account of the travels . Lord Sandwich , although willing to pay the promised money , was irritated with Johann Reinhold Forster 's opening chapter and tried to have it edited . However , Forster did not want to have his writing corrected " like a theme of a School @-@ boy " , and stubbornly refused any compromise . As a result , the official account was written by Cook , and the Forsters were deprived of the right to compile the account and did not obtain payment for their work . During the negotiations , the younger Forster decided to release an unofficial account of their travels . In 1777 , his book *A Voyage Round the World in His Britannic Majesty 's Sloop Resolution , Commanded by Capt. James Cook , during the Years , 1772 , 3 , 4 , and 5* was published . This report was the first account of Cook 's second voyage (it appeared six weeks before the official publication) and was intended for the general public . The English version and his own translation into German (published 1778 ? 80) earned the young author real fame . The poet Christoph Martin Wieland praised the book as the most important one of his time , and even today it remains one of the most important journey descriptions ever written . The book also had a significant impact on German literature , culture and science , influencing such scientists as Alexander von Humboldt and it inspired many ethnologists of later times .

Forster wrote well @-@ polished German prose , which was not only scientifically accurate and objective , but also exciting and easy to read . This differed from conventional travel literature of the time , insofar as it presented more than a mere collection of data ? it also demonstrated coherent , colourful and reliable ethnographical facts that resulted from detailed and sympathetic observation . He often interrupted the description to enrich it with philosophical remarks about his observations . His main focus was always on the people he encountered : their behavior , customs , habits ,

religions and forms of social organization . In *A Voyage Round the World* he even presented the songs sung by the people of Polynesia , complete with lyrics and notation . The book is one of the most important sources concerning the societies of the Southern Pacific from the times before European influence had become significant .

Both Forsters also published descriptions of their South Pacific travels in the Berlin @-@ based *Magazin von merkwürdigen neuen Reisebeschreibungen* (" Magazine of strange new travel accounts ") , and Georg published a translation of " *A Voyage to the South Sea* , by Lieutenant William Bligh , London 1792 " in 1791 ? 93 .

= = Forster at universities = =

The publication of *A Voyage Round the World* brought Forster scientific recognition all over Europe . The respectable Royal Society made him a member on January 9 , 1777 , though he was not even 23 years old . He was granted similar titles from academies ranging from Berlin to Madrid . These appointments , however , were unpaid .

In 1778 , he went to Germany to take a teaching position as a Natural History professor at the Collegium Carolinum in Kassel , where he met Therese Heyne , the daughter of classicist Christian Gottlob Heyne . She later became one of the first independent female writers in Germany . They married in 1785 (which was after he left Kassel) and had three children , but their marriage was not happy . From his time in Kassel on , Forster actively corresponded with important figures of the Enlightenment , including Lessing , Herder , Wieland and Goethe . He also initiated cooperation between the Carolinum in Kassel and the University of Göttingen where his friend Georg Christoph Lichtenberg worked . Together , they founded and published the scientific and literary journal *Göttingisches Magazin der Wissenschaften und Litteratur* . Forster 's closest friend , Samuel Thomas von Sömmering , arrived in Kassel shortly after Forster , and both were soon involved with the Rosicrucians in Kassel .

However , by 1783 Forster saw that his involvement with the Rosicrucians not only led him away from real science , but also deeper into debt (it is said he was not good at money) ; for these reasons Forster was happy to accept a proposal by the Polish Komisja Edukacji Narodowej (Commission of National Education) and became Chair of Natural History at Vilnius University in 1784 . Initially , he was accepted well in Vilnius , but he felt more and more isolated with time . Most of his contacts were still with scientists in Germany ; especially notable is his dispute with Immanuel Kant about the definition of race . In 1785 , Forster traveled to Halle where he submitted his thesis on the plants of the South Pacific for a doctorate in medicine . Back in Vilnius , Forster 's ambitions to build a real natural history scientific center could not get appropriate financial support from the Polish authorities . Moreover , his famous speech on natural history in 1785 went almost unnoticed and was not printed until 1843 . These events led to high tensions between him and the local community . Eventually , he broke the contract six years short of its completion as Catherine II of Russia had offered him a place on a journey around the world (the Mulovsky expedition) for a high honorarium and a position as a professor in Saint Petersburg . This resulted in a conflict between Forster and the influential Polish scientist J?drzej ?niadecki . However , the Russian proposal was withdrawn and Forster left Vilnius . He then settled in Mainz , where he became head librarian of the University of Mainz , a position held previously by his friend Johannes von Müller , who made sure Forster would succeed him when Müller moved to the administration of Elector Friedrich Karl Josef von Erthal .

Forster regularly published essays on contemporary explorations and continued to be a very prolific translator ; for instance , he wrote about Cook 's third journey to the South Pacific , and about the Bounty expedition , as well as translating Cook 's and Bligh 's diaries from these journeys into German . From his London years , Forster was in contact with Sir Joseph Banks , the initiator of the Bounty expedition and a participant in Cook 's first journey . While at the University of Vilnius he wrote the article " *Neuholland und die brittische Colonie in Botany @-@ Bay* " , published in the *Allgemeines historisches Taschenbuch* (Berlin , December 1786) , an essay on the future prospects of the English colony founded in New South Wales in 1788 .

Another interest of his was indology ? one of the main goals of his failed expedition to be financed by Catherine II had been to reach India . He translated the Sanskrit play Shakuntala using a Latin version provided by Sir William Jones ; this strongly influenced Herder and triggered German interest in the culture of India .

= = Views from the Lower Rhine = =

In the second quarter of 1790 , Forster and the young Alexander von Humboldt started from Mainz on a long journey through the Southern Netherlands , the United Provinces , and England , eventually finishing in Paris . The impressions from the journey were described in a three volume publication *Ansichten vom Niederrhein , von Brabant , Flandern , Holland , England und Frankreich im April , Mai und Juni 1790* (*Views of the Lower Rhine , from Brabant , Flanders , Holland , England , and France in April , May and June 1790*) , published 1791 ? 94 . Goethe said about the book : " One wants , after one has finished reading , to start it over , and wishes to travel with such a good and knowledgeable observer . " The book includes comments on the history of art that were as influential for the discipline as *A Voyage Round the world* was for ethnology . Forster was , for example , one of the first writers who gave just treatment to the Gothic architecture of Cologne Cathedral , which was widely perceived as " barbarian " at that time . The book conformed well to the early Romantic intellectual movements in German @-@ speaking Europe .

Forster 's main interest , however , was again focused on the social behavior of people , as 15 years earlier in the Pacific . The national uprisings in Flanders and Brabant and the revolution in France sparked his curiosity . The journey through these regions , together with the Netherlands and England , where citizens ' freedoms were equally well developed , in the end helped him to resolve his own political opinions . From that time on he was to be a confident opponent of the ancien régime . With other German scholars , he welcomed the outbreak of the revolution as a clear consequence of the Enlightenment . As early as July 30 , 1789 , shortly after he heard about the Storming of the Bastille , he wrote to his father @-@ in @-@ law , philologist Christian Gottlob Heyne , that it was beautiful to see what philosophy had nurtured in people 's minds and then had realized in the state . To educate people about their rights in this way , he wrote , was after all the surest way ; the rest would then result as if by itself .

= = Life as a revolutionary = =

= = = Foundation of the Mainz Republic = = =

The French revolutionary army under General Custine gained control over Mainz on October 21 , 1792 . Two days later , Forster joined others in establishing a Jacobin Club called " Freunde der Freiheit und Gleichheit " (" Friends of Freedom and Equality ") in the Electoral Palace . From early 1793 he was actively involved in organizing the Mainz Republic . This first republic located on German soil was constituted on the principles of democracy , and encompassed areas on the left bank of the Rhine between Landau and Bingen . Forster became vice @-@ president of the republic 's temporary administration and a candidate in the elections to the local parliament , the Rheinisch @-@ Deutscher Nationalkonvent (Rhenish @-@ German National Convention) . From January to March 1793 , he was an editor of *Die neue Mainzer Zeitung oder Der Volksfreund* (*The new Mainz newspaper or The People 's Friend*) . In his first article he wrote :

Die Pressefreiheit herrscht endlich innerhalb dieser Mauern , wo die Buchdruckerpresse erfunden ward .

The freedom of the press finally reigns within these walls where the printing press was invented .

This freedom did not last long , though . The Mainz Republic existed only until the retreat of the French troops in July 1793 after the Siege of Mainz .

Forster was not present in Mainz during the siege . As representatives of the Mainz National Convention , he and Adam Lux had been sent to Paris to apply for Mainz ? which was unable to

exist as an independent state ? to become a part of the French Republic . The application was accepted , but had no effect , since Mainz was conquered by Prussian and Austrian troops , and the old order was restored . Forster lost his library and collections and decided to remain in Paris .

= = = Death in revolutionary Paris = = =

Based on a decree by Emperor Francis II inflicting punishments on German subjects who collaborated with the French revolutionary government , Forster was declared an outlaw and placed under the Imperial ban ; a prize of 100 ducats was set on his head and he could not return to Germany . Devoid of all means of making a living and without his wife , who had stayed in Mainz with their children and her later husband Ludwig Ferdinand Huber , he remained in Paris . At this point the revolution in Paris had entered the Reign of Terror introduced by the Committee of Public Safety under the rule of Maximilien Robespierre . Forster had the opportunity to experience the difference between the promises of the revolution of happiness for all and its cruel practice . In contrast to many other German supporters of the revolution , like for instance Friedrich Schiller , Forster did not turn back from his revolutionary ideals under the pressure of the terror . He viewed the events in France as a force of nature that could not be slowed and that had to release its own energies to avoid being even more destructive .

Before the reign of terror reached its climax , Forster died after a rheumatic illness in his small attic apartment at Rue des Moulins in Paris in January 1794 , at the age of thirty @-@ nine . At the time , he was making plans to visit India .

= = Views on nations and their culture = =

Forster had partial Scottish roots and was born in Polish Royal Prussia , and therefore was by birth a Polish subject . He worked in Russia , England , Poland and in several German countries of his time . Finally , he finished his life in France . He worked in different milieus and traveled a lot from his youth on . It was his view that this , together with his scientific upbringing based on the principles of the Enlightenment , gave him a wide perspective on different ethnic and national communities :

All peoples of the earth have equal claims to my good will ... and my praise and blame are independent of national prejudice .

In his opinion all human beings have the same abilities with regard to reason , feelings and imagination , but these basic ingredients are used in different ways and in different environments , which gives rise to different cultures and civilizations . According to him it is obvious that the culture on Tierra del Fuego is at a lower level of development than European culture , but he also admits that the conditions of life there are much more difficult and this gives people very little chance to develop a higher culture . Based on these opinions he was classified as one of the main examples of 18th @-@ century German cosmopolitanism .

In contrast to the attitude expressed in these writings and to his Enlightenment background , he used insulting terms expressing prejudice against Poles in his private letters during his stay in Vilnius and in a diary from the journey through Poland , but he never published any manifestation of this attitude . These insults only became known after his death , when his private correspondence and diaries were released to the public . Since Forster 's published descriptions of other nations were seen as impartial scientific observations , Forster 's disparaging description of Poland in his letters and diaries was often taken at face value in Imperial and Nazi Germany , where it was used as a means of science @-@ based support for a purported German superiority . The spreading of the " Polnische Wirtschaft " (Polish economy) stereotype is most likely due to the influence of his letters .

Forster 's attitude brought him into conflict with the people of the different nations he encountered and made him welcome nowhere , as he was too revolutionary and antinational for Germans , proud and opposing in his dealings with Englishmen , too unconcerned about Polish science for Poles , and too insignificant politically and ignored while in France .

= = Legacy = =

After Forster 's death , his works were mostly forgotten , except in professional circles . This was partly due to his involvement in the French revolution . However , his reception changed with the politics of the times , with different periods focusing on different parts of his work . In the period of rising nationalism after the Napoleonic era he was regarded in Germany as a " traitor to his country " , overshadowing his work as an author and scientist . This attitude rose even though the philosopher Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel wrote about Forster at the beginning of the 19th century :

Among all those authors of prose who are justified in laying claim to a place in the ranks of German classics , none breathes the spirit of free progress more than Georg Forster .

Some interest in Forster 's life and revolutionary actions was revived in the context of the liberal sentiments leading up to the 1848 revolution . But he was largely forgotten in the Germany of Wilhelm II and more so in the Third Reich , where interest in Forster was limited to his stance on Poland from his private letters . Interest in Forster resumed in the 1960s in East Germany , where he was interpreted as a champion of class struggle . The GDR research station in Antarctica that was opened on October 25 , 1987 , was named after him . In West Germany , the search for democratic traditions in German history also lead to a more diversified picture of him in the 1970s . The Alexander von Humboldt foundation named a scholarship program for foreign scholars from developing countries after him . His reputation as one of the first and most outstanding German ethnologists is indisputable , and his works are seen as crucial in the development of ethnology in Germany into a separate branch of science .

The ethnographical items collected by Georg and Johann Reinhold Forster are now presented as the Cook @-@ Forster @-@ Sammlung (Cook ? Forster Collection) in the Sammlung für Völkerkunde anthropological collection in Göttingen . Another collection of items collected by the Forsters is on display at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford .

= = Works = =

A Voyage Round the World in His Britannic Majesty 's Sloop Resolution , Commanded by Capt. James Cook , during the Years , 1772 , 3 , 4 , and 5 (1777) (preview)

De Plantis Esculentis Insularum Oceani Australis Commentatio Botanica (1786) available online at Project Gutenberg

Florulae Insularum Australium Prodrum (1786) available online at Project Gutenberg

Essays on moral and natural geography , natural history and philosophy (1789 ? 97)

Views of the Lower Rhine , Brabant , Flanders (three volumes , 1791 ? 94)

Georg Forsters Werke , Sämtliche Schriften , Tagebücher , Briefe , Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin , G. Steiner et al . Berlin : Akademie 1958

Werke in vier Bänden , Gerhard Steiner (editor) . Leipzig : Insel 1965 . ASIN : B00307GDQ0

Reise um die Welt , Gerhard Steiner (editor) . Frankfurt am Main : Insel , 1983 . ISBN 3 @-@ 458 @-@ 32457 @-@ 7

Ansichten vom Niederrhein , Gerhard Steiner (editor) . Frankfurt am Main : Insel , 1989 . ISBN 3 @-@ 458 @-@ 32836 @-@ X

Georg Forster , Briefe an Ernst Friedrich Hector Falcke . Neu aufgefundene Forsteriana aus der Gold- und Rosenkreuzerzeit , Michael Ewert , Hermann Schüttler (editors) . Georg @-@ Forster @-@ Studien Beiheft 4 . Kassel : Kassel University Press 2009 . ISBN 978 @-@ 3 @-@ 89958 @-@ 485 @-@ 1