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## On the correspondence of the Adam Czartoryski party with imam Shamil and his naibs\*

**Zarys treści:** Artykuł dotyczy korespondencji pomiędzy polskim obozem niepodległościowym, na czele którego stał Adam Czartoryski, a imamem Szamilem i jego naibami. Główną bazę źródłową, na której się oparłem, stanowią dokumenty archiwalne, przechowywane obecnie w Bibliotece Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie, a także wspomnienia Michała Czajkowskiego, który w latach 40. XIX w. był agentem A. Czartoryskiego w Stambule.

**Outline of the contents:** The article deals with correspondence between the Polish independence party headed by Adam Czartoryski and imam Shamil and his naibs. The main source base I relied on was archival documents now held at the Czartoryski Princes Library in Kraków, as well as the memoirs of Michał Czajkowski, who was Czartoryski's agent in Istanbul in the 1840s.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Adam Czartoryski, Michał Czajkowski, imam Szamil, Kaukaz, Rosja

**Keywords:** Adam Czartoryski, Michał Czajkowski, imam Shamil, Caucasus, Russia

The relations between 19th-century pro-independence Polish exiles and the leaders of Caucasian nations are still an underdeveloped subject, even though many documents concerning this issue can be found in archives both Polish, mostly in Kraków, and foreign, primarily in London, Paris and Istanbul. Until contemporary times, the best book discussing this subject was *Sprawy kaukaskie w polityce europejskiej w 1831–1863* (Caucasian Questions in European Policy from 1831 to 1863) by Ludwik Widerszal, published before the Second World War, in 1934 (and again in 2011), even though it does not deal specifically with the relations between Polish leaders and the Caucasus. Of note is also the biography of Teofil Łapiński

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\* This article, written with the assistance of Professor Vazha Kiknadze from the Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology in Tbilisi, has been made possible thanks to financing of the *Documents on Caucasus and Polish-Caucasian relations held in the Princes Czartoryski Library in Kraków* project by the Lanckoroński Foundation.

by Jerzy Łątka, entitled *Romantyczny kondotier* (The Romantic Mercenary), even though it is a popular work that deals only with the western part of the Caucasus in the very limited period of 1857–1859 while Łapiński stayed there.

Although the issue of contacts between Polish exiles and leaders of independent Caucasian nations challenging Russian armies was left unexplored, some Polish authors that mentioned the Caucasus remained under the erroneous impression that the hosts of imam Shamil, the most important Caucasian leader who opposed the Russians in the mid-19th century, were replete with Poles. My comments about the lack of sources confirming such conclusions can be found in the preface to the memoirs of Karol Kalinowski entitled *Pamiętnik mojej żołnierki na Kaukazie i niewoli u Szamila. Od 1844 do 1854 roku* (My days of Caucasian soldiering and Shamil captivity. From 1844 to 1854) that appeared in 2017 thanks to the DIALOG publishing house. In this article, however, I wish to discuss the letters, either preserved until today or mentioned in other sources, exchanged between representatives of the Polish pro-independence faction and imam Shamil and his naibs.<sup>1</sup>

The Caucasus made an early appearance in the exile plans of Adam Czartoryski. In 1836, he sent his first emissary who planned to reach the region, Marian Brzozowski. An extant memorandum states that Brzozowski's task was to investigate whether it would be possible to set up a "Polish station" in the region to contact its inhabitants, provide military support in the struggle against Russia, and enter into agreements with Poles serving in the Tsar's army. Czartoryski assumed moreover that Brzozowski would assess the real potential of the Caucasian mountaineers, their organisation, actions planned by their leaders and possibilities of forming a regular army, and also gather information about the attitude of Poles wishing to defect from Tsarist troops. The prince was also interested in whether some Polish general could win the confidence of the locals and lead the Circassian forces or at least some detachment thereof.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, Brzozowski never set out for the Caucasus and reached only the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup>

No mention of Shamil was made in the documents concerning the planned expedition. As he had become an imam a mere two years earlier, in 1834, and had not yet achieved any notable successes in fighting against Russia, the Hotel Lambert members could well have been ignorant of his existence. The situation changed in the early 1840s. In 1844, the first emissary of Czartoryski, Ludwik Zwierkowski (travelling under the assumed name of Kara-Krak-bey), arrived to the Caucasus. His mission was to make contact with Shamil. Before the expedition, he was provided

<sup>1</sup> "Naib" is an Arabic word meaning "deputy". In Shamil's state, naibs were his plenipotentiaries who acted as military and administrative authorities for a specific territory.

<sup>2</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5282, file: *Pisma*, document: *Memorandum dla Pana Mariana Brzozowskiego o Kaukazie*.

<sup>3</sup> R. Żurawski vel Grajewski, "Kaukaz w 'dyplomacji' księcia Adama Jerzego Czartoryskiego w okresie kryzysu wschodniego (1832–1840)", *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych*, 2 (2003), no. 4, p. 189.

by Michał Czajkowski, the then main Hotel Lambert agent in Turkey, with a letter asking the imam to take joint action with Czartoryski in the Caucasus and Europe (a copy of which I was unable to locate). The Zwierkowski expedition is known to us from the notes of Czajkowski,<sup>4</sup> to whom Zwierkowski reported upon his return to Istanbul. According to him, when he arrived at Dzhubga,<sup>5</sup> he was greeted with all honours by influential beys from the Shapsug,<sup>6</sup> Abadzekh<sup>7</sup> and Nogai people.<sup>8</sup> Problems arose, however, when he resolved to travel further to meet Shamil. This was because almost everyone present objected to the imam arriving among the Circassians<sup>9</sup> for fear that he might submit them to his rule, as was the case with the peoples of Chechnya and Dagestan. One of the most influential figures among them said to Zwierkowski with reference to Shamil: “let sheikh Shamil have his wars and we will have ours too, but to him we will not submit; his rule is harder than the rule of the Turks when they governed Anapa. Dealing with the Turks, we could make money, but with Shamil we cannot be sure to keep our heads on our shoulders. If matters came to head, it would be better to submit to the powerful and mighty Russian tsar who merely wishes us to bow down to him but does not desire our estates and protects the life of his subjects.”<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, a conversation between Czajkowski and members of the Circassian aristocracy that took place in Istanbul in May 1846 reveals that some (including Hadji Kerantukh Berzek<sup>11</sup>) considered defecting to Shamil and asking to become his naibs.<sup>12</sup>

In his memoirs, Czajkowski<sup>13</sup> emphasised that “many (Adyghe – P.A.) had contacts with the Russian authorities which provided them with salaries and gifts. At any rate, the love of freedom or, strictly speaking, anarchy, was deeply ingrained in these people.” Eventually, Zwierkowski was sent to Shamil, but he was also

<sup>4</sup> Czajkowski published his memoirs in Russian in 1883.

<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, Dzhubga is a town in southwestern Krasnodar Krai in Russia.

<sup>6</sup> The Shapsugs are a sub-ethnos of the Adyghe. Today, their numbers in Russia are less than 4,000, mostly in Adyghe and Krasnodar Krai in the vicinity of Sochi and Tuapse.

<sup>7</sup> The Abadzekhs are a sub-ethnos of the Adyghe, now living in the locality of Khakurinokhahl in Adyghe. In the 19th century, they were one of the more numerous Caucasian peoples, but the majority left for Turkey as a result of conflicts with Russia. Today, they are living mostly in Middle East countries.

<sup>8</sup> The Nogais are a Turkic people living in North Caucasus. Today, they are most numerous in Dagestan, Stavropol Krai and Karachay-Cherkessia.

<sup>9</sup> “Circassians” is an exoethnonym and “Adyghe” an endoethnonym.

<sup>10</sup> *Записки Михаила Чайковского (Мехмет-Садък Паши)*, [http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Turk/XIX/1820-1840/Sadyk\\_pasa\\_2/text20.htm](http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Turk/XIX/1820-1840/Sadyk_pasa_2/text20.htm) (access: 09.07.2017).

<sup>11</sup> Hadji Kerantukh Berzek (1804–1881) was born in an aristocratic Ubykh family. He was one of the leaders who opposed Russian conquests in the western part of North Caucasus. In 1864, together with other Ubykhs, he migrated to the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>12</sup> BKCh, ref. no. 5438, file: *Dokumenty dotyczące misji na Kaukazie*, document: *Wyciąg z depeszy carogrodzkiej z dnia 26 kwietnia 1846*.

<sup>13</sup> The Czajkowski memoirs do not allow to conclude whether he cited the works of Zwierkowski or whether this opinion was his own.

instructed to communicate to the imam that he should limit his war to Dagestan only, while the Circassians would wage theirs between the Laba and Kuban rivers,<sup>14</sup> and that he should never attempt to unify or coordinate both forces. Accompanied by several Circassian riders, Zwierkowski reached the borders of Ossetia, where he was wounded by an unknown hand. Czajkowski suspected that this was the doing of the Circassians themselves, who were concerned that Zwierkowski would bring Shamil and his miurids [disciples – trans. note] to them.<sup>15</sup> According to Czajkowski, the assassin was one of the Shapsug Zazyoglu brothers who undertook to lead the Pole to Shamil.<sup>16</sup> Following the incident, it was decided to limit the embassy to Shamil to just two men bearing letters, and wait for an answer. The answer came promptly and was forwarded to Czajkowski by Zwierkowski.<sup>17</sup> His mission ended, and he returned to Turkey in March 1846.

The letter of Shamil to Czajkowski, delivered through Zwierkowski, is one of the few traces of contacts between Polish exiles and the leader of independent eastern Caucasus peoples. I call it a “trace”, because information about its existence, as well as about yet another letter sent by Shamil, can be found only in the Czajkowski’s memoirs. In his work, Czartoryski’s agent in Istanbul briefly summarised the letter. Shamil reportedly assured him that he knew about the bravery of Poles and would be greatly pleased to become their ally. He also asked Czajkowski to inform his superior that he would regard all Poles that reach him<sup>18</sup> as his children and count them among his miurids.<sup>19</sup> Shamil’s letter was to be composed in Turkish using Arabic characters, in such a manner that only a very educated speaker of Turkish would be able to read it. As related by Czajkowski, together with the imam’s letter he also received another one written in Russian from the hand of Daniel, the sultan of Elis.<sup>20</sup> In it, Daniel explained Shamil’s wishes in detail and was positive about entering into an alliance with Poles. Daniel supposedly assured Czajkowski that the imam would always be a loyal ally. He also reported that a large number of Poles who could form an army was living in the vicinity. However, they would only be useful if led by another Pole, and that they expected the arrival of a leader who would take charge.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Laba is a left tributary of the Kuban.

<sup>15</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Moje wspomnienia o wojnie 1854 roku*, Warszawa, 1962, p. 199.

<sup>16</sup> *Записки...*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that, based on the Czajkowski memoirs, this suggests that Shamil meant only the defectors who decided to join the independent mountain clans of their own will, and not all Poles.

<sup>19</sup> Most probably, the phrase should be interpreted to mean that Poles would be reckoned among Shamil’s warriors.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel-beg was the last sultan of Elis (today in northwestern Azerbaijan), ruling from 1831 to 1844. Until 1844, he collaborated with the Russians, only to defect to Shamil. In 1859, he went over to the Russians again.

<sup>21</sup> *Записки...*

In his memoirs, Czajkowski reminisced about yet another letter which he supposedly received from Shamil. According to Czajkowski, in the mid-1840s (the memoirs do not give a precise date, but late 1846 or early 1847 can be assumed), one lieutenant Terlecki from Galicia, dismissed from the Russian army, reached Istanbul from the Caucasus. Being involved in some intrigues (of which Czajkowski did not give any details) in Volhynia, he was demoted to private and exiled to the Caucasus in 1836, where he gained the favour of the Vorontsovs.<sup>22</sup> Under their patronage, he was quickly promoted to officer and sent to Shamil on numerous occasions to conduct negotiations, as he was able to communicate with him without an interpreter thanks to his excellent command of the Tatar (most probably Kumyk) language. During one of the meetings, he said to the imam that he was a Pole dismissed from the Russian army and wished to return to his native land. Shamil, who already considered Terlecki a good acquaintance, asked him whether he knew Michał Czajkowski. Terlecki replied that he did not know him personally, but had heard of him as an author of literary works which were popular in Poland.<sup>23</sup> Shamil then gave the Pole a letter addressed to Czajkowski together with gifts, consisting of local clothing with a sabre, guns, ammunition and horse harness. All of this Terlecki delivered to the addressee. In his memoirs, Czajkowski wrote that he gifted the harness to Witold Czartoryski<sup>24</sup> to be placed in the Czartoryski Princes Museum.<sup>25</sup> I was unable to locate this letter either, nor did I manage to obtain from the museum employees any information on whether the gifted items are still to be found in the establishment's collections.

While Zwierkowski was still in the Caucasus, Kazimierz Gordon, another emissary ordered by Czartoryski to reach the eastern lands, arrived from Paris to Istanbul in 1846. He was equipped with instructions drafted by Władysław Zamoyski, which listed the following tasks: 1) whenever Catholic Poles are living, they should be used to form independent regiments, 2) send priests to the Poles to help them preserve the faith and customs of their ancestors, 3) obtain the consent of Shamil and the Circassians to erect churches and, should the number of the faithful be in the thousands, send a bishop to preside over them, 4) enter into contacts with Shamil, Daniel-beg and the English authorities in India via Persia and Herat<sup>26</sup> or, alternatively, the English emissary in Persia and English consuls in Russia and neighbouring states. In his memoirs, Czajkowski stressed that if these instructions were to be followed, they would mean serving England and

<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the Vorontsevs arrived to the Caucasus in 1844, where Mikhail was appointed the governor.

<sup>23</sup> Czajkowski was the author of a fair number literary works, such as *Powieść kozacka* (1837), *Wernyhora wieszcz ukraiński: powieść historyczna z roku 1768* (1838), *Stefan Czarniecki* (1840), *Owrućzanin* (1841) or *Hetman Ukrainy* (1841).

<sup>24</sup> Witold Czartoryski (1822–1865) was the eldest son of Adam.

<sup>25</sup> *Zanucku...*

<sup>26</sup> Now a city in western Afghanistan.

the Catholic Church rather than Turkey and the Polish cause.<sup>27</sup> All the same, he stated that Mehmed Ali-pasha<sup>28</sup> assigned funds for the Gordon expedition.<sup>29</sup> Thanks to these funds, in June 1846 the Pole reached the Ubykh people on the eastern shore of the Black Sea.

Czajkowski provided Gordon with a letter to Shamil. The letter is preserved in a French-language<sup>30</sup> copy made for the Istanbul agency archive. The document is dated to 27 May 1846.<sup>31</sup>

A letter of M.[r] Czayka [i.e. Czajkowski – P. A.] to Imam Shamil-effendi sent through M.[r] K. G. [i.e. Kazimierz Gordon – P.A.]

To the powerful and greatly esteemed Imam-Shamil-effendi be honour, respect and glory!

A victorious leader, whose army makes one of the strongest and most fearsome of the world's monarchs tremble, has permitted one of the Lechs<sup>32</sup> to write to you on behalf of his nation's Beiler-bey.<sup>33</sup> Two years ago, our emissary miralay (colonel)<sup>34</sup> Kara-Krak-bey set out to meet with Y. H. [Your Highness – P.A.], bearing courtesies and words of friendship from the famous Beiler-bey of the Lechs; an unfortunate accident having prevented him from completing his mission, he was only able to reach the noble Suleiman-effendi,<sup>35</sup> Y.H.'s naib.

On the orders of my noble leader, I am sending to Y.H. Benderli-bey,<sup>36</sup> an artillery and engineering binbashi<sup>37</sup> (major) with the same mission and authority as Kara-Krak-

<sup>27</sup> *Зануцку...*

<sup>28</sup> Most probably, he meant Mehmed Emin Ali-pasha, then the foreign minister of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>29</sup> It should be considered that this was not a private mission. The Czartoryski Princes Library holds a document stating that Gordon was accompanied in his Caucasus expedition by Józef Dąbrowski. Upon returning, he was to be granted a farm in Adampol (the Polish settlement in the Ottoman Empire) in recognition of his service, and should Poland regain independence, also a salary of 3,000 zlotys per year. Cf. BKCz, ref. no. 6727, file: *Archiwum Hotelu Lambert: Dyrekcja Główna Osady Polskiej Adampol*, document: *List do Dyrekcji Główniej Osady Polskiej*.

<sup>30</sup> It was translated to Polish by Anna Gilg from the University of Strasbourg [and hence into English].

<sup>31</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5417, file: *Korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego i A. Czartoryskiego*, document: *List do imama Szamila*.

<sup>32</sup> "Lechs" was the appellation by which the Poles were long known in eastern lands. It survives today in the Armenian name for Poland, Լիհուսուի (Lehastan), or the Turkish name for the Polish language, Lehçe.

<sup>33</sup> Beiler-bey was the name of a high-ranking official in the Ottoman Empire, the governor of the largest and most important provinces.

<sup>34</sup> Miralay was a military rank in the Ottoman army, in modern Turkish referred to a brigadier general, a rank between colonel and major general.

<sup>35</sup> Suleiman-effendi was the naib of Circassia from 1845 to 1846. In 1847, he went over to the Russians.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon travelled over the Caucasus under the name Benderli-bey.

<sup>37</sup> Binbashi (binbaşı) was a military rank in the Ottoman army, in modern Turkish usually referred to a lieutenant colonel.

bey. He will provide Suleiman-effendi with the evidence that we want to conscientiously serve the interests of the nation Y.H. rules over, which run parallel to our interests and the interests of all enemies of Russia.

To my statement found in the letter addressed to Suleiman-effendi, I now wish only to add the question what stance is to be taken by the populous Lech nation if the movements of Muslim Caucasus nations were to be coordinated with the movements of Lechs and Tatars. However, this question could be realised only when Y.H. and my excellent leader come to a complete agreement, with Benderli-bey and me acting as intermediaries. I am looking forward to Y.H.'s decisions and will hasten to report them to my excellent leader.

I can but give thanks to God that we have found the way to reach Y.H. and pray for the day to come swiftly in which our swords will be able to drive off this insatiable enemy which, having brought our country to misfortune and ruin, now wants to enslave the Caucasian peoples. God in his greatness is using Y.H. to grind the ambitious projects of the Russian tyrant to dust and enable us to follow in the footsteps of the fearless nations that Y.H. commands.

(Signed) Michał Czayka Czajkowski, naib (lieutenant) of the Beiler-bey of the Lechs.

The Czartoryski Princes Library also holds another French-language copy of a letter whose original was given by Czajkowski to Gordon.<sup>38</sup> The letter is addressed to Suleyman-effendi. Like the previous document, it is also dated to 27 May 1846.<sup>39</sup>

A letter of M.[r] Czayka [i.e. Czajkowski – P. A.] to Suleiman-effendi, a lieutenant of Shamil-bey, to be sent by the dear Gordon (Benderli-bey)

To the noble and famous Suleiman-effendi, naib of the very powerful imam Shamil-effendi.

Honour to him who follows the voice of God.

Kara-Krak-bey brought us a letter which Y.E. [Your Excellency – P.A.] gave him to be delivered to us. We have long debated on the cause so nobly defended by imam Shamil and concluded that we could assist you in this holy cause in three respects. 1° By sending talented people who, by influencing the various nationalities that make up the Russian army, would demoralise and disrupt it. They would also be able to establish and manage military factories,<sup>40</sup> and to apply their mind and counsel to make the struggle simpler and easier. 2° Act together with the Sublime Porte, England and France to directly and indirectly make various Circassian tribes submit to the dominion of the glorious imam Shamil-effendi. 3° Do the utmost to obtain from our powerful friends material assistance in the form of money or weapons and hand them over to imam Shamil-effendi.

Therefore, following the orders of my excellent leader, the Bejler-bey (the prince of princes) of my nation, I make haste to carry out the first point of this request as successfully as possible by sending to Y.E. the bearer of this letter, Benderi-bey binbashi, an artillery major, a man of striking talent, able to tell you everything concerning the first point.

<sup>38</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5417, file: *Korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego i A. Czartoryskiego*, document: *List do Sulejmana-effendiego*.

<sup>39</sup> Trans. to Polish by Anna Gilg from the University of Strasbourg.

<sup>40</sup> Most probably, gunpowder factories and cannon foundries are meant here.

I have already begun to act, and my excellent leader is doing his work in France and England to obtain the results mentioned in the second point above. Once this part of our plans is achieved – and I hope the rest will be also – I will send to Y.E. miralay (colonel) Kara-Krak-bey.

As to the third point, we will take steps as well, but I must say that this objective cannot be achieved until the Circassian tribes living on the Black Sea shores take up arms and wrest a number of neighbouring forts from the Russians.

I have written to Sefer-bey, asking him to instruct his friends to help my emissary reach his goal of meeting with Y.E. The same request was made to Sefer-bey by a very high Sublime Porte official. In the same period I agreed with Eumer<sup>41</sup> and Hadji Kerantukh, an uzden<sup>42</sup> from the tribe of Ubykhs, a relative and friend of H.E [His Excellency – P. A.] Hafiz-pasha,<sup>43</sup> minister of the Sublime Porte, to arrange for my envoy to travel in Circassia, provide him with hospitality in Kerantukh's house and direct him to Y.E. Uzden Kerantukh, now returning from his Mecca pilgrimage, appears to have the best of intentions and perhaps my emissary will, God willing, be able to make them useful for Y.E. and your very powerful leader.

Foreseeing that Y.E. may be summoned to other parts of the country struggling against the Russians, I dare to provide my emissary with a letter to the very powerful sheikh Shamil-effendi and order him to reach the same.

I will be looking forward to news from Y.E. and hope to achieve the cause which is mine and yours alike, with the help of the Most High.

(Signed)

Michał Czayka Czajkowski

naib of the powerful Bejler-bey of the Lechs

Before he left for the Caucasus, Gordon received certain instructions from Czajkowski. The instructions stated that the mission's "necessary condition" was to reach Shamil and enter into an agreement with him. With respect to Kerantukh Berzek (in 1846 Czajkowski concluded an agreement with him concerning hospitality provided to Gordon<sup>44</sup>), it was stated that the acquaintance with him was to be used to fulfil the mission's objective. Should the Ubykh seek to achieve in Western Caucasus the position that Shamil enjoyed in Dagestan, Gordon was to support and counsel him, but: "he will always direct Kerantukh, if not to unconditionally recognise Shamil's authority, then at least to act in close agreement with the imam and take combined action against Moscow". Should Kerantukh shirk from military action, the Pole was to set out to Shamil as quickly as possible.<sup>45</sup> Extracts from Gordon's reports suggest that they strengthened Czajkowski's

<sup>41</sup> An unidentified person. Perhaps the name was not read correctly.

<sup>42</sup> Uzdens were members of the upper class among peoples living in the western part of North Caucasus.

<sup>43</sup> Hafiz-pasha, a Circassian by birth, was a Turkish military leader and statesman. He died in 1866.

<sup>44</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5438.

<sup>45</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5417, file: *Korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego i A. Czartoryskiego*, document: *Instrukcja z 17 maja 1846*.



conviction that the presence of an emissary in Western Caucasus “would certainly not improve relations with Caucasian peoples” and that “the friendly disposition of the Circassians is doubtful”. In the opinion of the Istanbul agent, the key objective was to make contact with Shamil and only once this was achieved could more detailed plans, such as sending an expedition, be made.<sup>46</sup>

As related by Czajkowski, Gordon was not particularly pleased with the Circassians, as they treated all Poles ending up with them like slaves. Alternatively, they sent them to Abasins<sup>47</sup> living near Suhum-kale,<sup>48</sup> who were subordinate to Russia and sold the slaves to Persia, Egypt or Turkey. The locals offered to Gordon only the elderly and invalids whom they deemed to be unfit to bring financial profit. They also allowed to erect two house chapels. No other results were produced by Gordon’s mission, and the Pole himself was soon murdered.<sup>49</sup>

In Polish historical writing, a version prevails in which the murder was perpetrated by a Tsarist agent.<sup>50</sup> Yet the case had a social and not a political background. Czajkowski mentioned it in 1873 in a letter to his comrade in arms Władysław Sabatyn: “You must remember Gordon, that brave man, who was killed in the Caucasus, not by an Armenian or Russian as the tale was told, but by a Circassian, the Ubykh Kerantukh Berzek, for pilfering honey from his wife.”<sup>51</sup> This event was expanded upon in Czajkowski’s memoirs. He wrote that, after the death of Gordon, his servant Janek who had an excellent command of Circassian returned to Istanbul and related the entire incident. The fact was that, during his Caucasian mission, Gordon stayed at the home of Kerantukh Berzek with whom he had sailed from Turkey. While there, he had an affair with his host’s wife and as a result was personally shot by Berzek. Fearing, however, the reaction of his associates who appreciated and were attached to Gordon, he put the blame on some Armenian man allegedly sent by the Russians from Suhum-kale to do the bloody deed. Hence the legend that the Pole was assassinated by a Tsarist agent. Czajkowski stated that Kerantukh Berzek reached Turkey with the last wave of Circassian exiles. When asked by the Turks about the fate of Gordon, he was reported to reply: “It is true that I killed him, but while he was my comrade in arms, she was my wife.”<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5419, file: *Depesze ze Stambułu, korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego*, document: *Kaukaz*.

<sup>47</sup> The Abasins are an Abkhazian-Adyghe people. They now number about 45,000 in Russia, especially in the Abazinsky District (Абазинский район) in the Karachay-Cherkes Republic.

<sup>48</sup> The modern city of Sukhumi.

<sup>49</sup> *Zanucku...*

<sup>50</sup> Examples include J. Drożdż, “Adampolskie ślady wojny krymskiej”, in: *Polacy i ziemie polskie w dobie wojny krymskiej*, eds. J. Borejsza, G. Bąbiak, Warszawa, 2008, p. 177; Cz. Zwierz, “Udział Polaków w walkach o niepodległość Czeczenii w XIX w.”, *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, 3/4 (1996), p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> M. Rolle, *Z minionych stuleci*, Lwów, 1908, p. 116.

<sup>52</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Moje...*, p. 200.

The Czartoryski Princes Library holds a French-language copy<sup>53</sup> of yet another letter of Czajkowski to Shamil.<sup>54</sup> Regrettably, I was unable to determine the circumstances in which it was sent. There is no drafting date on the document, but the contents suggests that it was written in 1846 or 1847, already following the departure of Gordon to the Caucasus (the letter is also located in the file with 1846-1847 documents). In his memoirs, Czajkowski states that while he was Czartoryski's main agent in Istanbul, three Poles had been sent to the Caucasus: Zwierkowski, Gordon and one Mikorski from Poznań. Mikorski's journey is the least researched. It is known that he failed to reach his destination and went back to Istanbul.<sup>55</sup> It cannot therefore be excluded that it was indeed Mikorski who had been tasked with delivering the following letter to Shamil, but presumably never completed his mission.

A letter to Shamil-bey

Honour and well-being to him who follows the path of God!

Greetings to the great ruler who made the world resound with his glory.

Greetings to the powerful defender of religion and protector of independence and freedom of the Dagestani and Caucasian peoples.

More than two years ago, following the orders of my leader, Bejler-bey of all Poles, I sent to you one of my colonels, Kara-Krak-bey. Unfortunately, he failed to reach you to pass the words of friendship, proposals and offers of my leader. He made a word of mouth agreement with Suleiman-effendi, at that time your naib in Circassia, and gave him letters to be copied and written plans of action. I do not know whether this naib, today said by the Russians to be an exile under their protection, faithfully transmitted these messages to you. When Kara-Krak-bey returned from his unsuccessful journey, my leader ordered me to send you another officer, Benderli-bey, a man of great talent and knowledge which you could use to oppose our common enemy. I know he arrived to the country to the Ubykhs, but not whether he reached you. Now I am sending colonel Guembenli-bey for this same purpose, accompanied by Rashid-effendi, a dragoman.<sup>56</sup> Should Benderli-bey be dead or unable to reach you, I am asking you to accept Guembenli-bey as a leader accredited by me. His mission is the same as Benderli-bey's – to contact you, powerful ruler, in accordance with the instructions of my leader, and combine our efforts.

The circumstances today are more favourable than ever. The European powers are in conflict, and the slightest provocation may lead to war. Therefore the eyes of all European rulers are fixed on the glorious struggle of Dagestan and the spirited hero who leads it. But if the fight were to rouse the enemies of Russia and bring allies to the Caucasus, it must be more closely connected to Europe. This is a connection only Poles can ensure. If we were to organise a company under your leadership made up only of Poles under their

<sup>53</sup> Trans. to Polish by Anna Gilg from the University of Strasbourg.

<sup>54</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5419, file: *Depesze ze Stambułu, korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego*, document: *List do imama Szamila*.

<sup>55</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Moje...*, p. 200.

<sup>56</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, a dragoman served as an interpreter and a guide for foreigners, and was sometimes entrusted with diplomatic matters.

national flag and led by Polish officers, the Russian army would be thrown into chaos because of defection of Poles who serve there but would rather follow their own colours. With a legion like this, you would gain fame as the liberator of oppressed nations. When the Georgians, Tatars, Cossacks and several million Poles who suffer under the despotic yoke of Russia see this unit as your contribution to the insurrection, they will undoubtedly join your cause and take up arms against their oppressor. England and France will be pleased to see this colossus, nurtured on injustice and rapine, fall under the blows of those it has oppressed for so many years, and will honour the powerful Shamil-effendi, the defender of justice in the world, a ruler whose friendship and alliance is to be sought. The Sublime Porte, freed from the burdensome obligations which now lie broken, will come to the aid of its co-religionists and recognise the Dagestani Empire founded by you, the true hero. The words in this letter I have written by the order of my powerful leader, Bejler-bey of the Poles, who believes that the Dagestani cause is most intimately tied to the cause of Poland and wishes to see the mighty Dagestani leader as his ruler and ally.

Michal-bej [Suk Zade? – illegible words – P.A.]  
Naib of the Bejler-bey of the Poles

It was not until the Crimean War ended, that the most renowned military mission with the participation of Poles, led by Teofil Łapiński, was sent to the Caucasus. At that time, however, the attitude of the European powers, especially Great Britain, to the Adygs had changed as a result of their failure to take action against Russia. This was mentioned in a letter sent by Czartoryski to Sefer-bey in February 1859: “It is with regret that I must inform Your Grace that the Western powers will have no sympathy for your cause now; to my efforts supporting you they reply that when they waged war against Moscow to assist Turkey, the Circassians did not wish to join the cause. Therefore they can expect nothing from European governments.”<sup>57</sup>

On the formal level, no Polish exile organisation participated in the expedition, as it was organised in a chaotic and unskilled manner from the very start. For this reason, politicians and activists did not wish to become involved in such makeshift efforts.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, one can find traces of co-operation between Łapiński and Hotel Lambert representatives in Istanbul. The Pole, however, was a poor organiser. Among other things, the quantity of arms supplied was insufficient, leaving some expedition participants with no rifles or guns. Likewise, a large portion of the equipment was pilfered during transport by Łapiński’s Turkish partners.<sup>59</sup> Co-operation with Sefer-bey, with whom the Poles were to take joint action against Russian interests, did not go too well either. While he was officially an enemy of the Russians, a number of his entourage openly worked with them. For

<sup>57</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5416, file: *Korespondencja M. Czajkowskiego*, document: *Do Sefer-paszy*.

<sup>58</sup> J. Łątka, *Romantyczny kondotier*, Katowice, 1988, pp. 112–113.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

example, Sefer-bey's son was a guide in punitive expeditions against the locals,<sup>60</sup> while his foster brother<sup>61</sup> handed Łapiński's letters sent to major Circassian figures to Russians.<sup>62</sup> With time, it transpired that Sefer-bey wanted to use Poles to fight not against Russians, but mostly against the independent Shapsugs with whom he was on hostile terms.<sup>63</sup> It was not until 1859 that Łapiński commenced talks with Muhammad-Amin, the naib of Circassia appointed by imam Shamil.<sup>64</sup> The bargaining led to the signing of an agreement whose text is currently held by the Czartoryski Princes Library in Kraków. The bilingual agreement contains the Polish text on one side and a text written in Arabic characters on the other, the latter being much shorter.

An agreement between His Excellency Mehmet Emin-pasha<sup>65</sup> and colonel Teofil Łapiński (Tefik-bey) in the name of H. G. [His Grace – P.A.] Prince Adam Czartoryski.<sup>66</sup>

Article 1. His Excellency Mehmet Emin-pasha consents to the establishment of a Polish regiment under its national colours and with its own regulations being formed.

Article 2. The Polish regiment shall enter into service on 1 Ramazan 1277 (1 April 1860)<sup>67</sup> and is bound to serve until 1 Ramazan 1280 (1 April 1863),<sup>68</sup> after which this agreement shall be renewed or the regiment, bearing their personal arms, shall be free to leave whenever they wish.

Article 3. The regimental commander is to be appointed by H.G. Prince Adam Czartoryski, the officers are to be appointed by the commander and submitted for approval to H.G.

Article 4. H.E. [His Excellency – P.A.] Mehmet Emin-pasha shall set aside three sites for buildings, barracks and gardens, each consisting of 10 morgens of arable land, with an abundance of water and trees nearby.

Article 5. The commander of the Polish regiment shall be obliged to take the field against the enemy at each request of H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha and render each time all assistance whenever demanded.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> The Caucasian peoples had a custom of sending their children to be raised with non-relatives, whose natural children were, in relation to the ward, called "foster brothers" or "foster sisters".

<sup>62</sup> "1857 г. июня 1. – Отзыв наказного атамана Черноморского казачьего войска Филиппсона начальнику главного штаба войск о польском выходе Лапинском", in: *Сборник архивных документов*, Нальчик, 2001, p. 83.

<sup>63</sup> J. Łątka, *Romantyczny...*, p. 84.

<sup>64</sup> It probably resulted from a decision taken by Łapiński himself, as Czartoryski, when mentioning a conflict within the regiment led by the Pole in a January 1859 letter to Władysław Jordan, stated that: "In the Caucasus, Łapiński was reporting only to his temporary commander Sefer Pasha and could only be reproved and punished by him" [...] and then: "Mr. Łapiński, having lost the confidence of Sefer Pasha, will be sent back to Istanbul" [...]. Cf. BKCz, ref. no. 5612, file: *Depesze carogrodzkie*, document: *A.C. do pulk. Wł. Jordana w Stambule*. It appears therefore that Sefer Pasha was treated as Łapiński's commander whom the latter had to obey. On the other hand, the agreement between the Pole and Muhammad-Amin was not in Sefer Pasha's interest.

<sup>65</sup> In contemporary literature, the name of Shamil's naib is usually given as "Muhammad-Amin".

<sup>66</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5612, file: *Depesze carogrodzkie*, document: *Uгода*.

<sup>67</sup> The inaccurate statement. 1st April, 1860 = 10th Ramaḍān, 1276.

<sup>68</sup> The inaccurate statement. 1st April, 1863 = 11th Shawwāl, 1279.

Article 6. H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha shall direct all defectors from the Russian army to the commander of the Polish regiment, who shall select as many of them for military service as he is able to provide with uniforms and arms.

Article 7. No Russian army soldier shall be allowed to reside in Circassia without a residence permit issued by H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha and the commander of the Polish regiment.

Article 8. No Russian army soldier shall be exchanged or sold by anyone without a permit from H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha and the commander of the Polish regiment, who shall ascertain beforehand whether the soldier has been captured or defected.

Article 9. After a service of three years each soldier shall either be permitted to reside in the land or depart wherever he wishes.

Article 10. H.E. undertakes to provide military warehouses with one measure [*miarka*] from each house by 1 Ramazan 1277.

Article 11. The commander of the regiment, colonel Tefik-bey, undertakes to provide arms, uniforms and equipment for 250 people by 1 Ramazan 1277 through Prince Adam Czartoryski.

Article 12. H.G. Prince Adam Czartoryski shall attempt to establish and facilitate relationships between H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha and European governments and nations.

Article 13. H.E. Mehmet Emin-pasha undertakes that, whenever he is able to render assistance to H.G. Prince Adam Czartoryski and his heirs against Russia, he shall make all efforts to do so.

Article 14. Should Mehmet Emin-pasha believe it necessary to conclude peace or an agreement with the Muscovites, prior to engaging in any contracts he shall notify the commander of the Polish regiment and facilitate the return of the regiment to Turkey.

Article 15. Should H.I.H [His Imperial Highness – P.A.] the Ottoman Sultan by coincidence enter in the possession of the Circassian territories, the Polish regiment, thankful for so many boons obtained by Poles in the lands of H.I.H [His Imperial Highness – P.A.], shall be immediately put at the disposal of the Ottoman government.

These conditions I sign and warrant on behalf of my commander H.G. Prince Adam Czartoryski. Woe to him that violates them. Teofil Łapiński.

The Czartoryski Princes Library also includes a letter written by Muhammad-Amin to Adam Czartoryski.<sup>69</sup> There is no date on the letter, but as it was placed in the file for the year 1859, it may have been drafted that year. The library holds both the original letter written in the Arabic script and its translation into Polish. I have not managed to determine the circumstances in which it was written and how it ended up in Czartoryski's agent archive in Istanbul.

To His Gracious Lordship, Prince Adam Czartoryski.

I salute Your Excellency full of hope that the state of your health [is – P.A.] that which you desire. We are still alive, God Most High be thanked, and opposing the Muscovite enemy as before. We do not need much but rifles, cannons, gunpowder and bullets. We have no shortage of people ready to gather and fight, but everyone is lacking the necessary arms. What we are short of are necessary supplies, such as good quality gunpowder, cannons and other weapons. Do give us what and how much you can. Therefore we are sending

<sup>69</sup> BKCz, ref. no. 5612, file: *Depesze carogrodzkie*, document: *List do A. Czartoryskiego*.

Your Grace a faithful man called Soliman-effendi. You can fully and safely trust him in all matters. The grace and blessing of God be with you and your children!  
Your faithful Mohammad-Amin, leader (wali) of the Circassians.

Establishing contacts with Mohammad-Amin came, however, too late for the Poles to start joint action. No such action took place earlier, as Czartoryski considered his chief ally in the Caucasus to be Sefer-bey Zankoko, who was not on good terms with Shamil's naib. In 1859, Muhammad-Amin's forces were already considerably depleted and did not play an important military role. Ultimately, the naib gave up the fight when Shamil surrendered in Guniba in August 1859, and left for Turkey. Łapiński left Circassia in the same year.

Apart from the material discussed above, the Czajkowski memoirs feature yet another excerpt from a letter which the author supposedly received from Shamil. He did not, however, give any details about its time and circumstances, only stating that the imam wrote to him "openly and sincerely". The excerpt runs as follows: "If you can use your influence with the caliph and the presence of your fellow Poles to transform the Circassians from slave traders, robbers and thieves into fighters for the holy faith and homeland, I am ready to enter into any designs you propose to me."<sup>70</sup> In my opinion, it appears very improbable that Shamil would write such an opinion about the Circassians to Czartoryski's agent (although it cannot be excluded). It should be considered that they never met, and any correspondence preserved until today does not allow to suppose that their relations were on so intimate a level as to share thoughts like these. Nevertheless, Czajkowski's memoirs demonstrate that he remained in close relations with imam Shamil by exchanging letters. However, I was unable to find any supporting evidence in the form of extant letters. For this reason, I treat this issue with a grain of salt. Perhaps Czajkowski, as a Polish activist, wished to use the imam's authority to corroborate his own, rather uncomplimentary, opinion about the Circassians, as opposed to the Chechnya and Dagestan natives over whom Shamil held sway. Some passages in the memoirs allow to conclude that he did not appreciate the Circassians. As an example, Czartoryski's agent, describing the North Caucasus peoples, stated that having resided for some time in Istanbul he "realized that there was no common ground in either kindred or political interest between the Tatar clans<sup>71</sup> living by the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea Circassians, of which five clans submitted to Russia, and five others pretended to oppose it, that the Tatars, as zealous Muslims, wanted independence and their own state, while the Circassians, much less religious, only desired to freely pursue their slave trading, raids and robberies."<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Moje...*, p. 199.

<sup>71</sup> In his memoirs, Czajkowski applied the name of Tatars to peoples speaking Nakh-Dagestanian languages.

<sup>72</sup> M. Czajkowski, *Moje...*, p. 199.

To summarise, in the Czartoryski Princes Library in Kraków I was able to find one original letter sent by Shamil's naib, Muhammad-Amin, to Adam Czartoryski, as well as an agreement between Muhammad-Amin and Teofil Łapiński. Besides, the library holds two French-language copies, made for archival purposes, of letters written by Michał Czajkowski and addressed to Shamil, as well as a French-language copy of a letter written by Czartoryski's agent to Suleiman-effendi. Other letters are known only from Czajkowski's memoirs. I was however unable to find them, but this does not mean that they did not survive until our times.

It should be noted that mention is sometimes made in historical literature about contacts between Shamil and representatives of the Polish pro-independence exiles but no sources confirming them exist. Let us take Andrzej Chodubski as an example. In one of his articles, the historian wrote: "Polish Tatars served as intermediaries in contacts between Shamil and Polish exiles in Western Europe. This was greatly facilitated because a Polish Tatar, Jan Chałdecki, was Czartoryski's secretary in 1861–1862."<sup>73</sup> I have not found any evidence, or even any trace of evidence, that could support such reasoning. It should also be noted that Chałdecki could not have been Czartoryski's secretary in 1861–1862, because the latter died on 15 July 1861. Chałdecki, the highest ranking Russian army officer (general major) that served with the insurgents during the January uprising (1863–1864), only emigrated to France when the uprising was suppressed.<sup>74</sup> I also believe that, when imam Shamil became a captive of the Russians in 1859, his every move closely watched by the Tsarist administration, it appears highly unlikely that he would maintain contacts with representatives of Polish exiles in Western Europe.

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<sup>73</sup> A. Chodubski, "Imam Szamil (1796–1871) i jego działalność", *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich*, 2 (1994), p. 55–56.

<sup>74</sup> R. Stróżyk, *2 Pułk Jazdy Wołyńskiej w postaniu styczniowym 1863–1864*, *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* vol. 16(67), no. 3, p. 57.

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Submitted 20.03.2018; accepted 10.05.2018