



The Establishment of the Eastern Agency in Istanbul as a Center for Polish Exile Missions in the 1830s–1840s Ottoman Balkans*

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This article analyses the ideological development and political evolution of the Balkan policy pursued by Adam Jerzy Czartoryski's Hôtel Lambert, one of the exiled political camps of the Polish Great Emigration associated with conservative-liberal and monarchist ideas. It argues that the geopolitical transformations in Eurasia of the late 1830s onwards and especially the growing strategic importance of the Ottoman Empire within the framework of the Eastern Question prompted Czartoryski and his circle in Paris to revise their earlier political assumptions and formulate a more active and systematic policy toward the Ottoman Balkans. The clearest expression of this new strategy was the establishment of the permanent Eastern Agency in Istanbul under the direction of the agent Michał Czajkowski. The article examines the circumstances of the agency's creation, the ideological premises of its activity, and its role in implementing Hôtel Lambert's wider political designs in the Ottoman Balkans. It further demonstrates that the agency functioned not just as an informal diplomatic outpost, but as a key center for coordinating Polish émigré missions, gathering intelligence and maintaining contacts with the primary strategic European policymakers and local political actors. At the same time, it attempted to adapt the Polish national cause to the realities of international diplomacy and revolutionary movements. The study thus situates Hôtel Lambert's Eastern Agency existence within the broader framework of transnational exile politics and the imperial rivalry among the Great Powers in the Ottoman Balkans. It also highlights the extent to which Polish political exiles were drawn into wider diplomatic and strategic calculations, particularly in the context of anti-Russian activity and the shifting balance of power after the Second Ottoman–Egyptian Crisis.

Keywords: Hôtel Lambert, Eastern Agency, Balkan policy, Ottoman Balkans, Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, Michał Czajkowski, Polish emigration, exile diplomacy

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Introduction

Examining the establishment of Hôtel Lambert's Eastern Agency in detail and in an international context, allows this study to be situated within the broader historiographical narratives of the Great Emigration, its political geography, and the imperial rivalry among the Great Powers in the Middle East. Previous scholarship has partly treated the Ottoman Balkans as a secondary arena for Polish exile activity, overshadowed by the more prominent diplomatic and political initiatives of Hôtel Lambert in Paris, London, and Western Europe. In these interpretations, the Eastern Agency usually appears either as an auxiliary outpost of Adam Jerzy Czartoryski's wider foreign policy or as a narrowly conspiratorial structure serving anti-Russian and anti-Austrian objectives in the Balkans. By shifting attention to Istanbul as a distinct center of coordination, mediation, and clandestine mission planning for the Polish émigrés in the region, this research shows that the agency should be understood not merely as a peripheral instrument of émigré diplomacy, but as an important node through which Polish political emigration adapted itself to Ottoman realities, Balkan revolutionary movements, and the changing balance of power in the East. It thus demonstrates that Polish exile politics in the 1830s and 1840s cannot be fully understood without taking into account their Ottoman and Balkan dimension. At the same time, in the wider Eurasian geopolitical context of the 1840s–1870s, Polish exiles were also drawn into the Russo-British rivalry, as not only British, but French and Ottoman political and diplomatic circles often viewed the Polish émigré networks as useful intermediaries, parallel intelligence channels, and potential instruments with which to weaken Russian and Austrian influence in the Ottoman Balkans and the Black Sea region. Thus, the Polish political actors became entangled in the larger complex imperial dynamics of the Ottoman Balkans.

The unsuccessful Polish November Uprising against Russian rule in 1830–1831 had a huge impact on Polish society and left a deep mark on national consciousness. Vivid echoes of this fact lingered for a long time in the Polish press, exile activities, literature, and folk art. The unsuccessful uprising would lead to the creation of a strong and vital Polish political émigré community, which would be extremely active in the following years. At its core were wealthy nobles, generals, officers, politicians, scientists, writers, journalists, and members of the former insurgent authorities. Precisely because of its intellectual and ideological potential, while it numbered only a few thousand people (most of whom lived

in France after 1831), this émigré community would be called the Great Emigration (*Wielka Emigracja*).

In 1832, as a result of the suppressed uprising, the number of Polish political emigrants in France in its core amounted to about 5,000–5,500 people, and by the end of the 1830s, it would not exceed these numbers.¹ For reference, the rest of the Great Emigration was concentrated successively in Great Britain² (between 700 and 800 people), Spain³ (some 400 people), the USA⁴ (roughly 400 people), Belgium⁵ (150–200 people), Switzerland⁶ (between 50 and 70 people), and several small groups in Scandinavia, Algeria, and the Ottoman Empire. After three-quarters of the Poles ended up in France, mostly in Paris, and they became the center of the Great Emigration. Following these processes, part of the Polish exile emigration became active politically, diplomatically, culturally, professionally, and covertly in the Ottoman Balkans in the 1830s and 1840s.

The Great Emigration should never be treated as if it were homogeneous, neither in political, ideological, programmatic, nor even economic terms. Quite the opposite is true. The various political and ideological currents and struggles that emerged among the leading camps during the November uprising were, to one degree or another, logically carried over into the emigration itself. This was mainly due to the different social strata from which each of them originated. In this way, several different political camps or groups were formed within the Polish emigration. The main ones were the following three, discussed in brief profile below.

1. The Polish National Committee, PNC (Komitet Narodowy Polski), founded on December 5, 1831 in Paris under the leadership of Polish politician, historian, and professor Joachim Lelewel. The political committee was part of the left-wing democratic faction of the Polish emigration, with predominantly republican views. It existed until December 1832, when it was liquidated by the French authorities under Russian pressure and Lelewel was forced to emigrate to Brussels again at the insistence of St. Petersburg. Between 1837 and 1846, Lelewel founded and led the organization “Union of Polish Emigration,” which

1 Kaleminka, *Wielka Emigracja*, 56–58; Falkowski, *Wspomnienia*, 133–34; Гросул, *Польская политическая эмиграция*, 24–25.

2 Marchlewicz, *Wielka Emigracja*.

3 Wróblewska, “Emigranci polistopadowi,” 89–104.

4 Stasiak, *Polska emigracja*.

5 Goddeeris, *La Grande Émigration*.

6 Lewak, *Od związków*.

aimed to unite all emigrants. Some of the more radical members of the Polish Democratic Society (or PDS) joined it.

2. The Polish Democratic Society (Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie), or PDS, founded on March 17, 1832 in Paris, after members of the Polish National Committee who had more extreme views broke away from this group. It was one of the most important and powerful organizations among the Great Emigration. The supreme body of the PDS after 1836, consisting of five democratically elected members, was called the *Centralisation*. Politically, the society followed strong left-wing democratic ideas, which included full-scale and profound social reform in a future free Poland, as well as the abolition of serfdom and the distribution of land among the peasants at the expense of the rich nobles and large landowners. PDS existed until 1862.

3. Hôtel Lambert, founded in 1833 in Paris under the leadership of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861). This was the most famous camp. It represented the right-wing conservative-monarchist movement among the Great Emigration. Hôtel Lambert were based on monarchism and the decisions of the Constitution of May 3, 1791.⁷ In other words, the nobility and large landowners were considered the upper class in relation to the peasants and citizens, and they were seen as essential figures who would play a leading role in the local and state administration of the country. Hôtel Lambert was the most influential, well-known, and wealthy Polish émigré organization, naturally relying on wealthy circles, the nobility, and, above all, the patronage of France and Great Britain. It carried out activities across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. It existed until 1870.

Of course, all political camps from the Great Emigration, although hostile to one another, strove for a shared *ultima finis*: the restoration of the Polish nation state within the borders of 1772. They each had different socioeconomic and political visions, however, of how this should happen and what the future Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth should look like. While the Polish Democratic Society managed to maintain its autonomy and independence to a large extent over the years, along with its strong ties and support among ordinary Poles and revolutionary groups in Congress Poland, Hôtel Lambert had no real political and economic independence, as it was mainly supported financially and politically by France and

7 The Polish-Lithuanian Constitution of May 3, 1791 was the first constitution in Europe and the second in the world after that of the United States (1787). Its aim was to end the political crisis in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by transforming the country into a constitutional monarchy and limiting the enormous influence and power of the nobility and landowners.

Great Britain, though it nonetheless managed to engage in extensive political activity outside France. Precisely for this reason, the activities of Adam Czartoryski's conservative-monarchist camp have been the most thoroughly studied. Hôtel Lambert is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the "Polish government in exile," implying that it acted on behalf of the entire Polish emigration or that it was the only Polish political organization, but neither of these things was true.

Czartoryski's Hôtel Lambert Camp

A few important clarifications are needed here. Any political emigration, including the Polish one, due to its foreign nature, cannot rely entirely on public institutions and administrative structures. This means that its staff and especially its leaders play a key role in developing its emigration policies and ideas. Indeed, the very existence of any policy abroad by a compact group or core, especially in an international context, depends par excellence on the capabilities, personal contacts, and influence of the most important representatives or leaders of that emigration. It is therefore not surprising that Hôtel Lambert, which became the most influential Polish camp among the Great Emigration in international terms, was grouped around the personality of Prince Adam Czartoryski and his associates. This was one of the prerequisites for the influence Hôtel Lambert gradually came to enjoy. Another important prerequisite was the fact that, in the nineteenth century, high politics (diplomacy and foreign affairs) was still a domain reserved mainly for the aristocracy. As a high-ranking Polish nobleman and experienced diplomat, Czartoryski played a key role in European international relations in 1802–1806 as an advisor and foreign minister of the Russian Empire and 1814–1815 as a participant in the Congress of Vienna. He had excellent diplomatic contacts and considerable influence in Great Britain and France.⁸ This gave him direct access to the highest circles and the governments, which ordinary emigrants would not have had.

From the beginning of his political emigration, Czartoryski's experience led him to the correct conclusion that the Polish national question could only be resolved in an international context. This credo was also at the heart of the activities of Hôtel Lambert. Czartoryski also made a sober and pragmatic

8 Czartoryski proved himself to be an experienced theorist in international diplomacy when, in 1830, he anonymously published his work, written between 1824 and 1827: *Essai sur la diplomatie. Manuscrit d'un Philhellène publié par M. Toulouzan*. Paris–Marseille. The second edition from 1864 already bears his name as the author. For a Polish translation, see Adam Czartoryski, *Rozważania o dyplomacji* (Krakow, 2011).

realpolitik assessment and concluded that a single, unified Polish émigré political organization, which would include all the diverse political camps of the Great Emigration, would be very unstable. The very creation of such an organization would compel him to make numerous compromises and ultimately would condemn him to passivity.⁹ The lack of support for such an organization proved another prerequisite for the successful influence of Hôtel Lambert. However, time showed that Czartoryski was correct, since the two camps within the Great Emigration that became the strongest and most influential, the Polish Democratic Society and Hôtel Lambert, agreed on this question.

Three main areas of activity can be distinguished in the actions of Czartoryski and Hôtel Lambert after 1831: international diplomacy, political propaganda, and military policy. In each of these fields, Hôtel Lambert strove to ensure that the Polish question remain relevant and on the agenda in Europe. Although Hôtel Lambert could not be officially established as a government in exile due to the international geopolitical and legal context, Czartoryski's position gave him unlimited direct access to ministers and senior politicians in London and Paris. This was where the main activity of the monarchist camp developed in the early years. His right-hand man was his nephew, Count Władysław Zamoyski (1803–1868), who was also the Czartoryski's main liaison with the British political circles. France and Great Britain supported the organization politically and financially, despite the many difficulties in securing the funds. For propaganda purposes, in 1832, Hôtel Lambert established the Polish Literary Society (Towarzystwo Literackie w Paryżu) in Paris and the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland in London. Both organizations were successful in promoting the ideas of Hôtel Lambert, and many publications and initiatives were created for them. They were active in the literary, cultural, and social lives of both capitals, relying on good press coverage. The desired target group in both Western societies was the upper class, but no significant success was achieved in this direction.

Unlike the first two directions of Hôtel Lambert, the third, military policy, encountered insurmountable obstacles. Czartoryski's ultimate goal here, since the end of the November Uprising, was to establish a purely Polish legion (a Legion Polonaise). The main idea behind this goal was to create a readymade military unit with a purely Polish character (Polish as the language of command, Polish uniforms, Polish flags, etc.) in an international context, which would give

9 Hahn, "Possibilities and Limitations," 8.

body to the idea of a Polish presence in Europe.¹⁰ For this reason, Czartoryski took a number of steps in this direction, assisting or sending Polish soldiers and officers to hot spots of conflict in Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Algeria, and Egypt in 1831–1840.¹¹ Count Zamoyski was sent to Belgium,¹² General Bem to Portugal,¹³ General Dembinski to Egypt,¹⁴ Major Bystrzonowski to Belgium and Algeria,¹⁵ General Chrzanowski to the Ottoman Empire,¹⁶ and so on. Many Polish emigrants, probably volunteers in the French army, took part in the invasion of Algeria, which began in 1830.¹⁷

This military project ultimately failed because the effective existence of a purely Polish legion in the political sense of the word depended on the host country. In other words, it was advantageous to use Polish soldiers and officers temporarily and partially in a given situation that served the “host” country, but not in the service of the Polish national idea as a whole. Regardless, the idea survived, and attempts continued to be made to create a Polish legion of Hôtel Lambert in the following years.

The Balkan Concept of Hôtel Lambert and First Missions to the Balkans

In 1834–1836, interest in the Polish national question on the part of the governments of France and Great Britain weakened significantly. The end of the Egyptian crisis of 1831–1833 and the new geopolitical realities in the East complemented the changed situation. All this led Czartoryski, disappointed with the policies of the western empires, to reform the policy of Hôtel Lambert. Namely, he began to seek rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire, which was emerging as the focus of geopolitical conflict over the Eastern Question.¹⁸ Realizing that the previous approach to resolving the Polish question through political and diplomatic means in an international context had been unsuccessful, Czartoryski and Hôtel Lambert espoused a new political concept involving

10 Ibid., 13.

11 Bazyłow, *Historia dyplomacji*, 268–73.

12 Konarska, *W kregu*, 62–65.

13 Frejlich, *Legion jenerala*.

14 Benis, *Une mission*.

15 Chudzio, *Polityk*, 92–128.

16 Graniewski, “The Mission.”

17 Numerous primary sources on the transfer of Polish emigrants to Algeria are stored in the Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères (AMAE), Mémoires et documents, Pologne, vol. 33 (1831–1839).

18 Skowronek, *Polityka Balkańska*, 22–23.

resolution of the Polish national question within the framework of a major armed conflict (a great war) between the Russian Empire on the one hand and Great Britain and France on the other.¹⁹ It should be noted that this concept followed the increasingly popular idea in Great Britain and France of forming some kind of anti-Russian alliance in the East. The reason behind this included Czartoryski's pragmatism, but also the natural dependence of the conservative-monarchist camp on France and Great Britain.

While Hôtel Lambert operated independently and autonomously among the Great Emigration, the financial and political support for the organization was provided mainly by Paris and, to a lesser extent, London, as mentioned above. In London, the “friends of Poland” and the circles around Zamoyski and Czartoryski managed to secure stable funding, albeit modest, while in Paris things were more complicated. The chronic underfunding of Polish emigrants forced the once proud and arrogant Czartoryski to hang around the offices of French ministries hoping to curry favor among third-tier figures. In addition to economic issues, on which their very existence depended, Czartoryski was well aware that he had to comply unconditionally with the political agenda of the ruling circles in Paris.²⁰ He repeatedly convinced the French authorities that Polish emigrants could best serve French interests. In a confidential note dated July 7, 1836 to the French foreign ministry, Czartoryski shared his view that the strong Polish emigration could become an active instrument of French policy. He also proposed joint action against the Russian Empire in the East in the form of secret missions with experienced Polish officers who would be appointed to the Ottoman army or other services but financed and protected by France.²¹

At the same time, in August 1836, Czartoryski formulated the new political ambitions in the East through a memorandum titled “The Reason and Goal of the Eastern Missions.”²² This was an operational plan to weaken Russia by acting in three arenas (Turkey, the Caucasus, and Persia) through tailored military and political work. In Turkey, Polish émigrés should provide military instruction, gather intelligence, and build bases in Wallachia and Moldavia to prove that Poland was the Ottoman Empire's most dependable ally. In the Caucasus, they should study a region at war with Russia, offer tactical expertise, and leverage the presence of many Poles (in Russian service, prisons, or forced labor) while also

19 Ibid., 30; Hahn, “Possibilities and Limitations,” 18–19.

20 Дамянов, *Френската политика*, 116.

21 Ibid., 117–18.

22 BCz, Rkps. 5282. X.A.C. Pisma Oryginalne Polityczne, 1834–1837, 207–16.

exerting influence on the neighboring peoples, whose loyalties were uncertain. In Persia, cast as a region of rivalry between Russian and British geopolitical interests, Polish émigrés could help British missions and earn Persian support. Across the East, the aim was to draw attention to the Polish cause, track Russian movements, encourage anti-Russian sentiment, further local interests, and report reliably to Czartoryski himself, with the explicit instruction to coordinate with British and French missions and rely on Hôtel Lambert for funding, recommendations, and contingency aid.²³

In line with this memorandum, Czartoryski drafted another document in the same month titled “Materials for a Plan of a Coordinated Action.”²⁴ The plan coordinated anti-Russian strategy based on the mobilization of peoples subjected to or threatened by Russian domination. In addition to the Ottomans, Persians, and Poles, all neighboring countries and peoples between Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Caspian Sea were seen as potential participants.²⁵ The central aim was to compensate for the passivity of the European governments by creating an independent network of action that would unite Poles, Ottomans, Persians, and other populations hostile to the Russian Empire in a common political and military effort. The document proposed a two-stage plan: first, a preparatory phase based on reconnaissance, clandestine contacts, political persuasion, and the organization of resources; second, a final phase of concerted action against Russia. In this design, Poland was imagined as the principal actor of the future struggle, but the Ottoman Empire occupied a particularly important place as the key eastern partner whose anti-Russian potential had to be activated through careful diplomacy and assurances of practical support. The document thus reveals the essential logic of Hôtel Lambert’s Balkan or Eastern policy: to transform scattered anti-Russian sentiments into an organized transnational coalition capable of weakening St. Petersburg and reopening the Polish question within a broader European and Near Eastern framework.²⁶

Thus, after 1836, Hôtel Lambert began to prepare the first plans for military and diplomatic actions in the East and to promote the protection of the integrity of the Sultan’s empire. The ties between Hôtel Lambert and the Ottoman Empire were strengthened through the Ottoman ambassadors and representatives in Paris and London, including Mehmed Namık Pasha (1804–1892), Mustafa

23 Ibid., 214–16.

24 Ibid., 285–343.

25 Ibid., 290.

26 Ibid., 290–300.

Reşid Pasha (1800–1858), Mehmed Ali Pasha (1815–1871), and others. They were key figures in the Tanzimat reforms. In Polish historiography, the beginning of the Hotel Lambert's activities in the Ottoman Balkans in the late 1830s is viewed predominantly romantically as an independent policy. As we have seen, this is far from the truth. The actions of Czartoryski and his agents in the East were carefully coordinated with the geopolitical goals of Paris and, to some extent, those of London. Czartoryski's associates maintained close ties with the espionage section of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Every Polish agent sent to the Orient had a French passport and French protection.²⁷ Thus, integrated into the geopolitics of France and Great Britain, Adam Czartoryski and Hôtel Lambert had very little room to maneuver in pursuing an independent, purely Polish policy and purely Polish goals.

The period between 1836 and 1841 was formative for Czartoryski's Balkan policies and his émigré political organization. As part of the targeted efforts towards the Orient, several initial missions of Hôtel Lambert merit discussion.

First, there were the military missions of General Wojciech Chrzanowski (1793–1861) and a few Polish officers. The experienced general was sent to Istanbul in 1834, 1836, and 1838, with the support of London, in his capacity as a British officer and advisor on the modernization of the Ottoman army, which was strongly supported by the British government at the time, Lord Palmerston (1784–1865) personally, and, among others, Czartoryski himself. Chrzanowski's activities had two sides. In addition to serving as an advisor and military officer carrying out tasks for London, he was also one of Czartoryski's agents.²⁸ The general's mission was not particularly successful and, following persistent protests by the Russian ambassador A. Butenev (1787–1866) and the Austrian ambassador B. von Stürmer (1787–1863), with exerted pressure from St. Petersburg and Vienna, he was recalled three times from Istanbul, the last time in 1839, along with other Polish officers in Ottoman service.²⁹

The second such major undertaking was the mission of Major Ludwik Bystrzonowski (1797–1878), an officer and politician, in the Ottoman Balkans and Caucasus in 1835. This mission aimed to revamp Bystrzonowski's contacts in the region, conduct military and political reconnaissance, and consider options and plans for future activities of Hôtel Lambert against Russia and Austria.

27 Handelsman, *Adam Czartoryski*, vol. 2, 5–11.

28 Graniewski, "The Mission," 135–36.

29 Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji*, 37–40; Дамянов, *Френската политика*, 119.

Having gained experience in the Near East in the early 1830s, Bystrzonowski soon became one of the most important advisors to Czartoryski in his shift towards the East.³⁰

The third in this list was the 1838 mission of Hôtel Lambert and its agent Janusz Woronicz (1805–1874), known in France under the pseudonym Werner. Woronicz was sent to the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, where he sought to intensify anti-Russian activity in the Ottoman Empire. The goal of Hôtel Lambert and Woronicz was to provide active support for the anti-Russian forces in opposition in the two principalities by supporting the revolutionary movement of Colonel Ion Câmpineanu (1798–1863).³¹ Woronicz took certain measures to distance the local elites from Russian influence and turn them against it. He tried to convince the elites to engage in anti-Russian activities, leaning on the French and British consulates for support.³² Though it enjoyed the support of Felix Colson, secretary of the French consul in Bucharest,³³ the initiative failed due to weak support from the French and British governments, the outbreak of the Second Egyptian Crisis in 1839, and the actions of Russian diplomacy, which closely monitored and responded to anti-Russian efforts in the Balkans.³⁴

The initial missions in the Balkan region could also be perceived as having served as a means of testing the waters for Czartoryski. The outcome of the Second Egyptian Crisis of 1839–1841 and its conclusion with the collective London Conventions of July 1840 and 1841 created a new geopolitical configuration in the East. The Russian Empire managed to oppose and divide France and Great Britain in their Eastern policy, but it paid for this with the renunciation of the advantageous Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi of 1833. This led to a rapprochement between Great Britain and the Russian Empire and, to a large extent, the exclusion of France from the Levant, which was most advantageous for London. The new realities led to two significant shifts in the policy of Hôtel Lambert. First, despite its good contacts in Great Britain and the essential similarities between the policies of the Czartoryski's group and those of London on the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, Hôtel Lambert naturally reoriented itself towards even closer cooperation with France in the Balkans. Second,

30 Chudzio, *Polityk*, 69–81.

31 Berry, *Czartoryski*, 108–32.

32 Lewak, *Dziesię emigracji*, 43.

33 Handelsman, *Le prince Czartoryski*, 8–12.

34 Florescu, “R. G. Colquhoun.”

as a result of geopolitical shifts, the focus of Hôtel Lambert turned entirely to the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire for active Franco-Polish anti-Russian and anti-Austrian actions in the East.³⁵

Against this backdrop, the Polish émigré and literary figure Michał Czajkowski (1804–1886) emerged while deepening his collaboration with Prince Czartoryski and Hôtel Lambert after 1838. His popularity grew immensely with the publication of the novels *Powieści kozackie* (*Cossack Tales*, 1837), *Wernyhora* (*Wernyhora, the Ukrainian Bard*, 1838), and *Kirdżali. Powieść naddunajska* (*Kirdżali: A Danubian Novel*, 1839). The latter was dedicated to Czartoryski's sister, Maria Czartoryska-Wirtemberska (1768–1854), and dealt with Slavic–Balkan themes. Although his works were not literary masterpieces, Czajkowski nonetheless won popularity as a writer by capturing the fashionable trends of the time and weaving them into his books. With the deepening of Czajkowski's ideological and political ties with Czartoryski, his growing popularity, and his close contacts with politicians and diplomats in the Paris circles, he came to the fore among the contributors to Hôtel Lambert.

Partly for this reason, Czartoryski sent Czajkowski, as part of the emerging new political line of Hôtel Lambert, linked to Catholicism, on a diplomatic mission to Rome in April 1840. This new line included not only the strong and devoted Catholicism professed by Czartoryski, but above all, the securing of support from the Vatican for Polish political actions and activities. The goal of Czajkowski's mission in Rome was precisely to raise the image of the Poles, strengthen spiritual ties, and change the Vatican's pro-Russian policy on the Polish question.³⁶ Though he had the cooperation of the Catholic orders in the Franco-Polish direction, Czajkowski's meeting with Pope Gregory XVI (*1831, 1765–1846) was essentially ceremonial in nature and achieved absolutely nothing.³⁷ Nevertheless, Catholicism would play a significant role in Czartoryski's Balkan policies over the next few years.

Czajkowski's mission did not go unnoticed. At the end of April and beginning of May 1840, the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery,³⁸ through secret correspondence from the Russian ambassador in Rome Ivan

35 Berry, *Czartoryski*, 80–81, 98–100.

36 Wszolek, *Pranica*.

37 Rawita–Gawroński, *Michał Czajkowski*, 32; Чайковский, “Записки,” *Русская старина* 93, no. 3, 657–73.

38 A special department within the personal office of the Russian emperor, representing in nature a secret police force, was established in 1826. The Third Department was formed by merging the Special Office with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as the newly formed special gendarmerie corps of

Potemkin (1780–1849), learned of Czajkowski's intention to travel from Rome via Florence to Odessa and Volhynia, probably to his family estate. An order was issued to prevent him from doing so.³⁹ New instructions followed for his arrest and the confiscation of all documents in his possession and for his transfer under strict armed guard to the military governor of Kiev.⁴⁰ At the beginning of July, the Kiev authorities already had a lithographic portrait of Czajkowski sent secretly by the Russian ambassador in Paris, Count Pyotr Pahlen (1777–1864), and they were watching for his appearance on the Russian border, sharing the information that he was using the foreign English name of Frank.⁴¹ By September, the Russian services already knew that the Polish emigrant's goal was actually to spark an uprising in his native land, and they were monitoring every foreigner named Frank who approached the borders. For a short time, the suspicions of the Russian secret police fell on a printer traveling from Brest to Moscow named Alexander Ferdinand Frank, but it turned out that this was not Czajkowski.⁴² In the end, the Russian services failed to identify Czajkowski on the basis of the portraits they had, but it is also unclear whether Czajkowski actually managed to infiltrate the Russian Empire.⁴³ It seems highly unlikely. All this suggests that the Russian apparatus was not only aware of and monitoring the activities of Hôtel Lambert and its agents, but that Czajkowski was now a person of special and operational interest to them. Similarly, the Austrian secret police were also closely monitoring the Polish political émigré activities across Europe and the Balkans.⁴⁴

During this period, Hôtel Lambert, with the active participation of Czajkowski, became involved with the impostor Nikola Vasojevich (1797–1844), who claimed to be a Montenegrin prince and heir to the throne of the “ancient” Balkan country of Holmia (which never actually existed). The “Vasojevich” affair was more of an independent initiative by Czartoryski to create a Balkan state or state entity under Ottoman suzerainty. It was little more than a farce,

the Russian Empire's armed forces on July 7, 1826. In this way, the two structures (the secret police and the gendarmerie units in the Russian army) were merged into a single structure. This made the Third Department a powerful military intelligence service with de facto supra-ministerial status. Its first head was General Alexander Benckendorff (1782–1844). The Third Department was the main source of intelligence for the tsar's secret police.

39 ГАРФ, ф. 109 (Третье отделение Собственной Его Императорского Величества канцелярии), оп. 15. 1-я экспедиция. 1840 г., арх. ед. 2, ч. 1, 4; 9–11.

40 Ibid., 17.

41 Ibid., 28–29.

42 Ibid., 36–38.

43 Ibid., 47–49.

44 Aliprantis, *The Origins*; Emerson, *Metternich*; Pijaj, “Relikt,” 51–91.

however, and it ended in fiasco and discredited Czartoryski's conservative-monarchist camp internationally.

The self-proclaimed Vasojevich was actually born in Albania, and his real name was Radovich.⁴⁵ He was a military engineer who had briefly resided in the Ottoman Empire as a military instructor and British vice-consul for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Albania. He subsequently emigrated to Paris, created his own legend and genealogy, and was introduced to Parisian intellectual circles, where he met Czartoryski.⁴⁶ Hôtel Lambert made a secret agreement with the imposter to provide political and financial assistance in support of Vasojevich's plans for a new Balkan state. Prince Czartoryski had to contribute a considerable sum of money from his personal funds. Interestingly, French Marshal Soult also personally contributed a significant amount of money, probably without the knowledge of the Tuileries Palace, to the Montenegrin "prince's" initiative.⁴⁷ The secret agreement also included a clause concerning the establishment of a Catholic church in the new Balkan state of Holmia, which required the support of Rome. Czajkowski became the liaison between Vasojevich and Czartoryski and left for Rome again, while Czartoryski sought additional international funding for the initiative. At that point, the affair took on comical proportions when it became clear that Vasojevich was a fraud and an impostor and that no support was forthcoming from Istanbul, Rome, or any other European capital.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the Russian secret services closely monitored the activities of Vasojevich and Czajkowski and were aware of the entire affair.⁴⁹ After the failure in Rome, Czajkowski and Czartoryski's other agent, Wincenty Rawski (1816 – after 1881), were instructed to travel on the French steamship "Skamander" to Malta, via Syria, Athens, with Istanbul as their final destination.⁵⁰ The Russian ambassadors in Rome, Paris, and Athens promptly sent secret reports to the Russian Foreign Ministry about the journey and activities of the two Polish agents.⁵¹ At the end of September 1841, Czajkowski set foot in the Ottoman capital for the first time. There, the "Vasojevich" affair finally came to an end, and given the fact that Czajkowski had taken part in it, Hôtel Lambert was

45 АВПРИ, ф. 151 (Политический архив), оп. 482, арх. ед. 3267, 2.

46 Berry, *Czartoryski*, 148–52.

47 Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji*, 44–45.

48 Berry, *Czartoryski*, 153–56; Đurković-Jakšić, *Petar II Petrović*, 146–61; Đurković-Jakšić, *Srbijansko-crnogorska*, 28–63.

49 ГАРФ, ф. 109, оп. 15. 1-я экспедиция. 1840 г., арх. ед. 2, ч. 1, 60–69.

50 Чайковский, "Записки," *Русская старина* 94, no. 4, 189–90.

51 АВПРИ, ф. 151, оп. 482, арх. ед. 3267, 3.

partially compromised before the Sublime Porte and the Great Emigration, and measures were taken to quell the consequences of Czartoryski's and Czajkowski's romantic but deluded venture.

The "Vasojevich" affair lays bare not only the romantic (or foolhardy) ardor that animated the thinking of Czartoryski and Czajkowski, but also the vagueness of Hôtel Lambert's grasp of the Balkans, a region they only barely understood. Although all the undertakings launched by Czartoryski's conservative-monarchist camp in the East from the late 1830s onwards were unsuccessful, Czartoryski and his agents gained valuable experience in the art of diplomacy and a good orientation in the geopolitical wilderness. Last but not least, this probably led to the abandonment of certain illusions and a more pragmatic approach to high politics within the exile camp.

The Establishment of the Eastern Agency in Istanbul

The political experience gained by Hôtel Lambert crystallized after the end of the Second Egyptian Crisis, when the monarchist camp focused its attention mainly on the Ottoman Empire, where it saw the greatest chance for success and influence. This brought to the surface Adam Czartoryski's old concept of a large Slavic state or federation,⁵² a notion he had first entertained when he had been in charge of Russian foreign policy.⁵³ Now, this vision also included a commitment to maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., this federation or Slavic state would exist within the framework of that very empire. The essence of this modernized concept was that a possible future Slavic federation would be the natural successor to the decaying empire of the Sultan, which would inevitably collapse at some point. Of course, the promotion of anti-Russian and anti-Austrian policies in the East was still a priority. The concept included the notion of Russia as the common enemy of the Poles and Ottomans and, of course, of the future Slavic state.⁵⁴ The Polish national question, according to this new vision, was to be resolved against this backdrop.

52 Between 1804 and 1806, as minister of foreign affairs of Russia, Czartoryski's ideological views not only supported the Balkan liberation movements but also strongly advocated in favor of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of a large Balkan federation under the protectorate of the Russian Empire. He saw this as a means of restoring the integrity of Poland.

53 Czartoryski, *Mémoires*, 39–45.

54 Berry, *Czartoryski*, 146–47; Skowronek, *Polityka Bałkańska*, 221–24; Hahn, "Die Diplomatie," 369–72.

The closer and more natural rapprochement between the Habsburg Monarchy and France and the foreign policy of François Guizot (1787–1874) after 1841 brought about a new layer of political action in the East. This was the French colonial idea of “civilization” (mission civilisatrice), adopted by Prince Czartoryski, based on Catholicism or Uniate Christianity and education. Here, too, France proved the sole supporter of the Poles in their common anti-Russian endeavors.⁵⁵

In this charged political climate, Czajkowski arrived in Istanbul with a French passport, as a representative of the Paris Institute of History, officially to study the history and ethnography of the Slavs within the Ottoman Empire. He was provided with special letters of recommendation personally from Guizot. Thanks to this, he almost immediately established contacts with the French diplomatic representatives in the Ottoman capital. These contacts included the ambassador Count Charles-Édouard de Pontois (1792–1871) and, a few months later, his successor, Count François-Adolphe de Bourqueney (1799–1869), as well as the first dragoman of the French embassy, Joseph Mathurin Cor (1805–1854), whom Czajkowski quickly befriended. Of course, under these circumstances, he enjoyed full French protection.⁵⁶

Czajkowski’s description of and observations concerning the French ambassador Pontois after their first meetings are interesting. Writing to Paris’ central, Czajkowski offered the following account:

Upon my arrival in Istanbul, I immediately went to Mr. Pontois. Mr. de Pontois welcomed me with the utmost courtesy and promised to be my guide on my literary pilgrimages—he gave me proof of his kindness—the very next day, right after his order, I visited all the mosques. He is very sympathetic to our cause, he likes Poles and feels compassion and gratitude, because he spent a year in captivity in Kaunas and was well received there. He speaks a few words of Polish and pronounces them well. He seems a decent and dignified man. As far as I have heard, he is widely respected here and, despite some criticism of the French government, he knows how to maintain the dignity and prestige of France, which is greater than we think, especially among reformers.⁵⁷

55 Berry, “Czartoryski’s Hôtel Lambert,” 52–53; Brzozowska, *Z polityki wschodniej*, 175–77.

56 Сковронец, “Михаил Чайковский,” 93–94; Handelsman, *Adam Czartoryski*, vol. 2, 96.

57 BCz, Rkps. 5410. X.A.C. Depesze Wschodnie, 1838–1842, 425.

On one occasion, when Czajkowski was enjoying the hospitality of the French Embassy as an overnight guest, he made the following contentions: “[Pontois] is certainly not one of the most intelligent politicians, but at least he understands the Turkish state and what is happening here in Istanbul better than other French people around him.”⁵⁸

In contrast, the newly appointed British ambassador, Stratford Canning (1786–1880), who was serving in the Ottoman capital for a second time, reacted very differently to Czajkowski’s presence in Istanbul. Sources reveal that Canning viewed the Polish émigrés in the East with suspicion, seeing them as conduits for French interests. During their meeting, Czajkowski tried to maintain his reputation in front of Canning, stating that he had “no political intentions in Istanbul, only literary ones,” but to no avail.⁵⁹ Not long before Czajkowski met with him, Canning told Zamoyski everything that needed to be said: “If a Polish delegation came to me and spoke about Poland, I would reply that I see no hope for it, no possibility of doing anything for it, no one can interfere with it, it is completely subject to circumstances, and there is no point in even talking about it.”⁶⁰

Initially, Czajkowski settled in a modest apartment in Istanbul and quickly familiarized himself with the political situation in the capital. In addition to powerful French figures from whom he hoped to win support, he also prudently befriended conservative circles in the Ottoman government and politicians such as Husrev Pasha (1769–1855) and Hassan Riza Pasha (1809–1877), who would play a dominant role in the Sublime Porte over the next few years.⁶¹ Czajkowski was also supported by Mustafa Reşid Pasha through Czartoryski, and he had the sympathies of the sultan’s nephew Ahmed.⁶²

At the time, Czajkowski was awaiting the arrival of Aleksander Wereszczyński (?–1843), who had been sent by Hôtel Lambert. He had made contact in the meantime with Ludwik Zwierkowski (1803–1860). Under the pseudonym Lenoir, Zwierkowski had been sent to Istanbul in the late 1830s with a French passport by his brother Walenty Zwierkowski (1788–1859), one of the leaders of the left wing of the Polish Democratic Society. Lenoir’s mission was to study the situation in the Ottoman Empire and provide Polish democrats with detailed information about possible actions in the East. Last but not least, he was to

58 BCz, Rkps. 5410, 443.

59 АВПИИ, ф. 151, оп. 482, арх. ел. 3267, 8–9.

60 Handelsman, *Adam Czartoryski*, vol. 2, 97.

61 BCz, Rkps. 5410, 429–430, 433–435; Skowronek, *Polityka Balkańska*, 52–53.

62 Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji*, 44–45.

monitor the activities of Hôtel Lambert in the region and send compromising materials that could help the Polish Democratic Society in its fight against Hôtel Lambert. Czajkowski befriended and recruited Lenoir to the cause of Hôtel Lambert, and he soon became one of its confidants and its most active agent.⁶³

Upon his arrival in Istanbul, Wereszczyński was tasked with impartially assessing Czajkowski's political activities and plans in the Balkans for the headquarters in Paris. Shortly thereafter, Czajkowski took over the management of Balkan affairs at the Paris headquarters. It was then, at the end of 1841, that Hôtel Lambert created the so-called *Eastern Agency* (Agencja Wschodnia or Agencja Misji Polskiej na Wschodzie), with its headquarters in Istanbul and Czajkowski as its chief agent and head.⁶⁴ The Eastern Agency would pursue the new main direction of Hôtel Lambert and French geopolitical interests – the Slavic population in the Ottoman Empire. One of its aims was to create an independent Slavic center in the Balkans under Ottoman suzerainty and to reduce Russian (and Austrian) influence over the Christian population.⁶⁵ This, in turn, was intended to promote Polish exile interests and the Polish national cause. Czajkowski became virtually the main instrument of this policy. The project to establish a permanent Polish agency in Istanbul was coordinated in detail by Hôtel Lambert and France, and it was based on François Guizot's French foreign policy concept. Thus, with the financial and political assistance of France, Hôtel Lambert's Eastern Agency was created. The agency was essentially a Polish intelligence center (network) that had to comply with the principles of French foreign policy in the Balkans.⁶⁶ The agency operated not only in the Ottoman context, but also with the overt and covert support of the Sublime Porte.

Shortly after arriving in Istanbul, Czajkowski contacted the Catholic Order of Lazarists through their leader, Father Louis-Florent Leleu, as well as the missionary and scholar Eugène Boré (1809–1878).⁶⁷ Like the Eastern Agency, the Lazarists were under French protection. Through their activities among the Christian population, which formed part of the “civilizing” mission in the East, the Lazarists became part of France's foreign policy.⁶⁸ Essentially, this was

63 Чайковский, “Записки,” *Русская старина* 94, no. 4, 190–91.

64 Ibid., 190–99; Skowronek, *Polityka Balkańska*, 53, 75.

65 Berry, “Czartoryski's Hôtel Lambert,” 52; Skowronek, *Polityka Balkańska*, 211–18.

66 Дамянов, *Френската политика*, 180–81; Гросул, *Польская политическая эмиграция*, 42–43.

67 Генчев, *Франция*, 58–59, 73.

68 Ibid., 71–73.

a means of penetrating the Balkans culturally and religiously with the aim of reducing the significant Orthodox influence of the Russian Empire among the Slavs. This approach also involved the use of soft power in the form of free Catholic education for Christians and the publication of books in Slavic languages. As France was unable to engage directly in these activities due to its position and St. Petersburg's response, it used the Polish Eastern Agency and Catholic orders to do so.⁶⁹

By early 1842, the Eastern Agency already had the characteristics of a quasi-diplomatic mission, not too dissimilar from other official diplomatic posts. Its leadership included Michał Czajkowski (chief agent and head), Aleksander Wereszczyński (managing agent), Ludwik Zwierkowski (first secretary), Wincenty Rawski (head of the chancellery), and Jan Saich (dragoman).⁷⁰ In the Ottoman capital, the Polish agency was housed in a three-room rented house. In addition to the five people listed above, its staff would increase to about 12 people over the course of the following years. This included two or three clerks or secretaries and one or two guards, plus the new agents.⁷¹ From here, the chief agent Czajkowski began to manage a significant network throughout the Balkans.

One of the most important pillars of the Eastern Agency's existence in Istanbul was the excellent connectivity and communication between its elements and its headquarters. All correspondence from the network of agents in the Balkans passed through Czajkowski's hands. He forwarded dispatches to Paris and communicated Czartoryski's instructions to his subordinates. Ideally, each new agent would undergo training at the Istanbul headquarters under the chief agent before leaving for their assignment. For security reasons, the agents themselves were prohibited from conducting personal correspondence during their service. As for correspondence between Istanbul and Paris, French diplomatic mail was most often used, and British mail was used very rarely. Letters to and from the Belgrade agent were most often delivered via the Serbian diplomatic mail and, occasionally, via the Ottoman or French mail. In other areas of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman mail service was used. The connection between Polish agents in more isolated areas of the Balkans and headquarters in Istanbul was maintained through Christian merchants, Austrian traveling agents

69 Skowronek, *Polityka Balkańska*, 54; Генчев, *Франция*, 55.

70 Чайковский, "Записки," *Русская старина* 94, no. 5, 426.

71 Lewak, *Dzieje emigracji*, 44.

on the Danube, and nearby consulates. Last but not least, Czajkowski sometimes used close relatives of his own or of Czartoryski to deliver the dispatches.⁷²

The most important details in the Eastern Agency's dispatches were often encrypted using a specially devised code of letters and numbers. Only the Paris and Istanbul headquarters had the key to decrypt the hidden information.⁷³ There were also cases in which other arbitrary ciphers were used in correspondence that sometimes remained incomprehensible to the addressee.⁷⁴ Significantly, the Russian diplomatic services and the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery obtained all information regarding the cipher method and the keys of the Eastern Agency shortly after the headquarters were established in the Ottoman capital. The details, information, diagrams, tables, explanations, and examples of how the cipher worked that reached St. Petersburg are impressive from the perspective of their level of detail. The fact that this information is neatly arranged in a legible Polish manual almost certainly suggests that the Russian secret police obtained it from Hôtel Lambert itself.⁷⁵

The Eastern Agency itself had limitations in terms of its physical existence, ranging from financing to staffing. In the first few years, the Polish agency in Istanbul had an annual budget of around 14,000–16,000 francs. The agency was financed through several official and unofficial channels from France and Britain. Evidence suggests that donations were regularly received from Catholic orders and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith via France. In Britain, funds were known to be sent to the agency via the politicians Thomas Wentworth Beaumont (1792–1848) and Lord Dudley Stewart (1803–1854), as well as through the London Literary Association of Friends of Poland with W. Zamoyski's mediation. However, insufficient funds meant that Polish agents were paid very little. This forced them to live modestly and often to take out loans, which greatly undermined their image and work.⁷⁶ Agents' salaries ranged from 50 to 110 francs up to 250 francs per month. This fell far short of the average salary of foreign diplomats in the Ottoman capital. Sometimes, as was the case with the aforementioned Ludwik Zwierkowski (who went by the alias Lenoir) during his

72 Skowronek, *Polityka Bałkańska*, 68–69.

73 Łątka, *Carogrodzki pojedynek*, 126–28, 160–61.

74 Skowronek, *Polityka Bałkańska*, 69.

75 ГАРФ, ф. 109, оп. 15. 1-я экспедиция. 1840 г., арх. ед. 2, ч. 1, 80а.

76 Skowronek, *Polityka Bałkańska*, 70; Konarska, *W kregu Hotelu Lambert*, 119–30.

mission to Belgrade in 1842–1843, agents were expected to support themselves by giving French lessons, for example.⁷⁷

Conclusion

Overall, the creation of the Eastern Agency in Istanbul was a logical continuation of the political plans and actions of Czartoryski's exile camp. Founded in the mid-1830s, the Istanbul headquarters served as a base for further, more proactive missions in the region, as well as a platform for the first Polish political and intelligence missions in the Balkans and the Near East. These missions were of critical importance for formulating the monarchic camp's new Balkan concept. The main network points of the Eastern Agency's residence in the late 1830s and 1840s included Istanbul, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Tulcea. After Istanbul, Belgrade became the second most important location in the Balkans. The first agents to carry out politico-diplomatic missions in Serbia were Aleksander Wereszczyński (who went by the alias Korczak) in 1840, Adam Łyszczczyński (who went by the alias Lynch) in 1841, Ludwik Zwierkowski in 1842–1843, and František Zach in 1843–1848.⁷⁸

Encouraged by the successes of the constitution builders in Serbia and the active work of the Franco-Polish policy in this direction, the prevailing view in the Eastern Agency during this period was that it was best for all Slavic matters in the Balkans (including Bulgarian) in general to be carried out under the auspices of Serbia. Serbia, the agency's leaders felt, should play the role of a Slavic center in the Balkans. Guizot and Hôtel Lambert acted cautiously so as not to arouse the suspicions of the Sublime Porte when they sent Zwierkowski to Belgrade earlier, and after him František Zach (1807–1892). The latter passed on the foreign policy program developed by France and Hôtel Lambert to Ilija Garašanin (1812–1874), which became known as "The Outline" (*Načertanije*).⁷⁹ The program became a cornerstone of Serbian foreign policy.⁸⁰ Probably due to the successes in that direction, the Eastern Agency received permission from France to expand its composition and activities in early 1843.⁸¹

77 Pezda, "Emigracyjne gry," 70; Pezda, *Ludzie i pieniądze*.

78 Cetnarowicz, *Tajna dyplomacja*, 44–214; Cetnarowicz, "Misja Ludwika Zwierkowskiego," 733–56.

79 Ibid.

80 Bataković, *The Foreign Policy*.

81 Чайковский, "Записки," *Русская старина* 95, no. 7, 213.

On the other hand, from the beginning of his stay in the Ottoman Empire, as chief agent, Czajkowski undertook three special politico-intelligence missions in the heart of the Balkans disguised as travels. The first mission in late 1841 was to Rodosto and Bandırma.⁸² The second was at the beginning of 1842 in Northern Dobrudja.⁸³ Both journeys, which took him to the fringes of the empire, were undertaken with the goal of establishing ties of some sort with the compact local populations of Old Believers⁸⁴ and Nekrassov Cossacks,⁸⁵ who, it was hoped, could then be used for anti-Russian activities by Czartoryski's camp. The ventures met with no success whatsoever.⁸⁶ The third mission from mid-1842 targeted the heartland of the Balkans (territories today in Bulgaria) with the aim of gathering information on the ground concerning the Bulgarians and other non-Muslims to establish contacts and plans for future activities.

Czajkowski summarized the agency's aims in a letter to Czartoryski from December 16, 1843:

I do not trust any Turk. Besides, our political form is to support the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and in fact, we are only interested in the existence of the Slavs. With the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, we would be, as before, always in emigration, while with the movements of the Slavs, we are moving forward. Let us not get too close to the Porte, so that the Slavs do not accidentally suspect us of being agents of the Porte, which would greatly harm us.⁸⁷

From the mid-1830s onwards, the Balkan activities of Hôtel Lambert and the establishment of the Eastern Agency in Istanbul at the end of 1841 marked the beginning of significant political activity in the Ottoman Balkans for the Polish exile emigration. The Istanbul headquarters was, in fact, a Franco-Polish intelligence bureau that depended on French foreign policy in the Balkans and the Sublime Porte simultaneously. Although it was an unofficial mission under complete French patronage, under the leadership of its chief agent, Michał

82 BCz, Rkps. 3882. Pisma Własnoręczne Michała Czajkowskiego, 642–717.

83 Чайковский, “Записки,” *Русская старина* 95, no. 7, 202–13; Сковронек, “Михаил Чайковский,” 95–100.

84 This was a religious sect that broke from the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century due to the reforms imposed by Patriarch Nikon of Moscow (1605–1681). These compact populations lived mainly in northern Dobrudja.

85 Old Believers, descendants of the Don Cossacks, who settled in the Kuban after the Bulavin Uprising of 1708. Their name comes from their leader, Ignat Nekrasov (1660–1737).

86 Чайковский, “Записки,” *Русская старина* 94, no. 5, 430–51; Кельсиев, “Очерк истории,” 612–13.

87 BCz, Rkps. 5486. X.A.C. Czajkowski. Listy 1841–1845, 513–14.

Czajkowski, it exerted considerable influence over the Sublime Porte and the Christian population in the Ottoman Empire in subsequent years in several important fields, including politics, education, and religion. The Eastern Agency served as a platform for numerous political, intelligence, and diplomatic Polish exile missions and travels across the Ottoman Balkans in the 1830s and 1840s and even into the late 1860s. At the same time, the types of activity in which the agency engaged reveals the ambivalent position of the Polish emigration itself. While it pursued its own national agenda and sought to mobilize the Balkan Christians within a broader anti-Russian and anti-Austrian framework, it was repeatedly drawn into the strategic calculations of the Great Powers, who used it for their own imperial purposes. The networks among the Polish émigrés and also their mobility, linguistic skills, and anti-Russian sentiments made them especially useful as intermediaries, agents, and informants for French, Ottoman, and, at times, broader Western diplomatic and intelligence interests in the Balkan region. In this sense, the Eastern Agency in Istanbul as a center for Polish exiles missions in the Ottoman Balkans was an integral part of a wider imperial contest in which émigré actors functioned both as political subjects and as instruments of competing powers. It operated between the narrow road of national desires and the constraints imposed by geopolitical rivalries and the imperial balance of power.

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