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“ZA VAŠU I NAŠU SLOBODU,” CROATIAN VOLUNTEERS IN THE POLISH-RUSSIAN GUERILLA WAR OF 1863-1864

**„Za vašu i našu slobodu“. Chorwaccy ochotnicy w polsko-rosyjskiej wojnie
partyzanckiej 1863-1864 r.**

Abstrakt

Artykuł dotyczy aktywności ochotników z Chorwacji w polskim powstaniu narodowym zwanym styczniowym (1863-1864). Uczestnictwo chorwackich przybyszów ilustrują trzy wybrane przykłady: 1. Petar Schmeiss – zwierzchnik partyzanckiego zgrupowania, dowodzący w największej bitwie Północnego Mazowsza/powstańczego województwa płockiego (Chromaków); 2. Grgur Saint Zegga – dowódca kompanii w oddziale Karola Kality ps. Rębajło w powstańczym województwie krakowskim, dzięki jego bohaterskiej, przypłaconej utratą życia postawie powstańcy zwyciężyli w potyczce pod Mierzwinem; 3. anonimowy uczestnik nieudanej międzynarodowej wyprawy Teofila Łapińskiego z Londynu do położonej na litewskim wybrzeżu Poługi.

Słowa kluczowe: powstanie styczniowe, Chorwaci, „Za Waszą i naszą wolność”, ochotnicy cudzoziemscy, bitwy partyzanckie

Abstract

The article concerns the activity of Croatian volunteers in the Polish national uprising known as the January Uprising (1863-1864). The participation of Croatian newcomers is illustrated by three selected examples: 1. Petar Schmeiss – the leader of the partisan group, commanding in the largest battle of Northern Mazovia/the insurgent Plock voivodeship (Chromakowo). 2. Grgur Saint Zegga – company commander in the unit of Karol Kalita-Rebajło in the insurgent Krakow voivodeship, thanks to his heroic attitude, paid with the loss of life, the insurgents won the skirmish near Merzwin. 3. An anonymous participant in the unsuccessful international expedition of Teofil Łapiński from London to Palanga, located on the Lithuanian coast.

Keywords: January Uprising, Croats, “For Your Freedom and Ours,” foreign volunteers, partisan battles

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The scale of foreign participation in the January Uprising is estimated at several hundred to several thousand volunteers. The fate of most of them remains a mystery, making the effort to identify them complicated, difficult, and perhaps even unrealistic. Due to the fact that many source materials were not preserved or destroyed, they generally remain a group of anonymous heroes fighting for a common cause.

The insurrectionists of 1863 included representatives of 20 nations: French, Italians, Germans, Swiss, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, English, Belgians, Dutch, Luxembourgers, Swedes, Danes, Norwegian, Croatians, Serbs, Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians.² Stefan Kieniewicz noticed the variety of motivations of the newcomers from abroad, including "the desire for adventure and an easy military career. However, what was always at stake was their declared and professed belief in the righteousness of the Polish cause and their readiness to sacrifice themselves for it."³ More or less successful attempts were made to organize the so-called national legions (Russian, Hungarian, Italian).⁴

Four national groups have been the subject of the most detailed studies. First, the Russians (about 300 fought on the insurgent side);⁵ second, the Hungarians, who sought revenge for Polish support during the Spring of Nations (94 known by name, probably over 100);⁶ third, the French, whose presence was often seen as part of the spearhead of the allied army of Emperor Napoleon III (between 79 and 200);⁷ and fourth, the Italians, who were grateful for Polish participation in the Risorgimento (several dozen).⁸ The topic has also been explored in Czech and Slovak historiography,⁹ and the question of German involvement has appeared in scientific literature.¹⁰

² Among others, Z. Grot, *Rok 1863 w zaborze pruskim. Udział społeczeństwa w powstaniu styczniowym*, Poznań 1963, p. 157-162 (partial list of foreigners taking part in the uprising and recorded by the Prussian police). Belarussians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians were not considered foreigners at that time because they had lived in the territory before the partitions, when it belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

³ S. Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe*, Warszawa 2009, p. 603.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 404-406, 483, 600-606.

⁵ First of all, I. Miller, *Żołnierze armii carskiej – uczestnicy powstania 1863*, in: W. Djakow, I. Miller, *Ruch rewolucyjny w armii rosyjskiej a powstanie styczniowe*, Warszawa 1967, p. 273-391; idem, *Udział oficerów i żołnierzy rosyjskich w powstaniu styczniowym*, in: ibidem, p. 392-447; P. Łossowski, Z. Młynarski, *Rosjanie, Białorusini i Ukraińcy w powstaniu styczniowym*, Wrocław 1959.

⁶ T. Polak, *Udział Węgrów w powstaniu styczniowym*, „Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny,” 1/1956, no. 1, p. 220-235; idem, *Węgrzy w powstaniu styczniowym 1863-1864*, „Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości,” 5/1960, p. 66-78.

⁷ P. Gach, *Francuzi w powstaniu styczniowym*, in: *Polskie powstania narodowe na tle przemian europejskich w XIX wieku*, eds. A. Barańska, W. Matwiejczyk, J. Ziółek, Lublin 2001, p. 167-179; E. Kozłowski, *Cudzoziemcy w powstaniu styczniowym*, in: T. Bojarska, E. Kozłowski, *Stanisław Bech i inni cudzoziemcy w powstaniu styczniowym*. Dwa szkice, Włocławek 1986, p. 21-31.

⁸ M. Przedpelski, *Włosi w powstaniu styczniowym 1863 r. na ziemiach północnego Mazowsza*, „Bieżuńskie Zeszyty Historyczne,” 1993, no. 1, p. 6-32; K. Firlej-Bieleńska, *Nulla i jego towarzysze*, Warszawa 1923; S. Kieniewicz, *Risorgimento, Garibaldi, a Polska*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny,” 91/1984, no. 2, p. 279-289.

⁹ V. Žacek, *Ohlas polského povstání 1863 v Čechách*, Praha 1935, p. 150-154 (about 50 volunteers), V. Borodovcák, *Ohlas polského povstania r. 1863 na Slovensku*, Bratislava 1960, p. 150n.

¹⁰ D. Fajnhauz, *Niemcy a powstanie styczniowe na Litwie i Białorusi*, „Przegląd Historyczny,” 1951, no. 4, p. 683-710; W. Caban, *Niemieccy koloniści wobec polskich walk narodowowyzwoleńczych w XIX wieku*, in: idem, *Niemieccy osadnicy w Królestwie Polskim 1815-1915*, Kielce 1999, p. 199-207.

Historians have attempted to outline the biographies and military skills of both the entire cadre of “guests from abroad” and individual commanders.¹¹ However, when it comes to volunteers from the South Slavic nations, this topic remains largely unexplored in scholarly research. It is worth examining the cases of three of them (two of whom are known by name), though the available information is relatively scarce and mostly limited to their participation in the insurgent struggle.

Petar Schmeiss and the Battle of Chromakowo

the insurgents, led by an officer from the Austrian army, the Croat Schmeiss, were convinced that they would win.¹²

From the general information available about Petar Schmeiss, it appears that he was an officer in the Austrian army and, according to some sources, a non-commissioned officer in the Zouaves of the French army.¹³ During the Polish guerrilla war known as the January Uprising, he was active in the Płock Voivodeship, in what is now northern Mazovia.

How did he come to lead an insurrectionist group? On July 16, 1863, a 500-man unit led by Józef Trąpczyński was defeated near Szygi, and some of the insurgents made their way to a rallying point near Mława. Several units, including those commanded by Teofil Witkowski (pseud. Kolbe II), Antoni Wolski (pseud. Dunin), Romuald Majer (pseud. Pałacyk), and former National Government commissioner Bolesław Gasztowt (pseud. Żmudzin), gathered there. After another group, led by Mieczysław Broniewski, joined them, command of the newly expanded combat unit was taken over by an Italian, Colonel Luigi Navonne.

On July 29, this unit was forced into retreat by Russian cavalry captain Rutkowski, who commanded an infantry unit and 30 Cossacks (a total of 230 soldiers). At this point, a Croatian, Captain Petar Schmeiss,¹⁴ assumed command from wounded Navonne. Schmeiss had between 450 and 500 men under his command, stationed in an insurgent camp near Bieżeń.

On the evening of August 9, the insurgent gendarmerie reported that enemy columns were approaching from Mława, Lipno, and Płock. In response, Schmeiss consulted with Teofil Witkowski and devised a plan to counteract the enemy's concentric attack by engaging a single Russian column from Mława, which was of similar size. This column, commanded by cavalry officer Dukmasow, consisted of approximately 150 infantry soldiers and the same

¹¹ K. Jadezyk, *Dowódcy powstania styczniowego. Portret zbiorowy*, Łódź 2016; A. Buława, *Z Francji rodem. Szkic biograficzny Leona Younga (Leo Juncka) de Blankenheim, cudzoziemskiego dowódcy polskich powstańców w 1863 r.*, in: *Brdów w dobie Powstania Styczniowego*, ed. P. Goldyn, Brdów 2013, p. 53-73; A. Buława, *Dowódcy obcego pochodzenia na czele oddziałów zbrojnych polskiej wojny partyzanckiej (1863-1864)*, in: *Militaria w edukacji historycznej*, vol. 2: *Przeszłości nie można zrekonstruować*, eds. A. Drzewiecki, Ł. Różycki, Gdynia 2014, p. 341-353.

¹² M.W. Berg, *Zapiski o powstaniu polskim 1863 i 1864 r. i poprzedzającej powstanie epoce demonstracji od 1856 r.*, vol. 3, Kraków 1900, p. 234.

¹³ K. Jadezyk, op. cit., p. 80, 134.

¹⁴ M. Krajewski, *Powstanie styczniowe na ziemi dobrzyńskiej (1863-1864). Uwagi ogólne*, in: *Z dziejów powstania styczniowego na Kujawach i ziemi dobrzyńskiej*, ed. S. Kalembka, Warszawa 1989, p. 118; M. Przedpelski, *Włosi w powstaniu styczniowym*, p. 303-31; R. Juszkiewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe na północnym Mazowszu*, Warszawa 1992, p. 72; S. Zieliński, *Bitwy i potyczki 1863-1864*, Rapperswil 1913, p. 242 (differences in the spelling of the surname – Szmajś, Szmajc, Szmajć); M.W. Berg, op. cit., p. 243; *Urzędowy wykaz potyczek wojsk carskich w Królestwie Polskim w l. 1863-1864*, ed. L. Ratajczyk, „Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości,” 1962, no. 8, part. 2, p. 318; „Dziennik Poznański,” no. 175, 4 VIII 1863, no. 178, 7 VIII 1863.

number of horsemen and Cossacks, totalling about 300 soldiers. The Russian forces stopped for the night at Szeńsk.¹⁵

On August 10, at 2 a.m., the insurgent unit under Schmeiss's command set out for Biezuń, covering another 17 kilometers in a straight line. In a report to the War Department of the National Government, Schmeiss wrote: "As I could not wait for the enemy to attack me from three sides at the same time, in consultation with Mr. Kolbe, the commander of the second unit, I marched against the nearest enemy column near Szeńsk."

Witkowski's unit was ordered to reach the same location by taking a circular route through Chamsk (nearly 22 km). However, due to the Russian forces moving toward the village of Poniatowo, Schmeiss altered his plan. This time, he intended to take a circular route himself, aiming to attack the Russians from the rear and engage them in battle to relieve Witkowski's exhausted unit. Upon hearing reports of Russian troops appearing at Chromakowo, Schmeiss ordered his subordinates to advance there immediately and after a brief rest, he also proceeded to the location, hoping to outflank Dukmasow. While Schmeiss demonstrated offensive initiative, the execution of his plan did not account for potential complications.¹⁶

On reaching the village, the insurgent commander proposed a two-pronged attack –advancing with an infantry line covered by the rest of the company and supported by cavalry. The Russian adversary sent the Cossacks into battle, but they were repelled first by the insurgent horsemen and then by the riflemen. Schmeiss described the encounter in his report: "My line advanced and fired on the fleeing men. The Cossacks, having reorganized in the village, launched a new attack on my riflemen, but they were once again repelled."

With the support of the infantry, another unsuccessful Cossack attack followed. Meanwhile, Schmeiss advanced against the Russian infantry under the cover of rifle fire from the scythemen. However, their charge was halted by a barrage of fire from Russian infantry positioned behind buildings. The scythemen were forced to retreat to Jakubowo, a neighbouring colony of Chromakowo. The sparse farm structures and the limited number of buildings made it impossible to either effectively halt the Cossack attackers or retreat toward the grove near the Swojecin farm. Schmeiss was forced into a desperate defence of Jakubowo, awaiting reinforcements from Witkowski's troops. The battle lasted for half an hour, but ultimately, the insurgents were driven out. However, some fighters remained trapped in the manor buildings, surrounded by Cossacks. When they refused to surrender, the enemy set fire to a sheepfold, burning alive approximately 120 men. The remaining insurgents withdrew toward the forests near the village of Jonne.

Schmeiss responded to Dukmasow's manoeuvre, in which the Cossacks attempted to cut off the partisans' retreat by encircling them from behind. To counter this, he deployed 20 riflemen to push the Cossacks out of their new position. The most critical moment of the clash came, as the commander later wrote: "In the meantime, I was wounded in the right leg. Seeing this, my soldiers became agitated, but after a moment, I got back on my horse and restored

¹⁵ R. Juskiewicz, op. cit., p. 73 – based on M.W. Berg, op. cit., p. 234, that Dukmasov's forces numbered 230 foot and 85 cavalry; S. Zieliński, op. cit., p. 243.

¹⁶ Description of the battle based on: R. Juskiewicz, op. cit., p. 73-74; S. Zieliński, op. cit., p. 243-244; M.W. Berg, op. cit., p. 234-235; Z. Chądzyński, *Wspomnienie powstańca z lat 1861-1863*, Warszawa 1963, p. 148; *Urządowy wykaz*, p. 318 – the date 9 VIII; „Niepodległość,” no. 4, 28 VIII 1863, no. 6, 5 IX 1863; „Dziennik Poznański,” no. 205, 10 IX 1863; „Dziennik Powszechny,” no. 187, 19 VIII 1863; „Wiadomości z pola bitwy,” no 6, August 1863.

order. Soon, however, I was wounded again, this time in the left side, and I could no longer prevent my men from fleeing into the forest in disorder.”

Polish casualties amounted to more than 200 killed and wounded, while Russian losses remain unknown.¹⁷ One of the key reasons for the insurgents’ defeat in this major battle in northern Mazovia was the amateurish leadership of Teofil Witkowski, who was halted at Poniatów by Russian infantry hidden behind fences. Mistaking this for Dukmasow’s main force and lacking timely information about the battle at Chromakowo, Witkowski withdrew with his riflemen, leaving several dozen scythemen at the mercy of the enemy for which he was later tried before a war tribunal.¹⁸ Another major factor was Dukmasow’s superior command skills as well as the better training and discipline of the Russian regular army compared to the insurgents. After handing over his personal broadsword to Romuald Meyer-Pałacyk, Schmeiss retreated to East Prussia for a long-term convalescence.¹⁹

Foreign volunteers formed a distinct cadre within the insurgent ranks, and many of them rose to lead military units. Among them were French, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, German, and Swiss officers.²⁰ It was, therefore, worth examining the only Croatian commander of an insurrectionist unit during the January Uprising and analysing his bold offensive plan and active leadership during a multi-phase battle – one that ultimately ended in a devastating defeat following his elimination from command.

Grgur Saint-Zegga and the Battle of Mierzwin

a native of Croatia, our countryman fell on the field of glory for the most sacred cause²¹

Before turning our attention to Grgur Saint-Zegga, it is necessary to highlight the role of one of the most outstanding insurgent commanders, as the Croatian volunteer had a significant impact on the first of his insurrectionist victories.

Karol Kalita, pseud. Rębajło, was a lieutenant in the Austrian army (9th Infantry Regiment in Stryj) and had participated in multiple military campaigns. He fought in the 1st platoon, 3rd squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment of the Polish Legion alongside the revolutionary army during the Hungarian Revolution of 1849 as well as in the Austro-French War of 1859, (including the Battle of Magenta).²² After participating in Aleksander Tetera-Taniewski’s Galician expedition (August 1863)²³ as part of the January Uprising, he returned to the battlefield in mid-September. It was at this point that his independent military career began – he was

¹⁷ R. Juskiewicz, op. cit., p. 74 – losses are unknown, at least 120 burned in the sheepfold and 80 killed near Poniatowo.

¹⁸ R. Juskiewicz, op. cit., p. 74, 76; Z. Chądzyński, op. cit., p. 148-149; S. Zieliński, op. cit., p. 243-244.

¹⁹ Z. Chądzyński, op. cit., p. 149; M.W. Berg, op. cit., p. 235.

²⁰ K. Jadczyk, op. cit.; E. i B. Liszewscy, *Viva la Polonia! Cudzoziemcy w Powstaniu Styczniowym 1863 r.*, [no place of issue] 2009; A. Buława, *Dowódcy obcego pochodzenia*, p. 341-353.

²¹ *Raport mjr Rębajły o potyczce pod Mierzwinem. Dowódca oddziału III do naczelnika sił zbrojnych woj. krakowskiego, płk Chmielińskiego*, in: *Dokumenty terenowych władz wojskowych powstania styczniowego, Powstanie styczniowe. Materiały i dokumenty*, eds. W. Dąkow, S. Kieniewicz, Wrocław 1976, p. 92-93.

²² L. Ratajczyk, *Karol Kalita ps. Rębajło*, in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Wrocław 1964-1965, vol. 11, p. 481; K. Jadczyk, op. cit., p. 119-120, 134-135; G. Cwyl, *Ilża 1864*, Warszawa 2020, p. 16-21; idem, *Karol Kalita ps. „Rębajło” jako dowódca powstańczy na tle wyższej kadry dowódczej Powstania Styczniowego 1863-1864* (Rozprawa doktorska), Warszawa 2021, p. 44-46, 49-51.

²³ G. Cwyl, *Ilża*, p. 21-24; idem, *Karol Kalita*, p. 56-64.

promoted to the rank of major and appointed as the insurgent organiser of the Stopnicki district.

Kalita immediately set about forming a new unit, which would become the core of the future Stopnicki Regiment. His 300-man force became the dominant contingent of the regional leader himself, General Józef Hauke-Bosak, who had been defeated at the ill-fated battle of Jeziorko on October 29, 1863.²⁴ However, Kalita was absent at the time due to health reasons. Upon returning to a forest camp in the Wymysłowo woods, he secretly began rebuilding his unit. Nearly a month later, under orders from General Bosak, Kalita assumed command of a group of approximately 135–140 volunteers from Galicia (including several horsemen), brought in by Capt. Stanisław Jagielski, stationed at a camp between the villages of Tur and Mierzwin.²⁵ Kalita then reorganized the force into four infantry companies, each with 30 men, with plans to increase their ranks to 60–80 upon his return to his base camp. The identities of all company commanders remain uncertain, but it is known that Captain Jagielski commanded one of the companies, while another was led by the Croatian volunteer, Captain Grgur Saint-Zegga.²⁶ The limited available information suggests that Zegga arrived with Jagielski from beyond the Galician cordon, likely in the autumn of 1863. On December 3, the unit took an oath of loyalty to the homeland and the National Government, pledging obedience to their superiors. The following day, news arrived of an approaching Russian pacification expedition against the insurgents. Coordination between the Russian units mobilized from surrounding garrisons was difficult, but their forces included Captain Pfeifer from Jędrzejów (two infantry units and 30 Cossacks, totalling approximately 390 soldiers), Colonel Własow from Szczekociny (two infantry units), and Colonel Maksym Taube from Kielce (size unknown).²⁷

On 5 December 1863, at around 6 a.m., upon receiving news of the approaching Jędrzejów column, Kalita, faced with the enemy's superiority and the risk of their forces converging, decided to withdraw.²⁸ He reorganized his camp and, by 11 a.m. set off southward to reunite with his previously stationed troops in the Cisowskie forests. Half of the cavalry were sergeants. Truskolaski led the vanguard, while the rest of the cavalry, under Lt. Czarnecki, formed the rearguard. However, the order to march had been given too late. As a result, Capt. Pfeifer's infantrymen ambushed the partisans along a narrow forest path. The insurgent rearguard, consisting of only a few men, fired a single volley before retreating behind the infantry. Panic spread through the ranks but was largely contained by Captain Saint-Zegga.

At a critical moment in the battle, Saint-Zegga not only halted the momentum of the enemy's attack but also, ignoring the danger, led his company along a narrow forest track to a more advantageous position. Kalita described this moment in his memoirs: "At the front of the infantry column marched Captain St. Zegga, a brave Austrian officer, who, unfortunately, died in this battle. He was the first to emerge from the pine trees into the spacious

²⁴ Idem, *Ilża*, p. 21–24; idem, *Karol Kalita*, p. 56–64.

²⁵ Idem, *Ilża*, p. 26–27; E. Kozłowski, op. cit., p. 127.

²⁶ G. Cwyl, *Ilża*, p. 27.

²⁷ *Raport mjr Rębajły o potyczce pod Mierzwinem*, p. 92–93.

²⁸ Description of the battle based on: G. Cwyl, *Ilża*, p. 28–29; idem, *Karol Kalita*, p. 105–107; E. Kozłowski, op. cit., p. 128; *Raport mjr Rębajły o potyczce pod Mierzwinem*, p. 93; K. Kalita [Pułkownik Rębajło], *Ze wspomnień krwawych walk*, [no place of issue] 2009, p. 64–70; Zieliński, op. cit., p. 184–185; W. Caban, *Z dziejów powstania styczniowego w rejonie Gór Świętokrzyskich*, Kraków 1989, p. 170.

clearing, in the middle of which stood the Russians in line formation. Realizing the situation, he immediately ordered his company to spread into a line behind the first row of pines, while encouraging his men to aim carefully at the enemy.”²⁹

The Russian commander was caught off guard and pushed back, allowing the insurgents to establish a battle line at the clearing’s edge. Kalita positioned his companies on both wings, with Saint-Zegga’s unit in the centre.³⁰ As the resistance of the “woodsmen” weakened, the enemy became increasingly disoriented – especially after Capt. Pfeifer was killed in battle. When the Russians shifted to a defensive stance, with some soldiers fleeing toward Mierzwin, Rębajło ordered a bayonet charge, forcing the enemy into a full retreat. Again, Kalita’s memoirs provide a vivid account: “Meanwhile, Captain Zegga and his officers, in an instant, rallied the soldiers on the right wing, who, charging across the field with the cry «Jesus Christ!» struck at the enemy, who fled swiftly into the forest.”³¹ The Russians attempted twice to regroup, but both efforts were thwarted, and they ultimately abandoned a supply cart in their retreat. However, the insurgents did not pursue further due to their limited strength, the risk of additional enemy reinforcements, and concern for civilian reprisals.³²

Despite being taken by surprise and outnumbered, the Polish insurgents achieved an unexpected victory. The enemy suffered the loss of their commander and several soldiers. The partisans, however, paid dearly for their triumph, losing three officers – Capt. Saint-Zegga, Lt. Ludwik Kociupiński, and Lt. Antoni Zabierzowski as well as six privates. The officers’ bravery, leading from the front to inspire their inexperienced subordinates, came at great personal cost. An entry in the *Official Gazette of the Radom Governorate* of January 18, 1864, recorded the discovery of three fallen insurgents from the battle of Mierzwin. Likewise, the parish *Book of the Dead* mentioned three deceased fighters, identified primarily by their distinctive clothing – likely the officers previously mentioned.³³

This victory significantly boosted the morale of the insurgents, enabling Kalita to secure further victories, including those at Huta Szczecińska and Ilża. Capt. Saint-Zegga’s crucial role in the Mierzwin victory and his ultimate sacrifice merit his recognition among the lesser-known yet deserving heroes of the Polish national struggle.

An anonymous volunteer in Teofil Łapiński’s sea expedition from London to Połaga

We swear that we will not spare our health and lives in the battle undertaken by the Polish nation.³⁴

The ill-fated sea expedition led by Teofil Łapiński – variously known as the Baltic or Swedish expedition (22 March–4 June 1863) – initially seemed promising but ultimately ended

²⁹ K. Kalita, op. cit., p. 70; G. Cwyl, *Karol Kalita*, cit., p. 128; W. Caban, *Z dziejów powstania styczniowego*, p. 170.

³⁰ G. Cwyl, *Karol Kalita*, p. 129.

³¹ K. Kalita, op. cit., p. 71.

³² Ibidem, p. 72; *Raport mjr Rębajły o bitwie pod Mierzwinem*, p. 92-93; S. Zieliński, op. cit., p. 184.

³³ K. Kalita, op. cit., p. 70; G. Cwyl, *Karol Kalita*, p. 128; W. Caban, *Z dziejów powstania styczniowego*, p. 170.

³⁴ T. Łapiński, *Powstańcy na morzu w wyprawie na Litwę*, „Gazeta Narodowa,” Lwów 1878, p. 180-227, by: J. Łątka, *Romantyczny kondotier*, Katowice 1988, p. 151.

in failure.³⁵ Since the Croatian volunteer's participation remains anonymous, only a brief outline of events can be provided. The National Government's agents arranged for a shipment of weapons and ammunition to be sent by sea, intended for the insurgent governor of Kowno, Zygmunt Sierakowski, on the Lithuanian coast near Połaga. To transport the supplies, the English steamer *Ward Jackson* was chartered, and Teofil Łapiński – renowned for his role in an expedition supporting the Circassians against Russia on the Black Sea coast – was appointed as the commander. A total of 152 volunteers enlisted in London, representing various nationalities: 98 Poles, 22 Frenchmen, 16 Italians, 3 Englishmen, 3 Germans, 2 Belgians, 2 Russians, 2 Swiss, 2 Hungarians, a Dutchman, and a Croatian. Ultimately, the unit comprised 140 military personnel and five civilians.³⁶ Following Łapiński's rousing speech, "the wording of the oath was repeated eagerly, first by the Poles, then by the foreigners in their languages."³⁷ In response to the expedition, the Russian authorities dispatched a temporarily disabled steam corvette to England in an attempt to intercept the ship. British customs officials also attempted to requisition the vessel. Nevertheless, on March 25, 1863, the *Ward Jackson* set sail.

After three days, the ship reached Helsingborg, where news arrived of Russian forces mobilising near Połaga, the Tsarist fleet resuming operations, and Sierakowski failing to arrive. In Copenhagen, a change of captain took place, and in Malmö, dangerous materials were removed from the ship, while almost all cargo was unloaded in Łapiński's absence. Given these circumstances, the commander resolved to limit the expedition to a landing on the Lithuanian coast.

On June 1, 1863, a new ship sailed Malmö to Copenhagen, where two further ship transfers occurred. By June 11, 1863, the ship reached the Curonian Spit, intending to land in Prussian territory near Klaipėda before crossing into Russian-held land. However, an attempt to ferry the volunteers in two boats ended in disaster when one was overturned by a rogue wave. Of the 32 men onboard, only eight survived; the rest – including French, Italian, Swiss, and Polish volunteers – perished. Following the aborted landing, the schooner drifted toward the Russian coast. By June 13, 1863, the ship had reached Gotland, Sweden, where the volunteers were interned and later sent back to Britain.

On 24 June, the would-be insurgents returned to English soil. After waiting ten days for further instructions, Łapiński released them. The British government provided each legionnaire with an allowance of 25 shillings for clothing, a ticket to Paris, and a pound upon arrival in the French capital. Despite their best intentions, the European volunteers ultimately failed to contribute to the Lithuanian uprising. Nonetheless, the Croatian volunteer's participation, though ultimately symbolic, stands as a testament to the broad international support for the Polish struggle – however poorly planned and executed the expedition may have been.

I will conclude with a general quote that perfectly encapsulates the essence of foreign involvement in the 1863 uprising: "Foreigners fighting in the January Uprising were distinguished by their belief in the rightness of the Polish cause. [...] Although they represented

³⁵ T. Łapiński, *Powstańcy na morzu w wyprawie na Litwę*, „Gazeta Narodowa,” Lwów 1878, p. 180-227; M. Godlewski, *Wyprawa morska powstańczego okrętu w 1863 r.*, „Przegląd Morski,” 9/1936, no. 86, p. 368-377; W. Hubert, *Polskie dążenia morskie*, Warszawa 1939; J. Łątka, op. cit., p. 134-186; A. Kotecki, *Powstanie Styczniowe na morzu*, „Niepodległość i Pamięć,” 22/2015, no. 2 (50), p. 200-206.

³⁶ W. Hubert, op. cit., p. 100.

³⁷ T. Łapiński, op. cit., by: J. Łątka, op. cit., p. 151; E. i B. Liszewscy, op. cit., p. 184.

only a symbolic fraction of European societies, their contribution was invaluable. [...] Their participation in the battles boosted the morale of Polish insurgents and drew international public attention to Polish issues. [...] Poland was – and remains – grateful for their sacrifice.”³⁸

An attempt at a conclusion

Much remains to be explored regarding the reception of the Polish national liberation uprising of 1863 among the South Slavic nations.³⁹ To date, only a single publication addresses 19th-century Polish-Slovenian relations,⁴⁰ while general knowledge on the subject is mostly limited to the participation of Serbian volunteers in the uprising. Among them were prominent socialist politicians of independent Serbia – Prime Minister and Minister of War Sava Grujić and Minister of War Dmitrije Djurić as well as Jevrem Marković, brother of Svetozar Marković who was regarded as the leading ideologist of radical socialism in the 19th-century Balkans.⁴¹ The situation is somewhat better documented for the Croats.⁴² Djordje Živanović noted that at the time, “the vast majority of both Serbs and Croats are completely on [...] the side of the Poles.” However, he also acknowledged that “the exact number of Poland’s supporters [...] is difficult to determine.”⁴³

Therefore, further academic research is needed to identify the individuals from these nations who actively supported the Polish cause and analyse particularly their motivations and predisposition toward armed struggle. This calls for a deeper investigation in foreign archival institutions, primarily Austrian as well as Serbian and Croatian, to uncover more about their roles and contributions.

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³⁸ E. i B. Liszewscy, op. cit., p. 120.

³⁹ D. Živanović, *Echa powstania styczniowego wśród Jugosłowian*, „Kwartalnik Historyczny”, 71/1964, no. 3, p. 693-710; H. Batowski, *Rewolucyjna współpraca Słowian zachodnich i południowych w czasie powstania styczniowego*, „Z polskich studiów slawistycznych,” 1963, Seria 2 [3] Historia, p. 95-115; J. Skowronek, *Kraje bałkańskie a powstanie styczniowe*, in: *Powstanie styczniowe 1863-1864. Wrzenie. Bój. Europa. Wizje*, ed. S. Kalembka, Warszawa 1990, p. 611-636; M. Šestak, *Polske povstani 1863-64 a slovanske narody v habsburske monarchii*, „Slovanske Historické Studie,” 12/1979, p. 109.

⁴⁰ A. Cetnarowicz, *Słoweński ruch narodowy i jego stosunek do spraw polskich (1848-1879)*, Kraków 1990, p. 62-79.

⁴¹ C. Leżeński, *Przez trzy granice. Polacy i Jugosłowianie na szlakach pokoju i wojny*, Warszawa 1986.

⁴² P. Żurek, *Siječanski ustanak 1863. u Poljskoj i Eugen Kvaternik*, Slavonski Brod 2012; D. Agičić, *Odjeci Siječanskog ustanka 1863. godine u Narodnim novinama i Pozoru*, in: *Zbornik*, ed. M. Kolar-Dimitrijević, Zagreb 2003, p. 199-205; idem, *Echa powstania styczniowego w Chorwacji*, „Prace Komisji Środkowoeuropejskiej PAN,” 7/2000, p. 39-48; A. Cetnarowicz, *Chorwacki ruch narodowy w Dalmacji wobec powstania styczniowego*, in: *Powstanie styczniowe. odniesienia, interpretacje, pamięć*, ed. T. Kargol, Kraków 2013, p. 37-50; D. Živanović, *Šenoa i Poljaci*, in: „Južnoslovenski filolog”, 22/1958, b. 1-4, p. 183-216; S. Kale, *Chorwackie echa walki Polaków o wolność: Powstanie Styczniowe w chorwackiej opinii publicznej*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej,” 49/2014, no. 1, p. 29-41.

⁴³ D. Živanović, *Echa powstania styczniowego*, p. 710.

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