

RUSSIAN GOVERNOR OF THE KINGDOM OF POLAND IVAN FIODOROVICH PASKEVICH AND HIS REACTIONS TO THE IDEAS OF THE HUNGARIAN SPRING OF NATIONS

Abstract: Paskevich had a completely unique position as governor of the Kingdom of Poland and military commander of the largest army of Russia. In 1849 he commanded the Russian forces during the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution (1848–1849). The aim of the article is to trace Paskevich's reaction to the Hungarian independence movement, known as the Hungarian Revolution. What views led him to invade Hungary. Paskevich was very reticent to express his personal beliefs and political views. However, the research leads to the conclusion that his ideology is incorporated in the slogan – autocracy, Orthodoxy, folk. Paskevich believed in autocratic, absolute and supranational rule and that the so-called the rule of law is the best solution for people. Of course, he advocated the Russian Empire, and he despised the Austrian Empire as being weak and corrupt. Nevertheless Paskevich was against the intervention on the side of Austria. He believed that Austria did not deserve Russia's help and would not show any gratitude. He had fears of an uprising in Poland that could trigger a lack of confidence in him in ruling the country. Unwavering faith in himself gave Paskevich an impulse to take further steps

482 Associate Professor, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland, artur.gorak@mail.umcs.pl, ORCID 0000-0002-1964-9008

towards the abolishment of the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland. Unification and russification reforms were introduced in education, communication, censorship and customs management. The elites of the Kingdom of Poland undertook actions similar to those of the Hungarians as early as 1831 – the war against Russia and the dethronement of the tsar. The defeat of the Hungarians accelerated changes in the political tendencies among the Poles. Already in 1848, clear ideological discrepancies can be seen, and are fully revealed in the January Uprising of 1863-1864. The Poles strongly advocated the fight for the liberation of all nations from the rule of empires.

Keywords: Hungarian Revolution of 1849, Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich, Kingdom of Poland, Russian Empire, Austrian Empire, imperialism, nation-states

1. Introduction

Paskevich was called father-commander by the tsar and had a completely unique position as governor of the Kingdom of Poland (almost a sovereign ruler) and commander of the conscripted army – the largest army in Russia. This was due to his merits for helping Nikolay Pavlovich to the throne.

Ivan Fedorovich Paskevich served in the Guards Infantry Division with the future Emperor Nicolay I. After the death of Tsar Alexander I, Paskevich supported Nicolay and not the older pretender to the throne, Konstanty. At a crucial moment, Nikolay assigned to Paskevich a secret mission to eliminate Ermolov (Head of the civilian division and border patrol in Georgia, Astrakhan and Caucasian provinces; commander of the Separate Caucasian Corps, 1816-1827), the proconsul of the Caucasus – the almost sovereign ruler of the Caucasus and the commander of the largest competent Russian army.

Paskevich went to Georgia, where Ermolov was compromised by intrigues and insubordination. On March 27, 1827 Ermolov was dismissed. The reason behind Yermolov's dismissal was the tsar's suspicion of Yermolov's involvement in the Decembrist revolt. Paskevich was a member of the Supreme Court hearing the case of the Decembrists. From 1826 he commanded the Russian army in the Caucasus, and in March of 1827 he became governor of the Caucasus.

When the parliament of the Kingdom of Poland dethroned the tsar in 1831 and the Polish-Russian war broke out, Nicholas I ordered Paskevich to lead the war. He led the suppression of the Polish uprising of 1830-1831, after which he was appointed as governor of the Kingdom of Poland, and pursued a policy of national oppression and russification. After defeating the Polish army, the tsar granted Paskevich the title of Duke of Warsaw and appointed him governor of the Kingdom of Poland and commander of the army. It was a unique position, practically he exercised full military and civilian power on the border vis-a-vis the key powers of Europe. Paskevich brought many of his associates from the Caucasus and granted them higher positions, but he put an end to the de-Polonization of the personnel, excluding the influx of Russians not related to him and to the Kingdom. The constitution, the parliament, the Polish army were abolished and civil liberties were significantly curtailed. Paskevich was practically a sovereign ruler. He did not allow any interference with his authority from St. Petersburg. Then in 1849 he was the commander of the troops during the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution (1848–1849).⁴⁸³



Il. 1.: Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich

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Paskevich's unique position, importance, independence and influence on the tsar makes us wonder what views motivated him to invade Hungary. Paskievich expressed his personal beliefs and political views with reticence. They fit into the slogan – autocracy, Orthodoxy, folk. In his attachment to the idea of the All Russian Nation a tendency towards nationalism can be detected. It is true that he came from the Cossacks of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but they were completely russified and believed in Moscow's political mission to rule the the stern, as well as western and southern Slavs. To some extent, he was influenced by the Eastern plan of Catherine II – the capture of Constantinople by Russia and the takeover of the idea of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Perhaps his origins and beliefs made him despise non-Slavic nations, especially Germans and Austrians. He repeatedly expressed his dislike and even contempt and distrust towards Austria. It did not mean sympathy towards the Hungarians. It seems that he would have been more willing to join the Slavic countries of the Habsburg Monarchy with Russia if Austria had not been considered a convenient buffer for Russia, holding the nations of the Carpathians and the Balkans under control.

Paskevich recommended waiting. He changed his mind in the spring of 1849 when Hungary took over the initiative in the war.⁴⁸⁴

One of the secondary reasons behind the Russian intervention was the mass participation of the Poles in the fighting in Hungary. Tsar Nicholas I was concerned that their participation in these events would lead to another Polish uprising, which would affect the territories of all partitions.⁴⁸⁵ Tsar Nicholas I decided to provide armed support to Franz Joseph I as part of the commitments of the Holy Alliance. In the proclamation issued on May 8, 1849, the Russian emperor justified his decision to support Austria:

“With our manifesto of March 26, 1848, we informed our faithful subjects of the misfortune that befell the western part of Europe, and at the same time we declared that we were ready to face our enemies [...]. The riots and revolts in the west have not yet ended [...], on the contrary, the revolt there has strengthened with the bands of our Polish traitors from 1831 and other fugitives, exiles, vagabonds and

484 Felczak 1983; Roberts 1991

485 Pomarański 1929, p. 7

adventurers of various nations, and has taken on dangerous proportions [...], and Russia will fulfil its holy calling”.⁴⁸⁶

At the beginning of May 1849, the Russian army crossed the borders of the Habsburg Monarchy, entered Galicia and, after short preparations, began to march toward Hungary. The intervention troops were headed by Field Marshal Ivan Fiodorowicz Paskevich. In early June, a Russian division commanded by General Fyodor Sergeyevich Paniutin crossed the Hungarian border at Pozsony and compelled the Austrian forces commanded by General Julius Jacob von Haynau, to attack from the west from the direction of Vienna. In the middle of that month, however, the main forces of Paskevich's army (about 70,000) through the Dukla Pass attacked the Hungarian army from the north from the direction of Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica. In addition, with approximately 30,000 soldiers the corps of General Alexander Nikolayevich von Lüders entered Transylvania. This was a huge support for Austria, as the intervention Russian forces totalled about 114,000 infantry, about 15,000 cavalry and 462 cannons.⁴⁸⁷

In the proclamation of Tsar Nicholas I, there was a reference to Polish emigrants, called “bands of Polish traitors”, who participated in the events of the Spring of Nations. The participation of the Poles on the side of the Hungarians has been described in detail by both Polish and Hungarian historians.⁴⁸⁸ According to the findings of the best researcher of this problem, István Kovács, there were over 5,000 Poles fighting alongside the Hungarians, including about 3,000 concentrated in the Polish Legion commanded by General Józef Wysocki.⁴⁸⁹ These events were also reflected in the memories of Polish participants in the Hungarian Uprising of 1848–1849.⁴⁹⁰ We can learn from various sources, that the Russian corps sent to intervene in Hungary included a group of Polish officers and soldiers serving in the tsarist army (including such famous ones as the future dictator of the January Uprising, Romuald Traugutt, in 1849 an officer (ensign) in a sapper battalion in I. Paskevich's intervention army).

⁴⁸⁶ „Czas” 1849, nr 76, s. 4

⁴⁸⁷ Bułharyn 1852, p. 282

⁴⁸⁸ Kovacs 1999; Kovacs 2001; Midzio 1966; Pod wspólnym sztandarem... 1999; Kozłowski 1983

⁴⁸⁹ Kovacs 2016

⁴⁹⁰ Buława 2016

Polish activities were led by the “Hotel Lambert” – a ministry of foreign affairs in exile. Czartoryski actively worked for the rapprochement of the Hungarians with the Slavic peoples – for the establishment of a federation. The Slavs of the Habsburg Monarchy saw no ally in Hungary. At the Slavic Congress in Prague, which took place in May and June 1848, harsh words of criticism were spoken against the Hungarians. Henryk Dembiński went to Prague. He argued that the Slavs should side with Hungary. He addressed an appeal to the president of the Congress – Leon Thun, asking him to send a plenipotentiary envoy to Croatia and Serbia with a declaration stating that the interests of the Slavic peoples require to reach an agreement with Hungary as soon as possible. However, Dembiński’s conclusions were not on the agenda due to the shelling of Prague.

2. Invasion of Hungary

Poland at that time was under the rule of Austria (Małopolska, Cieszyn Silesia Spisz), Prussia (Pomerania, Kuyavia, Wielkopolska) and Russia (Mazovia, Podlasie, Lublin region, Volhynia, Grand Duchy of Lithuania). Most of the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were incorporated directly into Russia in the form of: North-Western Country and South-Western Country. Most of the territory of the former Duchy of Warsaw was also given to Russia in 1815 under the name of the Kingdom of Poland, which from 1831 was deprived of a constitution, army and parliament. On behalf of the tsar, it was ruled by the governor – Ivan Fyodorovich Paskevich.

In his letters to the tsar, Paskevich argued that he had complete control over the society of the Kingdom of Poland. The supervision of the secret police, the huge army and the censorship did not, however, eliminate contacts with the emigration and did not change the beliefs of the nation. The censorship ordered reprints from the reactionary German press, which were written at the request of St. Petersburg. The method was used to scare the radical revolution. For example, the Slavic congress in Prague was completely hidden in silence, and generally Slavic matters rarely occupied the press. On March 13, 1848, the tsar wrote to the governor: “Russia cannot remain an idle spectator of the general collapse of the German states. She

will be obliged ... to step into the matter with all her might and stop the revolutionary stream.”⁴⁹¹

Paskevich closely followed the events in Hungary, but hoped that he would not have to act. In addition, Paskevich was clearly irritated by the signs of the Tsar's appreciation of General Radetzky. What's more – the tsar ordered Paskevich's son to bring to Radetzki the nomination for the position of the Russian field marshal.

The Tsar and Paskevich undoubtedly wanted to help Austria, regardless of its attitude. The key argument was the role of the Poles in the new great Hungary. However, Paskevich, above all, took care of his own affairs. It was up to them to rule the Kingdom of Poland and to prevent anyone else from leading a possible intervention in Hungary. Paskevich considered the ideal plan to seize Galicia and Bukovina by controlling the roads leading to Transylvania. The occupation of Eastern Galicia was close to Paskevich's heart, as I quote: “Eternally Ruthenian land”. He advised to reject Austria's proposal to enter Transylvania, which would cause risky fighting. In addition, he proposed the occupation of Bukovina. Russia's initial plans – letter of February 24 (April 5), 1849):

- 1) Take over Galicia and Bukovina and all passages through the Carpathians,
- 2) Move troops carefully from Wallachia,
- 3) Secure the border in Moldova

“For us too, the successes of the Hungarian revolutionary government will have bad consequences, if not now, then no doubt in the future. It is quite probable that Hungary, having defeated Austria, will, as a result of the existing circumstances, be forced to show decisive support for the plans of the Polish emigration. The extent of this support and its effects cannot be assessed, but it would not be easy for the victorious Hungarians to cut themselves off from the Poles, who so vigorously supported the independence of the Magyars.”⁴⁹²

Paskevich had to revise his minimalist plan when it turned out that Austria might collapse. Paskevich did not value or preferred Austria, but above all he

⁴⁹¹ Miturin 2017, p. 227

⁴⁹² Miturin 2017, p. 56-57

was an enemy of all upheavals, including the Hungarian ones, and moreover he was afraid of the consequences on his reign in Poland.

Count Caboga went to Warsaw and with tears in his eyes asked for help for Vienna. Paskevich had to make a personally unpleasant decision immediately, without asking the tsar's consent, which took about two weeks. For Paskevich, victory was important, but preferably fought with the hands of the Austrians and with minimal Russian losses. The tsar, on the other hand, wanted a loud and spectacular victory, which required the involvement of the entire Active Army, and thus time.⁴⁹³

Paskevich organized general Paniutin's corps and sent it by rail to Vienna. It was the first railroad landing in the history of Russia. The main invasion was to come from Galicia. Paskevich intended to go slowly, carefully and to minimize losses. He was afraid of failure, loss of fame and he knew that he had an advantage and time was on his side. He was embarrassed by the presence of Tsar Konstantin's son.

Reporting on Paskevich's war activities is not the subject of this article. They can be traced, among others, in the work of Miturin.⁴⁹⁴ Paskevich's plans and reluctance towards Austria are evidenced by the transfer of information to the tsar that the Hungarians would accept Grand Duke Constantine on the throne. Indeed, Paskevich was in no hurry for the decisive battle.⁴⁹⁵ Finally, on 1 (13) VIII 1849, Görgey surrenders to the Russians near Világos. Paskevich's son brought the news to the tsar to Warsaw.⁴⁹⁶ The Tsar fell to his knees and prayed. Paskevich wrote: "Consistently their fate should be decided by Your Majesty. You have defeated Hungary, they are at your feet and the war is over".⁴⁹⁷ Two weeks later, Paskevich returns to Warsaw.

3. Disgust and Aftermath

Nicholas I, apart from Paskevich, hated independent people. He preferred obedient contractors to advisers, which led to his downfall. Herzen wrote about Paskevich: "Paskevich is not a blind executor of the tsar's will. As much

493 Miturin 2017, p. 337

494 Miturin 2014

495 Miturin 2017, p. 338

496 Kita 2020

497 Miturin 2017

as he can, he pushes away the soulless, insatiable vindictiveness of Nicholas I. However, on closer examination, it can be said that he cared primarily for himself and his relatives. Until the end of 1849, Austria did not even start financial compensation for Russia. In the Kingdom of Poland, a special committee was established to settle financial accounts with Austria for the participation of the Russian army in the war. "The Hungarian war cost us more than 10 million and we are only asking for 4 million." Paskevich demanded that Russian accounts should not pass through the control department of the Austrian empire. Everything was approved in Vienna by the end of 1850, but the payment was postponed.

Many European monarchs sent to Paskevich their first degree orders. Paskevich's position increased even more and the Tsar's confidence was boundless. In Russia, the legal evaluation of Hungary was consistently called a "revolution", i.e. a violation of the rule of law, which at the same time legitimized the armed intervention. Of course, in this context, the invasion of Hungary was considered an honorable act. The imperial ideology was reflected in the symbolic sphere. In Russia a special medal was established to commemorate the war against the Hungary. The medal "For the pacification of Hungary and Transylvania" was intended to reward the military personnel of the Russian Empire who participated in the suppression of the revolution in Hungary in June-July 1849. The medal was established by the decree of Nicholas I of January 22, 1850. It was awarded to all military personnel, including generals, officers, soldiers, as well as regimental priests, doctors and medical officials, employees who took part in the campaign "to suppress the Hungarian revolution." From May to August 1850, the St. Petersburg Mint minted 213,593 medals, and, according to the Inspection Department of the Military Ministry, 212,330 of them were awarded (Illustration No. 2 and 3). The front side depicts the coat of arms of the Russian Empire, crowned with a small image of a shining all-seeing eye. An inscription placed around it, is important in the Slavonic ecclesiastical language, which attached religious significance and emphasized the panslavic nature of the war: "God is with us. Understand this, peoples, and surrender." In terms of ideological content, "God is with us..." is treated as the equivalent of "God is Lord..." in these verses the Lord's coming to earth is glorified. On the reverse side of the medal there is an inscription

horizontally in six lines: “For the pacification of Hungary and Transylvania 1849”.⁴⁹⁸



Il. 2 and 3.: Commemorative Russian medal for the pacification of Hungary and Transylvania, avers and reverse.

We find even more symbolic content in another medal issued on this occasion. It was a commemorative medal for generals and senior staff officers with the image of a Russian double-headed eagle tearing apart a three-headed hydra (hydra of revolution) and with the same inscription around: “God is with us, understand the tongues, and submit.” On the reverse there is an inscription (in Slavic letters): “The victorious Russian army defeated and pacified the rebellion in Hungary and Transylvania in 1849”.⁴⁹⁹



Il. 4 and 5.: Commemorative medal for generals and senior staff officers, avers and reverse.

498 PSZRI, v. 25 (1850), nr 23857

499 PSZRI, v. 25 (1850), nr 23857

The tsar was waiting for the European war and Paskevich was looking at it with concern. The tsar was convinced that revolutionary aspirations would sooner or later cause a similar war, and he wanted to overcome freedom movements wherever they appeared. The tsar saw weakness in the concessions made by monarchies to constitutionalism. He regarded any share in the power of the national representative as a factor of deterioration of power, order and well-being of the country. He believed that only Russia could oppose this degradation. It was Russia's destiny. The Hungarian campaign further strengthened the tsar in this specific belief. The army was also convinced of its omnipotence. Soon this self-admiration will be brutally verified in the First Crimean War.

Paskevich clearly renounces to find a comprehensive solution for the Polish question. He considers Polish aspirations inevitable and limits himself to maintaining the superficial order. He sent other information to the tsar: "Now all Poles, local, Poznań province and Galician, are on our side because in those countries they do not see the comforts they expected from the German revolution, and in our country they dream of uniting the whole of Poland under one sceptre." agreement between Austria and Prussia in Olmütz in 1850 – "Poles became completely silent, but not in exile." However, Paskevich had no illusions. When Austria left only 20,000 troops in Hungary, he wrote: "what would happen if in our Poland and what disorder would flare up if such a small army were left in it".⁵⁰⁰

Paskevich's political views became hostage to his career. Characteristically, he fully agreed with the tsar, although he did not always share his opinion on the methods of implementation. He was a monarchist to such an extent that he saw not only constitutionalism but also in bureaucracy as his opponent, that is, in the slightest deviation from the idea of autocracy, also in the eyes of the people.

Unwavering faith in himself gave an impulse to take further steps in the abolishment of the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland. Already in 1849, the changes in education began. On August 14, 1849, a new structure of the Warsaw school districts was approved, making its structure similar to other districts in the Empire. The fierce russificator Paweł Aleksandrowicz

500 Miturin 2017

Muchanow was nominated first as vice-curator (7 November 1849) and later as the curator (29 March 1851) of the district.⁵⁰¹

The abolishment of the Polish customs territory and customs administration, was a very important change which meant that St. Petersburg seized huge revenues from customs duties. At the same time, the Russian Customs Act and Administration were introduced. First, the Polish customs administration was dissolved. The Act of November 17, 1850 abolished the Polish customs service and introduced the Russian one subordinated to the external trade department of the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Empire. Then, on January 13, 1851 (by order of November 25, 1850), the customs border was cancelled and Russian customs tariffs were introduced [PSZRI, v. 25, 1850, nr 24594; DPKP, v. XLIII, p. 349-365]. The personnel of the customs board districts was russified already in 1851. Persons of Polish nationality were allowed only to hold the positions of office clerks.⁵⁰²

In 1851, the General Directorate of Post Offices of the Kingdom of Poland was abolished (by the decree of March 26, 1851) and its territory was transformed as the 13th Postal District of the Empire, directly subordinated to the authorities in St. Petersburg.⁵⁰³ Moreover, pursuant to the order of 10/22 April 1852, the Warsaw Censorship Committee was subordinated to the Main Board of Censorship in St. Petersburg.⁵⁰⁴

4. Summary

Russia saved the Austrian Empire. It did not and did not intend to gain any other benefits at the expense of Austria, except that the war be financed by Austria. In addition to maintaining the status quo and fighting the revolution as an international phenomenon, Russia feared the consequences for its rule in Poland. Serious consideration was given to the possibility that, in the event of victory, the Hungarians would repay their debt of gratitude to the Poles, first in Galicia and later in other Polish lands. Of course, the very

501 Latawiec, Górak, Legieć, Bogdanow 2015, p. 9-38

502 Latawiec, Górak, Legieć, Bogdanow 2016, p. 36-40

503 DPKP, v. XLIV, p. 335; Latawiec, Górak, Legieć, Bogdanow 2020, p. 27-38

504 Latawiec, Górak, Legieć, Bogdanow 2020, p. 47-49

idea of nations liberating themselves from empires was a serious threat to Russia.

We must also remember the political will of the tsar's grandmother (Ekaterina II) Alexander and Nicholas, i.e. the Eastern question. Russia was to liberate all Slavic nations from Turkish rule, occupy Constantinople and renew the Eastern Empire. A possible Hungarian victory in alliance with the Poles would have a reverse effect on the situation and Russia would officially be forced to oppose the liberation of the Slavs, i.e. Poles. The intervention in Hungary, having in mind the authorities of the uprising being reluctant to the equality and freedom of the Slavic nations, suited Russia very well and was later used in pan-Slavic movements.

Nevertheless, Paskevich was against intervention on the side of Austria. He believed that Austria did not deserve Russia's help and would not show any gratitude. He had fears of an uprising in Poland that could trigger a lack of confidence in him in ruling the country. On the other hand, he arbitrarily sent a division to defend Vienna because he knew the Tsar's goals.

It should be emphasized that during this period Paskevich cared primarily for his own fame, power and benefits. He would have never compromised his position in this war or in the next one, the Crimean. Therefore, when he was forced to act, he used all his available forces and tried to prevent the Russian army from getting involved in the main battles. He understood that any loss would be used against him. Moreover, he wanted the Austrian army to fight above all else.

The invasion of Hungary strengthened the unique position of the father-commander as the main pillar of the reign of Nicholas I. Paskevich was a conservative, which should be understood that he was above all a monarchist and a supporter of the absolute power. He considered people as an object of power and he explained his behaviour with material factors. Thus, he denied political ambitions or usurpations. Were it not for his russification activities, he could be considered a supporter of the universal empire. However, he cannot be suspected of understanding such issues. Paskevich saw all the evil and danger in the nobility and officials. The tsar was aware that he could not conflict with the commander of the largest army, the sovereign ruler of the western part of the empire, a man enjoying such a prestige throughout the country. The Spring of Nations stimulated Paskevich to work for the unification of the Kingdom

of Poland with the Russian Empire, although earlier he himself inhibited this process.

The elites of the Kingdom of Poland undertook actions similar to those of the Hungarians as early as 1831. The defeat of the Hungarians accelerated the changes in the political tendencies among the Poles. Already in 1848, clear ideological discrepancies can be seen, which will be fully revealed in the January Uprising of 1863-1864. The Poles strongly advocated the fight for the liberation of all nations from the rule of empires. The slogan "For your freedom and ours" was introduced into the program "Freedom, Equality. Independence". It was also expressed on the seal of the national government in 1863 and confirmed by the three-field coat of arms of Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia.



Il. 6.: Coat of arms from the seal of the Polish National Government during the January Uprising 1863-1864

The threat from Russia made it clear for the Hungarian politicians in exile, especially Kossuth, to understand the necessity of cooperation between Hungarians, Poles and South Slavs in the fight for freedom. This gave the opportunity to support each other in the following years and contributed significantly to the support the January Uprising on the part of the Hungarian society. It should be emphasized that most officers of the January Uprising gained experience and formed their ideology precisely during Paskevich's invasion of Hungary. The commander of the Polish legion gen. Józef Wysocki gave a farewell speech to the Hungarian nation:

"We fought together, you know it well, not as mercenaries, not for personal interests, but in the hope that your success and our participation

will become the basis for further fighting. Fighting for your cause, we also had this goal, to become supposedly intermediaries to reconcile you with the Slavic and Roman tribes, which unfortunate politics has made your enemies [...]"⁵⁰⁵



Il. 7.:Gen. Józef Wysocki

505 Wysocki 1899, p. 132-133

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