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Connections of Antoni Patek with the Resurrectionists

Le connessioni tra Antoni Patek ed i Resurrezionisti

Antoni Patek nacque nel 1812 nella regione di Lublino. In qualità di soldato, prese parte alla Rivolta di Novembre. In seguito al suo crollo, andò in esilio. Nel 1835, dopo lunghe avventure, Patek si stabilì in Svizzera (Versoix, vicino a Ginevra). Lì fece conoscenza con un altro emigrante della Rivolta di Novembre, l'orologiaio Franciszek Czapek. Nel 1839 Patek e Czapek formarono una società di produzione di orologi, la Patek, Czapek et Cie. L'azienda si concentrò principalmente sulla fornitura alla clientela polacca. Pertanto, gli orologi firmati con i nomi di Patek e Czapek furono decorati con immagini di re e principi polacchi, ritratti di eroi nazionali e motivi religiosi. Nel 1845, Patek interruppe la collaborazione con Czapek. Poco dopo, però, si unì a due nuovi soci, Adrien Philippe – orologiaio e uno degli inventori del sistema di regolazione e tensionamento – e un conazionale con notevoli risorse finanziarie, Wincenty Gostkowski. Con il tempo, la cerchia dei clienti della manifattura gestita da Patek si allargò. Oltre ai polacchi impegnati in attività patriottiche, gli orologi furono acquistati anche da politici, capi di Stato, star del palcoscenico dell'epoca e uomini d'affari.

Uno degli orologi prodotti dalla manifattura Patek si trova ora nella collezione del museo della Congregazione della Resurrezione. Secondo i materiali conservati fino ad oggi, questo orologio è appartenuto al reverendo Piotr Semenenko.

Patek entrò in contatto con i Resurrezionisti negli anni Trenta del XIX secolo, grazie a Walery Wielogłowski, segretario e uno dei compagni più stretti del fondatore della congregazione, p. Bogdan Jański. Nel 1839, Wielogłowski si recò a Ginevra per convincere il cugino Ludwik Popiel a fornire un sostegno finanziario all'impresa di padre Jański, che stava cadendo in crescenti difficoltà finanziarie. Lì incontrò Patek che, da devoto cattolico, cedette rapidamente all'evangelizzazione del suo nuovo amico.

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Antoni Patek divenne immediatamente un fedele benefattore e amico dei Padri fondatori della congregazione. La conferma della loro vicinanza è data dalla raccolta di corrispondenza che essi hanno conservato fino ad oggi. Queste lettere sono, da un lato, un'interessante testimonianza della fede di Antoni Patek. Dall'altro, ancora una volta, confermano il loro impegno nell'aiutare i connazionali in difficoltà. Il caso di un certo Kazimierz Kisielewski può servire da esempio.

Parole chiave Antoni Patek, Patek Philippe & Cie, orologeria, Resurrezionisti, la Congregazione dei Resurrezionisti, Hieronim Kajsiewicz.

Słowa kluczowe: Wielka Emigracja, Antoni Patek, Patek Philippe & Cie, Szwajcaria, zegarmistrzostwo.

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Antoni Patek is undoubtedly one of the most talented entrepreneurs in the history of Poland. Unfortunately, he remains a relatively unrecognized figure, mostly as a synonym for a luxury timepiece brand i.e., Patek Philippe & Cie. This completely overlooks many aspects of his public activities, including his commitment to the life of the Great Emigration. These achievements, as recent studies show, seem to be no less interesting than his professional ones.

As a brief reminder, Antoni Patek was born on June 12th, 1812 in Piaski Szlacheckie, a small village near Tarnogóra. He was the son of Joachim, an impoverished nobleman engaged in administrative service, and Anna née Piasecka. Antoni, as confirmed by his biography, was brought up in a spirit of genuine devotion, hard work, and a sense of duty to his homeland and his loved ones. Especially the former must have played an important role in the Patek household. Many years after he had left the country, he recalled: "I am not able to express to you the feelings of excitement and joy I experienced at the sight of Our Lady of Częstochowa, a thousand feelings crowded together into my heart, memories of childhood, the first prayers that my Mother once taught me!"¹ Antoni's virtues

1 Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow, ms. 1839, A. Patek to W. Wielogłowski, Geneva 30/04/1841, p. 306.

became particularly apparent after Joachim's death. In 1828, the teenage boy joined the forces of the army of the Congress Kingdom to help his orphaned family. After just two years of service he found himself at the outbreak of the November Uprising. Promoted to the rank of second lieutenant to a rapidly formed Augustów Cavalry regiment, he fought at Długosiodło, Mińsk Mazowiecki, Grochów and in the heroic defense of Warsaw. For his devotion and injuries, he was awarded the Gold Cross of the War Order of Virtuti Militari. After the fall of the uprising, he moved to Prussia, where he was interned, and then to France. Meanwhile, following orders from General Józef Bem, he organized a checkpoint in Bamberg for fellow refugees heading West. With the approval of the authorities, he settled in Amiens, where he made a living as a typesetter. In the mid-1830s persuaded by a friend he met there – Thomas Moreau – he left France for Switzerland, where he settled in the village of Versoix, near Geneva. There he met his future wife Marie Dénizart, the niece of the aforementioned T. Moreau, and was granted Swiss citizenship.²

Among the Poles residing at the time in Geneva was also a watchmaker, a polonized Czech – Franciszek Czapek. At Moreau's advice, Patek decided to try his hand at watchmaking, and together with Czapek founded the company Patek Czapek & Cie in 1839. The timepieces manufactured at the initially modest, but over time increasingly prosperous workshop, earned a high reputation from the very beginning. This was the result, on one hand, of the regulations imposed by the Geneva authorities (and the institutions subordinate to them that control the quality of jewelry produced within the canton), and on the other, of Patek's entrepreneurial flair. He cleverly appealed to the sentiments of the Polish aristocracy as the main target group of the whole endeavor. Timepieces stamped with Patek's and Czapek's names were decorated with the images of Polish kings, princes, portraits of national heroes and religious motifs. In 1845, Patek terminated his collaboration with Czapek but soon after he was joined by two new partners, i.e., Adrien Philippe – a watchmaker and one of the inventors of the keyless winding mechanism – and Wincenty Gostkowski, a compatriot with considerable financial resources. The circle of customers of Patek's manufacture expanded over time. Besides Poles involved in patriotic activities, the watches were also bought by politicians, heads

2 More on the life and work of A. Patek, see: B. Czapla, *Antoni Patek. Zegarmistrz królów*, Warszawa 2021.

of state, stage stars of the time and businessmen. It is worth mentioning that in 1851 Patek's stand during the Great Exhibition was visited by Queen Victoria of Hanover.³ This fact, somewhat related to the subject of this article, was noted in the diary of one of the founding Fathers of the Resurrectionists, Father Semenenko: "I saw Patek returning home to Geneva from the Exhibition in London. During the exhibition, his goods gained wide attention. The English queen and her husband were so struck by his products, that the following day they sent their children. So did the French queen with the Duke of Nemours. Antoni Patek is an excellent Christian!"⁴

For many years Patek maintained very good relations with the founding Fathers of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, commonly known as the Resurrectionists. This is evidenced not only by the letters, more about which will be discussed further on, but also by the timepieces preserved in the congregation's museum collection, stamped with the name of the protagonist of this article. The most interesting of these can be found in Rome and it belonged to the above-quoted Father Semenenko. The watch was made of sterling silver 800 (as evidenced by the already obliterated punch), which in itself is rather unusual as most of the timepieces produced by the Patek manufactory were enclosed in gold cases. This was the direct result of the aforementioned restrictions.⁵ The use of such material can be interpreted as a sign of modesty and restraint befitting the clergy. The watch measures 32.5 mm in diameter and weighs about 31.5 g. It is a timepiece in a *Half Hunter* type case, i.e., with a decklid-covered dial, enameled, with Roman indexes. The hands, with the minute one is missing, are kept in *Poires Stuart* type, and oxidized in blue. Inside the case, on the lid protecting the mechanism, one can notice an intri-

3 Besides the above-mentioned publication by B. Czapla, more on Patek's company can be found in: W. Siedlecka, *Polskie zegary*, Wrocław 1974, pp. 124–125; H. Florowska-Frančić, *Polskie początki firmy Patek Philippe*, „Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki”, 30 (1985) no 1, pp. 131–149; N. Foulkes, *Patek Philippe: The Authorized Biography*, London 2016.

4 Archives of the Congregation of the Resurrectionists in Rome (further as ACRR), ref. 5166/62, P. Semenenko, *Dziennik*, vol. 1, p. 28.

5 B. Czapla, *Antoni Patek*, p. 194. More on the matter, see: P. Y. Donze, *L'invention du luxe. Histoire de l'industrie horlogere a Geneve de 1815 a nos jours*, Neuchâtel 2002, pp. 22–25.

cate engraving portraying Christ with a flag in his hand, the symbol of victory over death. At Christ's feet one can see a five-pointed star. On its sides, the artist placed the letters *A* and Ω (Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega). This engraving is undoubtedly unique as it has not been possible to find a similar one. The timepiece was made in the mid-1870s, and it was then, according to information obtained from the Resurrectionist Fathers, that Patek donated it to Father Semenenko.⁶

This raises the question of when and where Patek established contacts with the Resurrectionists. The answer seems to reside in the person of Walery Wielogłowski – social activist, politician, November insurrectionist and emigrant, born in 1805, who met the congregation's founder, Bogdan Jański, around 1838 in Paris. He very quickly became influenced by the new spiritual leader of the emigration, becoming one of his closest, faith-converted comrades. In 1839 W. Wielogłowski went to Geneva to persuade his cousin Ludwik Popiel to support B. Jański's venture, which was falling into increasing financial difficulties.⁷ "Here was Wielogłowski Walery, that elegant Cracovian, coming from that new Catholic sect of ours in Paris", wrote in his diary the unofficial leader of the post-November Polish community settled on Lake Geneva, Henryk Nakwaski. And he continued: "He did not open up much with me, because I do not have the patience to listen to such things, but with Polonia here he was disputing. Enough of me to see him to know his intentions. He came here for a few days for a meeting with Popiel from Rome returning to the country [...]"⁸ One of these *disputants* was Patek, who, as a devoted Catholic, quickly surrendered to the evangelization of his newfound friend. As the latter reported to Jański later: "I recruited one Catholic in Switzerland, and perhaps one Polish Protestant will follow in time. [...] The rest of the Polish community doesn't believe in anything, and the short stay didn't allow me to do any more than I did!"⁹

6 Information obtained by the courtesy of the members of the Congregation of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., Father Robert Rapińczuk and Father Paweł Szymanowski.

7 J. Kuzicki, *Orężem i pracą. Życie i działalność Walerego Wielogłowskiego (1805–1865)*, Rzeszów 2005, pp. 100–115.

8 Library of the University of Lviv, ref. 1016, Henryk Nakwaski, *Pamiętniki z lat 1833–1868*, vol. 4, p. 173.

9 J. Kuzicki, *Orężem i pracą*, p. 115.

Patek immediately became a faithful benefactor, ally and friend of the founding Fathers of the congregation. The proof of their familiarity, of course – in addition to the already described watch – can be found in the above-mentioned collection of correspondence, preserved to this day. It is housed in the collection of the Resurrectionist Archives in Rome. It consists of 15 letters from Patek dating from 1847 to 1876, and mainly concerning current affairs. Among them, as is not difficult to assume – religion. Thus, already in the first of them, Antoni raises the issue of loosening Wielogłowski's relations (*nomen omen* – since the aforementioned visit of Patek's close friend in Geneva) with the Resurrectionists, as well as his relationship with Andrzej Towiański, i.e. the messianist and leader of the sect known as the Circle of God's Cause.¹⁰ "Walery Wielogłowski is very bitter against you, he thinks that you have acted proudly and dishonestly towards him, this opinion would disappear if you could only speak to him for five minutes – I think you earned fairly well by openly asking him what he is up to. He is very close to the Towiański circle and responds to my warnings on the subject by saying that he stands firmly by the Pope (he secretly declared to me that he wishes to become an instrument of restoring them to the bosom of the Church). God grant!" – he advised in a letter to Father Hieronim Kajsiewicz.¹¹

The business topics were no exception: "Is the facility of the goldsmith Castellani well regarded by the clergy, because perhaps it would not be bad to start selling our watches there for a while?" – asked Father H. Kajsiewicz in another letter.¹² The reference was to the famous Roman collectors and goldsmiths Augusto and Alessandro Castellani. Somewhere else again: "Dear Father Hieronim, you must have read in the diaries that the watch of our making, donated by the Emigration to Lord Dudley was extraordinarily beautiful, a masterpiece of the art of watchmaking, all of London and most prominent French magazines repeated it. Since I happen to be in Rome every year, I would be very grateful to you if you would kindly make an effort to arrange for the Italian dailies to repeat this news as well, free of charge and *dans les nouvelles diverses*,

10 More on the relations between W. Wielogłowski and Andrzej Towiański see: *Ibid.*, p. 155–163.

11 ACRR ms. 50016, A. Patek to H. Kajsiewicz, Geneva 11/06/1847.

12 ACRR, ms. 50028, A. Patek to H. Kajsiewicz, Geneva 16/11/1869.

like the others.”¹³ The success of the the measures taken by Patek’s Roman friends is regrettably unknown. However, there is no indication that Antoni was involved in a partnership with the Castellani, nor was it possible to track down any Italian article concerning the watch given to Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart by the post-November exiles.

The most interesting letters seem to be those concerning compatriots who fell into greater or lesser troubles. Particularly noteworthy among them is a series of correspondence concerning a certain Kazimierz Kisielewski, son of Adam, who tragically died in 1858 – a November insurrectionist, for many years an administrator of Lyon theaters, who after moving to Geneva, initiated the world’s first enterprise specializing in selling cattle insurance.¹⁴

At the end of 1867, in a letter to Father Kajsiewicz, Patek asked: “Perhaps you may recall Adam Kisielewski of the Warsaw Academy who, ten years ago, drowned in the Lake of Geneva, leaving a wife and four children; one of them, named Kaźmierz, with only the military in his mind, went to serve the Holy Father, as a corporal in the 7th Company, fought at Monte Rotondo, was taken prisoner and now the Italians have returned him to Rome. Kaźmierz’s mother and stepfather, aware that I am privileged to be in friendship with you, demand that I ask you to find out how the corporal is doing and, if well, that I recommend him to your mighty patronage.”¹⁵ Interestingly, Father Semenenko and Father Kajsiewicz, who have already been quoted several times, met A. Kisielewski many years before, in Lyon, during one of their evangelization trips. In 1837, Father Semenenko wrote to Jański: “Shortly after arriving [in Lyon – author’s note], not finding Chevalier in the house, we went to Kisielewski, to the theater. In the buffet we drank tea, because he, as a «controleur», could not move away. We sincerely and forcefully preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to him there, amongst the orchestra’s sounds and the voice of the singers. The Lord God blessed, because it made a strong impression on him.”¹⁶

13 ACRR, ms. 50016, A. Patek to H. Kajsiewicz, Geneva 11/06/1847. More on the Patek’s watch commissioned by Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart see: B. Czapla, *Antoni Patek*.

14 R. Bielecki, *Słownik biograficzny oficerów powstania listopadowego: E–K*, Warszawa 1995, p. 276.

15 ACRR, ms. 50024, A. Patek to H. Kajsiewicz, Geneva 5/12/1867.

16 P. Smolikowski, *Historia Zgromadzenia Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego*, vol. 2, Kraków 1893, p. 206.

One more thing to mention is that in Patek's letter to Father Kaisiewicz, there is a reference to the wars fought in the 1860s between the United Kingdom of Italy and Rome, which was trying to maintain its independence, supported by French forces. The Roman army, or so-called "pontifical legions," consisted mainly of volunteers from Catholic countries, including, as confirmed by the above example, Poles.

However, this brings it back to the case at hand. In the subsequent, much more dramatic letter, Patek urged his friend to figure out the situation and take the necessary measures: "The distressed mother begs you with tears to kindly and candidly report to me for what was Kaźmierz Kisielewski, who served in the papal army, sentenced to shackles? Would you be kind enough to write me a few lines in this respect unsparingly or send me an exception of the court decree."¹⁷ As it turned out, the reason for sentencing the young Pole to prison was his insubordination and drinking. As Antoni later recalled, "the local bishop, Mermillord, wrote to the Holy Father asking him to kindly release Kisielewski, who simply by frivolity went to drink wine across the military border. As proof of this boy's devotion to the papal cause, he enclosed his letters from the Holy See, in which he was offered to return to Geneva from Rome, where on his return he declared with eagerness that his feeling as a Catholic and Pole are strong in him to the point that he would be able to sacrifice himself for the Holy Father, to the last drop of his blood of necessary. I hope that the request of our beloved Bishop will receive a good result."¹⁸ With the support of the Resurrectionist Fathers and the connections of the protagonist, the case probably reached a fortunate conclusion. K. Kisielewski himself, on the other hand, as it was possible to establish, died in 1912 in Paris.¹⁹

The last remaining letter from Patek addressed to the Resurrectionists, specifically to Father Semenenko, is dated to June 20th, 1876. Antoni wrote to a friend who wanted to come to Geneva: "Having been suffering for two years, seriously ill for a year, having exhausted the resources of the city doctors in vain, I am traveling around various cities looking to cure myself. Your letter came to Geneva while I was in Vienna, I found it here and I must hurry

17 ACRR, ms. 50025, A. Patek to H. Kajsiewicz, Geneva 3/10/1868.

18 ACRR, ms. 50027, Idem to P. Kaczanowski, Geneva 13/12/1868.

19 *Registres journaliers d'inhumation, Cimetière parisien de Pantin*, Paris 1912, p. 119.

to inform you, Dear Father, that you will be able to celebrate Mass in any of our four churches and please consider coming to my apartment."²⁰ It is unclear whether they were able to meet – Antoni Patek died less than six months later, on March 1st, 1877.

Abstract: Antoni Patek was born in 1812 in the region of Lublin. Being a soldier, he took part in the November Uprising. Following its fall, he went into exile. In 1835, after long travels, Patek eventually settled in Switzerland (Versoix, near Geneva). There he became acquainted with another emigrant of the November Uprising, the watchmaker Franciszek Czapek. In 1839 Patek and Czapek established a watch manufactory, Patek, Czapek et Cie. The company focused primarily on supplying Polish customers. Therefore, watches signed with the names of Patek and Czapek were decorated with images of Polish kings and princes, portraits of national heroes, and religious motifs. In 1845, Patek terminated his collaboration with Czapek. However, soon after, he partnered with two new associates, Adrien Philippe – a watchmaker and one of the inventors of the keyless winding mechanism – and a compatriot with considerable financial resources, Wincenty Gostkowski. Over time, the customer circle of Patek's manufacture expanded. Besides Poles engaged in patriotic activities, watches were also purchased by politicians, heads of state, stage stars of the era and businessmen. One of the watches produced by the Patek manufacture is now in the collection of the Congregation of the Resurrection's Museum. According to the materials preserved to this day, this watch belonged to Father Piotr Semenenko. Patek became acquainted with the Resurrectionists in the 1830s, thanks to Walery Wielogłowski, secretary and one of the closest companions of the congregation's founder, Father Bogdan Jański. In 1839, Wielogłowski went to Geneva to persuade his cousin Ludwik Popiel to provide financial support for Father Janski's enterprise, which was falling into increasing financial difficulties. There he met Patek who, as a devout Catholic, quickly fell for the evangelization of his new friend. Antoni Patek immediately became a faithful benefactor and friend of the founding fathers of the congregation. Confirmation of their friendship is provided by the collection of correspondence they have preserved to this day. These letters are, on the one hand, an interesting testimony to Antoni Patek's faith. On the other, they confirm once again the commitment they made to helping compatriots in need. The case of a certain Kazimierz Kisielewski can serve as an example.

20 ACRR, ms. 500300, A. Patek to P. Semenenko, Geneva 20/06/1876.

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