

# POLISH RELATIONS WITH AND SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA (CIRCA 1500-1835)

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## Poolse betrekkinge met en vestiging in Suid-Afrika (circa 1500-1835)

Oor die Poolse betrekking met en vestiging in Suid-Afrika is weinig geskryf. Die redes daarvoor is die feit dat die betrokke bronne in verskeie argiewe in vele lande bewaar word, maar ook omdat Poolse emigrasie na Suid-Afrika in vergelyking met hulle vestiging in Noord-Amerika en Wes-Europa gering was. Hulle klein getalle en die feit dat hulle oor die hele land verspreid gewoon het, het tydens die onderhawige periode verhoed dat 'n hegte Poolse gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika tot stand gekom het. Tydens die daaropvolgende dekades het die Pole hulle aanwesigheid in Suid-Afrika sterker kenbaar gemaak. Hulle bydrae tot die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis verdien om opgeteken te word.

Not much has been written about Polish relations with or settlement in South Africa. The reasons for this situation are that the sources for the topic are scattered over many archives in various countries and that in comparison with the influx of Poles to North America or Western Europa Polish emigration to South Africa never took place on a massive scale. Because of their small number and the way they were scattered throughout the country, Poles in South Africa did not form a separate community in the period mentioned above. In the next decades Poles marked their presence in South Africa more strongly. The history of Poles in South Africa awaits recognition.

## Introduction

It may seem as if Poland and South Africa, situated thousands of kilometres away from each other, could never have had any contact. But initial researches indicate the contrary. Traces of a Polish presence in South Africa are old, going back to the time of the Portuguese explorers.

The history of Poland's contacts with South Africa is almost entirely forgotten in both countries. The turn of the sixteenth century can be accepted as the beginning of such contact. It was then that the first Polish Jews and Polish missionaries and sailors travelled on Portuguese ships round the Cape of Good Hope en route to India.

The first settlers originating from Poland came to the Cape during Jan van Riebeeck's term of office. The majority were personnel of the Dutch East India Company. After completing their service some of them decided to stay at the Cape for good.

During the next two centuries Poles in the service of West European governments or companies, as well as Polish Jesuits and Carmelites, regularly called at South African ports. On returning to their fatherland they brought with them extensive reports on the new country.

The steady process of Polish settlement continued and accelerated at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus settlers of Polish origin, being the ancestors of some Afrikaans, German and English speaking families, contributed their own share to the development of civilization in South Africa.

## Earliest contacts

The first sailor of Polish origin who reached the South African coast was a Jew,<sup>a</sup>

a. The term Polish Jew refers to: W.J. de Kock, *Portugese ontdekkers om die Kaap. Die Europese aanraking met Suidelike Afrika 1415-1600* (Cape Town, 1957), p. 159.

Gaspar da Gama (about 1455 - after 1510),<sup>b</sup> a native of the city of Poznan, the capital of Wielkopolska and the seat of the Bishop. He left Poznan as a child, went to Palestine<sup>c</sup> with his parents and then moved on to Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> When he was a young man he went to Calicut on the Malabar coast, where he became a ship owner and the father of a family.<sup>2</sup> In September 1498 Gaspar da Gama was captured as a spy by Vasco da Gama's crew at Anjadiva Island. From that time he worked for the Portuguese. According to Vasco da Gama he had experience of many matters in India and other regions.<sup>3</sup> Historians underline that Gaspar da Gama played a distinctive though subordinate role in the events of the next eleven years<sup>4</sup> and gave such valuable information regarding Oriental customs and trade that he was granted a pension.<sup>5</sup> King Emanuel I conferred on him the title "Cavaleiro de Sua Casa".

Gaspar da Gama sailed with Pedro Alvarez Cabral. During the first voyage, as a result of his advice that they should sail westward, they discovered Brazil accidentally on the 22nd April, 1500.<sup>6</sup> In 1502 Gaspar da Gama sailed with Vasco da Gama's second expedition to India. During the years 1505-1510, working as a merchant and an interpreter, he served at the court of the Indian viceroys Francisco d'Almeida and Alfonso d'Albuquerque and spent some time in Kilwa and Sofala.<sup>7</sup>

There is no information about Gaspar da Gama after 1510. It is suggested that he died; he may even have been killed.

In the sixteenth century two Poles, Erazm Kretkowski (1508-1558) and Krzysztof Pawlowski (died 1603), probably reached the South African coast. The former was a nobleman and humanist. His long voyage round the Cape of Good Hope is commemorated in the epitaph, written by the famous Polish poet Jan Kochanowski, to be seen on the tomb at the Saint Anthony Basilica in Padva.<sup>8</sup> Krzysztof Pawlowski, also a nobleman, sailed on the same route as Erazm Kretkowski from Lisbon to Goa in one of Francis da Gama's ships in 1596. In a letter to a friend in Cracow he recounted the voyage and gave some information about India. In the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope the galeon on which Krzysztof Pawlowski was travelling was becalmed for about twelve days.<sup>9</sup> During the voyage the ship lost one hundred and sixty men through disease and at one time Krzysztof Pawlowski acted as captain at the request of the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup> In Mozambique he made a very profitable deal selling ham from Gdansk (Danzig) for a sum twenty-four times that of the previous price.

In that time Jan (Hans) Tregier, a merchant from Warsaw, followed the same route to India to buy spices.<sup>11</sup> In Lisbon, before the ship's departure, Jan Tregier met

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b. Gaspar da Gama is frequently referred to as Gaspar (Kasper) da India, Gaspar d'Almeida and Gaspar de las Indias.

c. Authors writing about Gaspar da Gama are among others: Damiao de Gomes, Ch. Rohr, J. Herzberg, J. Bensadue, M. Kaiserling.

1. B. Olszewicz, 'Zyd Polski w Indiach w XV wieku', *Kronika Miasta Poznania* 9(3), 1931, pp. 187-204.

2. E.F. Robinson, *With the Da Gama's in 1497: a story of adventure told from the South African point of view* (Cape Town, 1922), p. 169.

3. G.M. Theal (ed.), *Records of South-Eastern Africa, III* (Cape Town, 1899), p. 87.

4. R.S. Whiteway, *The rise of Portuguese power in India 1497-1550* (London, 1899), p. 82.

5. G. Hamilton, *In the wake of Da Gama: the story of Portuguese pioneers in East Africa 1497-1729*, p. 40 (xerocopy in my files).

6. W. Slabczynski, *Polscy podróżnicy i odkrywcy* (Warszawa, 1988), p. 25.

7. *Encyclopaedia Judaica VII* (Berlin, 1931), p. 78.

8. J. Kochanowski, *Dzieła IV* (Kraków, 1883), p. 197.

9. K. Pawlowski, 'Peregrynacje do Indyj w roku 1596', (edited by W.T. Baranowski), *Roczniki Orientalistyczne*, 1929, pp. 283-302.

10. S.R. Welch, *Portuguese rule and Spanish crown in South Africa 1581-1640* (Maseru, 1950), p. 81.

11. J. Tazbir, *Rzeczpospolita szlachecka wobec wielkich odkryc* (Warszawa, 1973), p. 117.

Krzysztof Pawlowski from whom he borrowed four hundred talars. A disagreement about the repayment of the loan led to a lawsuit in India or Vietnam.<sup>12</sup>

Count Pawel Palczowski, traveller, educated in law and the arts at the Padva University, left this descendants interesting reports on his voyages, revealing some knowledge of the South African coast and the adjacent islands.<sup>13</sup>

A number of Poles served in the Portuguese navy and some of them reached the South African coast. However, a scarcity of records makes it impossible to reconstruct their lives. Jan Bocian, member of a well-known merchant family in Poznan (Posen), even administrated several vessels.<sup>14</sup> There are no sources giving the reason for Pablo da Gama's (elder brother of Vasco da Gama) visit to Poland just prior to Vasco de Gama's historical voyage to India.

In the first years of the seventeenth century more Poles travelled along the South African coast to India and the Far East. Jesuits began their missionary activities there, bringing the "good News" to pagans in India, Indochina, China, the Philippines and Japan. A chronological list includes Gabriel Letowski (1617-1659) who arrived in India in 1617<sup>15</sup> and Andrzej (Jedrzej) Rudomina (1596-1613) who sailed eight years later.<sup>16</sup> The next missionary was Wojciech Mecinski (1601-1643) who is referred to in the Portuguese records as "Pater Albertus de Polonia".<sup>17</sup> In reports of the voyage of the latter two Jesuits there are fragments of references to the place "where Africa ends".<sup>18</sup>

Among other monks should be mentioned Jan Ignacy Lewicki (died 1646)<sup>19</sup>, Mikolaj Smogulecki (1610-1656)<sup>20</sup> and Michal Boym (died 1659) who, in a long letter from Mozambique dated January 11, 1644, wrote the first comprehensive Polish report on Southern Africa.<sup>21</sup> He described precisely a land called "Kafraria" and referred to a powerful king at the Cape.<sup>22</sup> Michal Boym became well-known in China and Vietnam (he had i.a. a share in introducing the Copernican system into China, compiled an atlas and map of China and published work on the Chinese flora and medicine).

Besides the Jesuits, the Carmelite order also sent Polish missionaries by way of the Cape of Good Hope to Asia. They were Mikolaj Bibersztyna Kazimierskiego (1617-1661),<sup>23</sup> Wladyslaw Milinski (1611-1673)<sup>24</sup> and Jan Drzewicki (1625 or 1627-1695).<sup>25</sup> But there are no documents recording their voyages and possible contact with the South African coast.

## The Dutch period

A new chapter of Polish ties with South Africa began at the time of growing Dutch influence on the world sea routes, when the Polish Royal Navy was declining. One of the reasons for the decline had been Polish-Swedish conflict on the Baltic Sea and the decision by the king, Sigismund III, to send the navy to Wismar in 1628. Four years later the Swedes seized the city and Polish ships as well. During the rule of

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12. B. Kuzminski, *Przygody polskich obiezyswiatów na morzach i ladach* (Gdansk, 1973), p. 29.

13. S. Golabek, 'Od Kairu do Kapsztadu, Polska cegielka w badaniu Czarneho Ladu', *Kontynenty* 4, 1977, p. 27.

14. W. Maisel, 'Jan Bocian - nieznan zeglazarz poznanski', *Przeglad Zachodni* 4, 1954, pp. 211-216.

15. B. Baranowski, *Znajomosc Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII wieku* (Lódz, 1950), p. 225.

16. J. Krzyszkowski, 'O. Andrzej Rudomina, Towarzystwo Jezusowe. W trzechsetna rocznice jego zgonu kilka dat i nazwisk', *Misje Katolickie*, 1932, pp. 201-211, 265-268, 298-300, 336-338.

17. M. Czerminski, *Zycie X. Wojciecha Mecinskiego* (Kraków, 1895), p. 97.

18. J. Pertek, *Polacy na morzach i oceanach I* (Pozann, 1981), pp. 464-465; *Hagiografia polska. Słownik bio-bibliograficzny II* (Poznan, 1972), p. 130.

19. J. Pertek, *Polacy na morzach i oceanach I*, p. 468.

20. K. Kapitanczyk, *Udzial Polski w dziele misyjnym. Szkic historyczny* (Poznan, 1933), pp. 88-91.

21. M.J. Künstler, 'Boym Michal Piotr SJ', *Encyklopedia Katolicka II* (Lublin, 1985), p. 859.

22. J. Krzyszkowski, 'Boym Michal Piotr', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny II*, p. 380.

23. *Podreczna Encyklopedia Koscielna IX - X* (Warszawa-Poznan, 1904-1914), p. 134.

24. T. Chodzydło, 'Misje Katolickie', *Wklad Polaków do kultury swiata* (Lublin, 1976), p. 837.

25. K. Kapitanczyk, *Udzial Polski w dziele misyjnym. Szkic historyczny* (Poznan, 1935), p. 84.

Wladyslaw IV, the majority of Polish ships were sold to the Netherlands in 1640-1644.<sup>26</sup> The consequences of such action were easy to foretell. Many Polish seamen left for Western Europe where they looked for employment, especially in the Netherlands. During service under the Dutch government and in Dutch companies their Polish Christian names and surnames were changed or adapted to the Dutch orthography.

According to a legend circulating within the Polish community in Cape Town, a Pole, Jan Rybka, skipper in service with the Dutch East India Company, during one of the voyages to the East stopped over quite by accident in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope. This happened in 1652 and was the beginning of the city of Cape Town.<sup>27</sup> There is no scientific proof for the identification of Jan Rybka with Jan van Riebeeck.<sup>28</sup> The slight link between Jan van Riebeeck and Poland is that he returned from the East in 1648 on a ship named *Coninck van Polen*.<sup>29</sup>

It is beyond question that there were Poles amongst the first settlers at the Cape.<sup>30</sup> Some were uneducated, others were cultured. Most of them came from Gdansk (Danzig) or Silesia. It is an assertion of doubtful validity that all inhabitants of the city of Gdansk were of the German nationality.<sup>31</sup> Having full autonomy the city nevertheless formally belonged to the Polish crown from 1466 to 1793, and the process of shaping the national consciousness of European people had been fully accomplished only by the middle of the nineteenth century (Revolution of 1848). But it is a well-known fact that at the beginning of the settlement at the Cape and even later, besides the Dutch, Germans constituted the dominant group<sup>32</sup> - "The greater part of the colonists, being the descendants of soldiers in German regiments, composed of Prussians, Hannoverians, Flemings and Poles, and of French refugees ..."<sup>33</sup>

One of them, a former inhabitant of the city of Gdansk, Paulus Petkow (Petkaow) accompanied Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 and became a member of the Council for a year.<sup>34</sup> Another, Hans Jacob Lisky (Liskij or Liskey), participated in an expedition to the Namaquas in 1660. In the same year he escaped with the returning fleet to Europe.<sup>35</sup> During Van Riebeeck's term of office some other sailors and merchants from Gdansk stayed at the Cape.

More frequent contacts of people from Poland with the Cape region date from the turn of the eighteenth century. Some of them acquired the status of freeburgher, e.g. Jan Cijepel from the city of Gdansk.<sup>36</sup> Others visited the Cape several times during voyages to the Dutch colonies in the East, e.g. Henryk Mucha from Wroclaw (Breslau) who served the Dutch East India Company for thirteen years (1670-1682) as a sergeant.<sup>37</sup> Jan Sachs, great patriot and servant of the Company ended his days during a trip to Ceylon in 1671.<sup>38</sup>

The percentage of foreigners among the Company's personnel at the Cape grew steadily during the eighteenth century (57 per cent in 1700, 80 per cent in 1779).<sup>39</sup>

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26. J. Pertek, *Polacy na morzach i oceanach I*, p. 170.

27. B. Orłowska, 'Wróciłam z Przylądka dobrej Nadziei', *Panorama Polnocy* 42, 1961, p. 18.

28. A. Kuczynski, *Wśród buszu i czarowników. Antologia polskich relacji o ludach Afryki* (Wrocław, 1990), p. 51.

29. C.F.J. Muller (ed.), *Five hundred years: a history of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1988), p. 19.

30. S.A de Villiers, *Robben Island. Out of reach, out of mind. A history of Robben Island* (Cape Town, 1971), p. 15.

31. J. Hoge, 'Personalities of the Germans at the Cape 1652-1806', *Archives Year Book of South African History* 9, 1946 (Xerocopy in my files).

32. D. Heller, *A history of Cape silver 1700-1870* (Cape Town, 1949), p. 41.

33. J. Barrow, *Travels in Southern Africa II* (London, 1804), p. 138.

34. H.B. Thom (ed.), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck I* (Cape Town, 1958), p. 57.

35. E.C. Godée Molsbergen (ed.), *Reizen in Zuid-Afrika in de Hollandse Tijd I. Tochten naar het Noorden 1652-1686* (The Hague, 1916), p. 37.

36. Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town: CJ, 2873, 182.

37. K. Migon, 'Podróże Szlaskow na Wschód', *Kwartalnik Opolski* 2, 1966, p. 43.

38. S. Tync, 'Sekretarz torunski Jan Sachs, patriota polski', *Tygodnik Torunski* 43, 1924, p. 3.

39. R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, *The shaping of South African society 1652-1840* (Cape Town, 1989), p. 293.

Captain Robert Percival indicated that "among the inhabitants of Cape Town some traits of most European nations are found".<sup>40</sup> The Poles made their own contribution to this situation.

They were among the earliest mercenaries at the Cape.<sup>41</sup> Later references to them come from the traveller Hinrich Lichtenstein, who described the massive desertion from the 9th Battalion of Jägers, almost all Poles, in February 1803:

"They were part of a number of Poles who, having been in the French service, were in 1801, taken into the pay of the Batavian republic, and sent hither among the colonial troops ... In my principal journey, two years after, I found traces of them in a very distant part, as will be related in the proper place."<sup>42</sup>

All Poles at the Cape were male. Because of the scarcity of European women some of them had sexual intercourse with or got married to local Hottentot girls.<sup>43</sup> There is e.g. some Polish blood in the veins of the descendants of a Griqua tribe.<sup>44</sup>

Not famous, but typical of eighteenth century Polish settlers was Christian Troskie (Troske, Droske or Drosky) from the city of Gdansk:<sup>d</sup>

"He was a fusilier with the Dutch army and was on his way to Indonesia to protect the Dutch East India Company warehouses against pirates. When his sailing ship stopped at the Cape for provisions he heard that blackwater fever was rife in Indonesia and that people were dying like flies, so he deserted the army and found work on a farm in the Murraysberg area. He married a local girl and began producing ancestors of what was to become a Troskie clan."<sup>45</sup>

At the end of the seventeenth century the Catholic missions in the Far East suffered a decline. The only Polish Jesuits who called at South African ports at the beginning of the next century were Jan Chrzyciel Bakowski (1672-1731),<sup>46</sup> Mikołaj Szostak (1711-1770),<sup>47</sup> Karol Slominski and A.F. Malinski (died 1747).<sup>48</sup>

There are some references from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to Poles who, because of the religious persecutions of the counter-reformation, were forced to flee to Western Europe, mainly to the Netherlands and thence to South Africa. They were Polish and Moravian Brethern.

The end of the eighteenth century was tragic for Poland. The central European superpowers Prussia, Russia and Austria partitioned the Polish state three times (in 1772, 1793 and 1795). Poland vanished from the map of Europe for more than a hundred and twenty years. The process of Russianization and Germanization of the

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d. J. Hoge includes Christian Troskie as a German, see: J. Hoge, *Personalia of the Germans at the Cape 1652-1806*; J.D.A. Krige remarks on the old Slavonic origin of the family name Troskie, see: J.D.A. Krige, *Oorsprong en betekenis van Nederlandse en Duitse familienaam in die 'Geslacht-Register der oude Kaapsche familiën'* (Pretoria, 1934), p. 102.

40. R. Percival, *An account of the Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1804), p. 251.

41. J.T. McNish, *The road to El Dorado* (Cape Town, 1968), p. 3.

42. H. Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa in the years 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1806* (Cape Town, 1928), pp. 273-274.

43. E.g. Ancestor of Sowietzky family, see J.A. Heese, *Die herkoms van die Afrikaner 1657-1867* (Cape Town, 1971), p. 222.

44. J.T. McNish, *The road to El Dorado*, p. 3.

45. *The Star*, 1980-04-30.

46. J. Krzyszkowski, 'Zapomniany polski misjonarz XVIII wieku', *Misje Katolickie* 54, 1935, pp. 172-175.

47. K. Kapitanczyk, *Udział Polski w dziele misyjnym. Szkic historyczny* (Poznan, 1935), p. 84.

48. J. Retinger, *Polacy w cywilizacjach obcych swiata do konca wieku XIX-go* (Warszawa, 1937), p. 123.

Polish people was commenced. The Poles who visited or settled abroad were citizens of different states; officially their mother tongue was not Polish, but what they had in common was their faith - Catholicism.

Among Polish travellers, seamen and merchants of this period who sailed under West European flags some are worth mentioning. In the middle of the century Antoni Wodzicki, son of Catellan from Mowzy Sacz, South Poland, worked for the Dutch East India Company and in this connection visited South African ports. He died in Batavia.<sup>49</sup>

The globe-trotter Michal Dzierzanowski (about 1725-1808) spent part of his life in service to the French in the Netherlands, Martinique, India and the waters of the Indian Ocean.<sup>50</sup> According to one opinion he was sworn in as king of Madagascar. Michal Dzierzanowski used to call at South African ports and even traded with Dutchmen from the Cape. In exchange for slaves he got weapons for the army he was establishing in Madagascar.<sup>51</sup>

In the late seventies of the eighteenth century, Maksymilian Wiklinski sailed to India twice in the service of the French colonial army. In recollections dedicated to the Polish king Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, Maksymilian Wiklinski gave a description of Cape Town and Simonstown seaports, and recounted the capture of his ship by Englishmen in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope in 1779.<sup>52</sup>

Teodor Anzelm Dzwonkowski (1764-1850), a corporal in the service of the Dutch, visited Cape Town and its environs for a few weeks in 1786. He recollected his observations regarding the inhabitants, social relationships and ways of holding office in the colony. On the return voyage the frigate *Zefir* on which he was travelling called at Cape Town harbour and waited there for the formation of a great convoy including scores of Dutch merchant ships. It was characteristic that he, like other Poles during terms of service, did not acknowledge his Polish origins because of derogatory remarks made by others. After returning to Poland Teodor Anzelm Dzwonkowski took part in the Kosciuszko insurrection in 1794 aimed at regaining independence for Poland.

In the same period another Pole, Piotr Grozmani, a townsman from Warsaw, by chance found himself on the South African coast. There he made a collection of exotic objects which he handed to the Polish king Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski in an effort to regain his suspended royal salary.<sup>53</sup>

Count Maurycy August Beniowski (1741-1786) brings us back to Polish and French historical literature which records his exploration of Madagascar where he acclaimed himself king of the island. During his long voyages he did not call at South African ports. His chronicler, analyzing his last letter from Brazil, states that "it is unknown why Beniowski passed the Cape of Good Hope but did not visit it".<sup>54</sup>

## The British period

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century Poles serving in the Napoleonic army and taken prisoner by the British, were often compelled to serve in the British army or navy. Some were officers but most were ordinary soldiers or deck-hand sailors; they visited South African seaports as unknown sailors in the Royal Navy.<sup>55</sup> The fate of others proved more cruel and they

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49. S. Wodzickie, *Wspomnienia z przeszłości od roku 1786 do roku 1840* (Kraków, 1873), p. 16.

50. W. Konopczyński, 'Dzierzanowski Michal', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* VI, p. 157.

51. *Encyklopedia Powszechna Orgelbranda VII* (Warszawa, 1861), p. 903.

52. J. Pertek, *Polacy na morskich szlakach świata* (Gdańsk, 1957), pp. 268-269.

53. J. Reychman, *Orient w kulturze polskiego Oświecenia* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1964), p. 48, 88; W. Łukaszewicz, *Targowica i powstanie kosciuszkowskie. Ze studiów nad historią Polski XVIII wieku* (Warszawa, 1953), p. 178.

54. *Dziennik podróży i zdarzeń hrabiego M.A. Beniowskiego na Syberji, w Azji i Afryce III* (Kraków, 1898), p. 158.

55. A. Grabowski, *Wspomnienia II* (edited by S. Estreicher) (Kraków, 1909), pp. 366-371.

were jailed in Cape Town. After more than a year's stay with Napoleon Bonaparte on St Helena Island, the officer Karol Piatkowski (1786-1849) was a prisoner at the Cape for a few weeks at the end of 1816.<sup>56</sup>

Polish emigration to South Africa developed on a larger scale in the first years of the nineteenth century, mainly from the Prussian part of partitioned Poland. A few of those immigrants may be mentioned as ancestors of Afrikaner families: Jan Latsky, Antonie Sevascowitz, Mattheus Abagostus and Johan Sovietsky.<sup>57</sup> Jan Latsky, e.g., was a pioneer settler in the Great Karoo. He had served in a Cossack regiment against the Napoleonic army and was badly injured. Lawrence Green, introducing his adventures, writes: "After fighting at Waterloo he landed without a penny in Cape Town in 1821<sup>e</sup> and looked round for work".<sup>58</sup> He worked as a groom for a Paarl doctor, and later earned money as a smous north of the town. In 1827 Jan Latsky secured a farm of eleven thousand morgen, ten miles from where Carnarvon now stands, and named the place Celeryfontein.<sup>59</sup> He married an Afrikaans woman, Cornelia Susanna Viesen,<sup>60</sup> had five children and died at the age of one hundred years.<sup>61.</sup> His great-grandson Justus Latsky composed the song "Karooiland".

Settlers were recruited from some of the British regiments of the Cape Garrison. One of these regiments was the 1st Battalion of the 50th Regiment of Foot (King's Royal Rifle Corps) which served at the Cape from September 1811 to January 1819. Lord Charles Somerset in a letter to Earl Bathurst dated 19 September 1816 says: "... the men of the Battalion in question are all foreigners".<sup>62</sup> Among them were also Poles. The *Register of Permission to Remain in the Colony* includes dozens of soldiers of Polish origin.<sup>63</sup> Jan Ketschuk (Kitschuk) who was granted permission on the 27th February 1817 to remain in the Colony was the founder of the Afrikaner Kitshoff family.<sup>64</sup>

Other groups of Polish settlers are linked with Natal. The Polish activist of long standing, Roman Krolkowski of Johannesburg, tells of about twelve Poles who came to Natal in 1828. Some of them did not take a fancy to this country. They decided to go back to the fatherland northwards across the African continent. They surely died on the way.<sup>65</sup> They were probably uncaptured deserters from the 9th Battalion of Jägers.

The most prominent figure of the first settlement in Natal was Julius Franz Berken (Berkin or Berg), a Polish gentleman.<sup>66</sup> He travelled with Captain Allen F. Gardiner through the area of the Sixth Frontier War. They eventually reached Port Natal at the end of January 1835.<sup>67</sup> There he was nominated Treasurer of the first Town Committee.<sup>68</sup> On the 23rd June 1835, at the residence of Berken, during a meeting led by

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Probably Jan Latsky came to South Africa earlier, see: P. Philip, 'Supplementa ad Familia. Discharged soldiers and sailors who were granted permission to remain at the Cape: 1815-1824', *Familia XVI*, 1979, p. 11.

Jan Latsky died on 18th December, 1866 but L.G. Green gives the date of his death as a year later. See: L.G. Green, *Karoo: the story of the Karoos of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1955), p. 210.

56. W. Lystak, *Empiryczny pasjans* (Warszawa, 1978), p. 330.

57. J.A. Heese, *Die herkoms van die Afrikaner 1657-1867*, pp. 199, 213, 222, 223.

58. L.G. Green, *Karoo: the story of the Karoos of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1955), p. 210.

59. L.G. Green, *Karoo: the story of the Karoos of South Africa*, p. 210.

60. Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town: MOOC 6/9/217, 215; MOOC 6/9/148, 671.

61. Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town: MOOC 6/9/118, 3280.

62. P. Philip, 'Supplementa ad Familia. Discharged soldiers and sailors who were granted permission to remain at the Cape: 1815-1824', *Familia XVI*, 1979, p. ii.

63. P. Philip, 'Supplementa ad Familia. Discharged soldiers and sailors who were granted permission to remain at the Cape: 1815-1824', *Familia XVI*, 1979, p. 1-19.

64. R.T.J. Lombard, *Kitshoff. Die nageslag van Johannes Ketschuk* (Pretoria, 1984), pp. 1-11, 83.

65. R. Królikowski, 'Atrykanske wywczasy', *Kultura* (Paris) 1-2, 1961, p. 103.

66. J.E. Alexander, *Travels in Western Africa II* (London, 1837), p. 304.

67. A.E. Makin, *The 1820 Settlers of Salem* (Cape Town, 1971), pp. 86-87.

68. J. Bird, *The annals of Natal 1495-1845, I* (Cape Town, 1965), p. 310.

Gardiner, "It was decided to set up a town which was to be named D'Urban, in honour of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, Governor of the Cape".<sup>69</sup> His signature appears on the petition addressed to the Governor of the Cape in which "... the signatories besought His Majesty to recognize Natal as an infant colony under the name 'Victoria', their 'August Princess', with its boundaries as the Umzinkulu and Tugela rivers".<sup>70</sup>

Further activities of Berken were cut short by his sudden death: "... is reported to have perished at Sea, in the year 1835 on his voyage from Port Natal, towards Algoa Bay ...".<sup>71</sup>

## Conclusion

Not much has been written about Polish relations with or settlement in South Africa. The one chapter in one book<sup>72</sup> and some essays<sup>73</sup> have a more popular than scientific character and deal only with the history of the present century, especially the period after the Second World War. One of the reasons for this situation is that the sources for the topic are scattered over many state, private and church archives and libraries, mainly in South Africa, Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, France, England, Portugal and Italy. It should be added that in comparison with the influx of Poles to North America or Western Europe, Polish emigration to South Africa never took place on a massive scale.

Because of their small number and the way they were scattered throughout the country, Poles in South Africa did not form a separate community in the period mentioned above. Many Polish emigrants treated a stay in that country as temporary, just a period for collecting enough money to go back to Europe. Others submitted to a deep process of assimilation with the Boers or English or German speaking groups. They had known their fatherland only in their youth and later had no contact with Poland. An important factor was also the absence of Catholic priests from whom ministrations was forbidden until 1810, although in fact they only started coming to South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In the next decades Poles marked their presence in South Africa more strongly. They were diamond and gold diggers, missionaries, traders and also volunteers in the Anglo-Boer War.

The history of Poles in the Land of the Springbok waits to be recorded.

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69. E. H. Brooks and C. de B. Webb, *A history of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1967), p. 24.

70. *Missionaries and Voortrekkers*, p. 183 (Xerocopy in my files).

71. Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town: MOOC 13/1/77.

72. J. Jaworski, *W kraju Springboka* (London, 1973).

73. R. Królikowski, 'Afrykańskie wywczasy', *Kultura* (Paris) 1-2, 1961; R. Królikowski, 'O Polakach w Afryce Popudniowej', *Kultura* (Paris) 5, 1969, (Xerocopy in my files); M. Dziewiecka, 'Najnowsza Polonia południowoafrykańska', *Kultura* (Paris) 12, 1987.