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**Letters of Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski
as a source of information on research activities
of the Soviet Turkologist in the mid-1920s**

Abstract

Professor Tadeusz Kowalski (1889–1948) was in correspondence with scholars from practically all over the world. He had an active interest in the developments of Oriental studies in the Soviet Union. He valued the publications he received from the USSR as well as all contacts he had with Russian researchers. He sought to cooperate with Alexander Samoylovich (1880–1938) – one of the most eminent Turkologists in the Soviet Union. This goal had been partially achieved. The archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków now hold, catalogued under ref. no. K III-4, j. 174, just three letters from the Russian Turkologist. These materials, despite their small number, are an engrossing source of knowledge on the state of Soviet Turkish studies in the mid-1920s and the Soviet Oriental studies community. As the author managed to determine, these letters are all the more precious as the branch of the archives at the Russian Academy of Sciences in St.-Petersburg, where the legacy of professor Samoylovich is kept, has no copies. Interestingly, there are no surviving copies of the letters from professor Kowalski to the Russian Turkologist. This article aims to analyse the contents of the letters written by Alexander Samoylovich, the Soviet Turkologist, to professor Tadeusz Kowalski, and determine the purpose and direction in which Turkish studies were developing in the USSR in the period described in these sources.

Keywords: Tadeusz Kowalski, Alexander Samoylovich, letters, Turkology, Polish Oriental Studies, Soviet Oriental Studies, international scientific relations



Introduction

The legacy of the Polish Oriental studies researcher, Tadeusz Kowalski (1889–1948) is kept at the Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. Except for the scholar's works, documents detailing his organisational and scientific activities, and biographical materials, the archives also hold extensive correspondence, which – in the opinion of Jan Poradzisz – “practically replaces the scant biographical materials [...], contains 4100 letters to approximately 500 correspondents all over the world, including eminent Oriental studies researchers.”¹ While analysing information from almost 50 years ago, one should note that the archive contains letters addressed to the Polish Oriental specialist from no less than 435 senders. These included Russian and Soviet scholars, such as: Victor Filonienko (1884–1977), Vladimir Gordlevsky (1876–1956), Boris Grekov (1882–1953), Ignaty Krachkovsky (1883–1951), Vladimir Minorsky (1877–1966), Dimitry Rasovski (1902–1941), George Vernadsky (1888–1973), Yaakov Vilenchik (1902–1939), Isaac Vinnikov (1897–1973), and Alexander Samoylovich (1880–1938).

This article aims to analyse the contents of the letters written by Alexander Samoylovich, the Soviet Turkologist, to professor Tadeusz Kowalski,² and determine the purpose and direction in which Turkish studies were developing in the USSR in the period described in these sources. Catalogued under ref. no. K III 4 j. 174, the archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków hold three letters dated between 12th January 1926 and 4th April 1927. It should be noted here that letters of Tadeusz Kowalski most likely have not survived as they are not catalogued in either the branch of the archive at the Russian Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg or the National Library of Russia, where the legacy of the Soviet Turkologist is held.³ Although part of the correspondence is still in the private home collection of Alexander Samoylovich's granddaughter, Marina Platonovna, there are no letters from Poland in this archive as the author of this paper managed to ascertain. Moreover, it should be mentioned that the most complete collection of correspondence to the Soviet Turkologist, published by Galina Blagova, contains a letter from only one

¹ Jan Poradzisz, ‘Materiały Tadeusza Kowalskiego’, *Biuletyn Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk* 16 (1973), p. 59.

² On the subject of the life and works of professor Tadeusz Kowalski see e. g. Ewa Siemienieć-Gołaś, ‘Tadeusz Kowalski (1889–1948)’, in: *Studia Turkologica Cracoviensia*, vol. 5, *Languages and Culture of Turk Peoples*, ed. Marek Stachowski, Kraków 1998, pp. 9–11.

³ The legacy of Alexander Samoylovich may be incomplete, because in 1942, the scholar's son, Platon Alexanderovich Samoylovich, forced by his financial circumstances during the siege of Leningrad, sold his father's archives to the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences. Additionally, after Samoylovich's rehabilitation in 1956, his legacy was divided in two. One part is held at the branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences archive in St. Petersburg and the other at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. Possibly, during these turbulent times, some of the materials were irretrievably lost.

Polish researcher, Ananiasz Zajączkowski.⁴ As Kowalski's letters to the Soviet Turkologist have not survived, for the purposes of this article, the correspondence between the Polish researcher and the Russian Arab studies specialist, Ignaty Krachkovsky, may be used as cross-reference because he mentions Alexander Samoylovich in his letters on numerous occasions. These letters are part of the collection in the branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences archives, catalogued under ref. no. 1026, collection 3, case 450.

A brief biography

Samoylovich and his organisational and scientific achievements and legacy were in the realm of interest for both the Soviet and Russian researchers and possibly also due to his fascinating biography and his tragic death.⁵ Alexander Samoylovich was born on 17th (29th) of December 1880 in Nizhny Novgorod. His father was a headmaster of a grammar school for boys in the town. Advised by his father, in 1898, the future Turkologist began his studies of the Arabo-Persian-Turkic-Tatar languages at the Oriental department of Saint Petersburg University. In 1903, he was retained by the University to prepare for a professorship at the Turkic-Tatar Literature Department. At the beginning of his scientific career, his interests revolved mainly around the Turkmen language. However, after the death of his mentor, professor Platon Melioransky, Samoylovich (employed since 1907 as a Privatdozent) was forced to expand his realm of interests and take over the teaching of Turkish literature and language.⁶

After the October Revolution, his career took up the pace, which he welcomed with open arms. From the very beginning of his career, he was involved in political activities. Maria Sorokina expressed the belief that his active cooperation with the new authorities contributed to the Turkologist's success in the career of an activist and organiser of sciences.⁷ Indeed, in 1917, he became an associate professor and a full professor only a year later. From 1920 until early 1922, besides his research and didactic work, he also served at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs as a consultant for the Eastern division.⁸ Later, in 1922–1925, he held the post of the Rector of the Leningrad Oriental Institute. In 1924, he became a corresponding member, and in 1929 – while still relatively very young – a full member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. From 1932, he was the

⁴ See: Galina Blagova, *Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich: nauchnaya perepiska. Biografiya*, Moskva 2008, pp. 275–276, 352.

⁵ For more information on this subject, see: Vladimir Alpatov, 'Martirolog vostkovednoy lingvistiki', *Vestnik Akademii Nauk SSSR* 12 (1990), pp. 110–121.

⁶ Fedor Ashnin, 'Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich 1880–1938', in: *Tyurkologicheskiy sbornik 1974*, Moskva 1978, pp. 6–10.

⁷ 'Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich (1880–1938)', in: *Lyudi i sudby. Bibliograficheskiy slovar vostkovedov – zhertv politicheskogo terrora v sovetskiy period (1917–1991)*, ed. Yaroslav Vasilkov, Maria Sorokina, Sankt-Petersburg 2006, Viewed 05 April 2022, <<http://memory.pvost.org/pages/samojlovich.html>>.

⁸ Ashnin, 'Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich 1880–1938', pp. 11–12.

head of the Kazakhstan base of the USSR Academy of Sciences, which later developed into the Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences. In 1934, he was appointed the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the USSR Academy of Sciences, a function he held practically until his death.⁹

However, Alexander Samoylovich was, above all, an eminent scholar, author of over four hundred scientific works dedicated to widely understood Turkish studies, and his interests covered ethnography, philology, including dialectology, and history of Turkic peoples.¹⁰ His publications cover a broad scope of subjects – there are texts on the language, literature, arts and customs. At the same time, it should be emphasised that – as it was described by Galina Blagova (who regarded this as a valuable trait) – he was a field researcher and, during his numerous travels, he single-handedly collected and analysed an immense amount of language, artefact and manuscript materials.¹¹ In turn, Iskander Memetov noted that Samoylovich was a scholar who preferred to express his thoughts in short form – brief and concise articles. However, crucially, this was not detrimental to their value. His publications are characterised by precision in formulating research problems, and a clarity and brevity in argumentation. At the same time, the texts easily demonstrate the scope of his knowledge, which contributes to the overall beauty of his work.¹²

The power that facilitated and accelerated Alexander Samoylovich's career would also take a life. As was noted by Fedor Ashnin and Vladimir Alpatov, the arrest, trial, and death of the researcher was “a case like thousands of other cases – terrifying in being so routine [...] The charges he was facing were also routine: espionage for Japan, creating a counter-revolutionary, bourgeois-nationalist organisation that fought to separate the ethnic border states from the USSR and subjugate them to the Japanese imperialist influence.”¹³ According to the researchers, the charges were usually adjusted to the Penal code so that the sanctions against espionage or terror could be applied. However, no concrete evidence was ever gathered in support of these charges.¹⁴ Nevertheless, this proved no obstacle, and the Turkologist, who was arrested on 2nd October 1937, was sentenced after a barely 15-minute trial, and the sentence was carried out on 13th February 1938.¹⁵

⁹ Alpatov, ‘Martirolog vostokovednoy lingvistiki’, p. 115.

¹⁰ Fedor Ashnin, ‘Spisok trudov A.N. Samoylovicha (s ukazaniem retsenzii na nikh) i literatura o nem’, in: *Tyurkologicheskii sbornik 1974*, Moskva 1978, pp. 263–292.

¹¹ Galina Blagova, Dmitriy Nasilov, Yevgeniy Potseluevskiy, ‘Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich (nauch.-analit. obzor). Istoria i sovremennoe sostoyanie yazykoznania’, *Otechestvennaya i Zarubezhnaya Literatura* (4) 2006, p. 8.

¹² Iskander Memetov, *Tvorcheskiy put A.N. Samoylovicha i ego rol v razvitii vostokovedenia v Krymu*, in: *Razvitie vostokovedenia v Krymu (XI–nachalo XX veka)*, ed. Ayder Memetov, Iskander Memetov, Timur Useinov, Aleksey Sukhorukov, Simferopol 2019, p. 77.

¹³ Fedor Ashnin, Vladimir Alpatov, ‘Arkhivnye dokumenty o gibeli akademika A.N. Samoylovicha’, *Vostok* 5 (1996), p. 153.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 154.

Analysis of the letters

As the letters showed, the correspondence was initiated on 24th August 1925, by Tadeusz Kowalski, who sent a letter in French to St. Petersburg, thanking for the gift of publications by the Soviet Turkologist for the Committee of Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. A response to this and the following letters came in Russian. As Samoylovich explained in the letter: “following the practice established in the correspondence between yourself and the academic, Krachkovsky, I am responding to your letter in French by writing in my mother tongue and I would like to ask that you respond to me in your mother tongue.”¹⁶ Did the Soviet Turkologist write this, because, as he admitted further on, he wanted to learn Polish to stay abreast with the works published by Kowalski? Or did he write this because he was not sufficiently fluent in French to use it without hindrance in correspondence? It is not possible to ascertain either. However, it is known that Samoylovich’s mother spent her childhood in Poland, she was fluent in Polish and loved Polish literature, and that it was her – should he ever have any problems in understanding the letters from the Polish scholars – who helped her son.¹⁷

In the first letter, Samoylovich expressed hope that their shared scientific interests would facilitate a long and animated correspondence. However, their epistolary acquaintance lasted barely one year for no particular reason. The language barrier may possibly have contributed to this outcome, and the rule suggested by Samoylovich became, in time, too cumbersome. It is also possible, that the Soviet Turkologist was not as determined to maintain this contact, unlike the Arabist, Ignaty Krachkovsky, for whom – due to the ban on travelling outside of the country – any letters to and from other Oriental studies specialists from all over the world had to suffice as a source of information about the developments in Oriental studies outside the USSR.¹⁸ Both Kowalski and Samoylovich were not deprived of the possibilities for travel abroad and thus, the opportunities for direct contact with researchers from other countries and conducting field research. Therefore, their motivation to maintain an acquaintance purely through letters, it seems, may have been rather low. This in turn does not suggest that either of them had no hopes of meeting the other in person. It was Samoylovich who declared the following: “I believe that our shared interests may lead to us being able to meet finally.”¹⁹ Moreover, the Soviet Turkologist took steps to meet with Kowalski. An appropriate occasion was to be the first All-Union Turkological Congress. As one of the members of the organising committee, the researcher invited the Polish Oriental studies specialist to participate in the event. The proceedings were scheduled to begin on 25th February 1926 in the capital of the

¹⁶ Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 12.01.1926, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Izabela Kończak, *Z dziejów orientalistyki radzieckiej: Kul'tūm 'Awda – Klawdia Wiktorowna Ode-Wasiljewa*, Łódź 2013, p. 241.

¹⁹ Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 12.01.1926, p. 2.

Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic²⁰. However, Kowalski did not travel to Baku as – which he wrote to Krachkovsky: “I received the invitation to the Turkological congress in Baku but, alas, I cannot accept it, mainly as I lack the necessary funds and, secondly, I also lack the time. I had to limit myself to sending thanks and wishing successful proceedings.”²¹ When this information reached him, Samoylovich expressed his regrets, because – as he claimed – “the Congress seemed exceedingly interesting and beneficial to further research by Turkic peoples in various fields.”²² The discussions lasted over several days and were attended by a total of 131 speakers, among whom were Russians, representatives of nations from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia, and the Volga Region (Povolzhye). The foreign researchers were represented by Turkologists from Germany, Austria, Turkey, and Hungary.²³ Except its scientific scope, the Congress had a political aspect. One of the aims of the Congress was to justify the introduction of Latin alphabet in the transcription of Turkic languages and the abandonment of the Arabic alphabet that was used until then. Indeed, the majority of papers and addresses during the Congress concerned this specific issue. However, almost all speakers agreed that the introduction of the Latin alphabet was necessary.²⁴

The mutual contact between both scholars primarily boiled down to an exchange of publications. One could claim that it was this trading of published works that led to correspondence contact between the two men. In the first of the surviving letters to Ignaty Krachkovsky, Kowalski writes: “The Committee of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences received an entire series of publications by Samoylovich. We are extremely grateful for this precious gift!”²⁵ An attempt to reciprocate the gesture by Kowalski, unfortunately, ended in a fiasco, with neither party at fault. In the correspondence, Samoylovich informs the researcher from Kraków that the books which he sent to Samoylovich never arrived but that he was also able to borrow from Krachkovsky a copy of Kowalski’s book, titled *Post-war Turkey*. Having read it, he wrote to the Polish scholar: “our observations are generally the same, but after your expedition, as you already know, numerous important changes occurred in Turkey.”²⁶ The Soviet scholar regarded the undertakings of the new Turkish authorities as a step in the right direction and expressed his hope that the country could strengthen its independence if there would be no external obstacles.²⁷ He sent his subsequent works to the Polish researcher, including, for example, ‘Neskolko dopolnieniy k klasifikacii tureckikh yazykov’ (“Some additions to the classification of Turkic languages”).²⁸

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 2. In fact, the Congress commenced a day later – on 26th February and continued until 6th March. See Ramiz Asker, ‘Bakinskaya zarya na Vostoke’, *Türkologiya* 10 (2016), p. 94.

²¹ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 19.01.1926, p. 1.

²² Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 12.01.1926, p. 4.

²³ Asker, ‘Bakinskaya zarya na Vostoke’, p. 94.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 96–97.

²⁵ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 3.09.1924, p. 3.

²⁶ Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 12.01.1926, p. 3.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁸ Ibidem.

The contents of the second letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski allow one to reconstruct some of the subjects mentioned in the correspondence sent by the Polish scholar (that is, the letters which have not survived on the Soviet side, as the author of this paper already mentioned, and whose contents one may only conjecture). Among others, Kowalski wrote about his current research interests. At that time, these included the language of the Crimean Karaites. This is also evidenced in the correspondence sent to Ignaty Krachkovsky. In his letter sent on 19th January 1926, Kowalski wrote to the Russian Arabist: “I am currently working mainly on the Osmanli dialectology. I have also gathered rich Karaite materials and I am preparing to publish a larger collection of Karaite texts in the Trakai dialect.”²⁹ Samoylovich welcomed this news enthusiastically. In his letter dated 29th April 1926, the Soviet Turkologist reported: “I am very glad that you are continuing the work of Radlov, Foy, and Grzegorzewski, on the dialects of the Karaite language. I myself barely scratched the surface on this subject in the publication dedicated to the names of the days of the week in the Karaite language, titled: ‘K voprosu o naslednikakh khazar i ikh kultury’ (“On the issue of the heirs of the Khazars and their culture”).”³⁰ He informed the Polish scholar that the Karaite manuscripts collected by Radlov were kept at the Asiatic Museum in Leningrad. He also indicated that the Hebrew section at that museum, the printed materials could also contain Karaite documents. The Soviet scholar encouraged his Polish colleague to come to Leningrad and spend some time in the Russian scientific community.³¹ Samoylovich also advised Kowalski to start correspondence with Sureya Bey, who lived in Istanbul and was an expert in all Karaites, and “who [was] preparing a book about the Karaites in Turkish.”³² In order to facilitate their acquaintance, Samoylovich even gave him the proper address, one which he himself used when writing to Istanbul in the period from November 1925 to June 1926.³³ Kowalski – as can be gleaned from the analysis of the collected materials in the archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków – made use of this suggestion.³⁴ The collected correspondence includes letters from Seraya Shapshal, who, when living in Turkey “called himself Sureya Bey in order to facilitate his contact with the local community.”³⁵

And the Soviet Turkologist also kept the Polish researcher up to date as to his own work. He remarked, among others, about a short article on the Lithuanian Tatars and their religious sacred volumes, a paper he wrote with publication in mind – as he put it – in

²⁹ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 19.01.1926, p. 4.

³⁰ Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 29.04.1926, p. 1.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ At the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius the Seraya Shapshal collection includes correspondence from Alexander Samoylovich from the period 29.11.1925–20.06.1926 Under the ref. no. F143-584, there are 9 entries.

³⁴ Archive of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków, ref. no. K III – 4/175.

³⁵ Mikhail Kizilov, *The Sons of Scripture. The Karaites in Poland and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century*, Warsaw–Berlin 2015, p. 228.

a Baku periodical.³⁶ Their correspondence also provides information that Samoylovich was preparing a grammar book for the Chagatai language and that he wrote several notes on the Chagatai poets.³⁷ Except that, he submitted a text for publication – a paper where he was analysing the *yarlyk* (*jarlig*) and presented the ‘*pajza*’–‘*bajsa*’ in the *Džučievom ulus*³⁸. He also published a paper on the classification of Turkish dialects.³⁹

In the same letter, the Soviet scholar presented the opportunities for developing widely understood Turkological research in the USSR. According to Samoylovich, the interest in studying Turkic tribes of his country was growing. Many young people were preparing to study these peoples, especially from an ethnographic standpoint. The Soviet researcher even pointed out that there might have been too much Turkology. He explained that, at the time, in Leningrad, one could find representatives of all Turkic peoples, including even Turks from Anatolia. This daily practice in Samoylovich’s work was also an example of the growth of Turkology in the city. He could go beyond the traditional, office-ridden study of material products of the languages and cultures, and be in constant contact with the living Turkish language in its various dialects. He would hear the language every day: “at my Turkological seminar, there is a Yakut, a Chuvash, two Uzbeks, three Azerbaijanis, a Kumyk and three Crimean Tatars, and the next year, students from yet other tribes are expected.”⁴⁰ The Turkological seminar mentioned by the scholar, was created in autumn 1924 at the Leningrad Oriental Institute. He was actively engaged, not only through direct participation, but also as the organiser and the main driving force behind the entire undertaking. According to Ashnin, it was this initiative of the Soviet Turkologist that was one of the pivotal projects for the development of Turkology in the Soviet Union. The seminar also had a political facet. It was – one could venture this opinion – a true forge of Turkological specialists, who were then sent to work in the Turkish-speaking Union republics.⁴¹

As can be concluded from the last letter from Samoylovich, in their earlier correspondence, professor Kowalski asked for help in obtaining a publication by V.V. Radlov, titled *Book of Job* in the Lutsk Karaite dialect, which – as later publications indicate – was published in St. Petersburg in 1890.⁴² However, the Soviet Turkologist

³⁶ Concerns Samoylovich’s: ‘Litovskije tatory i arabskij alfavit’, *Izvestiya Obshchestva obsledovaniya i izucheniya Azerbaydzhana* 3 (1926), pp. 3–7.

³⁷ Concerns Samoylovich’s: ‘Materialy po sredneazyatsko-tureckoy literature, IV Chagatayskiy poet XV w. Amal’, *Zapiski Kolegii Vostokovedov* 2/2 (1927), pp. 257–274; ‘Chagatayskiye tuyugi’, *Doklady Akademii Nauk SSSR*, seria B (1926), pp. 78–80; ‘Iz tuyugov chagataytsa Emiri’, *Doklady Akademii Nauk SSSR*, seria B (1926), pp. 75–77.

³⁸ Concerns Samoylovich’s: ‘O ‘payza’–‘bajsa’ v Dzhuchiyevom uluse. K voprosu o basme khana Akhmata’, *Izvestiya Akademii nauk SSSR*, VI seria 20 (1926), pp. 1107–1120.

³⁹ Concerns Samoylovich’s: *Nekotorye dopolneniya k klasifikatsii turetskikh yazykov*, Petrograd 1922; Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 29.04.1926, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Ashnin, ‘Alexander Nikolaevich Samoylovich 1880–1938’, p. 12.

⁴² See, for example: Seraya Shapshal, ‘Karaimy SSSR v otnoshenii etnicheskom’, in: *Karaimy na sluzhbe u krymskikh khanov*, Simferopol 2004, p. 6–34; Ananiash Zajonchkovskiy, ‘Kratkoye izlozhenie grammatiki zapadno-karaimskogo yazika (lucksko-galichkiy dialekt)’, *Karaimskoye Naslediye* 1 (2011), p. 34;

was unable to provide assistance. It turned out that neither he nor his colleagues were familiar with the work. Moreover, he even remarked that “at Leningrad libraries, there are no printed texts in the Hebrew alphabet of the Book of Job.”⁴³ Of course, Samoylovich did not refuse the Polish scholar directly, but in the situation, as described above, he had very little to offer. However, he assured that the search for the volume desired by Kowalski would continue and that, in case the publication was discovered, a copy of the front page would be sent to the Polish colleague.⁴⁴

The correspondence was broken off – as can be suspected – by Samoylovich. So much can be concluded from the letters sent by Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky. In one of these letters, dated 11th December 1931, Kowalski complained that he had no news from the Soviet Turkologists he knew, including from the academic, Samoylovich: “I am vitally interested in Russian Turkology. For some time now I have not received any news on the work undertaken by professors Samoylovich, Malov, Gordlevsky or Dimitriev. Is there any way I could learn about their most recent publications?”⁴⁵ In another letter, dated 16th October 1937, the Polish professor again bemoaned the lack of news from the Soviet Turkologist, writing: “Earlier, he would write to me from time to time, then he stopped responding to my letters.”⁴⁶ It appears that these remarks clearly confirm the hypothesis that it was the Soviet researcher who discontinued the epistolary acquaintance with Kowalski. Quite probably, the Kraków scholar wrote this having received earlier news from the Russian Arabist. In September 1937, Krachkovsky informed his Polish colleague about the health of the Soviet Turkologist: “In the summer, he suffered a severe nervous breakdown, Samoylovich; now he is recuperating in the Caucasus.”⁴⁷ This news truly saddened the Polish professor, who responded saying: “And so the news of the professor Samoylovich’s illness is very unfortunate. I have always held him in high regard as a Turkologist of wide learning.”⁴⁸ This was the last remark on Samoylovich in the entire surviving correspondence between Krachkovsky and Kowalski. The Russian Arabist did not inform his Polish colleague either of the later arrest of the Soviet Turkologist or the trial, or even of his death. He never wrote that on 29th April 1939, by the decision of the general meeting, Samoylovich was stripped of membership at the USSR Academy of Sciences.⁴⁹ However, the author of this paper believes it is possible to assume that information on the fate of Alexander Samoylovich must have reached Kraków and Kowalski learned of the death of his colleague through different channels. The later correspondence between the Polish Oriental scholar and the Russian Arabist – which lasted until the death of Tadeusz Kowalski – appears to indicate as much. As the author of the paper mentioned above, Samoylovich’s name does not reappear again in the later letters. This is quite puzzling.

⁴³ Letter from Alexander Samoylovich to Tadeusz Kowalski on 4.04.1927, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 11.12.1931, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 16.10.1937, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Letter from Ignaty Krachkovsky to Tadeusz Kowalski on 8.09.1937, s. 2, ref. no. K III – 4/167.

⁴⁸ Letter from Tadeusz Kowalski to Ignaty Krachkovsky on 16.10.1937, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Ashnin, Alpatov, ‘Arkhirnye dokumenty’, p. 162.

If Kowalski indeed valued Samoylovich's scientific achievements so much, he would have asked Krachkovsky about further works in Turkology in the USSR. However, this subject never resurfaced, so most likely, Kowalski was aware of the fate of his colleague.

Summary

The 1920s were a very rewarding period in Samoylovich's professional life. One could say he was on the crest of a wave. He was finding fulfilment both as a scholar, whose achievements were recognised in the international community of Turkologists, as well as an organiser of research. Owing to his position at various institutions, he had the opportunity for numerous research travels. Thus, he became a seasoned field researcher, who was able to collect diverse study material and present a synthesis of his research on the pages of his many publications.

Both as a scholar and activist – and one closely connected to the new authorities – he understood perfectly that science and knowledge should have practical goals and applications, or even serve the socialist country. This was clearly manifested in his commitment in creating the theoretical basis for the new transcription system for the Turkic peoples living in the USSR – a system which would have been based on the Latin alphabet. As a semasiologist, Samoylovich was solving the problems related to the origins and development of Turkic languages with relatively young body of literature, and he was working on creating a proper terminology for these languages. One must emphasise his contribution in creating the new didactic and research institutions for the Oriental studies, especially in the context of the aims or tasks this education of new specialists in Oriental studies was to fulfil. Due to a shortage of well-educated and well-aware tutors (or simply ones with the correct ideological motivation), one had to ensure their proper preparation by any means necessary. The Turkological seminar mentioned above was a perfect example of such activity. Except for ethnic Russians, the students included people from Turkish-speaking USSR republics, who, after gaining an education in Leningrad, could return to their places of origin and there – as locals, and thus more trustworthy – could propagate socialist ideas and simply enforce the plans of the central authorities in reference to the local communities in far-away corners of the new state.

On the other end of this correspondence relationship was Kowalski, who could have had very little interest in the personnel issues or organisational revival in Soviet Turkology. Although in cases of larger investments, while taking advantage of the favourable attitude of the authorities – being popular – it would have benefited the research, subjects and issues undertaken and studied somewhere away from the mainstream – with the utilitarian function, serving the state's interest – but it seems that the Kraków scholar was not particularly interested in the opportunities that situation opened. From his Soviet colleague, he was expecting assistance in matters concerning his own research and brief information on the state and developments in Soviet Turkology. However, he unquestionably valued Samoylovich highly as a researcher and representative of the same scientific discipline.

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