

Sergey Lyubichankovskiy

(Orenburg State Pedagogical University, Russia)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8349-1359>

E-mail: svlubich@yandex.ru

Edward Zheligowski – Polish Exile in the Russian Civil Service (Based on the Materials of the Orenburg Region, 1853–1857)

Edward Żeligowski – polski zesłaniec w rosyjskiej służbie cywilnej (na podstawie materiałów orenburskich 1853–1857)

ABSTRACT

The article reconstructs the life of the Polish exile Edward Zheligowski in the Orenburg region in 1853–1857 on the basis of archival documents. It describes the circle of his patrons, contributing to the mitigation of his punishment. The author shows the mechanism of his appointment to a Russian state position while serving his exile.

Key words: Edward Zheligowski, exile, Orenburg region, Poles, an official on special assignments, acculturation

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THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: Sergey Lyubichankovskiy, the Department of Russian History of the Faculty of History of the Orenburg State Pedagogical University, 19/117 Sovetskaya Street, Orenburg 460014, Russia					
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The Orenburg region has been a land of exiles since its foundation. The provincial chancellery even included a so-called 'secret department', whose main tasks were to carry out police surveillance of political exiles. In the 19th century, Poles formed one of the largest groups of exiles. Most of the exiles became soldiers of the Orenburg line battalions operating throughout the vast territory of the Orenburg region, but it is noteworthy that some exiles were allowed to serve in the state institutions of the region and even made a serious service career. For example, Jan Witkiewicz, who arrived in Orenburg in shackles and who was initially destined for the fate of a private 'without the right of service' in the 5th Line Battalion, five years later was promoted to unter-officer, and a year later became an interpreter in the Orenburg Border Commission, a participant of several diplomatic missions, and a well-known diplomat.

Another Polish exile, Baltazar Baltazarovich Kolesinski, became an official of the Office of the Orenburg Governor-General, he 'was guilty of associating with the doctor Renier and listening to malicious instructions against the government, of buying from him and reading forbidden works, of meeting emissaries who came from abroad, of accepting one of them in his apartment, and of expressing a desire to contribute to the rebellion if it broke out in the Western provinces'¹. For his heroism during the storming of the Ak-Mosque, the soldier Kolesinski was appointed a collegiate registrar in 1853 and, while remaining under police supervision, was employed in the office. He received the right to leave the Orenburg region only in 1857².

In the official service during the exile was also a famous Polish poet Edward Witold Zheligowski, who chose the pseudonym 'Antoni Sowa'³, who was accused of writing seditious poems and participating in a secret student organization.

Zheligowski became an exile in 1851 and initially served his sentence in Petrozavodsk. However, there he was in real need, since the reputation of being politically unreliable closed all doors for him where his knowledge could be useful, so three years later he applied to be sent to Orenburg, where, as he argued, he could enter the service and be treated with kumys. There were no objections, and the permission was received. 'By the highest

¹ Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Orenburgskoy Oblasti [hereinafter: GAOO], f. 6, inv. 6, ref. no. 13456.

² GAOO, f. 6, inv. 12, ref. no. 1690.

³ Edward Witold Zheligowski (1816–1864) was a Polish poet, whose literary pseudonym – Antoni Sowa. From 1853 to 1857 he was in exile in the Orenburg region. B.Z., *Želigowski Edward Witold*, 'Rocznik Towarzystwa Hystoryczno-Literackiego w Paryżu' 1866, pp. 368–372.

order, for the creation of the essay ‘Jordan’, which revealed the unreliability of the author, in January 1851, he was exiled from Vilna to Petrozavodsk, Olonets province, with the establishment of police supervision, and then, by the order of the Minister of Internal Affairs, according to his desire, Zheligowski, he was exiled from Petrozavodsk to the Orenburg province [...] with the continuation of the established supervision [...]⁴.

The State Archive of the Orenburg Oblast has preserved a rather voluminous case ‘On the transfer to the Orenburg province for residence of a nobleman Zheligowski, who was in Petrozavodsk under the supervision of the police’⁵, containing correspondence of officials, Zheligowski’s letters, reports and other documents, many of which are even marked ‘Secret’⁶. Thus, from the letter of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Adjutant-General Bibikov, it is clear that, having allowed to change the place of exile, ‘the Emperor, by the way, has deigned to order: to transfer Zheligowski to another place, and not to Orenburg; strictly punish those who allowed the disorder [...]⁷.

However, the following documents show that the supreme order was not fulfilled because on the way the exiled was seriously ill (cholera), as testified by the senior physician of the Military Cantonists Battalion, Court Councillor Geppen. ‘Even now, the strength of the patient and the illness are still in such a state that I can’t recognize him out of danger – as well as the time when we can hope for his recovery, it is still difficult to determine with accuracy, but I probably believe that no more than one month it will be enough, if there are no new complications in his illness [...]⁸.

And only thanks to the community of Poles who had already been in Orenburg exile, it became possible to organize quickly medical care. For

⁴ ‘По высочайшему повелению, за создание сочинения ‘Иордан’, в котором обнаружена неблагонадежность автора, в январе 1851 года выслан из Вильно в Петрозаводск, Олонецкой губернии, с учреждением полицейского надзора, – читаем о нем в одном из архивных дел, – а потом, по распоряжению г. министра внутренних дел, согласно желанию его, Желиговского, из Петрозаводска выслан в Оренбургскую губернию [...] с продолжением учрежденного надзора [...]. GAOO, f. 6, inv. 18, ref. no. 351.

⁵ ‘О переводе в Оренбургскую губернию на жительство состоявшего в г. Петрозаводске под надзором полиции дворянина Желиговского’.

⁶ GAOO, f. 6, inv. 18, ref. no. 253.

⁷ ‘Государь император, между прочим, высочайше повелеть соизволил: Желиговского перевести в другое место, а не в самый Оренбург; с допустивших беспорядок строго взыскать [...]. *Ibidem*, sheets 10–10v.

⁸ ‘Даже теперь еще силы больного и болезнь в таком состоянии, что не могу признать его вне опасности – равно и время, когда можно надеяться на его выздоровление, определить с точностью еще трудно, но с вероятностью полагаю, что достаточно не более одного месяца, ежели новых осложнений в его болезни не будет [...]. *Ibidem*, sheet 12.

weeks was being close to death, and weeks had passed until he made a difficult recovery, and without this moral and material support, the outcome would have been fatal. Later in the poem *Больной* [Sick], written in Orenburg, Zheligowski wrote: 'Everyone helps me without measure'⁹.

According to the documents available in the case, the correspondence about the fate of Zheligowski was intense. There is not only information about his illness and a medical certificate, but also correspondence of the Orenburg and Samara Governor-General with the Olonets Civil Governor, a notification of the establishment of the police supervision over Zheligowski, reports on non-payment of travelling allowance to the exiles, a report and subscription of the exile that he undertakes to immediately appear 'to the local authorities there' upon arrival in Ufa¹⁰.

Finally, on the 4th of February, 1854, the Civil Governor reported to the Orenburg and Samara Governor-General that 'the nobleman Edward Zheligowski arrived from Orenburg to the city of Ufa on the 28th of January [...]'¹¹.

That was the beginning of Zheligowski's life in Ufa, which by the middle of the 19th century became the cultural centre of the vast Orenburg region. Here there was the residence of the civil Governor where the civilian control of the vast province was concentrated, and so there was a constantly need in educated officials; there were many educational institutions, theatre, and the only for the rest of the province newspaper – 'Оренбургские губернские ведомости' was published¹².

Unlike Petrozavodsk, where Zheligowski lived only on the scanty funds sent by his mother, in Ufa he was allowed to serve and on the 20th of March he was accepted into the office of Vice-Governor E. I. Baranovsky. In the Address-calendar of the Orenburg region for 1858, it is recorded that Eduard Yulianovich Zheligowski (as he was called in Ufa) served as a junior official on special assignments under the Civil Governor I. M. Potulov. Although he was receiving a salary then, it was clear from the correspondence of the offices of the Olonets and Orenburg provinces concerning the recovery of Zheligowski's travel allowance for moving from Petrozavodsk to Orenburg that it was only four years after his arrival in Orenburg that he was able to settle accounts with the Olonets authorities.

E. I. Baranovsky, under whom Zheligowski served, played a significant role in his fate. On the recommendation of Baranovsky, the new Civil

⁹ 'Все мне помошь несут без меры'.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, sheets 13–13v, 14, 15–15v, 19, 22–22v, 25, 28–28v, 32.

¹¹ 'что дворянин Эдвард Желиговский прибыл из Оренбурга в город Уфу 28 января [...]' *Ibidem*, sheet 37.

¹² *Очерки по истории Башкирской АССР*, vol. 1, part 2, Уфа 1959.

Governor I. M. Potulov, transferred Edward to the position of junior official of special assignments under the governor. For Zheligowski, the new position meant the possibility of leaving Ufa, a decent salary of 215 rubles (the same amount for renting housing). Zheligowski became an assistant to the Vice-Governor, who launched a fight against officials caught in bribery, etc. Baranovsky removed 55 officials only ‘for covetousness’. Thanks to the friendly support of the Vice-Governor, the exiled man under police supervision was able to go on business trips, get acquainted with the life of the region, meet with his compatriots, and took part in a literary and ethnographic expedition organized by the Ministry of Marine Affairs to ‘study the life of inhabitants engaged in seamanship and fishing [...]’¹³.

The poems, written in Ufa and dedicated to Ekaterina Karlovna Baranovskaya, as well as the poems dedicated to her sister, allow us to conclude that Zheligowski was as a guest in the house of the Vice-Governor.

However, the materials of the archive case already mentioned indicate that Zheligowski felt dissatisfied with his work in Ufa and wanted to serve his exile in Orenburg.

We quote lines from Zheligowski’s letter, dated September 22, 1854, addressed to the Governor-General V. A. Perovsky¹⁴: ‘Being in the region where Your Excellency is the head, I decided to address You. [...] The current situation is deplorable for me and morally kills. It is difficult to imagine what I went through and am going through after trying to learn something all my life, getting used to intellectual life, in the best society, and now, when I feel the strength to be useful for good deeds, I have no opportunities to do so and spend my days in a painful stagnation that condemns me to death [...]’¹⁵. In the letter, E. Zheligowski asked the Governor for a meeting, but the addressee did not receive a response, which means that he did not receive an audience.

Another memo to the same address Zheligowski wrote almost a year later – on the 9th of June 1855. In it, he ‘asks for relief from his fate’¹⁶, asks

¹³ ‘исследования быта жителей, занимающихся морским делом и рыболовством [...]’. Н. Мещерский, М.Л. Михайлов и его литературная командировка в Оренбургский край, ‘Степные огни’ 1941, 4, pp. 152–181.

¹⁴ GAOO, f. 6, inv. 18, ref. no. 253, sheets 47–48.

¹⁵ ‘Находясь в крае, где Ваше высокопревосходительство является главой, я решил обратиться к Вам. [...] Создавшееся положение является для меня плачевным и морально убивает. Трудно представить себе, что я пережил и переживаю после того, как всю жизнь старался чему-нибудь научиться, привык к жизни интеллектуальной, в лучшем обществе, а теперь, когда чувствую в себе силы быть полезным для добрых дел, не имею никаких возможностей для этого и провожу свои дни в болезненном застое, обрекающем меня на гибель [...]’.

¹⁶ ‘испрашивает облегчения своей участи’.

to 'get rid of [...] the painful [...] police supervision'¹⁷. From the archive file, it follows that, having received a memo from Zheligowski, the Governor 'was in communication with the Head of the 3rd Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery'¹⁸, and Count Orlov wrote that he 'finds it inconvenient to petition at the present time on the said subject'¹⁹.

The documents of the archive case show that many people applied for the transfer of E. Zheligowski to Orenburg. He was added to the staff of the civil governor's office on the 20th of March 1854, almost immediately after his arrival. But the correspondence about Zheligowski's 'arrangement of life' (that 'all efforts to find service in the place of residence are useless due to the concentration of only places of provincial administration in Ufa'²⁰, and, therefore, he should be returned to Orenburg, where he could 'apply his knowledge'²¹) continued for another six months, even more. This 'trick', quite obviously, was arranged by friends-well-wishers not without the participation of Baranovsky. He had already known that Zheligowski was on his staff! But – he knew and understood something else: in Orenburg, with its large 'community' of political exiles, the environment for the poet is much more favourable.

And later, when Zheligowski had already established himself in Ufa, Egor Ivanovich repeatedly asked Perovsky for 'merciful intercession [...] about easing his fate'²².

In the archive case there is a curious letter, written on the 3rd of October 1854 by a well-known scientist-orientalist V. V. Grigoriev, to V. A. Perovsky, in which he writes that 'would willingly offer the exile the position of an assistant of the head of the Border Commission'²³, but does not know whether Zheligowski, being under police supervision, has the right to serve 'all over the Orenburg region, or only in Ufa'²⁴.

¹⁷ 'избавить [...] от тягостного [...] полицейского надзора'.

¹⁸ 'входил в сношение с г. Главноначальствующим над 3-м Отделением Собственной Его Императорского Величества Канцелярии'.

¹⁹ 'находит неудобным ходатайствовать в настоящее время по означенному предмету'. *Ibidem*, sheets 58–58v, 60–60v.

²⁰ 'все старания приискать службу в месте жительства бесполезны по сосредоточию в Уфе лишь мест губернского управления'.

²¹ 'применить свои знания'.

²² 'милостивого ходатайства [...] об облегчении его участия'. Л.Н. Большаков, *Побраталии*, in: *По следам оренбургской зимы. Книга поисков*, Челябинск 1968, p. 140.

²³ 'охотно предложил бы ссылкому место помощника столонаачальника в Пограничной комиссии'.

²⁴ 'во всем Оренбургском крае или только в одной Уфе'. GAOO, f. 6, inv. 18, ref. no. 253, sheets 46–46v.

But the address of the exile was still Ufa. It is necessary to say that paid service gave the poet the opportunity to engage in literary work. In Ufa, Zheligowski writes new poems, prepares a collection of *Стихотворения Антония Собы* [Poems of Antoni Sowa], works on the novel *Сегодня и вчера* [Today and Yesterday], translates into Polish the poems by I. A. Nekrasov, T. Shevchenko's poem *Катерина* [Katerina] and a number of poems from his *Кобзарь* [Kobzar], writes his own poems, which later sounded in Russian thanks to A. Pleshcheyev, S. Kirsanov and others.

In the analysed case 'On the transfer to the Orenburg province for residence of a nobleman Zheligowski, who was in Petrozavodsk under the supervision of the police'²⁵ there is a document that in 1857 Zheligowski went to St. Petersburg on his official leave and did not return²⁶. Later, the failure to appear was recognized as legal, because his illness was certified by the chief doctor of the St. Petersburg police.

Thus, Zheligowski's Orenburg exile lasted almost four years: he arrived in Orenburg in July 1853, and left Ufa in early 1857.

After arriving in St. Petersburg, E. Zheligowski joined the chancellery of civil governor, began publishing his works, and became the editor and publisher of the Polish newspaper 'Słowo', which was banned after the first fifteen issues were published²⁷. On the pages of the newspaper Zheligowski called for the unification of Polish and Russian in the revolutionary struggle, the rapprochement of the cultures of the two peoples.

In January 1860, Zheligowski went abroad to resume publishing a Polish newspaper, began working on a poem about the Decembrists, and met with A. I. Herzen. Zheligowski died in exile in Geneva on the 29th of December 1864.

(translated by LINGUA LAB)

²⁵ 'О переводе в Оренбургскую губернию на жительство состоявшего в г. Петрозаводске под надзором полиции дворянина Желиговского'. ГАОО, ф. 6, инв. 18, ref. no. 253.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, sheet 72.

²⁷ K. Groniowski, *Próba stworzenia polskiego ośrodka naukowego w Petersburgu przed 1863 r.*, 'Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki' 1962, 7, 4, p. 462.

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STRESZCZENIE

Na podstawie dokumentów archiwalnych w artykule został zrekonstruowany okres życia polskiego zesłańca – Edwarda Żeligowskiego – w Kraju Orenburskim w latach 1853–1857. Opisano kraj sprzyjających mu osób, które przyczyniły się do złagodzenia jego kary. Ukazano również mechanizm jego powołania na rosyjskie stanowisko państwowego w czasie przebywania na zesłaniu.

Słowa kluczowe: Edward Żeligowski, zesłanie, Kraj Orenburski, Polacy, urzędnik do zadań specjalnych, akulturacja

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sergey Lyubichankovskiy – scientific associate of the Department of Russian History of the Orenburg State Pedagogical University. Main research areas: the history of the Southern Urals from the ancient times to the present day, the history of Russian everyday life, the history of bureaucracy, the history of Russian state system.