Agvan Dorjiev (Ngag dbang rdo rje) known also as Dorjieff or Agvaandorj (1854-1938) was a well known figure of the 20th century relations between Tibet and Russia. Buryat by nationality Agvan Dorjiev studied in Tibet in Gomang College of the Drepung monastery and became the representative of Dalai Lama’s interests in Russia. He was known among Tibetans as Sogpo Tsenshab Ngawang Lobzang (Sog po mtshan zhabs Ngag dbang blo bzang). He believed that Tsarist Russia was an important political power in Asia, alternative to Great Britain, and that Tibet could benefit from closer relations with Russia. Unfortunately, the First World War 1914-18 and the October Revolution in Russia of 1917 prevented these plans from happening. The Communist Russia did not develop friendly relations with Tibet. Soon Buddhism in the Soviet Republic was destroyed and Agvan Dorjiev’s work on Buddhist development in Russia was ruined. However, some remnants of his strenuous efforts survived, such as the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg. Although accused by the British of being a Russian spy and not a religious figure, which was also later maintained by the Mongols, Agvan Dorjiev remained an important leader of Tibetan Buddhism in Russia. His influence in shaping Tibeto-Russian and Tibeto-Mongolian relations should not be underestimated.

Throughout many years of Agvan Dorjiev’s activity in Tsarist and communist Russia he developed close relations with scholars of Oriental Studies. One of them was an Altaist, Professor Władysław Kotwicz (1872-1944), a Pole by nationality. Since Poland lost her independence and in 1795 was partitioned between the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria, Polish intelligentsia was often educated and worked in the institutions of the respective states. It was also the case of Władysław Kotwicz, who graduated from the Department of Oriental Languages at the University of St. Petersburg in 1895 and from 1900 was lecturing Mongolian and Manchu there. At the same time, however, he became member of the staff of the Ministry of Finance of the Tsarist government making his career there in the Eastern Department. Therefore he had direct contacts with many important figures of the Tsarist Russia, both among scholars and intellectuals, as well as among politicians and people of influence.

Władysław Kotwicz’s contacts proved useful during a visit of the Mongolian delegation in the summer of 1911. Top Mongolian politicians of that time: Da-Lama Tserenchimid, future Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs, Prince Qangdadorji (Khanddorj), future Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Qayisang (Khaisan), a political activist from Inner Mongolia,

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1 On Kotwicz’s biography see Tulisow 1986 and Dziurzyńska 2012.
future Assistant to the Minister of Internal Affairs, attempted to secure Russian favour in case of future Mongolian independence. On this occasion it was Agvan Dorjiev who made their initial contacts with the Russian side and who asked Kotwicz to break his holidays and take care of the Mongolian delegates in Russia. Most probably Kotwicz, owing to his contacts, arranged their meetings. In the following year 1912 Kotwicz undertook scholarly expedition to already independent Mongolia and was received with honours in Urga by the Mongolian officials.

Due to his true friendship with the Mongols and his sentiment towards Mongolian independence, which was probably related to the situation of his own motherland, Kotwicz became engaged in Mongolian political affairs. Both men, Agvan Dorjiev and Władysław Kotwicz had interests in keeping mutual contacts. Perhaps these relations were more than official. However, only a few letters, which are the evidence of these contacts, survived. They are kept in the Private Archive of Władysław Kotwicz at the Archive of Sciences of the PAN and PAU in Cracow.

Professor W. Kotwicz’s correspondence with important figures of the political scene of the 20th century Russia and Mongolia drew attention of scholars already many years ago. Fifty-one documents from the Kotwicz Private Archive were published by the Mongolian historian Shirendev in 1972. In 2011 Kotwicz’s correspondence in Russian language collected from archives in Cracow and St. Petersburg, Kalmykia and Buryatia was published by Dashdavaa et al. Shirendev underlined (1972, p.11) the importance of Kotwicz’s contacts and his role in supporting Mongols in their efforts to gain independence. He also remained an important advisor to the Mongols during their struggle to maintain this independence in the following years. Even later, the people’s government of Mongolia attempted to employ Kotwicz as its advisor, these plans, however, were not fulfilled. Agvan Dorjiev’s role in shaping Mongolian history was also acknowledged by Shirendev who called him a person ‘working for the Tibetan case’ (1972, p.12). Therefore Agvan Dorjiev’s two letters to Władysław Kotwicz were reproduced in Shirendev’s book and rendered also in Modern Mongolian. They were also translated into English in the monograph on the Mongolian independence of 1911 by Onon and Pritchatt. However, without knowing the political context of that time these letters remain hardly comprehensible.

One more field of common interest and co-operation of Agvan Dorjiev and Władysław Kotwicz was the construction of the Tibetan Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg. Dorjiev invited Kotwicz, together with two other eminent Orientalists, F. I. Stcherbatsky and A. D. Rudnev, famous Russian Buddhologist Fedor I. Stcherbatsky (1866–1942). Andrei D. Rudnev (1878-1958) was an eminent Russian Mongolist, who lived in Finland after the Russian revolution.
to be the members of the temple construction committee. The subject of building the temple was briefly mentioned also in one of the letters reproduced in the present article. In the Private Archive of Kotwicz there are kept unique photographs documenting the process of the temple erection. How important it was and still is to have built a Tibetan Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg one can grasp from the words written by Thubten Jigme Norbu alias Thaktser Rinpoche, who wrote in the Preface to Agvan Dorjiev’s biography translated by him into English: “I was deeply impressed to find a bit of Tibet in surroundings otherwise so alien to it, but I was impressed still more by the character of the man who had had the courage to put it there” (p.7). Thaktser Rinpoche did not agree with the opinion that Agvan Dorjiev had been a Russian agent. He underlined Dorjiev’s devotion to Buddhism and to Tibet. He felt personally attached to Agvan Dorjiev and he highly appreciated his work for Tibet.

It is also worth mentioning that when Agvan Dorjiev was arrested in 1922 while on his way back to Buryatia from the visit to Ural Kalmyks on the station called Rubakha (urbaq-a) and was in despair expecting all the worst including death, he turned to Kotwicz with the request to help him get out. Kotwicz in turn arranged an appeal to the authorities together with other scholars, such as Oldenburg, Stcherbatsky and Vladimirtsov stressing that Agvan Dorjiev was not involved in internal Russian politics and was engaged only in the Tibetan affairs. These efforts to release Agvan Dorjiev from prison combined with direct contact with politicians proved successful. The whole situation was described briefly in Agvan Dorjiev’s autobiography (English translation by Thubten Jigme Norbu, p.43):

“... One time I went to the Kalmuck district in order to have a look at the physicians in the teaching monastery I had established. On my way back I arrived at a juncture called Rubakha, close to Ural Kalmucks. (...) We were seized and placed in the railway prison. We were sent to Moscow and, without a careful investigation, put in the great prison Butyrskaia. (...) (p.45) I bribed the prison guard to send a letter to the great scholar Kotvich. When he received it, several scholars made impassioned pleas, saying, “He was only involved in Tibetan affairs, not in domestic politics,” and so on. It will be difficult to ever repay the kindness of the scholars Oldenburg, Kotvich, Stcherbatsky and Vladimirtsov. I knew a minister of foreign office. I met with him and relied on his help. Since the eastern route to Buryatia was cutt off by fighting, I again made my way to the Kalmuck lands.”

Tibetan version of Agvan Dorjiev’s autobiography written in 1923; fragment on the help from Kotwicz and other Orientalists (Lavain egsgig 2001, p.120, f. 32b (63)):

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10 Andreev 2012, p.36.
11 Since Taktser Rinpoche (1922-2008) remained the most beloved teacher of Prof. Elliot Sperling, who also devoted his scholarly undertakings to the subject of Tibeto-Mongolian and Tibeto-Russian relations, it seemed justified to include this otherwise a bit far of the main stream of Tibetological studies subject into the present volume dedicated to Elliot Sperling.
12 According to Andreev this happened in 1918. Andreev 2012, p.80.
13 Boris Yakovlevich Vladimirtsov (1884-1931), great Russian Orientalist, Mongolist, member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union.
Perhaps Agvan Dorjiev and Władysław Kotwicz had more in common that we can see from the scarce evidence which has survived. Both acted as advisors to Tibetan and Mongolian governments, respectively, and applied efforts to secure their independence. It seems that they could trust each other when necessary and that they maintained friendly relations which they did not publicise. Their correspondence was translated into English by Urgungge Onon and Derrick Pritchatt (1989). However, some of the passages translated by them arbitrarily seem to include authors’ implications of what was meant in the letters rather than the actual meaning. For example a passage on the political shape of relations of the Tibetans and Mongols with China called the ‘commonwealth’ (qamturan törü), was translated as “to serve China”. Another passage mentions the concerns of Mongolian khans and nobles in taking common decisions. However, it was translated by Onon and Pritchatt as “the independence will not last much longer”. Some passages were probably obscure to Onon and Pritchatt, such as the statement about sending money for erecting a certain building, which actually referred to the construction of the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg.

It should be also pointed out that Dorjiev, who was treated as a Russian spy by the British and later also by the Mongols, in the letter dated 8th February 1912 writes about the opinion of

15 Mongolian version, written in verse in 1921 is a bit shorter and events are written in an abbreviated manner in comparison with the Tibetan version, which was written two years later.

16 The Tibeto-Mongolian relations were very important. This can be known in more detail from the monograph on the Tibeto-Mongolian treaty, see Sperling et al. 2013.
“our government” (*manu praviytilstva*). The question is whether he refers here to the Mongolian government or to the Russian government? It seems that Consul Lyuba turns to him with words about ‘your Mongolian state’ (*tanu mongol ulus*) and further in the letter Dorjiev’s ‘our government’ refers to the Mongolian government. He is very concerned about such development of the political events which would be the best for the Mongols. Perhaps letters presented here can prove his loyalty towards the Mongols.

Thus with hope to shed more light on the content of the letters which document the way the political situation was comprehended by the contemporaries in 1912 and to make the relationship of Agvan Dorjiev with Władysław Kotwicz better known, their correspondence is reproduced here again with English translation and with necessary explanations.

Letter 1

AGATA BAREIA-STARZYNSKA

52
Translation

Highly respected [Sir],

Noble Vladislav, I am sending you best wishes ten thousand times.\(^\text{17}\)

Here new Mongolian rule was established. The weather is warm, snow is low and cattle is fat.

Majority of people are happy. Recently, a few days ago I heard the following from Consul Lyuba;\(^\text{18}\) Russia and the Chinese Republic will guard your Mongolian state from two sides and in case that soldiers appear from other empires we will protect [you].

[In response] to this statement some say that it is good. Some say that it is a trick. Some are discussing that if China approaches it will be bad and they are disturbed by this and similar [matters]. As to our government’s\(^\text{19}\) true opinion it says that it is very good.

In the present day(s) in the document sent from the Guomingtang\(^\text{20}\) to the Mongolian state\(^\text{21}\) it is said that it will support the commonwealth\(^\text{22}\) with Tibet and Mongolia\(^\text{23}\) as it was done in the past. The response to this statement is being discussed.

Here Da Lama became the Minister of Inner Affairs. Qayisang was bestowed a position of güng. These two [men] decide on very important political matters. Whatever they say to the Khan, this is done. This [in turn] is not received very well by many princes and nobility. It is not known what will happen.

As to Lyuba he gave advice and discussed this [issue] with many nobles, saying [that when things are] reported by one person then in the end one cannot be sure what is going to happen. He said that even Da Lama and Qayisang should have taken council with many, but they did not comply with this saying.

People who ought to go to Petersburg: Jalkhanz Gegeen\(^\text{24}\) and Dalai Vang\(^\text{25}\) are waiting for orders to let them go. Governor,\(^\text{26}\) who came from Barga,\(^\text{27}\)

\(^{17}\) Lit. ‘thousand times requesting your peace’.

\(^{18}\) Viktor Fyodorovich Lyuba was a Russian consul in Urga. See Tulisow 2012, p.34.

\(^{19}\) Here \textit{praviytilstvo} from Russian \textit{pravitel’stvo}.

\(^{20}\) Mong. \textit{ya ming tang}.

\(^{21}\) Mong. \textit{ulus}.

\(^{22}\) Or ‘joint-government / collaborative government’, Mong. \textit{gamtur an törü}. Onon and Pritchatt (p.88) translated this passage as “... the Tibetans and Mongols should serve the Chinese nation together as they did in the past”. However, it seems that they did not translate it precisely.

\(^{23}\) Mong. \textit{töbed mongol}.

\(^{24}\) Jalkhanz Gegeen or Khuthugtu, Damdinbazar 1874-1923 (Tib. Rgyal khang rtse) was a politically active Buddhist incarnation supporting the Jetsundampa’s government, especially in western Mongolia. In 1921 he became the Prime Minister. See Atwood 2004, pp.258-259, 471. About the line of reincarnations of Jalkhanz Gegeen see Laagan 2004, p.54.

\(^{25}\) Dalai Vang, Mongolian aristocrat. See Pozdneev 1971, I, pp.90, 249-250. The Minister of the Army, see Onon and Pritchatt 1989, footnote 33 to Chapter Five.


\(^{27}\) Barga, region of Mongolia, see Atwood 2004, pp.34-35.
was granted a position of duke and nominated a Vice-Minister of Outer (i.e. Foreign) Affairs.

It is said that Üjümčin and Sönid and [people of] Abaya as well as of Alashan are in favour of following [the Mongolian government] and they are coming [to join Mongols]. They are not rushing to put in order their inner affairs [however]. Moreover, they do not find concord among themselves. Some of them, actually, do not even think about it.

Requesting [Your] peace, Agvang.

On the 8th of February from Kürïye.

Da Lama is in correspondence with Kokovtsov as it is discussed. People are very afraid of that – it is said. Especially from the moment when he [Da Lama] knew that the last year’s gold mine of Sain Noyon was given to Lusinikov [=Lushnikov].

Lyuba said that it would be good if such cases were discussed and decided by many [people] and him. I know [about it].

With Kokovtsov [I remain in] correspondence.

Transliteration of the Mongolian text

[1] dede kündütü
[3] ene zajar-a mongγol-un sine törü toγtoju
[4] çay dulaqan casun baγ-a mal taryun

28 Mong. güng.
29 Here tavarsi minister from Russian tovarishch ministra, which means ‘vice-minister’, ‘deputy minister’. I am indebted to J. Tulisow for this information.
30 Mongolian groups in Inner Mongolia. The princes of Üjümčin and Sönid were junior descendants of the Chinggisid Bodi Alag Khan (1519-47), grandson of Batu-MÖngke Dayan Khan, see Atwood 2004, p.565a.
34 According to the Julien Calendar it was the 21st of February 1912.
35 I.e. Urga, modern Ulan Bator.
36 Vladimir Nikolaevich Kokovtsov (1853—1943) served as the Prime Minister of Russia (1911—1914), during the reign of Emperor Nicholas II.
37 Mong. altan yajar – lit. ‘golden place’, here stands for ‘gold mine’.
38 Shirendev 1972, p.164 (followed by Onon and Pritchatt p.89) reads his name in modern Mongolian as Lyusokhov, although it was not written so. It was actually written Lusinikov. A person with a similar name was Aleksey Mikhaylovich Lushnikov (1831-1901), a famous Russian millionaire and tea trading agent who got the confidence of Russian and Chinese merchants, and his sons, including Aleksey, an engineer involved in the construction of the Trans Siberian Railway (see Kandinsky’s Family Tree http://www.kandinsky.ru/oldenglish/tree06.shtml). However, in the letter sent by Qayisang to Kotwicz on the 20th of January 1912, Mikhail Alekseevich Lutnikov, “a native from Kyakhta and a manager” popular among the Mongols, is mentioned (Shirendev 1972, p. 116, Onon and Pritchatt 1989, p. 97). This must be wrong for Mikhail Alekseevich Lushnikov, another son of Aleksey Mikhaylovich Lushnikov. Probably one of the sons, Aleksey or Mikhail, was mentioned in the letter.
39 Forms in square brackets are correct according to the principles of the Classical Mongolian.
40 Gamma is not marked with dots which is indicated by underlined sign γ.
alus olan-iyor bayar-tai bayinam : oyira
[7] anu : rosı kitad respublika qoyar tanu mongγol
[8] ulus-yi [-i] qoyar tala-aca qamuyalayu busu
[9] gürting-ece cereg irebel bida arisilamui [arcilamui]
[10] kemegsen-e . jarim-ud anu sayin kemen jarim
[12] kitad galdabal mayu bolqu kemeldektü terigungten
[13] -iyer üyimemüi42 . manu pravitilstva43-yin üneker
[14] ayiladuyusan bügesü mași sayın kemen öggülejü
[15] yabunam . odoqan edir kitadun ya ming tang44
[16] respülika-aca mongγol ulus-tur iregsen
[17] bicig-tür . töbed mongγol uridayıın
[18] yosyar qamturan töri-yi tedkıy-e
[19] kemen iregsen-ü qarigü ögkü-ben kelecejü
[20] bayinam bui : ende da blam-a dotoγadu kereg-ün

[p.2, 1] minister boluyad . qayisang güng jerge-tei
[2] bolju ene qoyar yeke erke-tei ulus töri
[3] -yin yabudal-i totoγaju qayant-dayan
[5] egün tus olan noyad qad-un sedkel-tü
[6] tung tıraλamji ügei bayinam . yawın bolqu
[8] anu jöblen kelecegdün nigen kimün-iyer yabudal
[9] -iyen medegülged segül-dür yawın bolqu-yi
[10] boljusi ügei kemegsen ba . da blam-a qayisang
[13] kemeldemüi : piterbüürge45 yabuqu ulus jılaqanca
[14] gegen . dalai vang qoyar odoqu ber jariγ qarigü
[15] küliyen bayimui . baryu-aca iregsen janggi-yi
[16] güng jerge olyaju yadayadu yamun-u tavarsi46
[17] minister boljutai . üjencin söniid abay-a-nar
[18] alas-a-nżyud cu dayaqu sanal-tai ber
[19] iriγü bayimui kemeldemüi . dotorki yosun

[p.3, 1] duram-i totoγaju-ban üli yayaramui . üli
[3] kereg-tei degere cu ülii şanαqu buyu

41 ‘Deceit, fraud, trick’ etc. Lessing 1982, 533b.
43 In Russian pravitel’stvo, i.e. ‘government’.
44 Guomingtang.
45 Petersburg.
46 In Russian tovarishch, however, tovarishch ministra, here tavarsi minister means ‘vice-minister’, ‘deputy minister’. I am indebted to J. Tulisow for this information.
[4] eyin amuγulang-yi [-i] ayiladqayci ayvarg
[8] kemeldenem . ilangqui-a sayin noyan-u nituyeq-un
[9] altan-u γajar-i luisγqob-tu öber
[10] -iyen medejü öγkü boluγgan-aca . lyuba bi ene eyimů
[12] jöblelden toγtobal sayin kemegen-e . bi
[13] medemůi koqobcob-tai bicig-iyer

Letter 2


47 Like Khalkha būi.
48 According to Shirendev 1972, p.168 nodniin, i.e. last year’s.
Translation

Highly Respected [Sir],
Vladislav Lyudvikovich, I am sending my best greetings.\(^{49}\)
I went on the 21st of February. With about twenty people [of assistance] we asked
Consul for weapon (buu), but we have not received (any).
Here, after the establishment of the Mongolian rule all affairs are managed by Da
Lama and Qaisang. Moskvitin became close with them and (they) subordinated
the consul and [therefore] their situation is very good.
All other khans and princes do not like it and they are very worried. Majority
of\(^{50}\) khans and princes went back.\(^{51}\) Now still they are said to be going back.
If it is right to be in accord with many, “what will it mean?” they seem
to wonder.\(^{52}\)
If they get good advice from other people they do not use it. It is difficult to
achieve suitable solution, but similarly, they do not want to use a good adviser.
Indeed, [they] have not found yet understanding of the future.\(^{53}\) Urgent matters or
slow make no difference [to them].
[Reporting] this is humble [servant] Agvang requesting your peace ten
thousand times.
On the 21st of February\(^{54}\) from Küriye.\(^{55}\)
In the past I have sent 28 thousand.\(^{56}\)
When I arrive I hope that the building\(^{57}\) perhaps has been finished.\(^{58}\)
Please send my greetings to Andrei\(^{59}\) and to Vladimirtsov-s.\(^{60}\)

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\(^{49}\) Lit. ‘requesting your great peace’.

\(^{50}\) Mong. yeke baruy. Shirendev 1972, p.168 in his Modern Mongolian rendition wrote: ikhenkh,
i.e. ‘majority’.

\(^{51}\) According to Byambaa Ragchaa it means that they came for council, but went back without taking up
decisions. I am thankful for Byambaa Ragchaa for his help in translation of this passage. Onon and Pritchatt
understood it similarly.

\(^{52}\) Onon and Pritchatt read this passage as: “It seems that independence will not last much longer”.
However, there seem to be no grounds for such translation in the original text.

\(^{53}\) Mong. darui alus ucir.

\(^{54}\) According to the Julien calendar it was the 5th of March 1912.

\(^{55}\) i.e. Urga, modern Ulan Bator.

\(^{56}\) In 1912 Agvan Dorjiev was practically the only person feeling responsible to organize funds for building
the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg. See Andreev 2012, p.53. Therefore most probably the 28 thousand
mentioned in the letter refers also to the money sent for this purpose.

\(^{57}\) Most probably the reference was made to the building of the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg.
Onon and Pritchatt wondered whether this passage concerned building of a house (p.89).

\(^{58}\) On the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg see Andreev 2012. The first prayer session was performed on
the 21st of February 1913, on the 300th anniversary of the House of Romanov (Andreev 2012, p.69).

\(^{59}\) Since Kotwicz maintained close contacts with Andrei D. Rudnev, he was probably mentioned here.
I am indebted to J. Tulisow for this information.

\(^{60}\) Written as Valad[i]n]ircab. Since the family name is written in Plural (-ud) most probably “Vladimirtsov
and his family” was meant by Dorjiev.
Transliteration of the Mongolian text

[1] dede kündüütü
[2] vladislab lyudbiqobic tanu
[3] yeke amuγulang ayiladqamui
[4] bi bebrali\textsuperscript{61} 21- du yabubai . qorin\textsuperscript{62}
[7] ene ʒaʃar-a
[8] mongγol-un törü toytoyad
[9] qamuγ yabudal-i ta blam-a qayisang
[10] -nar kijü bayinam . edeger-lüge

[p.2, 1] busu qad noyad bügüde
[2] tarʒalaqu ügei tüng
[3] bacimdaju bayinam . yeke baruγ
[4] qad noyad bucabai . oodo-a
[7] jokiyabasu yargutai kemen
[8] sanγydaqu metü . busu kümün
[9] -ũ sobiyd\textsuperscript{63} ögbesü ülü .
[10] kereglemüi . tokinaju [tokiyaju] toytotal-a
[11] berke metü sayin sobiytniq\textsuperscript{64}

[p.3, 1] darui alus ućir-iyan
[2] oluγ-a edüi\textsuperscript{65} . kereg-ūn yararal
[3] -tai udayan-i ilyal ügei
[4] bayimui . eyin
[5] tümę amuγulang ayiladqayci
[9] minu iretel-e barılıγ-a tegüsgeged
[10] bayiqu bui j-a kemen nayidanam
[12] Valadimircab-ud-tu amuγulang kürgekü-yi γuyubai

\textsuperscript{61} In Russian \textit{fevral'}, i.e. February.
\textsuperscript{62} Shirendev 1972, p.168 rendered into Modern Mongolian as \textit{kharin}.
\textsuperscript{63} For Russian \textit{sovet}, i.e. ‘advice’.
\textsuperscript{64} For Russian \textit{sovetnik}, i.e. ‘adviser’.
\textsuperscript{65} I.e. \textit{ooloγui}. 


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