

PIOTR MYŚLAKOWSKI

WARSZAWA

POLSKIE TOWARZYSTWO HERALDYCZNE

CHOPIN'S NEPHEW, HENRYK 'LAURY' JĘDRZEJEWICZ: THE RIDDLE OF HIS DEATH RESOLVED

Little is known, historically speaking, about Henryk Jędrzejewicz, the first-born son of Józef Kalasanty Jędrzejewicz and Ludwika Chopin. Although by choice a soldier with the Russian army, he joined the January Uprising of 1863 against the Russian empire under the pseudonym 'Laury', with the rank of captain. He participated in military actions lasting several months under Colonel Edmund Callier, an outstanding military commander of Mazovia voivodeship. When his commanding officer fell into conflict with the National Government, Henryk Jędrzejewicz went into exile in Paris with Callier and several other officers, where they founded the Société des militaires polonais (Society of Polish Servicemen). He then pursued an active role in public service and strengthened his position in the Society, becoming its secretary general and advancing to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. His promotion (and that of other individuals) was criticised in emigre circles as being 'self-proclaimed'.

He probably took part (under the pseudonym 'Henry') in the defence of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, as chief of staff of the municipal headquarters. He made a living by working for an insurance company, but his financial situation was very unstable. For years he sought financial support from the institution Honneur et Pain (Honour and Bread), but was unable to prove the required military service during the Uprising, due to the lack of evidence that he was indeed 'Captain Laury'. In Paris he took an active part in efforts to erect a monument to his famous uncle, Fryderyk Chopin. He had a son, Jacques, from an informal relationship, who died during the last days of the Great War. Jędrzejewicz himself died, according to the scant information available, 'in Paris in 1899'. However, no certificate of his death has been found in any of the districts of Paris. Only recently was it established that he died in a social welfare institution in Limeil-Brévannes, near Paris, on 1 May 1899, and an urn containing his ashes was placed in a columbarium at Père-Lachaise cemetery.