

Chapter 1

Berdyczów, Wilno, St. Petersburg, 1800–1830

Bartłomiej Beniowski was probably born, and certainly brought up, in Berdyczów in the old Polish province of Volhynia, a town with a population of 40,000, situated on a long, low hill beside the wide-flowing Hnyłopiat River, 450 miles to the East of Warsaw and 100 miles West of Kiev, ruled by Russia since the second partition of Poland in 1793.¹ Beniowski himself did not clear up the precise place of his birth, for he always stated in later life that he was born “in Volhynia,” “came from Volhynia” or was “a citizen of Volhynia.”² Nor is his exact date of birth known, for all the existing documentation states – in line with contemporary practice in both Eastern and Western Europe – that he was in a particular year of his age. This documentation however clearly indicates a birthday in 1800, and probably on or around 24 August, the most popular name day associated with St. Bartholomew.³ Even the question of his surname is not entirely straightforward, for although until 1848 many records were kept in Polish in the provinces lost to Russia, Polish spelling was by no means yet

¹ The records of the University of Wilno tell us that he was brought up in Berdyczów, but do not explicitly give it as the place of birth: VUB/KC79, 80, 81. Stanisław Kościński, the 19th-century Polish oculist and historian of medicine, says that he was born in nearby Żytomierz, but some of Kościński's other information is mistaken, and this is almost certainly a conflation of two columns in the university registers, which place Berdyczów in the Żytomierz administrative district: Stanisław Kościński, *Słownik lekarzów polskich obejmujący obok krótkich życiorysów lekarzy Polaków oraz cudzoziemców w Polsce osiadłych, dokładną bibliografią lekarską polską od czasów najdawniejszych aż do chwili obecnej*, Warszawa, 1883, p. 588. See also: Józef Bieliński, *Stan nauk lekarskich za czasów akademii medyko-chirurgicznej Wileńskiej bibliograficznie przedstawiony. Przyczynek do dziejów medycyny w Polsce*, Warszawa, 1888, p. 734.

² See, e.g.: NA/HO-1/57/1868: Beniowski's naturalisation papers: “your Memorialist was born at Wohlynia [sic] in Poland;” “Adres tułaczów polskich we Francji do izby niższej Wielkiej Brytanii i Irlandii,” [in] *Caloroczne trudy Komitetu Narodowego Polskiego na dniu 8 grudnia 1831 r. we Francji zawiązanego*, Paryż, 1831–1833: signed, p. 219, by “Bartłomiej Beniowski, z Wołynia major.” See also: Peter Brock, *Z dziejów Wielkiej Emigracji w Anglii*, Warszawa, 1958, p. 22.

³ This is true of the registers of the University of Wilno, French refugee documentation, his application for British citizenship, his burial record etc.

standardised. In his early years (I will here say nothing of his later years when the English first tried to reproduce his name), Beniowski's name was sometimes transliterated from Russian spelling as "Beniewski" or "Bieniewski," and sometimes from Russian pronunciation as "Bieniowski" or "Beniowski," while further variants were common.

Despite the delusional or self-aggrandising claims made by Bartłomiej Beniowski's grandson, the early-20th century Lithuanian nationalist Tadeusz Wróblewski, Beniowski was not the son of "Count" Maurycy Beniowski, famed throughout Europe at the time of Bartłomiej's birth as a Siberian escapee and coloniser of Madagascar. Maurycy's brief excursion to Podolia took place at the wrong time to have figured in this story, and 20th-century research showed him to be a Hungarian adventurer, who was only involved peripherally in the Confederacy of Bar and had no other connections with Poland.⁴ But Captain Cook and Maurycy Beniowski's own *Memoirs and Travels*⁵ made Beniowski a name to be reckoned with at the turn of the 19th century, and Poles regarded him as a national hero.⁶ "A historic name," wrote Colonel Franciszek Gawroński in his diary in April 1831, when he heard of Bartłomiej Beniowski's glorious charge over to the Polish army at the Battle of Kuflew.⁷ And the heroic version was to subsist in Poland, given spectacular expression by Juliusz Słowacki's epic poem *Beniowski* (1841).⁸ But there were no family connections.

Adam Lewak claimed in Bartłomiej Beniowski's entry in the Polish Dictionary of National Biography that, "Apparently he came from a rich Jewish family from the Grodno region."⁹ There is, however, no specific evidence that his father was rich, or Jewish, nor indeed, that he came from the Grodno region.¹⁰ The records of the University of Wilno tell us that Bartłomiej

⁴ *Ateneum Wileńskie*, Year III, 1925–26, p. 436, obituary of Tadeusz Wróblewski: "his great-grandfather was the famous Confederate and traveller Maurycy Beniowski." On Maurycy Beniowski, see: Leon Orłowski, *Beniowski*, Warszawa, 1961; Janusz Roszko, *Awanturnik nieśmiertelny*, Katowice, 1989; Mieczysław Lepecki, *Maurycy August hr. Beniowski, zdobywca Madagaskaru*, Warszawa, 1986.

⁵ Count Maurycy Beniowski, *The Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius August Count de Benyowsky, Magnate of the Kingdom of Hungary and Poland. One of the Chiefs of the Confederation of Poland*, London–Dublin, 1790. Captain Cook included some of his tall stories in vol. III of his *Voyages*: see Mieczysław Lepecki, *Maurycy August hr. Beniowski*, op. cit., pp. 6–8.

⁶ See: Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, ed. Jan Dihm, *Pamiętniki czasów moich*, vol. II, Warszawa, 1957, p. 157.

⁷ Franciszek Salezy Gawroński, ed. Jan Czubek, *Pamiętnik r. 1830/31 i kronika pamiętnikowa (1787–1831)*, Kraków, 1916, p. 137.

⁸ Tadeusz Wróblewski would have known August von Kotzebue's play, *Graf Benjowsky, oder: die Verschwörung auf Kamtschatka*, 1794; and Waław Sieroszewski's novel, *Beniowski. Powieść historyczna*, Warszawa–Kraków, 1916.

⁹ *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 1, ed. Władysław Konopczyński, Kraków, 1935, p. 429.

¹⁰ Beniowski only once – in London in 1838 – suggested that his father might have money: see below p. 260.

Beniowski's father was named Szymon Beniowski, and he himself tells us that his father was a physician.¹¹ A Szymon Beniowski was awarded a doctorate in medicine by the University of Wilno in 1821, when, as we will see in a moment, Bartłomiej Beniowski was himself a medical student at the same university. Szymon's doctoral dissertation on spinal pain in pneumonia patients, which was cited respectfully and in detail by Professor Joseph Frank in his *Traité de Pathologie Interne*, contained empirical studies of patients in the Wilno University Clinic dating from 1818.¹² On obtaining his doctorate, Szymon Beniowski entered government service and became an Inspector of the Medical Board in Mohylew on the River Dniepr, at this time a Russian provincial capital, where he remained until his death in 1852.¹³ Kościński states categorically that this was Bartłomiej Beniowski's father. His theory is backed by the fact that there is no trace of Szymon as an undergraduate student in or just before 1818, which we would expect if he had been, for example, an elder brother who took a doctorate immediately after his first degree.¹⁴ Beniowski is not a common name in the early 19th-century registers of the University of Wilno: only Szymon and Bartłomiej occur. I therefore suggest that this Szymon Beniowski was indeed Bartłomiej's father. He possibly studied medicine in Wilno in the turbulent 1790s (no enrolment records exist for the period 1794–1806), after which he broke off his studies with a licence to practice, married, settled for a time in Berdyczów, and returned to the city to complete a doctorate at the time when his son entered the university. He was probably widowed by this time, and perhaps later re-married and founded a second family.¹⁵

There is no concrete indication from this stage in his life about Bartłomiej Beniowski's ethnic background. He was not, however, as his friend Jan Czyński – himself descended from Frankists – claimed, a late and tactical convert from Judaism to Catholicism. Czyński misleadingly described Beniowski in a letter to Antoni Ostrowski in 1833 as one of those Jews “who was baptised as a pure

¹¹ VUB KC 79, 80, 81: they are both entered in the records (in Polish) of the University of Wilno as “Beniewski.”

¹² BJ ms. 3659, p. 154 ff. [Wilno] “W oddziale nauk lekarskich otrzymali stopnie uczone 1816–1830,” p. 156; Joseph Frank, *Traité de Pathologie Interne*, vol. 2, Bruxelles, 1842, p. 445 (Szymon Beniowski, *Diss. inaug. de rachialgitide pneumoniam et praesertim pleuritidem dorsalem mentiente*, Vilnae, 1821).

¹³ Stanisław Kościński, *Słownik lekarzów polskich*, op. cit., p. 588; Józef Bieliński, *Doktorowie Medycyny promowani w Wilnie* [from *Pamiętnik Lekarski*], Warszawa, 1886, p. 13.

¹⁴ LVIA, F720, Ap.1, B 822, p. 33; Józef Bieliński, *Doktorowie Medycyny promowani w Wilnie*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁵ Tadeusz Wróblewski, either seeking his roots or legacy hunting, in 1910 obtained information that a certain Arkady Semenovich Beniowski had attained the rank of infantry general in the Russian army, and was drawing his pension in Bryansk in Western Russia. If this was Bartłomiej Beniowski's nephew, then he had a brother, or half-brother, as well as a father called Szymon – or General Arkady Semenovitch Beniowski may have been a more distant relation if he was a relation at all. See: LMAVB BF 306A p. 6, typed statement in Russian, January 1910.

formality in order to do much good for his co-religionists.”¹⁶ Szymon Beniowski was a Roman Catholic when he was awarded his doctorate at the University of Wilno, and according to current regulations, was also granted a patent of hereditary nobility.¹⁷ Bartłomiej Beniowski was almost certainly born and baptised into the Catholic faith, and was marked down as “Roman Catholic” without question when he first registered as a student at the University. Unfortunately, although against all the odds some of the ecclesiastical parish records from Berdyczów survive, they do not cover the years of Beniowski’s baptism, or any other events concerning his family.¹⁸ We know nothing of Beniowski’s mother, who perhaps died in childbirth, for we do not hear of any siblings. Something in Beniowski’s later fierce Polishness, combined with an aggressive defence of Jewishness in a period when this was socially and culturally taboo, could perhaps suggest that only one of his parents was from an ethnically Jewish background. But while in later years he recalls his father with respect and affection, he never mentions his mother. Szymon Beniowski may well have been a rationalist and enlightenment free-thinker of Jewish descent who was a member of the Roman Catholic church, and very possibly came from a Frankist family that had converted to Catholicism earlier in the 18th century – but there is no tangible support for that hypothesis.

The province of Volhynia in which Beniowski spent his early years stretched south from the River Pripet into the rolling fertile country of the Dniepr basin. For many in Western Europe, this was *terra incognita*. When Beniowski applied for British citizenship in 1854, and declared that he was born in Volhynia, Lord Palmerston minuted on his application, “Is this Russian, Prussian or Austrian Poland?”¹⁹ Berdyczów was, if possible, even less well-known, although in Poland itself, the town managed to achieve the legendary status of idiom: the phrase, “Write to me in Berdyczów,” came to mean, “Stop bothering me,” or more straightforwardly, “Get lost.”²⁰ Aleksander Jełowicki,

¹⁶ AGAD AOU/390, k. 186, J. Czyński to A. Ostrowski, 16.III.1833; see also: Adam Gałkowski, *Polski patriota – obywatel Europy. Rzec o Janie Czyńskim (1801–1867)*, Warszawa, 2004, p. 207.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Daniel Beauvois, *Wilno – polska stolica kulturalna zaboru rosyjskiego 1803–1832*, Wrocław 2010, p. 274.

¹⁸ Marriage registers are available only for 1813–1820; pre-marriage examinations for 1798: TsDIAG F1046–1–06; christening registers only from 1828: F 1046–1–55; the “Status animarum” or parish census for Berdyczów has survived only from 1825 onwards: F1046–1–28; F1046–1–32; F1046–1–34.

¹⁹ NA/HO-1/57/1868.

²⁰ Juliusz Słowacki wrote in *Beniowski* (Lipsk, 1841, Book I, stanza 11), when his hero fled the country: “then in Italian say, addio! And in Polish, «Write to me in Berdyczów!».” When Otto Śliżień (“Z Pamiętnika (1821–1824),” [in] ed. Henryk Mościcki, *Z filareckiego świata. Zbiór wspomnień z lat 1816–1824*, Warszawa, 1924, p. 136), a student contemporary of Beniowski’s, was released from arrest in the Dominican Monastery in Wilno in 1823, he jumped on a sledge to depart for his lodgings, “and called to the Dominicans, ‘Write to me in Berdyczów!’.”

whom Beniowski was to know as an exile in 1832 in Paris, born further South in the old Polish eastern territories, explained in his memoirs that the phrase reflected the continuing importance of the town for the Polish gentry of Volhynia, Podolia and the Ukraine in the first decades of the 19th century:

If you have some urgent mercantile business, then off you go to Berdyczów; if you need to make a major purchase for the estate or for the house, then off you go to Berdyczów; if the newly-weds need a carriage and pair; or the bride needs a trousseau; if the drunkard needs wine; if the cardsharp needs a wager; if some whippersnapper needs a punch-up with the Muscovites – then off they go to Berdyczów. ... Berdyczów is convenient for everyone, it's on the way everywhere, giving rise to the saying: *Write to me in Berdyczów*.²¹

Henrieta Błędowska, from an aristocratic family residing near Berdyczów and six years older than Beniowski, recalled the commercial opportunities offered in the town, where an elegant emporium offered Turkish shawls, pearls and diamond necklaces to a land-owning clientele.²² Strangers, it is true, might regard customs here as backward. In 1812, Heinrich Vossler, a Württemberg prisoner of war, was surprised to find the abacus in constant and skilled use in these eastern territories, while “only the better educated merchants were able to do sums on paper.”²³ Commentators were unflattering about the town's aesthetics. Jełowicki bemoaned the mud (“the muddy River Hnyłopjat, on the banks of which lay the even muddier Berdyczów”), terrain with no natural defences, the unhealthy air, and the lack of good drinking water.²⁴ Vossler complained of the stray dogs that “roam the streets in packs and not only bark at passers-by but sometimes actually attack them.”²⁵

And then there were the Jews, for Berdyczów was in Jełowicki's words, “the capital of the Polish Jews, who like frogs croak and spawn in the mud.”²⁶ On Saturdays, in the oak spinney that lay between the town and the nearby village where the Radziwiłłs, who owned Berdyczów, had their seat, there were “crowds of Jews and Jewesses dressed up to the nines in European fashion,” some on foot, some on horseback.²⁷ Jełowicki's Berdyczów is a town of the east, where yelling Jews swarmed around you on arrival, grabbed “your carriage, your men, your horses” and swept you off to a hostelry, leaving only the recourse of

²¹ Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia*, Poznań, 1877, p. 85.

²² Henrieta z Działyńskich Błędowska, *Pamiętka z przeszłości, Wspomnienia z lat 1794–1832*, Warszawa, 1960, pp. 68, 353.

²³ H. A. Vossler, *With Napoleon in Russia 1812*, London, 1969, p. 147. Vossler was in Tchernikov two hundred miles north of Berdyczów.

²⁴ See also: Henrieta Błędowska, *Pamiętka z przeszłości*, op. cit., p. 83.

²⁵ H. A. Vossler, *With Napoleon*, op. cit., p. 147. Poor quality water supply and packs of stray dogs still feature in Berdyczów 200 years later. This is attested by my own observations and by the fact that the Ukrainian government reportedly culled 20,000 stray dogs in Kiev before the European Cup football championships in 2012.

²⁶ Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia*, op. cit., pp. 85 ff.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 162.

taking an agent, who would “lead you safely through streets filled with Jewish stalls and cries.”²⁸ The description is almost identical – leaving aside the absence of brilliant sunshine, and the ethnic composition of the “noisy rabble” – with tales told by European travellers in Egypt in the 1830s, when Beniowski went on a mission to Muhammad Ali, and perhaps he then remembered Berdyczów and felt at home. I am also citing these views because although Beniowski was officially a member of the Roman Catholic nobility, he in later years proudly ranked himself alongside the Polish Jewish community. Did his convictions about Jewish emancipation arise when he was a boy early in the century, and men like Jełowicki could write casually that parts of Berdyczów were “overrun with defiled Jewry,” further noting that:

In the eyes of every Jew, such greed and cunning dishonesty, that it is difficult to reconcile your pity for this people with the contempt you feel; luckily, they do not care about your feelings. If anyone wants to give Jews civil rights, I invite him to Berdyczów, and if he manages it here, I congratulate him.²⁹

The poor Berdyczów Jews lived down by the river in the mud. The more salubrious parts of the town were up on the escarpment where there were also shops and stalls of a better class. Most of the town was built of timber, with only a few solid brick residences. The Radziwiłłs’ town house stood at the western end, almost opposite the church of St. Barbara – where Balzac was to marry – which had been endowed in 1759 by Barbara Radziwiłł. It was perhaps somewhere in this area, at the apex of the triangle formed by the two main roads running north westward through the town, that Beniowski lived as a boy, in a wooden house not dissimilar to the St. Barbara’s presbytery, described in an inventory of 1802. Here the timber structure was plastered and lime-washed inside and out, and was constructed with a veranda on both sides and separate entrances to all the rooms from the courtyard. The windows were glazed and the shutters had good iron fittings; all the rooms had floorboards. The kitchen was on the opposite side of the courtyard from the dwelling rooms; there were bread ovens and stoves for heating the rooms, as well as a cellar. All of these buildings, together with stables, were surrounded by a high wooden fence.³⁰ Heinrich Vossler however provides a graphic and less attractive description of the wooden houses in Tchernikov, which were:

without privies, the yard as a whole serving this purpose. This does not make it more filthy than it would otherwise be because of the pigs that run about in it and eat the excrement.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 165.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ TsDIAK F 1046–1–4, “Wizytacja kościoła Parochialnego Berdyczowskiego” p. 5: “Stan ekonomiczny Probostwa Berdycze.”

Indeed, so greedy are they for this fare that in order to obey the call of nature in peace you need a stout stick to ward them off.³¹

The St. Barbara's inventory passes over sanitary arrangements.

Berdyczów offered the young Beniowski a cosmopolitan environment and glimpses of a wider world, for apart from Poles and Jews, there were Swiss, Frenchmen, Germans and Russians living in the town, most of them involved in trade (Jełowicki: "sucking Polish pockets"³²). Volhynian towns also attracted a variety of Western Europeans seeking employment as private teachers of languages, music or drawing, and in other professional capacities.³³ There was a fairly large Polish middle-class community, including doctors and retired army officers, with whom these incomers mixed socially. Aleksander Kozieradzki, a decade younger than Beniowski, wrote of the formative impact on his teenage self of the presence of regiments of soldiers during his schooldays at Łuck in Volhynia, which "worked on my imagination, showed that there ... must be a wider world than Łuck."³⁴ Beniowski's childhood was set in much more turbulent military times, and although the campaigns of 1812 passed Berdyczów by, his imagination must have been similarly fired by rumours of the war and its possible consequences.³⁵

Beniowski had plenty of opportunities as a child to observe the Polish marcher gentry, although he would have observed them from afar, for Bobrowski tells us explicitly that even in the 1830s:

teachers, doctors, apothecaries, artists, crown officials and merchants remained outwith the circle of society. Neither group ... felt any need to approach one another. ... Generals and colonels of the army, if they themselves sought out contacts, were admitted into society.³⁶

Even so, he would have known of the exploits of the wealthy landowners from near Berdyczów, where many of the Polish gentry were still following the wild old ways of the 18th century. Perhaps none were as extravagant as the legendary borderlands swashbuckler, Mikołaj Bazyli Potocki,³⁷ but the landowners remained a law unto themselves. Henrieta Błędowska recounts a fatal accident

³¹ H. A. Vossler, *With Napoleon*, op. cit., p. 147.

³² Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia*, op. cit., p. 165.

³³ In Krzemieniec, there were Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, and an Englishman ("MacDonald"), see: Aleksander Kozieradzki, ed. Stefan Kawyn, *Wspomnienia 1820–1831*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1962, pp. 174–175. See also: Henrieta Błędowska, *Pamiętka z przeszłości*, op. cit., p. 242; Tadeusz Bobrowski, ed. Stefan Kieniewicz, *Pamiętnik mojego życia*, vol. I, "O sprawach i ludziach mojego czasu," Warszawa, 1979, p. 479.

³⁴ Aleksander Kozieradzki, *Wspomnienia*, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁵ See, e.g. François Houdecek, "Le gouvernement de Louis XVIII et le retour des prisonniers de guerre français en Russie 1814–1816," *Napoleonica. La Revue*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 21.

³⁶ See: Tadeusz Bobrowski, *Pamiętnik mojego życia*, op. cit., p. 174.

³⁷ On Potocki (1712–1782), see: *ibid.*, p. 238.

when her brother-in-law's English butler accidentally shot a friend of the family, but no fuss was made and the accident was shrugged off.³⁸ Armed forays and raids were commonplace.³⁹ The early 19th century also saw wild recklessness among the gentry's gilded youth, and in Bobrowski's view, the nearer they lived to Berdyczów, the wilder they became.⁴⁰ There were black sheep in the branch of the Radziwiłł family that owned Berdyczów, including Mikołaj Radziwiłł (1791–1853), whose estate was finally placed in administration and whose mistress, "the Berdyczów *bourgeoise* Jewka," accompanied him to church "dressed in velvets and mink," before he finally married the ex-washerwoman widow of a medical practitioner, "a boor with no learning," who had left a fortune of a million Roubles.⁴¹ Social barriers could fall if the price was right.

Above all, the schoolboy Beniowski would have been able to observe the local gentry at the famous Berdyczów fairs, of which four each year were grand occasions lasting for four weeks.⁴² Jełowicki claimed that to get a real picture of the "Ukrainian" gentry (read: Polish gentry from the Ukraine), you had to see them in Berdyczów at a big fair, preferably, the St. Onuphrius fair in June. There were "feasts of display, music and card sharpening," and fantastic rumours spreading like wildfire that "amuse the gentry and frighten the Muscovites and Jews." In the broad meadows down by the river, there were "more than a hundred thousand head of cattle," thousands of sheep and pigs, with the gentry making deals, and eating and drinking to seal the pact, while, says Jełowicki, the Jews were "everywhere acting as agents, swindling and jeering."⁴³ Horses played an important part in all accounts of the town and its fairs. The *Pochwalne* fair in March was mainly for stallions; the autumn Cosmas and Damian fair was for carriage and saddle horses. Jełowicki tells us of races that took place in the afternoons during the fairs, when "everything that draws breath in Berdyczów" rode out to the Machnów town gate. Carriages "full of beautiful women, dressed up in flowers and feathers, in pearls and diamonds," stood several rows deep along the road, with young men on horseback wheeling amongst them:

When everyone is finally in place, and the sun has lost a little of its strength, then the Tartar *mirzas* race against the Polish gentry for nearly a mile, from the woods to the town, on the flat with a slight uphill finish. As soon as they come into sight, at once a murmur rises among the spectators, and then everything goes quiet. Everyone's heart is beating like

³⁸ Henrieta Błędowska, *Pamiętka z przeszłości*, op. cit., p. 75.

³⁹ Tadeusz Bobrowski, *Pamiętnik mojego życia*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 63–64.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 95.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, pp. 280 ff.

⁴² ed. Filip Sulimierski, Bronisław Chlebowski, Władysław Walewski, *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. I, Warszawa, 1880, p. 136. The *Onufrej* fair was the most important one, and started on 12 June; *Preczyste* began on 15 August, *Kosmy i Damiana* on 1 November, and *Pochwalne* on 24 March. In all, the town held ten fairs a year.

⁴³ Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia*, op. cit., p. 169.

a hammer, for big bets have been placed ... everyone is pleased if the Poles win, and they sometimes do.⁴⁴

Possibly, years later, Beniowski shared memories of these races with his steeplechasing Irish business partner, John Greene. Jełowicki tells us that the town's great church indulgence fairs had not lost their ecclesiastical significance and were as famed as those of Częstochowa, with father confessors who were "circumspect and strict."⁴⁵ But for schoolboys, the fun of the fair would have lain elsewhere, and even the strictest Discalced Carmelite would have failed to keep them away from the secular attractions.

The Discalced Carmelites exerted a major influence over the boys of Berdyczów for they ran the school that Beniowski attended in the vast fortified, walled monastery at the top of the Berdyczów escarpment, founded in the mid-17th century by Janusz Tyszkiewicz, the voivode of Kiev.⁴⁶ Beniowski tells us that his father had taken care of his initial education, and had taught him at a very young age something about mnemonics, which he claims enabled him to advance rapidly in his schoolwork:

In my early infancy my father, a physician and an extraordinary linguist, initiated me in the mysteries of several mnemonic contrivances; in the study of languages I invariably employed the association of ideas.⁴⁷

Beniowski's father thus gave him a good grounding for academic progress, for in the first decades of the 19th century, the study of foreign languages was everywhere prized. Tadeusz Bobrowski tells us that, "the more languages someone could speak, the more educated he was thought, and thought himself."⁴⁸

Schooling in Berdyczów in Beniowski's childhood was under the supervision of the University of Wilno and of the Wilno Chief Education Officer, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. Adam Czartoryski's name, which will echo through the rest of Beniowski's life story, now crosses his near horizon for the first time. Czartoryski worked on the basis of the foundations laid in 1773 by Poland's Enlightenment-inspired ministry of education, the *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej* [National Education Commission]. Within this system, there

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 168–170.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴⁶ Until the partitions, the Carmelites had a major library and publishing house. Beniowski's schooling is recorded in the registers of the University of Wilno: VUB/F2/KC78 "Księga wpisowa uczniów Uniwersytetu Imperatorskiego Wileńskiego w roku 1819–1820," p. 77, register number 305. On the Berdyczów Carmelites, see: Antoni Urbański, *Podzwonne na zgłiszczach Litwy i Rusi*, Warszawa, 1928, p. 76.

⁴⁷ Bartłomiej Beniowski, *A Handbook of Phrenotypics for Teachers and Students by Major Beniowski, the Discoverer of these principles of the art of memory*, Part I. "Development of the Principle of Familiarity," London, 1842, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Tadeusz Bobrowski, *Pamiętnik mojego życia*, op. cit., p. 144.

were three types of school in the “lost provinces”: parish elementary schools; district secondary schools; and *gymnasias*, which were planned as major secondary schools in *guberniya* capitals. Berdyczów did not have one of the great Volhynian schools like the famous *Gymnasium* in Krzemieniec, where the pupils wore supercilious expressions and fashionable clothing,⁴⁹ but the parish school run by the Discalced Carmelites became in 1811 a district school under this system.⁵⁰ Beniowski may therefore have been enrolled in the parish school as a small boy and stayed on for secondary education when it became a district school. Although Aleksander Jełowicki expressed surprise that “in Berdyczów, a town so central among our voivodeships, so populous ... there is only a miserable district school,”⁵¹ the Berdyczów Carmelite school was attended by sons of the local gentry, with occasionally scions of great aristocratic families, as well as the sons of the local bourgeoisie.⁵² An inspection of the school in June 1814 found there were 183 enrolled pupils, the vast majority of whom – 169 – were classified as gentry, a category in which Beniowski would have been counted. Of the rest, 10 boys were from the merchant class; 2 from the military class; and 2 were Jews. Only five of these boys were boarders.⁵³

During Beniowski’s time in Berdyczów, the school year began on 1 September and ended on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, 29 June, with Christmas and Easter holidays of about two weeks. During term time, when the school bell rang at 7 o’clock in the morning, the boys would have marched in procession to the church to attend mass. After a break for breakfast, they would have started lessons at 8 o’clock and continued, with a dinner break at perhaps half past eleven, until 4 o’clock in the afternoon. There may also have been evening lessons, and prep had to be done at home, but usually two afternoons a week were given for recreation. Corporal punishment was only for the younger boys. For the older classes, punishments included reprimands and detention; if a pupil crossed the line very far, “the most severe punishment was to kneel under

⁴⁹ Aleksander Kozieradzki, *Wspomnienia*, op. cit., p. 126.

⁵⁰ On the system, see: Michał Ambros, “Zarys statystyczny szkół wydziału Wileńskiego,” *Ateneum Wileńskie* XIV, fasc. 1, Wilno, 1939, pp. 149 ff.; Daniel Beauvois, *Wilno*, op. cit., pp. 360 ff. The famous institution in Krzemieniec was called a *Gimnazjum* from 1805–1819 and a *liceum* from 1819–1831: *ibid.*, pp. 436, 472.

⁵¹ Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia*, op. cit., p. 168.

⁵² Tadeusz Bobrowski names (*Pamiętnik mojego życia*, op. cit., p. 136) Julian Grudziński, a former gentry magistrate in the Kiev court; and (pp. 25–26) Adolf Pilichowski. The controversial novelist Henryk Rzewuski (1791–1866) also attended the school (*Słownik Geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, op. cit., p. 137).

⁵³ BJ ms. 6341 IV: “Materiały dotyczące historii szkół, znajdujących się na terenach podległych Wydziałowi Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego, zebrane przez Jana Marka Giżyckiego 1787–1833 i 1886,” K. 203, p. 21, 13.VIII.1814: “Działo się w Berdyczowie Roku 1814 Dnia 27 Czerwca, Wizyta Szkoły Berdyczowskiej.” The small number of boys of Jewish faith in Volhynian schools is discussed e.g. by Michał Ambros, “Zarys statystyczny,” op. cit., p. 166.