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**THE POLISH COMMONWEALTH OF THE DAY
OF STANISLAS AUGUSTUS
IN SELECTED WESTERN WORKS ON RUSSIA**

From at least the second half of the 1870s, when the relating to the reign of Catherine II volumes of Sergei Soloviev's work *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen* were published,¹ it was known how much information on the history of Poland under Stanislas Augustus could be found in works on the history of Russia. If the matter concerns contemporary western historiography it is worth remembering this all the more so, as books relating to the history of the Polish Commonwealth are incomparably less numerous and enjoy there the interest of a much narrower group of readers. *Russica* equally deserves detailed attention because amongst English, French, American or German historians involved in the history of Russia there dominant sympathizers of the eastern power, who are often inclined to confidently accept the theses of Russian historiography, which they do not, if only due to linguistic considerations, compare with the results of the research of Polish historians.

I have chosen three works by authors of renowned recognition, devoted either exclusively or to a large degree to the history of Russia during the times of Catherine II. This refers to the works of Isabel de Madariaga, Hamish M. Scott and Hélène Carrère d'Encausse.

¹ Most of the volumes relating to the Catherine II times were published by Academic International Press, see Sergei M. Soloviev, *History of Russia from Earliest Times*, vol. 42: *A New Empress: Peter III and Catherine II, 1761–1762* (1990); vol. 43: *Catherine the Great in Power: Domestic and Foreign Affairs, 1763–1764* (1998); vol. 45: *The Rule of Catherine the Great, the Legislative Commission (1767–1768) and Foreign Affairs (1766–1768)* (1986); vol. 46: *The Rule of Catherine the Great, Turkey and Poland, 1768–1770* (1994); vol. 47: *The Rule of Catherine the Great: War with Turkey, Polish Partition, 1771–1772* (2003); vol. 48: *The Reign of Catherine the Great, 1772–1774: War, Diplomacy, and Domestic Affairs* (1991).

The work by de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, published for the first time in 1981 and written with an obvious admiration for the title heroine has brought about, as another English researcher, Simon Dixon, has remarked, ‘her fundamental rehabilitation of Catherine’.² The fundamental source for the said compendium of knowledge on the times of Catherine II has been first and foremost source publications, at the head of which is SIRIO,³ but the author is also an authority on English archives of the epoch of Catherine II (in particular those relating to the period of ‘armed neutrality’) and of course many other source publications. The de Madariaga’s collection of studies published a dozen or so years ago remind us that her research interests with regard to Russia had earlier gone beyond the period of Catherine II and had covered the entire eighteenth century.⁴ We are therefore dealing with a prominent authority on eighteenth-century Russia, whose work of the Empress Catherine has become a world classic.

The second work which I would like to concentrate on with regard to the political events in Poland under Stanislas Augustus is the book by Hamish M. Scott on the subject of the ‘coming into existence’ of the great power status of Prussia, Austria and Russia in the period between the Seven Years War and the First Partition of Poland and the concurrent First Russo-Turkish War.⁵ This work brings about an important synthesis of the international political relations in the period which it covers. And in this case the basic sources are published sources although in Scott – in a similar way to de Madariaga – certain questions are explained on the basis of archives, first and foremost British. However, unlike his predecessor Scott does not know any Russian. This is not to be without significance for his presentation.

And finally the book on Catherine II from the pen of Hélène Carrère d’Encausse.⁶ Known as a historian of twentieth-century

² Simon M. Dixon, *Catherine the Great* (Harlow and New York, 2001), 8.

³ This abbreviation represents the *Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva*, published from 1867 to 1916 and numbering in total 148 volumes.

⁴ Isabel de Madariaga, *Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Collected Essays* (London and New York, 1998).

⁵ Hamish M. Scott, *The Emergence of the Eastern Powers, 1756–1775* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁶ Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Catherine II: un âge d’or pour la Russie* (Paris, 2002).

Russian history, the author was encouraged to venture into the epoch of Catherine II by the Russian historian of the period, while being at the same time a politician of the Russian foreign ministry, Petr Stegniĭ.⁷ Thanks is given in the text for the inspiration and help in searching Russian archives.

What are the events from Polish history that fall into the field of vision of these western historians? First and foremost it is the last free election, and therefore the years 1763–4. Later Poland appears against the backdrop of Nikita Ivanovich Panin's 'northern system' as well as in relation to the dissident question. Separate interest is aroused by the First Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74 and the First Partition, subsequently the Four-Year *Sejm* and the Second Partition against the background of the French Revolution.

The authors, in writing about the times of Catherine II and discussing Polish affairs, forget about the first half of the eighteenth century. They do not take into consideration the deep dependence of the Polish Commonwealth on Russia already in the times of Peter I, do not remember about the Russian-Prussian treaties of alliance, which from 1720 renewed at every change of ruler, had always contained a secret clause about the joint maintaining in Poland of the principles of a political system guaranteeing the weakness of the state (free election, weak royal authority, *liberum veto*, not allowing an increase in the numerical strength of the army). What is of even more importance is that significant facts remain unknown to the authors, those which preceded the election of Stanislas Augustus. Here, first and foremost, a mention must be made of the fate of the reforms at the Convocational *Sejm* (assembled before the election of the king) of May – June 1764 when the Czartoryski family tried to abolish the *liberum veto* and came up against a resolute Russian ban supported by the threat to place against them the self same armies that had entered the Republic to support the election of Stanislas Poniatowski. Admittedly – besides Polish historians – this had been already written about by the German historian Richard Roepell, preceding Szymon Askenazy,⁸ but as one

⁷ His most important work is: *Razdely Pol'shi i diplomatiya Ekateriny II, 1772, 1793, 1795* (Moscow, 2002).

⁸ Richard Roepell, *Das Interregnum. Wahl und Krönung von Stanislaw August Poniatowski* (Posen, 1892); Simon Askenazy, *Die letzte polnische Königswahl: Inaugural-Dissertation* (Göttingen, 1894).

can see the matter is neither known nor remembered, although both de Madariaga and Scott note Askenazy in their bibliographies. Yet this is no trifling matter for it concerns the actual position of Russia in relation to Polish reforms. Despite the fact that de Madariaga and Carrère d'Encausse cite the Russian language volumes of SIRIO which refer to this period (the matter concerning volume 51), they are not acquainted with the instructions of Catherine II and Panin contained therein to the Russian diplomats of the interregnum period of the Commonwealth – Hermann Keyserlingk and Nikolaï Repnin. And in these instructions as the fundamental demand it was clearly and unequivocally stated that no interference in the *liberum veto* should occur even to the smallest degree. Our authors equally do not notice the demand of 1763 that St Petersburg should obtain the status of a guarantor of the Polish political system which was to mean that Russia obtained the formal right to decide about the shape and range of Polish political legislation.

As oppose to the unknown contents of St Petersburg's Russian-language instructions from volume 51 of SIRIO, volume 22 of the same publication, published in French, is widely cited.⁹ The volume contains the reports of the Prussian envoy in St Petersburg, Victor Solms (as we know from another source abridged in a biased way¹⁰) as well as a part of the instructions to him. In it there are, among other things, the conversations of the head of Russian foreign policy, Nikita Ivanovich Panin, with Solms, conducted straight after the election of Stanislas Augustus, in the September, October and November of 1764. These discussions concerned the idea of pulling Poland into alliance with Russia, motivated by the intention to allow the Commonwealth, in the event of war with Turkey, to replace for Petersburg, at least to a certain degree, the lost ally that was Austria. On the subject of ideas of alliance with Poland Panin presented introductory remarks to Solms, allegedly made without Catherine II's knowledge. Passing over the actual intentions of Russia (as recently the Moscow researcher, Boris Nosov, has raised, the 'alliance' in fact was to constitute only

⁹ Volume 22 of SIRIO was published in St Petersburg in 1878, volume 51 in 1886.

¹⁰ The scope and direction of these tendencies I have indicated in the article: 'Rzeczpospolita między Prusami a Rosją w świetle polsko-pruskiego sporu o cło generalne w 1765 r.', pt 2, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cxv, 3 (2008), 31–3.

a means for the unconditional forcing of all the Russian demands in relation to the Commonwealth, including the guarantee of political system and the dissident question¹¹) these talks were never to enter into a phase other than that of mere ruminations, they equally did not envisage the lifting of *liberum veto*; talk was simply about reforms which would somewhat improve the internal functioning of the Polish state though not enhancing it in any significant way

il [Panin] pense qu'en souffrant qu'on y [into Poland] introduise plus d'ordre dans le maniemment de la justice et dans le règlement de leur commerce ou de leur police intérieure, on atteindrait ce but [Poland's ability to support Russia against Turkey] sans avoir à craindre que cette réforme la redrait un État dont la puissance pourrait être à craindre pour les voisins.¹²

Frederick II reacted to these ideas in a decisively hostile way, Catherine II also rejected them, forbidding any reforms whatsoever in her instructions to Stanislas Augustus' Coronation *Sejm*.¹³ This instruction was from the November of 1764 and therefore prior to the period of the imperial outrage at the Commonwealth for ignoring her demands on the dissident question by the Coronation *Sejm* which convened in December 1764.

And yet the above mentioned transcripts of Panin's talks with Solms are presented by the authors in question in their analyzed works as proof that Panin and Catherine were inclined to allow reforms in Poland, including the abolishing of *liberum veto*. They were to be torpedoed by the uncompromising attitude of Frederick II. In this way, by passing over important Russian-language publications and accepting without due source criticism loosely connected considerations

¹¹ Boris V. Nosov, *Ustanovlenie rossijskogo gospodstva v Rechpospolitoi* (Moscow, 2004), 241–64. Similar conclusions come from Jerzy Michalski's studies ('Problematyka aliansu polsko-rosyjskiego w czasach Stanisława Augusta. Lata 1764–1766', *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxxv, 4 [1984], 695–721) as well as Zofia Zielińska's ('Problema rusko-polskiego sojuza w pervye gody pravleniya korolya Stanislava Avgusta', in Boris V. Nosov [ed.], *Polsha i Evropa w XVIII veke. Mezhdunarodnye i vnutrennye faktory razdelov Rechi Pospolitoi* [Moscow, 1999], 102–23).

¹² Victor Solms to Frederick II, 7 (18) Sept. 1764, SIRIO, 22, p. 317.

¹³ Rescript for Reprin of 11 (22) Nov. 1764, SIRIO, 57 (St Petersburg, 1887), 84–6; Frederick II to Solms, 6 Oct. 1764, *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*, vol. 24 (October 1764 – December 1765), ed. Kurt Treusch von Buttlar and Gustav Berthold Volz (Berlin, 1897), 4–5.

as facts, there has been created a thesis on fundamentally different Russian and Prussian relations to Polish reform than those reflecting the realities of the time. These fantasies are helped by the scant memory of earlier Russian-Prussian agreements, out of which one may see the constant identical interests of Berlin and St Petersburg in maintaining the Commonwealth's weakness.

This distortion in perspective is enhanced by undervaluing the dominant position enjoyed by Russia in central and eastern Europe in the period prior to Catherine's reign. In relation to the Russian military presence in the Commonwealth during the period of the Seven Years War Scott writes, among other things:

The Seven Years War had made clear the extent to which Poland was at the mercy of her neighbours. The fighting had also seen an intensification of St Petersburg's control and marked the origins of an enduring Russian military presence on Polish soil, though this would only become evident in retrospect.¹⁴

These conclusions seem to neglect, for instance, the fact that the Russian regular army was stationed in Poland from 1704 to 1719 with a short interlude for the campaign of 1708–9 ending with the Battle of Poltava; that from 1733–5 they fought a war with the levy in mass, which was not able to defend Stanislas Leszczyński, and imposed Augustus III on the Commonwealth, and then often marched through the gentry state either to the Turkish front, or the western one (1738–9, 1748–9).

This same author also noticeably exaggerates the position of Prussia in relation to Russia for the years 1763–4, establishing, among other things, that 'Prussian support had contributed to ... the restoration of Ernst Biron ... and the reimposition of the Russian protectorate'¹⁵ (referring to Kurland) and emphasizing that after the concluding of the alliance 'it would be several years before the high cost of Russia's triumph, the acceptance of the Prussian King's almost equal influence in Poland would become evident'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Scott, *The Emergence*, 105. In relation to the earlier period Scott mentions only that the Russian-Prussian treaty of alliance of 1764 'was a return to the policy pursued during Peter I's final years, that of alliance with Prussia and dominance over Poland' (p. 122).

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 107.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 116.

Evidence of how unequal the position of both partners was is borne out by the *casus foederis* entry in the alliance of the 11th of April 1764. Scott claims in connection with this:

In the case of an Ottoman offensive against Russia, or an invasion of Frederic's Rhineland territories, such aid could be restricted to a subsidy, a provision which clearly favoured Prussia.¹⁷

While the real significance of this clause was that for the first time in the treaties concluded by Russia and Prussia since 1720 Berlin was obliged to support Russia in any possible war with Turkey. In none of the earlier alliances had *casus foederis* covered an eastern war.¹⁸ The entry giving Berlin the possibility for military aid to be substituted by monetary support, although important for Berlin, was secondary in comparison with the fact that the Hohenzollern monarch was obliged to support Russia in a most real eastern war, in contrast to Catherine II's exotic obligation to defend Prussia's Rhine possessions. Exotic, considering the weakness of France and Austria after the Seven Years War. The inclusion of the Turkish clause in 1764 proved Russia's dominance and was the heavy price that Prussia had to pay for the alliance.

Here the matter does not only concern erudite transgressions. The erroneous perspective of the relations between Russia and Prussia, that is the underestimation of St Petersburg's dominance over Berlin, masks an important fact that Poland's fate was decided first and foremost by Russia, not being forced to compromise to the wishes of its Prussian ally if agreement was not reached. And not willing to listen to Prussian advice that *liberum veto*, free election, weak royal authority and the mere skeleton of an army be maintained, thus preventing reforms. We shall repeat once again that such a point was to be found in all the above mentioned alliance treaties concluded

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 115.

¹⁸ Cf. Fiodor F. Martens (ed.), *Sobranie traktatov i konventsii zakluchennykh Rossiyeu s inostrannymi derzhavami*, v: *Traktaty s Germanieyu 1656–1762* (St Petersburg, 1880), 239 (year 1726), 262 (1729), 279 (1730), 320 and 331 (1740 – here formally is excluded *casus foederis* for the Russian-Turkish wars, the Russian-Persian wars as well as the Prussian lands lying to the west of Weser), 341 and 351 (1743 – formal exclusion of *casus foederis* from the Russian-Turkish and Russian-Persian wars).

by St Petersburg with Prussia (and was also imposed by Russia in her alliances with Sweden and Austria¹⁹). This was also reiterated in all instructions to Russian envoys in Poland for the interregnum period (the most important of these was the ‘Obshchee nastavlenie’ of 6 [17] Nov. 1763²⁰) and, of course, also after this. The underestimation of Russia’s strength and its hostility towards any projects which aimed to modernize the gentry state also represents an underestimation of St Petersburg’s responsibility for the tragic nature of Poland’s fate during the era of the partitions.

Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, the author of the French biography of Catherine II, has a hazy idea about Polish-Russian relations in the first half of the eighteenth century, if she claims that, for example, during the short reign of Peter II (d. 1730) there took place

fait notable ... la Russie et la Prusse signèrent alors un traité envisageant la succession d’Auguste II en Pologne. L’idée d’un démembrement de ce pays, de son *partage*, fut pour la première fois agitée.²¹

That is firstly that the Russian-Prussian alliance treaty of the 9th (20th) of September 1729, for this is the only one under Peter II’s rule to be taken into consideration, in no way concerned partition. Secondly, the matter of partitioning Poland was already raised in Russian-Prussian relations in the years 1709–11; Frederick I had heard from Peter the Great then the famous ‘es sei impraktikabel’, which was expression of the conviction that Russia was able to maintain the whole of Poland under its exclusive hegemony. Thirdly, the treaty of 1729 did not constitute the first, but the third in turn of this type of treaty – following on from the treaties of 1720 and 1726. Russian

¹⁹ Michail A. Polievktov, *Baltiiskii vopros v russkoj politike posle nishtadskogo mira* (St Petersburg, 1907), 164; Władysław Konopczyński, *Polska a Szwecja od pokoju oliwskiego do upadku Rzeczypospolitej 1660–1795* (Warsaw, 1924), 99; Walter Leitsch, ‘Der Wandel der österreichischen Russlandpolitik in den Jahren 1724–1726’, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, NF, vi (1958), 33, 53, 79, 83–8 (characteristic that the watch over maintaining Polish ‘freedoms’ did not arouse the slightest opposition in Austria in the course of negotiations over Russian alliance); Martens (ed.), *Sobranie traktatov*, i (St Petersburg, 1874), 28–32.

²⁰ SIRIO, 51, pp. 92–101; in French translation: d’Angeberg [Leonard Chodźko] (ed.), *Recueil des traités, conventions et actes diplomatiques concernant la Pologne 1762–1862* (Paris, 1862), 3–11.

²¹ Carrère d’Encausse, *Catherine II*, 24.

policy was based at the time on two fundamental alliances with the two rivalling German states of Austria (alliance from 1726) and Prussia – simultaneous alliances lasted equally after the Prussian attack on Silesia (1740) when the rivalry between Austria and Prussia had grown into deadly hostility. Regardless of the aversion to the power status obtained by Prussia following the taking of Silesia, Elizabeth Petrovna, in forging an alliance with Prussia on the 16th (27th) of March 1743 and subsequently entering into the Austrian-Prussian peace treaty of 1742 (she did so on 12 [23] Nov. 1743, recognizing with it Prussian authority in Silesia),²² declared herself in this way for recognition of Prussia's power status and for balance between Prussia and Austria. From 1740 St Petersburg also refused support for Vienna against Berlin, despite the obvious *casus foederis*. A change in the policy of the Empress Elizabeth was to occur only after the end of the Second Silesian War and it resulted in Russia's involvement in the Seven Years War. This war was to teach Frederick to respect Russia for the rest of his life.

In writing about Panin's 'northern system', Scott and other authors treat it with total seriousness, although Scott knows the relevant fragment of the *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, from the pen of Michael G. Müller, showing how incomplete this 'system' was; *de facto* limiting itself to a community of Russian-Prussian interests in relation to Poland as well as to joint Russian-English cooperation in relation to Sweden, where there was a need to weaken French influences.²³ *Nota bene* the source documented text by the Dane Kurt Rahbek-Schmidt, proving that the phrase 'northern system' was a general term for northern states, in no way determining the existence of any 'system', has not broken through into the historiography.²⁴ Panin, according to Scott,

shared Catherine II's view that Russia's existing territory was sufficiently extensive, especially in relation to its thinly scattered population, and that no further annexations were desirable, at least for the moment.²⁵

²² Martens (ed.), *Sobranie traktatov*, v, 332 ff., 353 ff.

²³ Michael G. Müller, 'Nordisches System – Teilungen Polens – Griechisches Projekt. Russische Aussenpolitik 1762–1796', in Klaus Zernack (ed.), *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, ii, 2 (Stuttgart, 2001), 573–9.

²⁴ Kurt Rahbek Schmidt, 'Wie ist Panins Plan zu einem Nordischen System entstanden?', *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, i, 3 (1957), 406–22.

²⁵ Scott, *The Emergence*, 122.

How does the author reconcile these statements (duplicating Russian propaganda, including Panin's circular for Russian diplomats of the 10 [21] of Nov. 1763²⁶) with the plan, often referred to in English-language works (and recalled by Scott in relation to the First Partition), of General Zakhar Chernyshev of the autumn of 1763 containing the proposal for the annexation of a large part of Poland, exactly the same territory which Russia was to take in the First Partition? As is known Catherine II considered Chernyshev's proposition to be most attractive, although difficult to realize, surely because she did not desire to share Poland with Prussia and Austria and did not believe in the possibility of unilateral annexation.

We shall return, however, to the 'northern system'.

Poland had a distinct role in Catherine II's wider policies, as a passive member of the Northern System and, perhaps, a useful ally against the Ottoman empire in any future war – establishes Scott (he had written this already in articles on which de Madariaga had also based herself in relation to Russia's foreign policy). The Empress and Panin were therefore willing to see an increase in the size of the Polish army ... together with a strengthening of the monarchy and even the limitation or actual removal of the veto, which was proposed at this time. This was resolutely and successfully opposed by Frederick the Great, who had secured a say in the country's future in the 1764 treaty with Russia and intended that Poland be kept weak and divided, in order to facilitate his own ambitions.²⁷

The only footnote to this fragment (remaining in glaring breach of the facts and proving a misunderstanding of the foundations of Russian policy in relation to Poland) relates to the reports of the Prussian envoy in St Petersburg, Victor Solms, that is to his casual conversations with Panin. And yet even in these conversations there was never muted consent for the removal of *liberum veto*.

The adoption by Scott of the view that Russia at any time would have allowed for the reforms cited by him and that this was overturned by Prussian resistance, allows one to burden the latter with the greatest responsibility for the tragic partition of the Commonwealth and to treat St Petersburg's stance on the matter more leniently.

²⁶ SIRIO, 51, pp. 101–3, text in Russian, so probably unknown to Scott.

²⁷ Scott, *The Emergence*, 175–6.

A similar mistake is committed by Carrère d'Encausse,²⁸ despite the fact that she knows Russian and has cited the relevant volumes of SIRIO in her bibliography. Yet in this instance recourse is made not to them but follows the lead of the Russian historian Stegnii who also ignores the instructions in SIRIO which unequivocally forbid the breaking of *liberum veto* to any degree whatsoever.

De Madariaga's stance on these questions is, however, more original. She, too, knows admittedly nothing about the Russian dogma of the inviolability of *liberum veto*, of the pursuit, already in 1763, of the guarantee of the political system (all western historians only link this with the Radom Confederacy and the Replin *Sejm* of 1767–8), yet creates a construction not reflecting reality (first and foremost – as I have indicated above – the chronology of events), linking agreement for reform with the dissident question. Already in 1764 Russia makes, as de Madariaga recalls, a demand for tolerance towards dissidents, who were being terribly oppressed by Catholic zealots, while Catherine II was prepared – in exchange for this – to allow for reforms.²⁹ As Poles had not carried out the dissident matter as the empress had intended, there came the ban from St Petersburg: no reforms whatsoever. It is worth adding, by the way, the fact, one so obvious for Polish historians, that Russia was not pursuing tolerance but for an equality of rights of non-Catholics with Catholics, something unthinkable for the mentality of the peoples of the eighteenth century, is something that does not find its way into the works of the prominent researchers herein referred to. The whole anti-Catholic propaganda conducted by Voltaire and Grimm, who were paid for the purpose, and voluntarily by Helvétius as well, is to this day a compulsory buzzword of this historiography, which emphasizes that toleration even if it was not the only aim of Russia within the dissident question, was undoubtedly one of the aims. And this already justified all the rest. Only de Madariaga has perceived Replin's warning, known from SIRIO (and also Soloviev), sent from Warsaw to St Petersburg, that neither the king nor the Czartoryskis even though possessing a sizeable party

²⁸ Carrère d'Encausse, *Catherine II*, 134, 147 ('Et elle [Catherine II] se fit l'avocat de quelques réformes, certes limitées, mais souhaitées par son candidat: avant tout, la suppression du *liberum veto*. Avant même l'élection, une connivence se faisait ainsi jour entre le futur roi et ses protecteurs, Catherine et Panine', p. 147).

²⁹ Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven, 1981), 197–8.

would be able, even if they wanted to, to impose on society agreement for the Russian pro-dissident demands, even though they were well aware what Poland was threatened with by not fulfilling the imperial will. Aware of the fact that the stubbornness with which Catherine II demanded the complete and instant solution of the dissident question led to an extraordinary escalation of the situation, de Madiariaga considers that ‘there was indeed in Catherine’s whole attitude to the problem of the dissidents an insensitiveness which goes beyond mere diplomatic arrogance or clumsiness’, but justifies the said explaining that

the Catholic fanaticism of the Polish noble backwoodsman was unintelligible to the daughter of the Enlightenment, who had incidentally ... showed incomprehension of Orthodox fanaticism.³⁰

At the same time Catherine’s stance in relation to the dissident question does not stop our authors from repeating many times that Catherine was an opponent of violent and forceful solutions and from praising her for her moderation in pursuing political aims. Simon Dixon only points to the severity in the punishment of Pugachev and the death sentence handed out to Mirovich as being somewhat inconsistent with this view.³¹ We shall recall that in this latter case the matter concerned the removal of an inconvenient witness of the murder in 1764 of Ivan VI. And one more trifle in this matter: in de Madariaga’s article, published again in 1998 on the subject of Catherine II’s relation to the philosophers, she justifies her heroine – that despite a tendency to act in a moderate fashion she tolerated for so long the use of torture in her country, particularly in religious matters, and did not do much of a practical nature about the question of religious tolerance:

She could not, however, embark immediately on her accession on a policy of religious toleration. Her position in her early days was too insecure, she needed the support of the Church, she had put herself forward as the guardian of Orthodoxy.³²

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 199 f.

³¹ Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, 146.

³² Isabel de Madariaga, ‘Catherine II and the “philosophes”’, in *eadem*, *Politics and Culture*, 220.

De Madariaga does not here perceive that the alleged impossibility of jeopardizing Orthodoxy did not hinder the empress in issuing the *ukase* on toleration in 1763 determining the secularisation of Church property; in matters that were favourable for her the new ruler was prepared to risk the disfavour of Orthodoxy.

Carrère d'Encausse does not become involved in justifying the empress for the manner she played out the dissident question, but as evidence of Catherine's tolerance she broaches (besides praise for the secularisation of Church property) the relations of the Russian ruler to the Jesuits whom she maintained in White Rus', as well as the support for archbishop Siestrzeńcewicz against the Holy See. Is she counting on the readers not knowing not only the work of Maciej Loret *Kościół katolicki a Katarzyna II* (1910), but also that of Paul Pierling *La Russie et le Saint Siège* (1896), in which the role of the scandalous sycophant that Siestrzeńcewicz was, is clearly visible? Only Dixon, in writing about Catherine II's tolerance (the *ukase* on toleration of 1763 and the declarations in the 'Instruction' of 1767, Catherine II's propaganda text after all, always serve as its evidence), has noted that the said tolerance was accompanied, however, by strict administrative state control over the Churches.³³ None of the works herein discussed involves itself either in the fate of the Uniate Church in the lands incorporated into Russia following the first partition, or the exertions made for the restitution of Orthodoxy in Poland.

If the matter concerns the First Partition then we shall recall the famous conversation between Prince Henry of Prussia, Catherine II and Chernyshev of the 8th of January 1771 when discussion was stimulated by the news that Austria had recognized Spiš (Zips), taken in 1769, as its own permanent possession; the empress summed up the matter with the words: 'Mais pourquoi tout le monde ne prendrait-il pas aussi?', and General Zakhar Chernyshev added: 'Mais pourquoi ne pas s'emparer de l'évêché de Warmie? Car il faut, après tout, que chacun ait quelque chose'.³⁴ Solms' report and Prince Henry's letter to Frederick II of that day persuaded the Prussian monarch that this constituted agreement to partition and that he himself was to determine its dimensions in consultation with the empress. In relation to the first partition Scott (in whose book this section of

³³ Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, 118.

³⁴ Albert Sorel, *La question d'Orient au XVIIIe siècle*, 3rd edn (Paris, 1902), 134.

text gives the impression of being the most objective and brings to the historiography a new perception) emphasizes the Prussian initiative and the Austrian annexations and does not forget to mention the Russian annexing strivings in relation to Poland, observed by Prince Henry during his visit to St Petersburg at the turn of 1770 and 1771. Besides which he does not go further than the power game known from the times of Albert Sorel's *La question d'Orient* (1878) and Adolf Beer's *Die erste Teilung Polens* (1873), and therefore maintaining the thesis that the greatest cause of the partition was the conflict between the great powers, developing from those Russian territorial aspirations in the Balkans which Austria and Prussia did not want to accept. Prussia was determined to not allow the eastern (Turkish) conflict to die off without the acquisition of territory for herself. The proposal to satisfy these aspirations at the cost of Poland turned out to be acceptable to all. Scott in establishing this emphasizes that there is a need for a new work on the genesis of the first partition, a work which would incorporate all the factors and would enrich the existing archive material³⁵ by, first and foremost, the almost unknown Russian archives. Scott adds later a clear evaluation of the partition:

Though the eighteenth-century European states system enjoys a justified reputation for rapacity, it was the first occasion, upon which major states acting together had seized large areas of territory from a country they had not earlier defeated in war or with whom they did not have an established dispute. Nor were these substantial annexations justified by credible dynastic or legal claims. ... The first partition was purely a matter of cynical power politics, and exemplified the new dominance of the great powers over other states.³⁶

De Madariaga, who in writing about the year 1763 does not refer to Chernyshev's annexation plans by name, but perceives in them merely 'a plan for the modification of the Russo-Polish frontier in the strategic interests of Russia'³⁷ (in the self same way that Chernyshev himself justified it, without subjecting his declaration to historical criticism) forgets about Russia's appetite for annexation in her

³⁵ Scott, *The Emergence*, 211.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 216.

³⁷ De Madariaga, *Russia in the Age*, 189.

accounts of the origin of the partition. And clearly avoids an evaluation of the scope of Catherine II's responsibility for the partition:

There have been many attempts to assess the responsibilities for the first partition of Poland. ... We do not know what happened during the critical two months of December 1770 and January 1771.

And a little further on:

In effect Catherine found her freedom of action in Poland reduced, and her relations with Prussia bedevilled by Frederick's constant nagging. The territories Russia acquired could, in the long run, be assimilated. The manner of their acquisition, the obligation to share with two other predatory powers, permanently weakened Russia's western barrier.³⁸

This clear intention to unburden Russia of blame for the partition is all the more visible in another fragment devoted to the question, where talk is of the fact that no European power stood up in Poland's defence and came out against the partition, while

most of the *philosophes*, however, including Voltaire, approved, or did not disapprove, of the partition, largely because Poland represented in the age of the Enlightenment an even more fanatical Catholicism than that of Spain.³⁹

Dixon in the mentioned biography of Catherine II limits himself to repeating the old Russian historiographic thesis that

Partition was a mixed blessing for Russia, which had sacrificed indirect domination over the whole of Poland for direct control of only a part of it ... her stranglehold on Polish affairs was broken.⁴⁰

Besides, this biographer of Catherine II underlines several times that as a result of the partitions, though rather not earlier than after the second, there found themselves within Russia's borders a large Jewish population (there exist several newer works on this subject with John Klier's work at the head⁴¹). Against the background of what I have

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 235–6.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 231.

⁴⁰ Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, 3, 164.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 79; John D. Klier, *Russia Gathers her Jews: The Origins of the 'Jewish Question' in Russia 1772–1825* (DeKalb, Illinois, 1986).

said to date, Scott's position of unequivocally denouncing the First Partition and recognizing Russia's annexation aspirations as one of its causes appears to be relatively the most objective.

Carrère d'Encausse takes an extreme position. Not a word is mentioned about Russian aspirations to Moldavia and Wallachia, which gave rise to conflict between the powers, she does not connect partition with Russia's appetite for annexation known from Chernyshev's plan (although towards the end of the book she does recall the plan⁴²), she emphasizes, however, the Prussian initiatives and partition aspirations as well as Austrian annexation precedents in the form of occupying Spiš (1769) and the Nowy Targ district (1770), finally the threat that the portioning aspirations of the German powers constituted for Russia. The conspiracy played out by these potencies, visible in the meetings of Frederick II with Joseph II in Neisse (Nysa) and Nové Město (in Moravia), and finally Frederick II's threat that if the acquisitions in Poland did not appease Joseph II's conquering aspirations then Russia awaited war with Austria, allegedly persuaded Catherine II – against her intentions – to enter into the partition in June 1771. She did not want to but had to.⁴³ Exactly these self same arguments, from Karamzin to Stegniń, that is for almost two hundred years, have been repeated by Russian historiography.

This does not exhaust the uttermost concurrence of Carrère d'Encausse's theses and those of Russian historiography. In quoting the territories and giving the number of people that fell to the partitioning powers, the French researcher concedes that 'la part du lion' fell to Austria while Catherine II took for herself a part 'relativement modérée'. Yet the most important being that

les territoires ainsi acquis par elle avaient, il faut le souligner, été siens par le passé avant de lui être confisqués par la Lithuanie.⁴⁴

We have therefore the rehashing of the old and still binding thesis in Russian historiography that unlike Prussia and Austria, Russia did not reach out for anyone else's but merely took back her own. It is staggering that this French historian was unable to summon up at

⁴² Carrère d'Encausse, *Catherine II*, 522 (page omitted in the index of persons).

⁴³ *Ibidem*, 168–72.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 169 f.

least a little critical distance to these theses of imperial Russian historiography.

Equally in Carrère d'Encausse's version the Second Partition does not morally burden Russia and her ruler. In remaining silent on the historically well known – particularly from Robert H. Lord's classic work – Russian aspirations of 1789–90 to 'punish' Poland with partition for the revolt that constituted the work of the Great *Sejm*, the French historian exposes Prussia's partition propositions announced from the spring of 1791 and Potemkin's partition option and following his death several other advisors of empress who allegedly again did not want to, but was forced to submit to foreign and domestic pressures. Not only were the pro-partition declarations of Catherine II, cited by Lord, passed over in silence, but also the numerous evidence of the colossal appetite for annexation on the part of the Russian elite. As an example of this type of research negligence (in the chapter with the characteristic title: 'Partage de la Pologne ou rassemblement des terres de la Rous?', p. 493) one may point to the observations concerning the spring and summer of 1791, that Catherine feared on the side of Prussia strivings for a new partition which she would have supposedly opposed, while the first traces of a new division allowed for by her were to have derived only from July 1791. And yet at that time, as Carrère d'Encausse claims, Catherine was supposed to approach the idea of partition most unwillingly ('une éventualité peu souhaitable').⁴⁵ In this view the historian refers to Lord's research but the significance of the source footnote quoted by the American researcher is different than what Carrère d'Encausse wanted to perceive in it. We shall cite Lord:

It is difficult now – she wrote [Catherine II to Potemkin 18 (29) July 1791] – to predict the end to which this policy [intervention in Poland] will lead; but if ... it is crowned with success, two advantages may result for us. In the one case, we shall be able to overthrow the present constitution and to restore the old Polish liberty Or in case the King of Prussia should display an invincible covetousness, we shall find ourselves obliged ... to agree to a new partition of Poland in favor of the three allied Powers. From this there will result the advantage that we shall extend the boundaries of our Empire, augment by so much its security, and win new subjects of the same faith and blood as ourselves. Poland ... will be reduced to such

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 499–500.

limits that ... it can offer no dangers to the neighboring Powers and will form only a sort of barrier between them.⁴⁶

Does that quote show, as Carrère d'Encausse claims (in accordance with the whole of Russian historiography) that the new partition constituted for Catherine II a little desired solution?

That the evaluations placed by Carrère d'Encausse copy imperial propaganda is borne out also by the justification for the Third Partition: the author does not conceal Catherine II's initiatives for the complete elimination of the Polish state, but explains it by the supposedly raging Jacobinism in Poland and the hostility of Poles towards Russians displayed during the Kosciuszko Uprising.⁴⁷ In characterizing the territories that Russia took during the Third Partition, Carrère d'Encausse states:

L'Empire ... récupérerait des orthodoxes, mais avait évité d'inclure des Polonais dans ses frontières. Il atteignait ainsi la limite des pays gouvernés dans le passé par les descendants de Riourik. Le gouvernement russe légitima l'annexion de ces nouveaux territoires comme l'achèvement du rassemblement des terres de la Rous, 'terres et cités qui ont autrefois appartenu à l' État russe, sont peuplées de nos nationaux ... et ont reçu la révélation de la foi chrétienne orthodoxe'.⁴⁸

In this evaluation, a fragment of which (as a quote in a quote) is the manifesto published by the Russian authorities in 1793, the complete lack of distance on the part of the author to the Russian evaluation is obvious, she does not even notice that a part of 'Rurik's inheritance' was taken over by Austria. Again in the place of historiography the reader is being treated to imperial Russian propaganda enriched by a vision of the lands incorporated into Russia as being territories that in the eighteenth century had no Poles on them! We understand that consequently Catherine II considered the inhabitants of these lands – completely contrary to reality – to be Polonized Ruthenians. *Nota bene* de Madariaga cites this anachronism as a claim by

⁴⁶ Robert H. Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland: A Study in Diplomatic History* (Cambridge, 1915), 246–7.

⁴⁷ Carrère d'Encausse, *Catherine II*, 515–16, on p. 518 it is completely anachronistic to consider the text of Kosciuszko's Uprising manifesto as a manifestation of 'd'un nationalisme extrême'.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 519.

Catherine II herself ('not a single Pole, as Catherine proudly put it') and at least in this way she distances herself from it, although she does not explicitly state its divergence from reality.⁴⁹ In any case Carrère d'Encausse's answer to the question broached in the chapter title: 'Partage de la Pologne ou rassemblement des terres de la Rous?' is clear and consonant with the Russian interpretation in force to this day – that in opposition to the looters of the Polish lands that were Prussia and Austria, Russia only took that which was rightly hers.

It is worth signalling at the end several other matters that concern Poland, about which we have information in works on Russia that differ greatly from reality. The first is the treatment *per non est* of the National Education Commission created in 1773. The attitude towards education was one of the touchstones of affiliation to the Enlightenment, therefore all those writing about Catherine II have devoted at least one chapter to her efforts to promote education. De Madariaga, in a work published in 1979, repeated in the book on Russia and again published in 1998, presents in great detail the educational efforts of Catherine II and her entourage. We learn from here, among other things, that

the town of Polotsk, which became Russian at the first partition of Poland in 1772, was a town in name only, with almost no townspeople apart from Jews. But in 1780 there were six schools in the guberniya with 300 noble pupils and 130 townspeople's children. Mogilyov already had 34 schools with 858 pupils in the guberniya, Smolensk had twelve urban schools.⁵⁰

There is not a word about the Jesuit college in Polotsk, although we know a lot about it thanks to the disputes of Bishop Sistrzeńcewicz. Then the author of 'the empress' rehabilitation' writes at length about how Catherine brought Teodor Jankowicz to Russia in 1782 *via* the mediation of Joseph II and the personal counsel of Johann Felbiger, and in 1786 issued the statute for the National Schools Commission. The article concludes with the statement that after the great educational reform in Prussia in 1763 and Austria in 1774, 'the next country to set up a nationwide school system was Russia in 1786'.⁵¹ Matters

⁴⁹ De Madariaga, *Russia in the Age*, 450.

⁵⁰ De Madariaga 'Catherine II and the Russian educational system', in *eadem*, *Politics and Culture*, 178

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 191.

are similar in Carrère d'Encausse, who incidentally makes a few mistakes (including Jankowicz being for her Czech), but who fails to note Ambroise Jobert's *La Commission de l'Education Nationale en Pologne 1773–1795*, published in 1940. It is difficult not to perceive in this elementary gaps in the author's erudition, who in another place praises Catherine II for preserving the Jesuits in White Rus'. *Nota bene* another concealment from the sphere of culture (in all those writing about Catherine II's achievements) concerns the educational role that Stanislas Augustus fulfilled at her side during their romance (when she was the grand duchess).⁵² The German researcher Claus Scharf indicates the effacement of this question in all the versions of Catherine II's diaries, many times changed during the author's life, always in a spirit to show that she owed everything to herself (*a self-made woman*) and her new homeland, nothing to the period of growing up in her native German principedom or anyone outside.⁵³

Roger Bartlett, the author of the classic work on the colonization of foreigners in Russia, repeats, after Russia propagandists, the claim that in Poland in 1763 there were around one million peasants who had run away from Russia, although Boris Nosov in supplementing the calculations of the imperial historiographer Vasilii Semevski with the results of the latest research, has calculated the number to be around 120,000 (minimum).⁵⁴ But there is not a word in Bartlett about the dozens of Russian military expeditions into the Polish border to capture real and alleged escapees, and first and foremost about the permanent presence on the territories of the Ukraine, Wolhynia and Podolia of Russian military corps, which systematically abducted Polish peasants for settlement on the newly captured lands in Turkey in 1774. Even such a pro-Russian politician like hetman Ksawery Branicki (later one of the Targowica leaders) was to complain to his friend, Grigoriï Potemkin, about the practice already in 1775,

⁵² De Madariaga (*Russia in the Age*, 11–12) writes only about the common intellectual interests of Stanislas Poniatowski and Grand Duchess Catherine.

⁵³ Claus Scharf, *Katharina II.: Deutschland und die Deutschen* (Mainz, 1995), 112–13.

⁵⁴ Roger Bartlett, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762–1804* (Cambridge, London and New York, 1979), 9; Nosov, *Ustanovleniye*, 225; Vasilii Semevski, *Krestyanie v tsarstvovanie imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, i (St Petersburg, 1881), 337–9.

for his own peasants had asked him for help.⁵⁵ The most infamous of these Russian plunderers, the Voronezh regiment, during its stay in the south-eastern marches in 1783–7, allegedly took away from there at least 30,000 Polish subjects.⁵⁶ The question of the running away to Poland of Russian peasants has found reflection in Robert Jones' article,⁵⁷ a known researcher into the Russian administrative reform of 1775, and Jakob Johann Sievers' role in this. Jones treats *à la lettre* the propaganda arguments of St Petersburg, justifying the partition by Polish anarchy which, among other things, disabled Russia from carrying out the return of their runaway subjects. Amongst the sources proving the justness of the Russian complaints the author cites the already mentioned Chernyshev memorial of 1763 containing a plan for the annexation of Polish territory to the east of the Western Dvina River and the Dnieper; Chernyshev indicates in it that the reasons for the undertaking of such an annexation could be any whatsoever, e.g. claims over runaway peasants.⁵⁸ The author

⁵⁵ Ksawery Branicki to Grigorii A. Potemkin, Biała Cerkiew (Bila Tserkva), 9 Sept. 1775, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, fond 11 (Perepiska raznykh lits), opis' 1, no. 867, pp. 19–23.

⁵⁶ Przemysław P. Romaniuk, 'Sołłohub Jan', *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 40 (Warsaw and Cracow, 2000–1), 316; Stanislas Augustus to Prince Charles of Nassau-Siegen 2, 7, 9 and 12 Jan., 27 Feb. 1787, in Zofia Zielińska, 'Listy Stanisława Augusta z podróży do Kaniowa (1787)', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, cx, 4 (2003), 100–5.

⁵⁷ Robert Jones, 'Runaway peasants and Russian motives for the Partitions of Poland', in Hugh Ragsdale and Valerii N. Ponomarev (eds.), *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne, 1993), 103–16.

⁵⁸ SIRIO, 51 (St Petersburg, 1886), 9–11: 'Но как такое приобретение для государственной пользы должно быть от соседей своих прикрыто справедливостью ... чтоб у прочих держав не показываться, что завоевание сие делается одним только преимуществом сил, а не справедливостью ... представляются ниже следующие случаи и способы. ... Между тем надежду при избрании короля или прежде претензии свои на вышеупомянутыя земли произвестъ, с изяснением к тому права, и что от самого того происходили разныя в республике жалобы, на которыя она не только никакой справедливости не учинила, но и ни в какия уважения не поставила, в противность трактатам и тому почтению, которое соседственным государствам одно другому должны, беглых никогда не выдавали, пошлину забирали, нарушая тем свободу коммерции, многих к ним посылаемых ругательски бивали и прочее, что только выискать возможно будет [dist. ZZ], и что сие занятие и овладение делается не для приобретения земель, коих в российской империи, как всему свету известно, больше нежели в том нужда ест, но единственно, чтоб такая натуральная между утвердя отвращением всего того, что когда-либо соседственную дружбу нарушить может, будет сие легчайшим способом оную и твердо основать и всех происходящих прежде спор миновать, что несумненно служит к благосостоянию обоих государств'.

omits the entire context, in particular the nature of the argument as the pretext indicated by Chernyshev, treating it as one of the source proofs, that the impossibility of eradicating the practice of Russian peasants escaping to Poland constituted one of the reasons for the partition option. We know from another source that this running away, being a occurrence that existed after partition as well, was something that had resulted from the draconian principles for enlistment into the army, from which the Russian peasant sought asylum in the Commonwealth.⁵⁹

This last question induces one to raise a matter not connected with Russia but with Prussia. Scott's book, mentioned here many times, on the creation of the great eastern powers is written in a way displaying open admiration for Frederick II and one based to a significant degree on Prussian and German sources and studies. Scott writes, among other things, about the territorial dispersion of the Prussian state at the beginning of Frederick's reign and he concludes that if Prussia was to be a power, it would have to achieve a noticeable territorial increase and the merger of Brandenburg Prussia (the kingdom of Prussia) with the rest of the state.⁶⁰ The former, as is known, Frederick achieved thanks to the seizing of Silesia, the latter thanks to the partition of Poland. In emphasizing the colossal destruction of Prussia as a result of the Seven Years War, an annihilation of 10 per cent of its population, Scott raises the necessity to compensate for this loss and shows that the looting of Saxony, which for the entire period of the Seven Years War was under Prussian occupation, resulted in a third of Prussia's war losses being taken over by Saxony.⁶¹ The author does not mention Poland within this context though does refer to it later on when he writes about Poland being a 'wayside inn' for the Russian army. There he raises the matter of Prussia's falsification during the Polish war of Polish money and the exorbitant profits derived therein, while he knows this thanks to the article by Jörg Hönsch.⁶² Scott does

⁵⁹ General Petr Ivanovich Panin spoke on this subject at an internal meeting of the Russian elite, Sergei Soloviev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, vol. 25 (Moscow, 1965), 228.

⁶⁰ Scott, *The Emergence*, 20–31.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 41.

⁶² Jörg K. Hönsch, 'Friedrichs II. Währungsmanipulationen im Siebenjährigen Krieg und ihre Auswirkung auf die polnische Münzreform von 1765/66', *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschland*, xxii (1973), 110–75.

not write about the wanderings of the Prussian expeditionary forces to Greater Poland, which occurred after the end of the Seven Years War (the turn of winter and spring 1763), he is equally silent on analogical cases and the looting of subjects, money, grain and property in the September of 1764 (however, both forms of enriching Prussia have left their mark in *Politische Correspondenz Friedrichs des Grossen*).

What I have written obviously only constitutes a part of the facts and distortions that concerned the Commonwealth, and with which we have contact in the literature devoted to the Russia of Catherine II. It is pleasing to be able to state that these flaws are not to be found in the already referred to German synthesis of Russian history, where the corresponding section was written by Michael Günther Müller.⁶³ Yet this is merely a 'textbook' and consequently a book containing only very general comments on the place of the Commonwealth in the foreign policy of Russia, not going into, for example, the details of the struggles for reform or the dissident question to the degree that is the case in the works by the aforementioned authors. It therefore follows to conclude by stating that until the monographs we write start to appear in English, we will be unable to get through to western historiography a presentation of fundamental facts on the matter of the struggle of the Polish state for survival.

trans. Guy Torr

⁶³ *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, ii, 2, pp. 567–606.