

Russia and Poland – a ‘domestic row’ of Slavs, or a conflict of mentalities?*

ALEKSANDER W. LIPATOW

ORCID: 0000-0001-9128-8975

(Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences)

The historical confrontation of Russia and Poland, interpreted in terms of national interests, national ideologies and confessions, would become complicated, particularly in Russia, by the framing of Polish-Russian issues in the constraints of the Slavic community concept.¹ Thus, the differences and the geographical proximity of the neighbours existed in a wider, universal context of Slavdom as a specific and separate part of Europe. Hence the attitude of Alexander Pushkin, poet and historian, to the Polish November Uprising of 1830–1831, and his approach to the Russian-Polish confrontation.² This is where his *To the Slanderers of Russia* originates from – a patriotic riposte to Europe, outraged by the brutal suppression of the Polish independence impulse.

For Pushkin, the Polish uprising was a ‘domestic row’ of Slavs. This statement reflected attitudes characteristic to the majority of those Russians who belonged to the civil society. Hence the following approach: keep away, Western accusers, from the door to our mutual home. The two largest Slavic powers, Poland and

* First printed as “Rosja i Polska – ‘domowy spór’ Słowian czy konflikt mentalności?”, in: *Napis* issue VI (2000), pp. 245-255.

1 On the topic of this concept, compare: A.W. Lipatov, “Wspólnota słowiańska: historyczne reinkarnacje i metodologiczne interpretacje idei” [Slavic community: historical reincarnations and methodological interpretations of ideas], in: *Wielkie mity narodowe Słowian* [The great national myths of the Slavs] (Poznań: 1999); A.W. Lipatov, “Słowiańska wspólnota: prawda historyczna i mit ideologiczny” [Slavic community: historical truth and ideological myth], in: *idem, Słowiańszczyzna – Polska – Rosja* [Slavic region – Poland – Russia] (Izabelin: 1999).

2 Cf. A.W. Lipatov, “Mickiewicz i Puszkina: obraz na tle historiografii i historiozofii” [Mickiewicz and Pushkin: a picture on the background of historiography and historiosophy], transl. by M. Prussak, in: *Teksty Drugie* [Second Texts] no. 5 (1998), pp. 211-219.

Russia, have always been fighting for the leadership of Slavdom. Poland lost this historic conflict. It therefore needs to acknowledge Russia's supremacy and support it in the common task of building a great and strong Slavic community against the challenge of Western community.

This type of Russian thinking, blending elements of local nationalism and Slavic universalism on the foundation of Russia's all-national status of power, shaped the mentality of Russian civil society. This is how, through the prism of this mentality as a primary factor, one can explain historic conflicts of Russianness and Polishness, as well as the complications of the relationships of Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet states with nations within and without their borders.

The lack of a balanced ethnic policy within the country's borders and outside of them, is a historical characteristic of multi-national Russia, which stems from systems of governance and from a permanent shutting off of the outside in order to maintain inner uniformity. 'Russian Tsarism' was, as stated by prince Andrey Kurbsky already in the sixteenth century, 'closed as if in a hellish fortress'.³ This method of governance was modified over time, but it was still based on unchanging imperial premises and the related rules of political thought, on the character and ways of functioning of national institutions and the social engineering used. This method can be traced, to use a term by Jan Kucharzewski, from the 'white Tsarism to the red one', but also, to some extent, in the mentality and ways of operating of post-Soviet political elites.

The Russian ethnic policy originated from the strictly Russian, own traditions related to Russia and the Russians, of the creation and expansion firstly of Muscovy, then the Russian Empire, the USSR and post-Soviet Russia. Not only did it originate from these, but it even depended on them. This gave way to the aforementioned gaps and shortcomings in national policy regarding other nations, and sometimes an actual lack thereof, from older times up until the present day.

The foundation of the country itself was interpreted as 'collecting Rus lands'. This lofty phrase, in use until present day, is not historiographic, but rather ideological in its nature: the Rus lands were not collected, but conquered by the Grand Duchy of Moscow. They were conquered not only in the territorial sense: along with the conquest, local customary laws and political systems were annihilated, often together with local elites, and often bloodily. In this way, remnants of democratic traditions of ancient Rus, preserved since before the Mongol invasion, were being destroyed. The cruel destruction of the city republics of Novgorod and Pskov, the Slavic counterparts of city republics in the West at that time, was the final stage

3 *Perepiska Ivana Groznogo s Andreev Kurbskim* [Correspondence of Ivan the Terrible with Andrey Kurbsky] (Leningrad: 1979), p. 110.

of ‘collecting the Rus lands’, completed by mass deportation of notable residents. (The last move became a traditional method of Tsarist, and then Bolshevik, politics, experienced not only by Polish people).

In this specific way, the creation of centralist powers of absolute monarchies, natural for those times, was underway in Eastern Europe. The Grand Duchy of Moscow, however, was also utilising experiences of Eastern despotism, experienced in the years of the Mongol invasion. In this process, the Duchy was also destroying its own historic and ethnic experiences of Rus from before this invasion. Thus, the phrase ‘collecting Rus lands’ speaks to the early stage of the shaping of Muscovy only symbolically. It is then that mostly Rus lands were ‘collected’. But, already at that time, other lands of the former invaders were being ‘collected’: those of the Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, then the Urals, Siberia, etc.

Muscovy absolutism, in contrast to its Western counterpart, was total. Not only did it change the external shape, that is the borders of the Rus lands. It gradually also transformed the conquered lands internally, shaping the Russian soul in its own image, forming a national mentality on a path originated in the era of the Mongol enslavement. The spiritual rebellion of Andrey Kurbsky (who found refuge in the country of the Nobles’ Democracy) against the tyranny of Ivan the Terrible was a sign of traditionalism – of the democratic tradition of Old Rus, which was being destroyed, of polemics with the current absolutism, which had been historically alien to Rus. But it was this very absolutism, which, after conquering old traditions, created a new one, still dominating the Russian mentality. Bringing the majority of ethnicities into serfdom, rendering the nobility wholly dependent on the Tsar’s power, and sacralising the Tsar and his rule⁴ – all of this gave way to civil society, building foundations of administrative and spiritual tyranny in the near historical prospect. Paternalism as an outcome of submitting blindly to the will of the Tsar and believing in him as if he were the highest power on Earth, servile obedience to power as a result of an enslaved mind, and through this a passive putting one’s trust in fate, lack of initiative, subduing elements of individualism: all of this, alongside a system of secular governance, was implanted into the consciousness of the inhabitants through the Orthodox Church (related to Tsarism) and its *sobornost* dogma. From the times of Peter the Great, the Orthodox Church became an extension or an agency of the state which exists in this capacity until the present day.

The dependence of spiritual authority on the secular, and a specific role of the ruler, is related to Russia’s roots in the Byzantine cultural realm. As a result,

4 See: B. Uspienski and W. Zhivov, *Car i Bóg* [Tsar and God], translation and introduction by H. Paprocki (Warsaw: 1992).

Mickiewicz, who got to know Russia very well from the inside, expressed the differences between the Russian and Polish mentalities particularly aptly: 'We serve God as the Muscovites serve the Tsar'.⁵

After the Turkish conquest, Byzantium lost its national entity, as well as its role as a dynamic cultural centre. The prominent Russian historian Klyuchevsky noted that Rus owed much to Byzantium, although it is also there whence the attitude of 'to believe, not to think' came our way. This is why a negation of rational thinking was possible, hence the Orthodox Church would still stand against the teaching of geometry in the seventeenth century, as it was a discipline where thinking replaced believing. Byzantinism without Byzantium in Russian national life was inevitably becoming a tradition oriented in a direction opposite to that of the history of Europe. Furthermore, in order to enter European modernity, the Muscovy state needed to create internal rationales, which would give rise to a common ground for encountering the dynamically evolving Latin world. In this aspect, the connections between Ivan III of Russia with Holy Roman emperor Frederick III and Pope Paul II are notable. As a consequence of these contacts, the Muscovy prince (who soon proclaimed himself the Grand Prince of All Rus) married Sophia, the Rome-raised daughter of the last Byzantine emperor. The daughter of Ivan married the grand duke of Lithuania and future king of Poland, Alexander, and Italian masters were invited to erect new edifices on the Kremlin.

The endeavours to enter the sphere of the Western world were continued by Ivan the Terrible, who even wanted to marry the queen of England for this reason. The development of the concept of opening one's own Byzantinism to the world among Russian elites can be evidenced by the fact that in 1595, Tsar Boris Godunov planned to create the first university in Moscow. He intended to invite German professors. The Church opposed this idea, arguing that Latin, just like the Tatar language, would lead the Orthodox people into the hands of Satan. But the process of occidentalising was inevitable, due to national interests, and it gained a particular developmental dynamic in the next century, when Poland was to play an exceptional role.

In that period, top-down factors (court politics and culture, drawing on Polish models, often through the medium of fellow Ukrainian-Belarusian Orthodox worshippers), operated together with bottom-up factors: as a result of a direct contact with Polishness during the Time of Troubles, and of the later conflicts with the Republic of Poland.⁶ The Sarmatian influences in popular culture were re-

5 A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła wszystkie. Wydanie sejmowe* [Collected works. Sejm edition], vol. 16 (Warsaw: 1933), p. 219.

6 Cf. *Istoriya literatur zapadnykh i yuzhnykh slavyan* [History of the literatures of the Western and

flected in the popularisation of Polish fashion, but also Polish *Facetie* [‘jests’], jokes, plots in novels, and songs. Upon arriving in Moscow, Symeon of Polotsk noted that people sang Polish songs, sometimes not even understanding the Polish lyrics, but in order ‘to raise their spirits’.⁷ The unusual popularity of Polish songs is documented by a large number of preserved manuscripts from the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth century.⁸ The audience were captivated by the new melodics, different from the Russian folklore, and by the meaning itself – a different elegance of customs and experiences. On the other hand, high culture absorbed the model of Polish syllabic poetry, and incorporating Polish poetics and rhetoric, as well as the legacy of Greek-Roman Antiquity, in a shape internalised and rendered familiar by Polish literature.

On both levels (high-brow and popular culture), the reception of Polishness was rudimentary: new themes were expressed *e x t e r n a l l y* – in their visible shapes. Russians were not mentally or emotionally prepared for its *i n t e r n a l* reception – that is, an adequate understanding of matters related to individualism and of the way of thinking characterising civil society. Republicanism was completely foreign and entirely unintelligible in literary texts in the despotic Muscovy, which rejected the existence of a civil society. But the ‘external’ reception, that is infatuation with the ‘envelope’ of Polishness and an ‘omission’ of its ‘heart’, created a situation whereby the Muses were stronger than Mars. Despite state conflicts and confessional animosities, Poland had attracted Russians from that period. It is here one can find the beginnings of the unrequited love of Russia towards Poland, continuing until this day and inexplicable to Polish societal memory.

Since the times turbulent and violent towards traditional Russian culture and customs, the top-down reforms of Peter the Great, the Russian community, its culture and mentality, had undergone a kind of *s p l i t t i n g*, the results of which we experience even today. The orientalist model of familiarity and an occidentalised model of modernity painfully cut through the systems of state, society, culture, of everyday life itself and of the historic Russian nationalities. A realisation of the effects of this splitting, attempts at reconciling and re-uniting which began in the late 1820s (Occidentalists and Slavophiles), continue today, reflecting the

Southern Slavs] (Moscow: 1997); A.W. Lipatow, “Zmiana paradygmatów: od średniowiecza ku literaturze nowożytnej” [A paradigm shift: from the Middle Ages to modern literature], in: *Barok* [Baroque] no. III/2 (6) (1996), pp. 115-129.

7 S. of Polotsk, *Isbrannye proizvedeniya* [Selected works] (Moscow-Leningrad: 1953), p. 213.

8 A. Pozdniejew found over 500 Russian and over 100 Ukrainian manuscript collections, which he studied thoroughly. See, among others: his essay “Svetskiye polskiye pesni v russkikh rukopysnykh pesennikakh XVII w.” [Secular Polish songs in Russian handwritten songbooks from 17th c.], in: *Polsko-russkiye svyazy* [Polish-Russian connections] (Moscow: 1970).

process of the shaping of self-consciousness of the ever-modernising Russia. In this context of the approach of Russia toward the West, one can find the roots of the diverse attitudes of Russians towards Poland. They are diverse, as, from the times of Peter the Great, Russian nationality, its culture and mentality and, with it, the historical leanings and style of self-identifying thought, were all diversifying.

When Peter was creating a European empire as a despot in the, now traditional, Muscovy style, he made everyone realise (based on his own, and indirect, occidental experiences) that what was needed to implement his grand designs was not just an external change of the shape of the country and its statehood, but also an internal change of the Russian soul and culture. This is why he embarked, in a barbaric manner, on a total implementation of new models of education, customs, and even fashion. This was aimed at creating personality, an individual, alongside and against the traditional *sobornost*. This was because only an individual can demonstrate initiative, vital to the shaping of Russia, turning towards the West. But the Muscovy despot, becoming a Petersburg emperor, simultaneously remained a Russian. This is the reason behind the ambivalence typical of the new reality he created. The will of an individual, their initiative and the direction of their activities were demarcated and constructed by the higher Tsarist power – secular and religious at the same time.

Nevertheless, the created symbiosis of Byzantinism and Latinness, together with an implementation of the patterns of Western culture and educational system, inevitably gave ground to a gradual development of seedlings of civil society in the bosom of a modernised national society. Radishchev and Novikov in the times of Catherine II (who demonstrated her ideal of a Russian ruler with the statue of the *Bronze Horseman*), highlight both the rise of a civil society stratum (still narrow at the time), and the first symptoms of the appearance of Russian intelligentsia, beyond Russian traditionalism and occidentalised Russian despotism, and at the same time, against them.

It was in this stratum of the civil society and in this milieu of the intelligentsia that 'Polonism', now traditional to Russia, acquired a new, and this time a fully conscious dimension. Together with the foundation of a common ground of civil society (based on the independent thinking of an individual), Polishness became appealing to Russianness, this time not merely aesthetically as before, but also in a civil sense, especially in the form of Nobles' Democracy and the characteristics of Polish community that were shaped by it. It is this phenomenon that was documented by future Decembrist, poet Kondraty Ryleyev, in a letter to Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, charmed by his personality of a Kościuszko insurgent and

‘friend of Washington’, as well as by the sounds of his ‘Sarmatian lute’.⁹ This also attracts another Decembrist, poet Alexander Bestuzhev. ‘I am wholly content with Polish poetry’, he wrote in a letter to his mother. ‘It breathes patriotism, and invention often disguises itself in the robes of new thought and apt phrase. Continuing to learn Polish, I extract new ore for the Russian language.’¹⁰

Therefore, the cultural splitting of Russia conditioned a splitting of the Russian attitude towards Poland and the reception of Polishness. K. Ryleyev, A. Bestuzhev, P. Vyazemsky, S. Sobolewski, A. Turgenev (in terms of the early period) are not only Polonophiles, and not simply Polonophiles. They are, first and foremost, representatives of *civil society*, and hence their Polonophilia. This is because, in their times (as opposed to the seventeenth century), other sources of Western European models of culture and art were already present and dominant. But Polish literature, Polish historical tradition, Polish outlooks on the world – everything that influenced Polish mentality, was attractive for those Russians. This is because it was related directly to the Polish model of civil society, shaped by the system of Nobles’ Democracy (which, in any case, could evoke associations with the old, Rus model of democracy, suppressed by the Grand Duchy of Moscow).

In terms of society and popular culture, one can observe a certain evolving continuity. The original, external infatuation with Polishness, migrating from high-brow to popular culture, was becoming a symptom of the inner need to escape the constraints of the familiar, protracted Middle Ages; this was subconscious at first, and then (from the late seventeenth century onwards), it would become ever more conscious. It was the need to transgress the borders of traditional Byzantinism – outside of policy, independently of policy, or even against official state policy towards Poland, against the official line of the Orthodox Church with respect to Catholicism.

These pursuits would manifest themselves in fashion (which, in its essence, is irrational and apolitical) and in the rational (in terms of foundations) high culture. With the progressing occidentalisation of parts of Russian culture throughout the eighteenth century, Polish culture becomes one of the partners, and no longer solely a model, as was the case before. It is, however, still a model (examples include *Historical Songs* by Niemcewicz, *Dumy* by Ryleyev, Polish music, and finally the Polish aristocratic circle, which would gradually create an influential enclave in St Petersburg, as well as Polish nobility, who came into direct contact with the

9 Contents of the letter in: A. Kraushar, *Obrazy i wizerunki historyczne* [Historical pictures and images] (Warsaw: 1906), p. 330.

10 *Pamiętniki dekabristów* [Memoirs of the Decembrists], ed. N.W. Ismailov, vol. 1 (Leningrad: 1926), p. 30.

Russian element after the partitions of Poland and the insurrections of the 19th century).

Direct connections in the realm of culture would still bond Russians with the Poles, fostering a better understanding. At the same time, official politics would still divide and separate them.

At the same time, the now-formed Russian civil society, in defiance of the Russian state society, would absorb Polishness through its cultural not political reception. Hence, there would be a deeper understanding of Poland and Polishness in this very environment. Therefore, if, before the formation of civil society, Polish culture was received through its external manifestations, then it would later be understood in its internal manifestations (and thus in its essence) through an understanding of another national mentality. Before, as well as after, such a reception within the framework of state society was, remained, and still is impossible. This is because it is unintelligible precisely due to the nature of such society, shaped historically and still co-recreated by the system of governance and the domestic and foreign policy it delineates. Poland, on the other hand, since the time of the partitions, becomes a subject of both domestic and foreign policy, and Polish people become part of the population both within and outside of Russia.

It was politics that began to complicate the attitude towards Poland and the Poles in the Russian state society. It took place and gained momentum at a time when Poland underwent transformation from a part of the outside world into a part of the inner world of Russia. This internal part of the Empire, which did not wish to embrace the customs or submit to requirements, imitate the Russian way of life, thus rejected everything that shaped the mentality of the Russian state society and everything that was maintained by the system of authority. This Polish defence-negative reaction provoked irritation among the power elites and the state society. An opposition of culture and nature, hidden within the human disposition, would emerge. The coded attitude of the 'self' towards the 'other' would rise to the surface of civil life. This was further reinforced by the view that this 'other' in an ethnic sense, being 'self' in a national self, did not want to identify with such 'selfness', did not want to identify with that which is 'common' and thus Russian-state.

This unwillingness of the Poles to live in accordance with the requirements of the Russian statehood and mentality caused irritation in the state society. This took the form of sacramental questions, raised since the Empire times, up until the era of the 'alliance of socialist states with Soviet Union at the head': 'what do they actually need?' or 'why can they not live like we do?' These questions, apart from genuine or feigned (ideologically correct) incomprehension, inadvertently

revealed the Russian inferiority complex (conscious to varying degrees): ‘we accepted the yoke and the undignified standards of living, but they always want to be better’.

Such Russian reactions to the ‘Polish waywardness’, ‘Polish aloofness’, ‘Polish haughtiness’, ‘Polish scheming’, reflect not only the difference in national mentalities, but also the level of maturity of self-identification.

The forming of Polish mentality is continuous and concise. Stemming from this is a clear shape and core of Polish self-identification. Conversely, as a result of repeatedly interrupted continuity of history (the Mongol invasion, Muscovy state, Empire of Peter I, USSR, post-Soviet Russia) and of the splitting of Russian culture (spanning from the era of Peter I to our present times), the Russian mentality, as per the ethnological research, is still fragile, uncertain and timid. Its self-identification is ambiguous and inadequately defined.

This is the reason behind both the extreme nature of the famous ‘Russian soul’, and the opting for brute force as a way of solving all problems. It can be observed from the beginnings (suppression of Novgorod by Muscovy and mass deportations of peoples), through the Empire period (suppression of Polishness and deporting Poles into exile), then in the USSR (invasion of Poland in 1939 and deportations of Poles to Central Asia and Siberia), to the era of post-Soviet Russia: violent dissolution of its own parliament as a method of reinforcing democracy, or the second Chechen war as a way of settling ethnic issues. At the same time, these are examples of lasting dominance of the state society, which, in line with the rules of feedback, is a projection of the system of governance on to the societal plane. Hence the inert persistence of Muscovy-time experiences. The conquest (or ‘collecting’, as per the aforementioned, a lofty term in official historiography) of Rus lands by force, and then the national consolidation of those, on the common ground of statehood and belief, could have never produced similar results in the long run with respect to conquered nations of different cultural traditions and religions. Nevertheless, similar methods were also used towards those nations, and their independence movements were suppressed in the same way as their own peasant or Cossack rebellions would have been.

In their practice, the Russian regime inertly treated Poland in the same way as they did other nations. This is because the causative factor of such behaviour was the already-shaped, traditional mentality of ‘land collectors’ and nations ruled by an iron fist, which was reflected in the saying *Sila est, uma ne nado* (‘Where there is force – one does not need a mind’), still in use today.

Such a mentality, like a harness put on an imperial war horse, made it impossible to understand that, firstly, Poland was a country with a great history, and far longer continuity of statehood than Russia, and, as a result, had a high political

culture. Secondly, that the Republic of Poland, belonging to the Western circle of European culture, was at the same time fundamentally different from the majority of Western states with their republican system and thus with its national mentality.

What came to be known as ‘Congress Poland’ was not conquered, but annexed to Russia as a result of international agreements and thus also obligations, which gave it special status within the Empire. However, in imperial practice, this status was not honoured by the Russian authorities due to the tradition of mentality in place: within the country (in contrast to that part of Europe, where the Roman law was known), both then and now, the mode of thinking was not based on legal guidelines, but on the inner sense of justice. From the point of view of the authorities this was justice solely in relation to the Russian case. This is why administration could not encompass Polish uniqueness with the predictable effects of the violation of laws (which Polish people were used to), and the (also predictable) consequences of the insult of Polish tradition and national pride. One could say that the indolence of the Russian authorities in the realm of ethnic policy was an unintentional reason for successive Polish uprisings. One example could be the speech of Nicholas I in October 1835 to the Warsaw delegation in the Łazienki Park, when the Tsar stated authoritatively and firmly that the Poles had to prove, through absolute obedience that they deserved the title of Russian subjects, or else Warsaw would be razed to the ground.

No reflection was therefore drawn from the November Uprising. The later traditional behaviour of the authorities continued to co-create the tradition of Polish insurrections.¹¹

In the history of the Russian statehood the lack of appropriate approach to the national character founded on an understanding of the society’s mentality against which ethnic policy is created remains. The most recent testament to this status quo is the aforementioned second Chechnya war over the span of less than ten years of the existence of self-proclaimed ‘democratic’ Russia.

Elites of power always provide the direction of thought to the civil society, while reflecting this thought at the same time. However, due to the splits within the Russian culture, discussed above, this thought is far from uniform. Russian philosopher, G. Fedotov (1886-1951) stated that, after the reforms of Peter I, the Russian nation lost its ability to understand its own state. And yes, it is still the case today. In the multinational parts of the country, self-identification as ‘Russian’ is vague,

11 For the topic of Russian politics in relations to Poland in latest research, see: A. Nowak, *Polacy, Rosjanie i biesy* [Poles, Russians and demons] (Cracow: 1998); L.J. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoj politiki: polaki v Rossii i russkiye v Polshu* [Paradoxes of imperial policy: Poles in Russia and Russians in Poland] (Moscow: 1999).

as it does not convey specific ethnicity, locality, or language. All of this means that the ‘transmission belt’ between authority and civil society is loose and shaky. Thus, alongside the obedient absorbing of anti-Polish propaganda slogans, there still exists a hidden fascination with Polishness. It can manifest itself in negative ways. This could take the form of explicit aggression: it is irritating and aggravating that the Pole can afford what the ‘Russian patriot’ cannot, subconsciously a slave to the blind and obligatory faith in the Tsar and the state. It can also show in positive ways: in uncontrolled admiration, rapture, enchantment with the lively beauty of Polishness, when an irrational reaction escapes the rational, ideologised, internal and external control. One of the more vivid examples is the so-called ‘Polish scene’ in the first Russian Romantic opera, *A Life for the Tsar*, by Mikhail Glinka.¹² For over one and a half centuries, keen applause erupts following the raising of the curtain, when a picturesque image of Polish dress, Polish posture and Polish gestures is presented, to the accompaniment of the polonaise.

This lively reaction has become a tradition, or a custom: the alluring charm of Polishness still enraptures Russians, and it does so to such an extent that the audience do not realise they are applauding those who invaded the country and are planning to kill the protagonist. They had been applauding, and they continue to do so, against the anti-Polish tendency of the piece.¹³

Those two types of receiving Polishness by the civil society reveal an ambivalence of a Polonophobia blinded by the lack of autonomous thinking, and Polonophilia’s lively sensitivity to beauty. Together, they create the complex of unrequited love towards Poland. Such Russians are still offended by the lack of reciprocity, because the level of thinking of state society and its characteristic horizon of imaginings (that is, intellectual and political culture, the degree of identity shaping), all that determines the form of the members of this society (in which the individual is repressed by the official), hinders the possibility to understand the Poles’ mentality and the due penitence for the sins of Russian state against them.

The sphere of civil society, where, from the very beginning, there was no reason

12 In Soviet Times, this opera was fitted with an ideologically amended libretto, and was staged under the title of *Ivan Susanin*.

13 For the topic of Polish-Russian animosities, see: A. Kępiński, *Lach i Moskal. Z dziejów stereotypu* [Lyakh and Muscovite. From the history of the stereotype] (Cracow: 1990); J. Orłowski, *Z dziejów antypolskich obsesji w literaturze rosyjskiej* [From the history of anti-Polish obsessions in Russian literature] (Warsaw: 1992); A.W. Lipatov, “Obraz Polski i Polaków w sztuce radzieckiej” [The image of Poland and Poles in Soviet art], in: *Teksty Drugie* no. 5 (1997), pp. 25–39; J. Maciejewski, “Stereotyp Rosji i Rosjanina w polskiej literaturze i świadomości społecznej” [The stereotype of Russia and the Russian in Polish literature and social consciousness], in: *Więź* [The Bond] no. 2 (1998), pp. 183–197; *Polaki i ruskskiye v glazakh drug druga* [Poles and Russians in each other’s eyes] (Moscow: 2000); *Ruskskiye i polaki: vzaimoponimaniye i vzaimoneponimaniye* [Russians and Poles: mutual understanding and misunderstanding] (Moscow [forthcoming]).

to complain about ‘unrequited love’, displays an entirely different state of affairs. The personal friendships of Mickiewicz with Ryleyev, Bestuzhev, Vyazemsky, the symbolic funeral in Warsaw of the five Decembrists executed by the Tsar (in the Warsaw liberated from the regime of Empire during the November Uprising), the famous motto, ‘For our freedom and yours’, or the poem ‘To Friends Muscovites’ by Mickiewicz, are now historic symptoms of mutual love. Mutual, as those Russians and those Poles, then and now, against all external circumstances (political, ideological, national), possess a common bond which is internal, and thus unsusceptible to external pressures. This is the individualised, personal, cultural and legal outlook which characterises civil society. It is here that a mutual understanding is born, and empathy, which leads to fondness.

It is precisely within the framework of civil society, in spite of the twists and turns of Russian history (both Soviet and contemporary), where the tradition of an *a u t h e n t i c* understanding of Polishness is preserved. During the rebirth of civil society in the times of the Thaw (after its complete destruction as a result of the Bolshevik revolution) the Russian renaissance of Polishness also began. As was the case at the beginning of the creation of civil society in Russia, there has been a turn not towards Polishness as such, which was shut in on itself, but towards that which remained rebellious in the socialist block. It was a turn towards that which, despite totalitarianism, has kept an individuality, identity, independence, autonomous thinking, capacity for personal choice and the ability to make unforced decisions – that is, a turn towards everything that the Bolsheviks and the Soviet regime destroyed together with the civil society. In the Soviet era, Polonophilia meant in its essence (as was the case at the beginning of the departure from Byzantinism) openness to the West, and *O c c i d e n t a l i s a t i o n t h r o u g h P o l o n i s a t i o n*. An additional phenomenon was the re-emerging cultural-historical tradition: Occidentalism in a Polish form, with its characteristic Polish sense of humour, Polish legal respect for the individual and the Polish gestures in everyday culture, were associated in the Muscovy era with the tradition of Old Rus democracy destroyed by that state. Today, it reminds one of the democratic tradition of Russian civil society, damaged by the USRR. Thus, the severed thread of history has been tied back together, not without Polish contribution. Civil society in today’s Russia exists legally once again, constituting a thin stratum, for now. The state society is dominant, in its Sovietised robes – the same ones worn by the elites in power. Hence, in this stratum, the tradition to negate national mentalities in political activities is still present. This results in a (perhaps not always conscious) lack of respect, and thus also of an understanding, for national differences. This relates to all, including Poland. It was once reflected in the patronising-contemptuous saying ‘*Kuritsa ne ptitsa, Polsha ne zagranitsa*’ [‘a chicken is not

really a bird, Poland is not really abroad’], still in use today. Traditionally, this gem of Russian imperialist mentality is ascribed to the first Emperor of Russia, Peter the Great. Its embedding in the mentality of Russian elites of power is still in place today. This, among other things, illustrates in an appropriate degree the position of contemporary, official Russia on Poland’s foreign policy which has carelessly forgotten, that it is not really ‘abroad’.

The traditional mentality of the elites of state authority reinforces the traditional level of thinking of the state society. Stemming from this is a lack of imagination, which, in turn, results in the lack of appreciation for the fact that, not only the nineteenth century, but the twentieth century have also already passed. In the process of globalisation, the world has changed radically, and, with it, the structures of power both in Europe and worldwide. Taking a stand against Poland’s autonomous decisions (and against other, independent countries of the former Soviet block and the former USSR), official Russia, calling itself democratic, behaves not merely like a power (which it ceased to be, but which it still wishes to perceive itself as), but like a deserted woman. In a state of hysteria, she does not want to see how pitiful her behaviour is. She cannot understand that she has to pull herself together, so as not to lose her way or stagnate. Instead, having understood herself, she has to come to her senses in the changed situation, establish new relations in the new circumstances, enter new structures, so as to, while respecting others, gain respect for herself.

*Translated by Maria Helena Żukowska,
verified by Jerzy Giebułtowski*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Horizontow L.J., *Paradoksy imperskoj politiki: polaki v Rossii i russkiye v Polsce*, Moskwa 1999.
- Istoriya literatur zapadnykh i yuzhnykh slavyan*, t. 1-3, red. L.N. Budagowa, A.W. Lipatow, S.W. Nikolski, Moskwa 1997.
- Kępiński A., *Lach i Moskal. Z dziejów stereotypu*, Kraków 1990.
- Kraushar A., *Obrazy i wizerunki historyczne*, Warszawa 1906.
- Lipatow A.W., *Mickiewicz i Puszkina: obraz na tle historiografii i historiozofii*, przeł. M. Prussak, „Teksty Drugie” 1998, nr 5.
- Lipatow A.W., *Słowiańszczyzna – Polska – Rosja*, Izabelin 1999.
- Lipatow A.W., *Zmiana paradygmatów: od średniowiecza ku literaturze nowożytnej*, „Barok” 1996, III/2 (6).
- Lipatow A.W., *Obraz Polski i Polaków w sztuce radzieckiej*, „Teksty Drugie” 1997, nr 5.
- Maciejewski J., *Stereotyp Rosji i Rosjanina w polskiej literaturze i świadomości społecznej*, „Więź” 1998, nr 2.
- Mickiewicz A., *Dziela wszystkie. Wydanie sejmowe*, Warszawa 1933.
- Nowak A., *Polacy, Rosjanie i biesy*, Kraków 1998.

- Orłowski J., *Z dziejów antypolskich obsesji w literaturze rosyjskiej*, Warszawa 1992.
- Pamiętniki dekabristów. Sbornik materiałów*, t. 1-3, red. N.W. Izmajłow, Leningrad 1926.
- Pierpiska Iwana Groznego s Andreem Kurbskim*, red. A.A. Zimnyj, J.D. Rykow, J.S. Łurie, Leningrad 1979.
- Polaki i ruskiye v glazakh drug druga*, red. W. Choriew, Moskwa 2000.
- Polotskij S., *Isbrannye proizvedenya*, Moskwa-Leningrad 1953.
- Puszkin A.N., *Oszczercem Rosji*, tłum. J. Tuwim, w: „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2001, nr 257.
- Russkaya literatura XVIII wieka i slavyanskiye literatury. Issledovanya i materyaly*, red. P.N. Bierkowa, I.Z. Sierman, Moskwa-Leningrad 1963.
- Ruskiye i polaki: vzaimoponimaniye i vzaimoneponimaniye*, red. A.W. Lipatow, A. Mencwel, J. Prokop, E. Suchanek, I. O. Szajtanow, Moskwa 2000.
- Uspienski B., Żywow W., *Car i Bóg*, przekł. i wst. H. Paprocki, Warszawa 1992.
- Wielkie mity narodowe Słowian: materiały do dyskusji panelowej towarzyszącej konferencji „Język, literatura i kultura Słowian – dawniej i dziś III”*, Poznań, 23-26 IX 1999, red. A. Gawarecka, A. Naumow, B. Zieliński, Poznań 1999.

ABSTRACT

The article presents a cross-section sketch of the attitude of Russia toward Poland and the Polish people, demonstrating its ambivalence, stretching between Polonophobia and Polonophilia ('the complex of unrequited love toward Poland'). Its sources are generally thought to lie in the elementary mental disparity between Moscow's total absolutism and Polish civil society, based on individualism, Latin culture and the Roman law. This disparity becomes a centuries-old source of political conflict and cultural fascination.

KEYWORDS: Poland, Russia, conflict, politics, culture