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Russia in the propaganda of Polish national uprisings, 1768-1864. Select issues

Outline: The insurrectionary struggles of 1768-1772, 1794, 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, aimed at liberating Poland from Russian domination, were accompanied by propaganda campaigns which sought to implant specific images of Russia and the Russians in the public mind. This analysis seeks to recreate those images which are extant in select appeals, manifestos, declarations and miscellaneous pronouncements of those times. In doing so, an attempt is made to answer the question how perceptions of Moscow changed in the views of the Bar Confederates, Kościuszko's insurgents, and those of the forces of the November and January Uprisings, and to identify their fixed and constant elements. The picture was not always absolutely clear-cut because, apart from the predominance of recurring anti-Russian themes, there were also calls for reconciliation addressed to the Russian people.

Keywords: Polish-Russian relations, Polish national uprisings, political propaganda, image of Russia.

The topic under consideration is too broad and multi-faceted to allow for anything more than the most important issues to be flagged in a short article like this. However, in admitting the impossibility of discussing the entire wealth and complexity of the propaganda of the popular uprisings of the XVIII and XIX centuries here, through an analysis of select texts of the insurgents of 1768-1772, 1794, 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, an attempt may be made to recreate the propaganda image of Russia and Russians. To what extent did they differ to the picture of Russia in earlier epochs? Were there and what were its fixed and constant elements? Given the plethora of diversified opinions, did transitory incidental opinions not arise? These are just some of the questions that occur. In searching for answers, what proved useful were both the official documents of the various insurgent authorities (or official documents signed by persons belonging to a given movement's leadership) and – in a certain sense, at the other extreme – the poems and popular songs relating to struggles for

freedom with Russia. These latter testimonies being agitprop compositions aimed at arousing and intensifying the fighting spirit, were an interesting supplement to the more considered pronouncements as reflected in official appeals. Due to the daunting volume of the sources available, I have eschewed the wealth of material that is to be found in popular commentary and satire. For another reason, the works of the great romantic poets have not been taken into considerations. Their creativity, which on many an occasion had undeniable propaganda impact, belongs to an entirely different category of influence.

By the XVI and XVII centuries, a clear picture of Russia and Russians had already begun to take shape in Polish opinions and writings. The fluctuating character of the relations that obtained between the Polish Commonwealth and Moscow was reflected not only in the armed conflicts that flared up, but also in contacts of a peaceful nature which allowed for observations of the cultural differences and the different mentalities of these two neighbours. The Muscovite state, growing in strength, albeit – as it seemed – still far off (and hence not a threat) and alien, engendered disdain in Poland. It was the haughty attitude of a people who considered themselves to be of a superior and different culture and religion, in comparison with a people who did not speak Latin. The Polish Commonwealth of nobles enjoying the benefits of freedom and democracy, representing the “bulwark of Christianity”, was counterpoised against the barbaric and benighted Muscovites toiling under the cruel yoke of tyrants.

Mikołaj Rej portrayed Russian peasants as stupid and cunning, liars and cheats. Wespazjan Kochowski wrote with disdain about perfidious Rus, about the “Jew-headed Muscovites” and called Moscow a “poisonous harpy”. Waclaw Potocki spoke haughtily of the “Muscovite hoi polloi”, of their tendency to drunkenness and the obsequious servility of its citizens to the tsar¹.

Literary works containing opinions about Russia and its people, even if they didn't have the character of propaganda in the strict sense of the word, influenced the perception of Moscow as an Asiatic domain lying beyond the pale of European civilisation. It is significant how great a weight the Russians themselves attached to their own image in Europe and how they monitored the popular commentaries on their subject that appeared in political literature and *belles lettres*. The tsar's advisory body ‘Posolsky Prikaz’, which drafted, assessed and approved laws and reforms, had an Envoy Division; this was the central office dealing with foreign relations and alliances, and which had a school of translators attached to it. From the mid-XVII century, in the period of intensified interest in Poland, that is where all available foreign documents, notably those issued by the Polish Sejm (parliament) were translated into Russian. Moreover, Russian diplomats painstakingly monitored

1 J. St. Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajow w dawnej Polsce wiek XVI-XVIII*, Warsaw [1933], p. 117; J. Tazbir, *Rosjanie w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX w.*, in: *Między Wschodem a Zachodem. Rzeczpospolita XVI-XVIII w. Studia ofiarowane Zbigniewowi Wójcikowi w siedemdziesiąt rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by T. Chynczewska-Hennel, Warsaw 1993, p. 252.

Polish popular commentaries and circumstantial poetry. Russian officials compiled lists of works containing messages unfavourable to Russia and would intervene demanding punishment for their authors. An early victim of this external censorship was the poem *Władysław IV* penned by Samuel Twardowski; the Muscovite diplomat and envoy to Poland Grigorij Pushkin wrote out all the fragments recognised to be insulting to the tsarist state, and under pressure of outraged Russian officials, the Polish court ordered all available editions of this poem to be burned. This, of course, boosted popular demand for this work, and the entire print-run was immediately snapped up by the Poles².

Those incursions of Moscow, which were visibly ever growing in strength in the second half of the XVII century, into the internal affairs of the Polish Commonwealth, which was a clearly waning power in the international arena, were a prelude to the subsequent activities of Russian censorship. It may be asked to what extent Polish commentary and literary works dealing with Russia had a propaganda character. Without going into semantics over the issue of what may be defined as propaganda, it may surely be recognised that the answer was provided by the Russians themselves. Their fears of the spread of an unfavourable image of Moscow in Poland and beyond is confirmed by the real or imagined Russian perception of the opinion-forming role of Polish writings.

The picture of Russians as seen by the Poles assumed greater definition in the period of crystallisation of the modern Polish nation; it came at a time of intensifying aggressive interference in Poland's internal affairs by her neighbours, which culminated in her partitions, which, understandably, elicited insurrectionary reactions. One of the more important factors shaping national self-awareness in Poland was the need to define oneself in relation to Russia ("self-definition through counter-opposition"). It was against that, the Russian practise of statecraft, that militated Poles in defence of their sovereignty and drove them to successive uprisings.

The first of these was the Confederacy of Bar which lasted for four and a half years (from 29 February 1768 to 18 August 1772). Admired by the romantics as an uprising against Russian domination, its assessments by subsequent generations were mixed and varied, depending on whether one saw in it more a struggle in defence of "the golden freedom" aimed against reforms, or war of a national character³. In the

2 Cf. S. I. Nicolaev, *Polskajapoezija w russkich pieriewodach. Wtoraja połowina XVII – pierwaja triet'XVIII wieka*, Leningrad 1989, pp. 32-34.

3 According to Kazimierz Brodziński, the Confederates of Bar were "the avengers of the fatherland oppressed by Muscovites" (quoted after: M. Janion, *Barska poezja romantyczna*, in *Gorączka romantyczna*, Gdańsk 2007, second edition, p. 245). Writing in the second half of the 20th century, this historian, who was critical of the Confederates, appreciated its significance for the national cause: "It was a riot of the nobility, it had a reactionary ideology, it could be said it belonged to the anarchic past of the nobility. And yet it exuded features of struggle against foreign political control and domination. It was however, in Tyniec, Lanckorona and Częstochowa, a war of national character. Those who hazily thought – in the ranks of the Confederates otherwise than in the old Wettin times – of that independence of the nobility from Russia, were the precursors of the later uprisings – warriors for independence. In the fighting, the Poles met with Sovorov for the first time. The second time was

course of countless battles and skirmishes, some of them conducted in the name of independence, in an undeclared war of several years' duration with Russia, the mentality of its participants changed and sparked the evolution of Polish national consciousness in its recognisable modern guise. The Confederates sustained painful sacrifices. Thousands of them died in battle or as deportees to Siberian penal colonies, not to speak of other repressions as for example the confiscation of property. The Confederation of Bar thereby passed into the tradition of struggles for independence opening at once the era of national uprisings (1768-1864).

The long period of struggles and their scope were an unprecedented phenomenon. The Confederacy's literature could be regarded as a no less interesting phenomenon. In the rich circumstantial-political creativity of the XVIII century, the writings of the Bar Confederates were quite distinctive. Usually anonymous, they combined "the folklore of the nobility" and elements of Sarmatian culture with strains of Polish baroque⁴. Understandably, the plentiful political literature of the Confederates invariably referred to Russia. The Polish-Russian clash and the sorry state of the Poles was expressed by the author of *Treny nad upadkiem Ojczyzny 1768 roku napisanych* (*Laments on the fall of the Fatherland of 1768*) in the following way: "That nation, free to date, famed for its liberties, now jangles the chains of slavery / That nation, previously undefeated, now lies held down by Moscow's petty hand"⁵.

Strictly political strands as well as references to moral and religious issues can be found in the poems and dramas, dialogues or other texts dealing with Russia and Russians. The tsarina Catherine and prince Nicolai Repnin, the Russian ambassador to Warsaw, figured pre-eminently among the villains portrayed in the creative output of the Bar Confederacy's supporters. This was to be most readily typified in the dramatic genre mockingly dubbed "Przemocki" (from the word 'przemoc' meaning violence). The ambassador and his liege found their way into the satirical poem *Zdania o królu, senatorach, carowej, Replinie i dysydentach anno 1768 diebus aprilis* (*Notes on the king, senators, the tsarins, Repnin and dissidents, April 1768 A.D.*): "Who is it this tsarina her highness? / The tsarina her highness is a hag..." "Who is this prince Repnin?... He is Luther and Calvin's old clapped out nag"⁶. The hated Russian ambassador was the favourite object of jibes, and in the propaganda literature of the time, his name was richly adorned with epithets like "dogcatcher" and "scoundrel". In the poem *Do posła rosyjskiego tyrana* (*To the Russian tyrant's envoy*) he was the worst in the pecking order of a sordid lot – "after other swine – come the Muscovites" – for whom the death knell is approaching. We read on further in the same work that "For the Russian feast for your lady / Mad on meat,

during the famous slaughter of Praga in 1794..." (T. Łepkowski, *Polska – narodziny nowoczesnego narodu 1764-1870*, second edition, Poznań 2003, p. 163).

4 *Literatura konfederacji barskiej*, ed. by J. Maciejewski, vol. 1: *Dramaty*, Warsaw 2005, pp. 20-21 (Foreword).

5 Quoted after A. Kępiński, *Lach i Moskal. Z dziejów stereotypu*, Warsaw-Kraków 1990, p. 66.

6 *Literatura konfederacji barskiej...*, J. Maciejewski ed., vol. 3: *Wiersze*, Warsaw 2008, pp. 233-234.

you will make ham out of your own body”⁷. Elsewhere, Catherine was described as a “spunky strumpet”.

Apart from making fun of the enemy, there was also no shortage of dire warnings addressed to Moscow in Confederate literature, which differed in tone to the satirical works. Here is an example: “Don’t dice with God, o power of Moscow!... You who would presume to give us laws and faith / Consign to perdition, crush, despoil Poland, plunder, her / Bring about schism, make sacrifice of different faiths / And bribe unvirtuous Poles. / For what are the miracles that God works now: / Know that your monarch will be surprised”. The threatening tone against Russia assumed by those Poles who “have already begun to fight”, was accompanied, significantly, by the awareness that the game was being played with a mighty opponent⁸. This struck a more portentous note than the one sounded in the already mentioned *Laments over the fall of the Fatherland* that spoke of “the petty hand of Muscovy”.

The author of the drama *Tragedyja druga z dwunastu osób pryncypalniejszych wszczęta* (*The Second Tragedy commenced by twelve more important persons*), enumerated the activities of Russia that were destructive of Poland. “Absolutist Moscow... has decreed new laws”, “has violated our freedom”, “has humbled the Roman faith”⁹. It is usually assumed that religious motives were what differentiated the military-patriotic literature of the Confederates from the creativity of the Kościuszko era, of the Legions of Napoleonic times or of the insurgents of 1830 and 1863. As we shall see below, one should sooner talk about different proportions because, in the writings of the three great uprisings that were to follow, there were also far from seldom references to religious issues.

The above examples of anonymous Confederate creativity more often than not illustrate the folklore and over-emotional politicking of the nobles in their serried ranks rather than the political calculations of their leaders. More considered and deliberate tones are to be found in official Confederate appeals. In regard of the official documents, attention may be drawn to the message addressed to the Russian forces. On 7 March 1768, one of the Confederate leaders, Michał Hieronim Krasiński, published a *Manifesto to the Russians*. In it we read: “We hereby declare unto the Russian forces and the Muscovite, Baltic, Cossack and Kalmuk estates, that, as of long standing, the community of the Slavic nations, allies and unites us... that we wish to stand with them as friends and comrades in amity and in defence of the old national faith, and jointly we shall help each other, and this we want to do; we shall sacrifice our lives and fortunes for the preservation of that faith, we appeal for their recognition of that mutual and indubitable amity of theirs towards us and their neighbourly and friendly disposition as enshrined in treaties, for their voluntary withdrawal from our countries”. The author condemned the “dissident faction” and declared

7 *Literatura barska (antologia)*, J. Maciejewski ed., second supplemented edition, Wrocław 1976, pp. 290-291.

8 *Poezja barska*, K. Kolbuszewski ed., Kraków 1928, p. 49.

9 Quoted after T. Sucharski, “Rosja wchodzi w polskie wiersze” – obraz Rosjanina w literaturze polskiej, in: *Katalog wzajemnych uprzedzeń Polaków i Rosjan*, A. de Lazari ed., Warsaw 2006, p. 96.

himself to be the defender of “our Roman Catholic and their Greek national faith”. The idea behind this propaganda message proved counterproductive. Not only did the Manifesto not produce the expected positive response, it enraged Catherine II even more, and led the Russian forces to escalate the pressure on the Confederates which brought in train further defeats in successive skirmishes¹⁰. That failure, however, should not obscure the significance of the message contained in the idea of a Slavic alliance, which is to recur (at times in demonstrative form) in the declarations of the uprisings to come.

Amicable words about the Russians in Confederate writings were the exception. In official writings, as in commentaries and in poetry, the predominant picture was that of the potency with which war was being waged over the most important issues. In a leaflet of 1769, there was reference to Peter the Great, “the founder of Russia’s immeasurable greatness”, whose ambition to rule in Europe, “to Poland’s great misfortune”, ran through Poland. These intentions were continued by Peter’s successors, and the deed was done by “(she) who sits on the throne today” who wanted to surpass him. There is also reference to the “poison” and “duplicity” of Moscow, to Repnin’s tyranny and “the Muscovite ambition which now could not even stand the term freedom of Poland”¹¹.

Russia was referred to in a far more toned down fashion in Confederate texts meant for foreign consumption, in documents of a diplomatic character. This tendency can be seen in utterances from the period of revived hopes of Turkish support for the Confederates, and in the later period when the Russo-Turkish war actually flared up. In one of those letters to the Crimean khan Krim Girej of August 1768, we find the following assessment of Russian intentions: “Through the destruction of our rights, Moscow wishes to conquer the whole of Europe and if this Power succeeds in its intentions in Poland, and if Faith and Freedom are wiped out, its resultant consequences will be the destruction of belief in the ability of the Ottoman Porte to survive and the fear that the conquest of the whole of the Eastern country is at hand”¹². The ensuing treaty of the Bar Confederates with the Khan (December 1768) speaks of “damage wrought on Poland by Moscow” and about “Muscovites oppressing our homeland, in breach of laws and treaties”, while a memorandum from bishop Adam Krasiński addressed to the French minister cardinal E. T. Choiseul, contains an announcement of a forthcoming manifesto with “an explanation of the political wrongs suffered by the nation and placing before the eyes of the whole world the public and private wrongs done by Russia”¹³. We see that Confederate politicians were capable of telling the world about Russia’s activities with the help

10 *Konfederacja barska. Wybór tekstów*, S. Sierpowski ed., annotated by W. Konopczyński, first edition, Wrocław 2010, pp. 17-18.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 188-191.

12 Quoted after A. Nowak, *Poligony i służby imperialnej polityki: między Barem, Krymem, Kaukazem i kazachskim stepem*, in: *idem, Ofiary, imperia i historycy. Studium przypadków (od XVIII do XXI wieku)*, Kraków 2009, p. 71.

13 *Konfederacja barska. Wybór...*, pp. 26, 27, 25.

of facts and arguments lying in the legal-political domain; they sought to demonstrate that the denial of human rights was a universal problem.

For another reason the last manifesto of the General Council of 26 November 1773 is noteworthy in that it opens with words describing the drama of the situation: "Poland finally falls". It would be impossible to analyse here the whole of this voluminous manifesto. What is of significance for the purposes of these reflections is its fragment concerning the spread of information, and hence on issues associated with propaganda. Towards the end of the manifesto, its authors wrote that: "We enjoin our dear co-citizens to ensure that, as far as it may lie in their power, they should try to spread this protest everywhere and enter it into all official acts wherever they possibly can, but above all, we enjoin them to press it deep into their hearts..."¹⁴.

The question occurs as regards the efficacy of the propaganda of the Confederate camp. It is difficult to give an unequivocal answer but it is possible to attempt some sort of evaluation of the efforts of the Confederates that were aimed at influencing public opinion.

In his exhaustive monograph on the Confederacy of Bar, Władysław Konopczyński relayed the opinions of contemporaries – mostly critical – on the topic of the Confederates' propaganda. The criticism was that "The General Council is telling the nation too little about itself, and with insufficient skill". Out of the hundreds of leaflets, appeals, official manifestoes, as well as circumstantial poems and songs, among others religious ones, in the opinion of the author of *Konfederacja barska (The Bar Confederacy)*, barely one tenth of them appeared in print contemporaneously. Printing presses were in the hands of the king and religious orders which, *nota bene*, also affected Russian envoys who were deprived of the opportunity to publish their counter-propaganda rejoinders. The Confederates, however, hired small print shops, for example in Częstochowa and Piotrków, and could also print their missives unhindered in Silesia or Hungary. Thus technical difficulties, as well as the insufficient level of awareness of the power of the printed word, caused failure to attend to the need to supply potential readers regular press information. Comments on sins of omission on the home market did not extend to foreign publications. In this field, Confederate politicians showed themselves to be more resourceful. Due to her political interests, France was more propitiously inclined towards the Confederates, which found reflection in the press (notably "Gazette de France"). Moreover, a consistent supporter of the Confederates was the "Kurier Augsburski" (Augsburg Courier)¹⁵.

It is not the purpose of this sketch to assess the credibility of the Confederate publications and the level of sophistication of their propaganda. W. Konopczyński and subsequent authors wrote about the braggadocio, tissues of lies and disinformation applied by the Confederates which went beyond typical propaganda practice¹⁶.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

15 Cf. W. Konopczyński, *Konfederacja barska*, vol. 2, Warsaw 1991, pp. 850-853; quote from p. 851.

16 *Ibid.*, *passim*; J. Michalski, *Schylek konfederacji barskiej*, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków 1970, pp. 22-25.

Literature of low intellectual quality and bereft of good taste should not be ignored however, because it constitutes interesting research material for studies associated with the prevailing mentality and opinions of the time. And the expressed opinions that crystallised then yield a very concrete picture of Russia which appeared in Confederate propaganda. The course of history was to ensure that the vision of a dangerous, powerful, absolutist and perfidious Moscow which is plundering and trampling Polish freedom and profaning the Roman Catholic faith, was to lodge in the Polish psyche and long outlast the political factions and parties that first conjured it up. This was already to become apparent in 1794.

The Kościuszko Insurrection was the only national uprising that fought against two partitioning powers – Russia and Prussia – simultaneously. It had the greatest territorial scope and though it lasted less than eight months (from 24 March to 16 November 1794), organisationally, it managed to encompass the entire country with insurgent operations. What distinguished the rising of 1794 was the well organised network of propaganda-information agencies. Upon setting up its central authorities – the Supreme National Council – a propaganda dissemination system was then set in place. This was the Division of National Instruction attached to the Supreme National Council, which had a network of subordinate outposts in the field which combined propaganda and educational tasks. The official press mouthpiece of the Council was the “Gazeta Rządowa” (Government Gazette). Led by Ksawery Dmochowski, the Division of National Instruction also had at its disposal numerous printing presses and an efficient liaison system¹⁷. In spite of that, as rightly pointed out by a researcher of the issue, the insurgent authorities did not manage to work out a uniform propaganda policy line. The appeals of Kościuszko, the leaders of the uprising in Lithuania, or the authorities in Warsaw, differed among themselves¹⁸. It seems, however, that this reservation has smaller application to insurgent concerns with Russia itself than to other issues. The watchword: ‘Moscow’ (as well as Muscovites) more often than not had unifying, convergent effect rather than divisive and divergent, in the insurgent camp.

What is the image of Russia and Russians that emerges from the propaganda of the Kościuszko Insurrection? Let us start with the official documents of the Insurrection.

In his proclamations and appeals, Tadeusz Kościuszko portrayed the Russian enemy and their conduct in a very concrete way, often referring back to past events. And thus the Manifesto of Połaniec of 7 May 1794, contains a reference, rarely quoted by historians, to the Russians as: “a cunning enemy employing deceit, treachery and every trick in the book.” Kościuszko went on to declare that “the whole course of Muscovite tyranny in Poland is proof of to what degree every underhanded outrage

17 M. Jaeger, *Działalność propagandowo-informacyjna władz powstańczych (1794, 1830-1831, 1863-1864)*, Lublin 2002, *passim*; A. Woltanowski, *Z dziejów propagandy insurekcji kościuszkowskiej w Warszawie*, “Rocznik Warszawski”, R. IX: 1969, p. 31-62.

18 A. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *Wolność w propagandzie powstania kościuszkowskiego*, in *Kościuszko – powstanie 1794 r. – tradycja. Materiały z sesji naukowej w 200-lecie powstania kościuszkowskiego 15-16 kwietnia 1994 r.*, J. Kowecki ed., Warsaw 1997, p. 27.

ever conceived, tossed our fate – bribery, seductive promises, flattery, pandering to superstitions, stoking up passions, inciting people against one another, besmirching everything in the eyes of others – all wedded to the most perfidious cunning that the fury of hell had ever devised.” Further reference was made to “cunning Muscovite intrigues” with the Russians described as “a nation of brigands”. Kościuszko made it known “to national opinion that the Russians are seeking ways of inciting the rural population against us”, counterpoising the common people’s penury against their more auspicious future under the aegis of Moscow and against the venal arbitrariness of the nobility. “In doing so, they encourage and allow the rural population to pillage and plunder country houses.” It is also worth drawing attention to the last of the Manifesto’s 14 recommendations addressed to the standing committees operating throughout the whole country: “The clergy of both rites will hereby proclaim it (the Manifesto) from the pulpits in the Catholic and Orthodox churches continuously for the next four Sundays” and that the Manifesto should be read out in every village and parish¹⁹. This fragment sheds light on the organisation of insurgent propaganda and on Kościuszko’s appreciation of the need “to enlighten the common people”.

Kościuszko’s diligence in disseminating information and his efforts to win for the national cause all social strata is also visible in the appeal *To the Polish Uniate clergy, both monastic and secular*. In this appeal, he took pains to present Russia in a way that took into account the specific nature of the would-be recipients of this propaganda, the Orthodox clergy, Kościuszko wrote: “that the throne of the Muscovite state founded on violence and annexation, on crime and duplicity, offends the world with its lawlessness and inhuman persecution of people and nations, forever appealing to sacred religious belief and its priests to support them in their godlessness... That’s right, priests! You, together with the whole of the common people, are the slaves of Moscow, but with us you will be priests who are respected... Therefore unite your hearts with the Poles who seek to defend your freedom and their own...”²⁰.

Simultaneously, the *Appeal of Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Supreme Commander of the national armed forces to the citizens, the inhabitants of the city of Warsaw* was proclaimed. The message to the townspeople was prefaced by the invocation “citizens!” In addressing the population of the capital city, Kościuszko stressed that not only did they not fail him, but their courage... and “attachment to freedom” exceeded his expectations. Calling upon them to stand by in the spirit of courage, he, as their commander, he promised them victory over the enemy; but, as graphically illustrated in other instances, the people were not fooled for “Despite so many betrayals, despite treacherous intrigues hatched at home and abroad, you crushed numerically powerful enemy forces, you avenged by blood the countless wrongs and injustices wrought on us by Catherine-the-cruel’s base henchmen, you have liberated

19 *Akty powstania Kościuszki*, 1.1, part 1: *Protokóły i dzienniki Rady Zastępczej Tymczasowej i Rady Najwyższej Narodowej*, Sz. Askenazy, W. Dzwonkowski eds., Kraków 1918, pp. 220-224.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 261-262 (appeal of 7 May 1794).

the capital of the shackles put on you by an alien soldier... Remember that our war is a war unto death against the tyranny of Moscow; either, through our virtue and courage, we liberate ourselves from these chains, or the cruelty of Moscow, which exceeds in its severity anything that we have ever read of the greatest tyrants in the annals of humanity, shall leave none of us alive"²¹. It is noticeable that insofar as Russia was depicted in all of Kościuszko's utterances in the same way (for example, the term "tyranny of Moscow" recurs repeatedly), they were nuanced depending on their target group of recipients. The thrust of propaganda in this appeal, addressed to townspeople (and not only those of Warsaw because it came with the exhortation: "Hear this appeal my brothers, and relay it to the citizens of all Polish and Lithuanian towns") was clearly aimed at an audience perceived to have been more sophisticated, more aware of the general situation and with a better understanding of Poland's situation.

A different type of issue was that of wooing enemy Russian and Prussian soldiers over to the insurgents' side. Appeals were addressed to them, encouraging them to desert and choose Poland as an oasis of freedom. It was written about Russians who enlisted in the Polish army that "they swore to share with us the benefits of freedom or sweet death for their new fatherland"²². This thread, which entailed the call for a chivalrous and generous approach to the enemy and giving help to Russian prisoners of war, fits into the wish to search for "another Russia" and "Muscovite friends".

The Supreme National Council's appeal *To the citizens of Poland and Lithuania on the occasion of higher Muscovite declarations* issued on 27 June 1794, is an interesting document. It is an example of polemics with enemy propaganda. Its preface speaks of: "Shameless declarations of Prince Nicolai Repnin and Serge Golitsyn, generals of the Muscovite tsarina, upon the entry of her armies into Lithuania and Poland in the last few days of May of the current year. The standard practice of more than several years' standing is that every invasion of the Polish Commonwealth's territory by Moscow is preceded by slander, cant and hypocrisy... Has Moscow the right to call independent Poles rebels because they do not subordinate themselves to Moscow's stratagems and violations of treaties which it itself had forced on Poland and which are repugnant to the nation and appalling to Europe? Is it fit for Moscow to accuse the Polish nation of treachery aimed at her?" Further there is speech of "besmirching the nation", of duplicity, false declarations and empty promises addressed by Russia to Poles. The authors of the appeal warned against giving credence to Russian assurances. "Let neither the nobility nor rural folk be fooled by the false hopes engendered by Muscovite declarations". It ends with the rhetorical question: "Should you not rather believe your kith and kin, your defenders, your brothers, than the alien violators, enemies of the name itself of the Polish nation?"²³. A robust characteristic of the "Muscovite" and the determined response

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 177-178 (appeal of 8 May 1794).

22 Quoted after A. Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, *op. cit.*, p. 57

23 *Akta powstania Kościuszki...*, pp. 366-368.

to enemy propaganda in the shape of torrid but at the same time well-founded polemics, once again reveals the scale of the implacable struggle with Russia that was also waged in this field of conflict.

Poets also joined in that propaganda war during the Kościuszko Insurrection. The national cause was propagated in poetry, predominantly anonymous, usually in a lighter and more accessible form than was the case in official documents. The *CITIZEN'S POEM on the occasion of Igelstrom's letter to the Minister of War in which he invokes God and the good cause of his Monarch, 1794* (*WIERSZ OBYWATELSKI z okazji listu Igelstróma do Ministra Wojennego, w którym odwołuje się do Boga i dobrej sławy Monarchini swojej 1794 r*) deserves attention²⁴. This work is of a polemical character and, as in the case of the appeal of the Supreme National Council quoted above, it was composed in response to the pronouncements of that Russian dignitary. The poem opens with an invocation couched in tones of the utmost gravity and pathos, calling upon God in witness of Russian lawlessness and slanders: "God! Your sanctity is being traduced by a blasphemer / Calling himself just according to his own lights / But futile is the sacrilegious tongue in which he calls upon you: / You are the God of the oppressed, not the accomplice of violence". Further, there is an enumeration of the criminal activities of Russia against Poland since the times of the Wettin dynasty up to 1794 ("Who was the first in breach of the holy order of nations / To enter in arms the land of others and infect it with lawlessness?") the Russian policy of intervention, the Radom Confederacy, the imprisonment and deportation of the opposition's senators on Repnin's orders, the incitement to war, plunder, intrigues, the cruelties of Drevitch committed on hostages, the partitions of Poland, the Sejm (Parliament) of Grodno, the invigilation and persecution of the population of Warsaw by Igelstrom's secret police. This litany of woes reflected its author's perception of Russia as she was in the recent past and contemporaneously. This poem is suggestive through its aggregation of issues – accusing Moscow and its ruthless ruler of every manner of depredation. The epithets, aimed at concrete facts and specific dishonest personages, are not of a generalised character; they do not extend to the whole of Russian society which is frequently the case in campaigning propaganda.

The regular recurrence of the technique of counterpoising positive heroes (the Poles, Kościuszko) against sordid villains (the Russians, Catherine II) is also much in evidence. This can be seen in both humorous and tragic verse. For example, an author of perhaps not the greatest of talent wrote: "O furious Muscovite, / While you are blinded so, / ... Fate augurs that your pelt will be scarred / by Kościuszko, the scourge of God". Then came a facetious rhyme tinged with regret composed at the tail end of the Insurrection: "Our Kościuszko was famous, / He beat the Ruskies well; / We no longer have Kościuszko, / We won't manage ourselves". One of

²⁴ *Poezja powstania kościuszkowskiego*, edited by J. Nowak-Dłużewski, Kielce 1946, pp. 69-70; quotes taken from this source.

the insurgents' epigrams (borrowing from a popular Polish folk song) proclaimed: "A red apple – that's our man Kościuszko, / And the pine-nut – that's the Empress"²⁵.

Kościuszko's war against the Muscovites was the theme of songs and ditties rallying the people to do battle. In the folk song (or at least styled so) *Pobudka krakusów* (*Reveille of the Cracovian cavalry*) of 1794, the enemy was treated with humour and a touch of disdain. "Let us all now beat the Ruskies / they have laboured long enough! / Let us teach the satrap's fodder, / That there's spirit in Poles too; / With our scythes we'll rub your noses.... God will yet smile on us agin, / Let's not spare our fists on them; / There's five fingers to a hand, / So beat well the upstart band"²⁶.

The Cossacks fighting in Kościuszko's ranks sang a song to the same tune which was partly a translation of the Polish version, but with significant adaptations and new, somewhat blood-curdling, verses: "Let's go lively to Kościuszko, / we'll be chopping down the Ruskies. / They have taken lands of ours / Why have they put us in chains? / They have shamed our wives and daughters / Come let's rip their guts out". Both versions enumerated the harm suffered by the people at the hands of the Russians. The song is an incitement for revenge. The attitude to the enemy, like in the Polish version, is expressed in the announcement that "As for the Muscovite detachments / We shall slaughter the scumbags" ending in the call: "We'll not let the Muscovites take us". A significant fresh motif was the presentation of the social problem (which was also to be found in the Polish text), but in the Ukrainian version it referred to the Ukrainian question. The exhortation to fight under Kościuszko's banner tied in with the guarantees given by the insurgent authorities that "The nobles give us freedom / and recognise us as a people, / Our Archirei (Orthodox bishop) is already in the Senate, / While we're still rotting in our hovels"²⁷. This text, unmistakably agitating for rebellion, could not have been a coincidence. It clearly revealed that an important aim of insurgent politics and propaganda was to draw all social strata and nationalities into the war with the common foe – Russia. That is why, too, attempts were made to explain to people the significance of the unfolding events and to appeal to them in a simple and comprehensible way.

Like in the writings of the Confederates of Bar, in the pronouncements of 1794, Russia is painted as being implacably hostile to the Polish Commonwealth both in the past (as seen in historical references) and in the contemporaneous period to the insurgents. In both periods, the tsarina Catherine II was presented as the embodiment of evil. Kościuszko wrote about the "cruel Catherine", and the poets of the insurrection called her the "tyrant of the north", "the treacherous tsarina", "witch" and other such endearments. Repnin, Golitsyn and Igelstrom were painted in equally dark colours. The Russian state was described in these writings as "treacherous Moscow", and Russians as "greedy Muscovites", "a cunning nation, extreme by nature". The lan-

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7, 96, 86.

26 *Powstanie kościuszkowskie. Zbiór pieśni i poezji poprzedzony zarysem historii powstania*, A. Belcikowska ed., Warsaw 1931, pp. 41, 43.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

guage describing Russian policy towards Poland was replete with references to “the most arrant despotism”, “treachery”, “violence”, “cruelty”, “brute force”, “oppression” and “tyranny”. The Poles were put in “chains”, “bonds”, “a shameful yoke”, “the disgusting yoke of slavery”, “slavery worse than under the Turks”²⁸. It should be noted that, in principle, there were no differences in the themes of the anti-Russian propaganda produced by the various groupings. For example, one of the leading Polish Jacobins, Jakub Jasiński, in his poem *DO EGZULANTÓW POLSKICH. O stałości (To Polish Exiles. On steadfastness)* wrote of the “ill-fated Poland whom today the Muscovite has muzzled harshly.” And about “the doggedly ferocious Muscovites paying for their invasion in blood”²⁹. The Supreme Commander of the Insurrection and others (frequently unknown by name), expressed themselves in the same vein, using very similar formulations.

The Kościuszko Insurrection’s propaganda rounded off and consolidated the picture of Moscow received in bequest of the Bar Confederates; the image was now lucid and popularly shared. Overlooking for the moment the issue of the effectiveness of propaganda activities as a whole, which did leave much to be desired, one may risk the assertion that in relation to Russian issues, the strength of its impact on public opinion was remarkable. Paradoxically, the Russians themselves contributed to this since facts like for example the ‘slaughter of Praga’ needed no anti-Russian propaganda to etch themselves into the collective memory with the worst imaginable connotations. The image of a powerful and hostile Russia, which at the same time was not invincible and could be defeated, was the bequest of the propaganda activities of the insurgents of 1794.

The strategy employed in the November Uprising of 1830 differed from that of the Kościuszko Insurrection in that no special body dealing with propaganda affairs was ever set up. To be sure, in the ten month period of fighting (from 29 November 1830 to 5 October 1831), various political centres did embark on propaganda initiatives – the Sejm (Parliament), the National Government, the Commander-in-Chief – but they were uncoordinated and of an ad hoc nature representing on more than one occasion a panoply of diverse opinions. Overall, the civil and military administrations engaged in agitprop to a very small degree. No official press organ was ever set up in spite of the fact that it was very much needed. Considerable services in the field of propaganda-information activities were rendered by the clergy which supported the uprising to a large degree. One can only speak of the propaganda

28 Cf.: *Poezja powstania kościuszkowskiego...*, *passim*; A. Grześkowiak-Krawicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39. It is worth juxtaposing the description of Catherine II as the “tyrant of the north” with Voltaire’s description of her as the “Semiramide of the North”. (On the adoration of Peter I and Catherine II by the western philosophers of the Enlightenment see: M. Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes. From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1990, pp. 42-59). It should be added that for obvious reasons the descriptions of the tsars as Peter the Great and Catherine the Great, as found in the West, did not take root in Polish tradition and literature.

29 *Świat poprawiać – zuchwałę rzemiosło. Antologia poezji polskiego oświecenia*, T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński eds., Warsaw 1981, pp. 334, 335.

successes of the November Uprising in the context of its impact on foreign public opinion and winning its support. In the assessment of a specialist in this problem area “the organisation of propaganda abroad was exemplary”³⁰.

Irrespective of its quality and weak organisational coordination, November Uprising propaganda did exist, especially (what is obvious due to the identity of the enemy) in relation to Russia.

In the official documents of the insurgents, tsar Nicolas I tended to be presented as the embodiment of Russia. The momentous parliamentary act of his dethronement, passed at a combined sitting of both chambers on 25 January 1831, was couched in unequivocal, balanced and, one might add, even diplomatic language: “The fact of its so oft violated liberties releases the Polish nation from the oath of loyalty to its ruler as of today... The Polish nation in congress in the Sejm declares that it is an independent People and that it has the right to offer the Polish Crown to whomever it sees fit to wear it, and will be able to expect of him with confidence, that the faith and liberties entrusted to his care shall be preserved without impairment”³¹. Hence, news of the tsar’s dethronement and its underlying reasons – his acts of lawlessness, was conveyed with restraint though clearly stated. The restraint that is noticeable in the language of the resolution stemmed from the parliament’s political composition; radicalism here, was out of the question.

In the parliamentary opinions and pronouncements expressed in the initial phase of the Uprising, besides formal accusations levelled against the monarch, evident care was taken to distinguish between satrap and subject, as can be seen in the following statement: “We were not motivated by any national hatred of the Russians, a great Slavonic people like ourselves”³². The references to Slavism in Polish propaganda in this period will be discussed further below.

A different and far more firm and clear-cut language typified the pronouncements of representatives of the eastern lands which had been detached from the Polish crown and incorporated as provinces of Russia; in their address to the Sejm, they wrote about Russian violence and force and “the Russian Autocrat who has forced his *ukases* (diktats) upon us”³³.

A poetic commentary to the parliamentary act of 25 January 1831 was published by Stefan Garczyński in his poem *Na dzień detronizacji (On dethronement day)* which opens with the triumphant cry “The crown adorns his head no more! / His

30 M. Jaeger, *op. cit.*, p. 262. Cf. Sz. Askenazy, *Zabiegi dyplomatyczne polskie 1830-1831*, “Biblioteka Warszawska”, vol. 3, 1905.

31 Cf. Akt Sejmowy Detronizacji, in *Dyaryusz Sejmu z r. 1830-1831*, published by M. Rostworowski, vol. 1, Kraków 1907, pp. 243-244.

32 Cf. “Manifest obu Izb Sejmowych Królestwa Polskiego. Wskutek uchwały z dnia 20. Grudnia wydany”, in *Dyaryusz Sejmu z r. 1830-1831*, p. 63.

33 Address of the representatives of the Eastern Lands, Volhynia, Podolia and Ukraine to the United Chambers of the Sejm of the Kingdom of 22 January 1831, published in *Powstanie listopadowe w dokumentach i pamiątkach biblioteki Polskiej w Paryżu*, Cz. Chowaniec, I. Gałęzowska ed., London 1952, item 173.

temples are shorn of the stolen gold / the Polish warrior is knocking the sceptre out of his hand". Garczyński wrote in elation of the "(Russian) eagle's talons" being drawn and "the tsar of the North" being banished and replaced by "the sceptre of freedom of the nation", and predicted a happy future for the peoples "when the world will be transformed into one family"³⁴.

The authors of patriotic song and verse, frequently anonymous, more often than not spoke of the Muscovites in a straightforward and unequivocal manner. Their message was aimed at a catholic audience – usually, a call to arms, not infrequently they called for revenge. The radicalism of many-a-piece shows that they were spawned in revolutionary circles. This could be seen in the *March of the Lithuanians of 1830*. Here is a fragment: "The treacherous Muscovite has flexed his muscles / to destroy our tribe, / He took us under his reign and yoke. / He tears to pieces Polish lands. / In vengeful hands / grab hold of arms / the tyrant's power will be no more; / Fight and sing of freedom, / And victory is ours"³⁵. In the lesser known further verses of *Warszawianka (The Varsovienne)* reference was made to history: "Arise Kościuszko! Strike the devious heart, / which by promise of mercy dares to mislead, / And the bloodbath of Praga / was that the murderer's merciful act?" and gave out the rallying cry: "For, oh Pole, the fight is fierce, / The proud tsar must fall"³⁶.

Apart from the uplifting strands in the poetry of the November Uprising, there were also those aimed at ridiculing the enemy. The lively song to the words of Wincenty Pol with the opening line: "The cannons roaring at Stoczek", has a light and lively lilt. Its hero is general Józef Dwernicki, who "leading from the front / Rides hard at the Muscovite all by himself" who is then relieved by the Krakus cavalry whom he greets with the cry: "Come give the Muscovite a seeing to (translator's note: the word used is 'trzepać' which means beat, for example as in beat a carpet, but it has a wide variety of facetious colloquial applications), / Because Poland has risen today!" Those brave lads have captured and are leading "four cannons and Muscovites like a herd of swine!"³⁷. The obvious aim of this text was to give heart and instil the conviction that after Stoczek other victories would follow, and this links in with the message that the Russians should not be feared since they can be defeated. Presenting the enemy in a supercilious tone was one of the morale-boosting techniques employed by the insurgents.

Acerbic satire was aimed at ridiculing both the hated Muscovites (for example in the ditty by Rajnold Suchodolski dedicated to Arch-duke Constantine titled *Our beloved duke*) and Polish traitors who remained in the enemy's service. The offering under the telling title *The march of spies to the gallows* refers to the latter category of undesirables. Its anonymous author announced an inglorious end for traitors:

34 *Poezja powstania listopadowego*, A. Zieliński ed., Wrocław 1971, pp. 164-165.

35 *Powstanie listopadowe. Zbiór pieśni i poezji poprzedzony zarysem historii powstania (1830-1930)*. A. Bełcikowska, Warsaw 1930, p. 105.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 89-92 (song titled: *Krakusy*).

“Such a death worthy of the life, / let the low down traitors be strangled – / So should perish every knave, / that venally serves Russia”³⁸.

The more hot-headed “harry and slaughter the Muscovite” tendency, as evidenced in the oeuvre *The Twenty Ninth of November*, was by no means exclusive November insurgent propaganda. A completely different note was struck in the friendly approach to the Russian people with its clear emphasis on the common enemy – the tsar and the system of violence oppressing both nations in equal measure. That policy of reconciliation already had its history, and it found reflection in the speeches, appeals and poems on Polish risings for freedom. In them, reference was made to the ties of brotherhood uniting the Slavs. Agitprop initiatives targeted on Russian soldiers were undertaken in the name of Slavonic unity and the solidarity of the peoples (the latter being particularly emphasised in 1794 in reference to the French revolutionary ideology of liberty, fraternity and equality). An important moment was the great street demonstration in honour of the Decembrists organized in Warsaw on 25 January 1831 on the initiative of the Patriotic Society, which forced the decision on dethroning the tsar. The quintessence of these attitudes and tendencies was to be subsumed in the watchword of Joachim Lelewel “for your freedom and ours”³⁹.

This sentiment was propagated in various ways. It was evident in the order of the day of the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces, Michał Radziwiłł, of 22 February 1831, which proclaimed: “Soldiers! The time has come to open our eyes to that tribe of Slavs that is fenced off from European civilization. By the will of the Nation, you will be sent into battle with banners inscribed in two languages “For Your Freedom and Ours”. Carry them before you, tear into the enemy ranks with them, and if the sight of these sacred words does not move Russian hearts, then remember that you are shielding Praga, the same Praga where the ashes of thirty thousand Poles are calling for vengeance”⁴⁰. As can be seen, the author of this message did not harbour exaggerated illusions regarding the amenability of “brother Muscovites” to Polish nostrums. Popular commentaries and poetic exertions resounded in similar conciliatory tones, and they evince disappointment and regret that the idea of Polish-Russian brotherhood fell on deaf ears.

That resounded with particular strength in the famous *Kościuszko Polonaise* of 1831 to the words of Rajnold Suchodolski. In it, the poet made reference not just to Russia, but also to Polish attitudes to slavery. Here is a key fragment of that poem:

38 Both works in S. Latanowicz, *SATYRA i polemika prasowa z przed 100 laty*, Poznań 1931, p. 24.

39 For a more exhaustive discussion of this, cf. A. Nowak, *Kto powiedział, że Moskale są to bracia nas, Lechitów...* (*Idea słowiańskiego pobratymstwa i historia polskiego apelu wolnościowego do Rosjan: 1733-1831*), in *idem*, *Jak rozbić rosyjskie imperium? Idee polityki wschodniej (1733-1921)*, Kraków 1999, second edition, pp. 39-80 and *idem*, *Między carem a rewolucją. Studium politycznej wyobraźni i postaw Wielkiej Emigracji wobec Rosji 1831-1849*, Warsaw 1994. Cf. *Projekt odezwy sejmowej do Rosjan* edited by J. Lelewel, beginning with the words: “Brother Russians!” (in *Polska myśl demokratyczna w ciągu wieków. Antologia*, Warsaw 1986, pp. 109-112). The authorship of the slogan “For your freedom and ours” was attributed by some people to Adam Gurowski (cf. H. Głębocki, “*Diabeł Asmodeusz*” w *niebieskich binoklach i kraj przyszłości. Hr. Adam Gurowski I Rosja*, Kraków 2012, p. 10).

40 *Powstanie listopadowe w dokumentach*, item 243.

“Who said that Muscovites / are brothers of us Lechites. / I’ll be the first to shoot him in the head / in front of the Carmelite church. / Who would preach slothful existence / Our chains, our trampled rights, / I shall rip their traitors’ hearts out / on the unavenged bones of Praga”⁴¹.

Two distinctive basic currents ran through the propaganda of the November Uprising in relation to Russia. One presented our eastern neighbour as Poland’s mortal enemy, and Russians as cruel and savage people who were at a far lower level of civilization than the Poles. This view of Moscow was a continuation of earlier perceptions. In referring to history, especially to preceding risings for freedom, they invoked the whole chain of Russian violence inflicted on Poland which cried out for revenge. The ghosts of past heroes were summoned (Kościuszko), and their memory was celebrated to strengthen the fighting spirit.

The thread of friendship between brother Slavs and the propagation of a common struggle for liberation from the yoke of despotism (which, indeed, did have its tradition too) proved unavailing. The reality of Polish-Russian relations differed diametrically from the Utopian dreams of spokesmen for reconciliation.

The January Uprising lasted from 22 January 1863 (the date military operations commenced) to the end of April 1864 (the end of the fighting of the more notable forest-based detachments). The dating could be subject to dispute because the rising of 1863 was preceded by patriotic demonstrations and, as Tadeusz Łepkowski maintained, “it could be recognized not without justice, that the uprising commenced on 22 February 1861, that is, when the Russians first used arms in the battle with Polish demonstrators in Warsaw.” Łepkowski then took the execution of Romuald Traugutt (the ‘Dictator’ of the Uprising) at the Warsaw Citadel on 5 August 1864, as the symbolic end of the struggle⁴².

An interest in the propaganda aspects of the Uprising prompts acceptance of the extended view regarding the duration of the struggle. As Marek Jaeger argues, the fundamental centres of national power and the organisation of their propaganda agencies took shape before the formal outbreak of the Uprising. In the most clandestine of conspiracies imaginable, the insurgent authorities of 1863 managed to set up the best functioning agitprop apparatus which distinguished itself by the coordination, energy and considerable engagement of those who joined in the enterprise⁴³.

41 *Powstanie listopadowe. Zbiór pieśni...*, p. 75.

42 T. Łepkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

43 Moreover, this author claimed that “The propaganda Of 1863-1864 was to have had a total character. There were organisations in every municipality... National and provincial press was published; the authorities had at their disposal a network of efficiently run printing and lithographic presses; action was efficiently run in Europe using the offices of the Hotel Lambert and resigning from their own organisational plans; the whole was managed by one supervisory body according to uniform principles, which functioned despite the lack of stable Government”. (M. Jaeger, *op. cit.*, p. 109). On Polish propaganda aimed at the West in 1863-1864 cf. W. Jasiakiewicz, *Polska działalność propagandowa w Wielkiej Brytanii w dobie powstania styczniowego w świetle korespondencji, pamiętników, publicystyki i prasy*, Toruń 2001 and M. Wolniewicz, “Niedoszła interwencja humanitarna”. *Barbarzyństwa rosyjskie w polskiej propagandzie (1863-1864)*. (Article in this volume of SDR).

What is the image of Russia and the Russians that emerges from the official documents of the insurgent authorities? On 22 January 1863, the Provisional National Government issued a manifesto in which the commencement of the uprising was announced. Its preamble carried a reference to the forced conscription of young men in an effort to defuse the mounting revolutionary tension: "The despicable government of the invader, enraged by the resistance of its tortured victims, has decided to deliver it a decided blow – to kidnap tens of thousands of the bravest and most passionate of its defenders, put them in the hated Muscovite uniform, and march them off thousands of miles away to eternal penury and perdition". Further in this call to arms addressed to the nations of Poland, Lithuania and Rus (Ukraine) to "hasten to the banners of the White Eagle, the Mounted White Knight and the Archangel" (the national emblems of the three member nations of the Commonwealth). The text ends in a message to the Russians which is sufficiently significant to deserve quoting in full: "And now we speak to you, the Muscovite nation: our traditional watchword is freedom and the brotherhood of the peoples, that is why we forgive you even the murder of our Fatherland, even the blood of Praga and Oszmiany, the violence in the streets of Warsaw and the torture in the dungeons of the Citadel. We forgive you because you too are being pauperised and murdered, with the sad and martyred bodies of your children swinging on the tsarist gallows, with your prophets freezing to death in the snows of Siberia. But if at this decisive hour you do not feel within yourselves anguish for the past and holier desires for the future, if in the trial of strength with us you give support to the tyrant who is killing us, and trampling over you – woe to you! Because by the judgment of God and the whole world, you shall be cursed and sentenced to carry the shame of eternal serfdom and the pain of eternal slavery, and will be challenged to a terrible fight unto annihilation; the final battle of European civilisation with the savage barbarity of Asia"⁴⁴.

There is a striking difference in the language, in the concentration of emotions, in the approach to the Russians between the above manifesto and the documents of the November Uprising. Though here too the brotherhood of the peoples was invoked, the approach in its entirety has quite a different timbre. Albeit the manifesto of 1863 did express a balanced sympathy for the suffering of the tsar's subjects, and it speaks of forgiveness, but that forgiveness, so to speak, is of a conditional character. The authors of the manifesto were really addressing an ultimatum to the "Muscovite nation": if it does not decidedly turn away from the tyrant, annihilation awaits them in the mortal combat between European civilisation and the savage barbarism of Asia. We know from numerous earlier propaganda missives (more so from those of a less official character) the superior tone with regard to barbarians, which makes the manifesto of January 1863 an unambiguous, very lucid and fun-

44 *Powstanie styczniowe. Materiały i dokumenty. Dokumenty Komitetu Centralnego Narodowego i Rządu narodowego 1862-1864*, E. Halicz, S. Kieniewicz, I. Miller, eds., Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków 1968, pp. 37-38. The authorship of the manifesto is ascribed to Jan Majkowski and his sister, the poet Maria Unicka (*ibid.*, information on p. 38).

damentally different declaration to the diplomatic formulations of, for example, the act of dethronement of January 1831.

For another reason an appeal published by the Executive Committee at the end of March 1863, which warned the Poles of Russian propaganda that was in truth hostile to them, deserves attention. In the document, we read among others that: "The Muscovite Tsar feels weak in relation to our ranks to such a degree, that not depending on the force of bayonets alone, he is resorting to the most despicable of measures. He could not cow us by imprisonment, murder and its scorched earth strategy, so he is spreading everywhere a web of intrigue, sowing falsehoods and lies. Shame and humiliation on those cowards and weaklings who believe in every fairytale that is released and who allow themselves to be driven into panic"⁴⁵. Here is an example of a document which deals with propaganda matters in official form (dealing with concrete activities or rather counter-activities), but at the same describes enemy doings in a similar way to strictly agitprop texts.

It seems that the rhetoric of the January Uprising relating to Russia was stamped by what until then was an unheard of degree of determination. The texts and pronouncements of this generation of insurgents contained not only the customary designations applied to the enemy (like 'tyrant', or "the cursed yoke of slavery") and calls for revenge, but also a new motif. This was the propaganda message which sought to reflect both the actual struggle with Moscow and the experience of previous insurrections. This message, understandable because of the tragic context of the unfolding events, seemed to proclaim that there was no way of pulling back from this mutual hostility. Here is a fragment of an appeal issued on 6 August 1864 by the head of the city of Warsaw at news of the execution of R. Traugutt, R. Krajewski, J. Toczyski, R. Żuliński and J. Jeziorański: "Moscow has not yet sated itself with our blood, with each passing day it needs fresh victims; the brigand conscience of the tsar seeks forgettance and relief in ever new crimes... Today, we can only show contempt and curse. Let us then throw a curse and push our disdain into the despicable face of the executioner and let us accelerate the moment when, as victors, we shall be able to demand settlement of past scores"⁴⁶.

The insurgent authorities appreciated the need to educate the people in the national spirit, and the activities undertaken in that direction found expression in publications targeted on the widest readership possible. They turned to the peasants not only in the official documents of the uprising but also in agitprop poetry written in simple, sometimes vernacular, language. In such works, the current situation was elucidated and the enemy was explicitly highlighted in a direct and accessible way. Relations with Russia were presented in concert with internal political and social issues. An important place was taken by religious issues. Examples of two such characteristic works are given below.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71 (document of 26 III 1863).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

In the poem *Polish letter to the Muscovite tsar*, what is immediately noticeable is the volley of epithets aimed at the Russian monarch: “Fiercest brigand of all brigands, / Malicious as the devil”, “O Muscovite, o damned you! / Unheard of criminal”, “devil’s hound”, and the enumeration of his criminal activities: “you hang priests”, “without cause, you bathe in blood /of women and children”, “you murder”, “you burn down villages”, “you desecrate altars”. That is the top layer of the work. The basic theme and cause of the poem was the forced signing of servile declarations of loyalty initiated by the Russian authorities. The quoted *Letter* thus represented a response to specific Russian moves as evidenced by the following fragment: “You herd in the people from all directions with whips / to sign declarations”. The author also mentioned the repressions against the Catholic Church, writing about the profanation of altars and the hanging of clergymen, and accused the Tsar of “taking an axe to the holy cross of Jesus”⁴⁷.

An example of linking the national cause with the social question is the *Song of Polish peasants*. Addressed to peasants, the text presents the emancipatory decrees of the National Government in light rhyming form “For the times in Poland today are different; if the Muscovite were to take the Fatherland, / Immediately he would restore seigniorial rights and serfdom, / He would order the peasants / to wait on Russian Orthodox priests. / But when Moscow’s head is given a thumping / then serfdom will forever be no more”⁴⁸. In the first of the quoted pieces, what draws attention is the picture of Russians as the ones who harm the people. The author of the poem emphasises not the national but the social oppression the Russians stood for. The Polish insurgent authorities brought the peasants liberation, while Russia spelt seigniorial rights and serfdom. Here one can find echoes of the Kościuszko Insurrection with its appeals to the common people.

All of the Polish national uprisings were directed against Russia, hence the Russian strand was of fundamental significance in insurgent propaganda. The image of the enemy, as well as the way the Poles saw themselves as standing against Muscovite “barbarism”, evolved from the Sarmatian self-portrait – the Polish nobility’s image of themselves – which found expression in such descriptions as “*unus defensor Mariae*” (‘the sole defender of the Virgin Mary’), or the Commonwealth as the “*antemurale christianitatis*” (‘the bulwark of Christianity’) – and gravitated towards implanting a picture of the avengers of Praga. However, this did not mean resignation from ‘Christological’ motifs based on the Mickiewiczian vision of Poland as ‘the Christ of the Nations’.

Next to the Russian invaders, the villains in insurgent propaganda were the home-grown traitors who collaborated with the Russians, or people who were taken to be such: King Stanisław August Poniatowski (in the lore of the Bar

47 The poem, published in a clandestine magazine called “Przyjdź Królestwo Twoje” (Thine Kingdom Come) aimed at peasants and craftsmen, in *Powstanie Styczniowe. Materiały i dokumenty. Prasa tajna z lat 1861-1864*, t. 3, S. Kieniewicz, I. Miller eds., Wrocław, Warsaw, Kraków 1970, p. 173.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

Confederates), the men of Targowice (who repealed the Constitution of the 3rd of May and ratified the Second Partition of Poland), spies, Aleksander Wielopolski (the Russian-appointed Polish governor-general of the Kingdom of Poland). They were treated to no less acerbic epithets than the Muscovites an example of which is the biting satirical *lanterne* poetry of the Kościuszko Insurrection era, as well as of other uprisings.

In seeking an answer to the question about the efficacy of Polish propaganda in the age of national uprisings, in seeking examples of its success, one should primarily look at Kościuszko. His cult in his heyday when he was the Supreme Commander, and later, after his defeat, the large looming presence of his name in the propaganda of subsequent risings for freedom testified to its powerful impact on the public imagination. But the message of freedom carried beyond the flashpoints of rebellion and lodged in the Polish collective memory as best exemplified by the achievements of those who fought with word and pen. The consolidation and, perpetuation of the awakened awareness of national identity in conditions of bondage and the strong urge for national self-determination and statehood, was not just the great achievement of eminent exiles whose patriotic creativity nourished the hopes and aspirations of generations. At ground level, in the various lands of partitioned Poland, there were also capable leaders and organisers supported by writers and artists, often modest and anonymous, who understood the significance of propaganda in the struggle for the national cause and put their talents to good effect.

In conclusion, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that certain themes, recurring strands of thought and stereotypes associated with Russia and the Russians that were inherent in Polish insurgent propaganda of the 18th and 19th centuries, returned in the altered circumstances of the 20th century during the Polish-Soviet War of 1920. Especially in the summer of 1920, when the Russian peril was at its zenith, many Polish politicians, commentators, artists, poets and writers, put their shoulders to the task of fortifying the fighting spirit; in doing so, they often drew on 19th century templates. It was then that propaganda slogans and watchwords like “Hey who’s Polish charge with bayonets” (taken from the refrain of the revolutionary song – *the Varsovienne* of 1830), or stirring up past associations of the *auld enemy* as “the red tsar”, all of which was instantly recognisable to every Polish schoolboy, found a ready and most receptive audience. In this way a certain continuity was highlighted; the danger coming from the east was always there no matter what colour it assumed.

Russia in propaganda of Polish national uprisings from 1768 to 1864. Selected problems

All Polish national uprisings of the late 18th and 19th century were against Russia hence in the insurrectionary propaganda the Russian thread had fundamental importance. The discussed subject is so extensive and multifaceted that in this text only the most important problems were

signalled. Through the analysis of insurgents' selected riots from the years 1768-1772, 1794, 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, the author tried to reconstruct the propaganda image of Russia and Russians.

Neighbourhood of the Republic and Moscow abundant in armed conflicts as well as peaceful contacts caused that a clear image of Russia arose in Polish opinion and literature in the 16th and 17th century. It assumed a greater clarity during the creation of the modern Polish nation while more and more insistent neighbours' interventions in Polish matters, ended with the partitions of Poland (the first partition in 1772, the second partition in 1793 and the third partition, liquidating the Republic of Poland, in 1795), caused a reaction in a form of insurrectionary actions.

The Confederacy of Bar (February 1768-August 1772), being officially undeclared war with Russia (though defence of the independence was not the only aim of confederates), created among others a very precise image of this state. The course of history caused that at that time dangerous, powerful, absolute and at the same time hypocritical vision of Russia was created. This image of Moscow which robs, rapes the Polish liberty and profanes Catholic belief will retain for long in minds exceeding the borders of camps or political parties.

In anti-Russian propaganda contents in the Kościuszko Insurrection era (March-November 1794), differences between individual parties did not exist. "Polish Jacobins", commander Kościuszko as well as others, often unknown by surnames, participants or supporters of the uprising expressed about Russia and Russians in a similar spirit.

The propaganda of the November Uprising (November 1830-October 1831) brought, apart from strictly anti-Russian threads, also conciliatory tendencies towards the Russian people, oppressed by the Tsar equally with the Poles and the reference to bonds of brotherhood uniting the Slavs. A slogan of Joachim Lelewel "For our and your freedom" expressed these attitudes. The rhetoric of the January Uprising (January 1863-summer 1864) concerning Russia was marked with extremely earlier determination. The message of the January insurgents, understandable because of tragic context of events, seems to be saying that there is no retreat towards mutual hostility.

The negative heroes of the uprisings were, apart from Russian invaders, native traitors cooperating with them or people considered to be such traitors. Among positive heroes Kościuszko makes a mark not only for the period of the insurrection of 1794 but also in propaganda records for next generations. Its form survived in Polish collective memory as a symbol of a struggle with "Muscovite tyranny" of the Polish independence.

Some motives, threads and stereotypes connected with Russia and Russians came back in different realities of the 20th century during the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1920). The Polish propaganda in the clash with the Bolshevik agitprop dated back the legacy of the 19th century more than once.

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