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## Polish-Russian Dialogue in the United States as Exemplified by Wacław Lednicki's Circle\*

**Zarys treści:** Artykuł poświęcony jest kontaktom profesora Wacława Lednickiego z emigracją rosyjską. Lednicki był jednym z wybitniejszych polskich slawistów, zasłużonym dla promocji polskiej literatury w USA, gdzie uzyskał poważną pozycję w środowisku naukowym. Profesor, chociaż był światopoglądowym liberałem to wbrew powszechnemu mniemaniu, był świadom poważnych przeszkód, uniemożliwiających porozumienie z Rosjanami. Może się to wydawać zaskakujące, lecz podzielał on wizję historii Rosji autorstwa prof. Jana Kucharzewskiego, jak również prof. Mariana Zdziechowskiego, ze schyłkowego okresu jego działalności.

**Content outline:** The article is devoted to Professor Wacław Lednicki's relations with the Russian émigré community. Lednicki was one of the pre-eminent Polish Slavists, distinguished for his promotion of Polish literature in the United States, where he gained a respectable position in the academic community. Although his worldview was liberal, he was, contrary to popular belief, aware of the severe obstacles that made an understanding with the Russians impossible. It may seem surprising, but he shared the views of Prof. Jan Kucharzewski and Prof. Marian Zdziechowski (from his late period) on Russian history.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Rosja, Polska, emigracja, uchodźstwo, Lednicki

**Keywords:** Russia, Poland, émigré community, exile, Lednicki

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## Introduction

Wacław Lednicki was born on 28 April 1891 in Moscow. His father was Aleksander Lednicki, a well-known lawyer and social activist. He completed his secondary education in Moscow in 1910 and began his Polish studies in Kraków. However, he quickly returned to Moscow and enrolled in Romance and German philology at the University of Moscow, where he received his candidate's degree in 1915. During the war, he worked as a Russian teacher in a boarding school, and in 1918, he became secretary to the Representation of the Regent Council of the Kingdom of Poland in Moscow, headed by his father. In 1919, he returned to Poland, where he joined the army for two years. In 1921, he worked briefly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since he liked academic work best, in 1922, he returned to the Jagiellonian University, where in the same year, he received a doctorate in Romance studies based on the thesis *Alfred de Vigny. Z historii pesymizmu religijnego* [Alfred de Vigny. On the history of religious pessimism]. However, it wasn't easy to reconcile his research interests with working at the university, as all the chairs in Romance studies had already been filled at that time. That is why the professors on his examination commission convinced him that if he wanted to stay at the university, he should take up Russian studies, which was not a popular subject in those days. Thus, Lednicki made a pragmatic choice; writing about his professional career in his memoirs, he said, "I never found Russia tempting".<sup>1</sup> He wrote his habilitation thesis, *Aleksander Puszkina. Studia* (Alexander Pushkin. Studies) under Professor Marian Zdziechowski at the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius in 1926. From 1926 to 1928, Lednicki taught the history of Slavic literature at the Free University of Brussels. In 1928, he was appointed Chair of the History of Russian Literature at the Faculty of Philology, Jagiellonian University. In the academic years 1930/1931 and 1932/1933, at the request of the Polish Government, he chaired the Department of Slavic Literatures at the Free University of Brussels, where he taught Russian and Polish literature. After returning to Kraków, he would go to Brussels every year as a guest lecturer; in addition, until the end of his life, he continued to correspond with people he had met there, including a group of Russian émigrés. Lednicki's articles appeared in foreign journals,<sup>2</sup> and he also published a book in Paris,<sup>3</sup> which, combined with his work at the University of Brussels, made him one of the more recognisable Polish Slavists.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Lednicki, *20 lat w wolnej Polsce* (London, 1973), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> See id., 'Poland and the Slavophil Idea', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 7, no. 19 (1928), pp. 128–40; id., 'Poland and the Slavophil Idea (II)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 7, no. 21 (1929), pp. 649–62; id., 'Mickiewicz en Russie', *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, no. 3 (1929), pp. 318–33.

<sup>3</sup> V. Lednicki, *Pouchkine et la Pologne: à propos de la trilogie antipolonaise de Pouchkine* (Paris, 1928).

The father of the future professor, Aleksander Lednicki, was a co-founder of the Kadets party, a member of the Duma and the best-known advocate of cooperation with Russian liberals. Thanks to the recognition his father enjoyed among the Russians, Waclaw could quickly establish extensive contacts with many prominent figures on the Russian political scene, including Alexandr Kerensky, Vasiliy Maklakov and Dmitry Filosofov. It is worth mentioning that Filosofov, grateful to Waclaw's father for free legal aid, gave him some valuable paintings and a sofa on which Leo Tolstoy had slept at Filosofov's family home.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Lednickis moved among the intellectual cream of the declining Romanov empire. Undoubtedly, his surname made it easier for the young Lednicki to access material and people that would have been harder for him to reach without his father's legend.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, Aleksander Lednicki saw the fight for the freedom of the Polish nation as an element of a broader fight for the freedom of humanity.<sup>6</sup> In his articles, he referred to Adam Mickiewicz's oeuvre and advocated Pan-Europeanism, that is, the construction of a united Europe – he headed the Polish branch of the Paneuropean Union.<sup>7</sup> His father's views must have influenced Waclaw Lednicki, who would go on to study Mickiewicz's oeuvre professionally; in addition, he was a founding member of the Union of Polish Federalists in the USA and a columnist for *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, a journal promoting federalist solutions.<sup>8</sup>

Professor Lednicki wanted his father to be well remembered, so he sought to explain his political choices. Defending his father's good name was one of his goals in writing his extensive memoirs, which he brought to the threshold of Poland's regained independence.<sup>9</sup> His *Pamiętniki* was also a tribute, as it were, to his father. Lednicki defended his policy of seeking a rapprochement with the Russians and argued that he was, as he wrote, one of the "main" builders of the reborn Poland.<sup>10</sup> *Pamiętniki* attracted the interest of Russians and Poles, especially those from the Stolen Lands.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Id., *Pamiętniki*, vol. 2 (London, 1967), p. 342.

<sup>5</sup> Id., *20 lat w wolnej Polsce*, pp. 84ff.

<sup>6</sup> A. Kier Wise, 'Polish Messianism and Polish-Russian Relations: The Influence of Adam Mickiewicz on Aleksander Lednicki', *Polish Review*, vol. 47, no. 3 (2002), pp. 311–12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>8</sup> S. Łukasiewicz, *Trzecia Europa. Polska myśl federalistyczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych (1940–1971)* (Warszawa–Lublin, 2010), pp. 48 and 144.

<sup>9</sup> W. Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1 (London, 1963), vol. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Id., *Pamiętniki*, vol. 2, p. 708.

<sup>11</sup> Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America (hereinafter: PIASA), Waclaw Lednicki Papers (hereinafter: WLP), 7.130, J. Mackiewicz to W. Lednicki, Munich, 1 Oct. 1965, fol. 110.

## Views on Russia and Attitude towards the Russian Émigré Community

Professor Lednicki studied Russian literature, looking for traces of mutual influences of Polish and Russian literatures.<sup>12</sup> Some of his colleagues saw his oeuvre as too enthusiastic with regard to Russians.<sup>13</sup> Lednicki himself experienced an evolution in his worldview, becoming closer to his mentor, Prof. Marian Zdziechowski, in his views on Russia towards the end of his life.<sup>14</sup>

Despite having extensive contacts in the Russian émigré community, Lednicki wrote in his private correspondence that it was impossible to reach an agreement with the Russians.<sup>15</sup> This was not a desire on his part to please his Polish correspondents. Feliks Gross unsuccessfully urged him to present a critical analysis of Jan Kucharzewski's concise study of Russia's history (*The Origins of Modern Russia*, New York 1948).<sup>16</sup> In fact, Lednicki shared the view of this eminent historian, who demonstrated a close link between the processes that took place in the Russian Empire and the outbreak of the revolution, the coming to power of the Bolsheviks and the construction of the Soviet system.<sup>17</sup> Was this not somewhat contradicting what he wrote about his father's policy? It certainly was, but he could always explain this contradiction by citing other realities and the need for a conciliatory policy. I doubt that his memoirs are a polemic, as Piotr Mitzner has claimed, with Kucharzewski's book.<sup>18</sup> Nor is it possible to agree with Józef Lewandowski, according to whom Lednicki considered Kucharzewski's and Zdziechowski's studies downright detrimental when it came to getting to know Russia.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> W. Lednicki, *Przyjaciele Moskale* (Kraków, 1933).

<sup>13</sup> Id., *20 lat w wolnej Polsce*, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> After the war, Lednicki wrote to Giedroyc, trying to cool down his desire to cooperate with Russians: 'I'm repeating the path of my master and predecessor, Marian Zdziechowski [...] he turned his back on Russia with 'horror and revulsion'; Archiwum Instytutu Literackiego Kultura (hereinafter: AIL), Korespondencja Redakcji (hereinafter: KOR RED), 410, W. Lednicki to J. Giedroyc, Berkeley, 28 Dec. 1947, n.p.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> 'Before you dot the i, professor, and lay down your arms before Kucharzewski – it may be worth sleeping on this another few dozen days – but it seems to me that Lednicki is right and Kucharzewski is wrong. I appreciate your critical remarks and agree with many of them, especially when a scholar of your stature is writing about Russia', PIASA, WLP, 7.92, F. Gross to W. Lednicki, New York, 3 March 1948, fol. 38.

<sup>17</sup> 'Your letter, professor, with such an authoritative and favourable opinion about Kucharzewski's study made a big impression on my instructor. He intends to bring to our library the abbreviated English version of *From the White to the Red Tsarate*'; PIASA, WLP, 7.103, A. Pleszczyński to W. Lednicki, Santa Barbara, 9 Apr. 1953, fol. 21.

<sup>18</sup> P. Mitzner, 'Wacław Lednicki przechował w piwnicy w Moskwie 'Bitwę pod Grunwaldem' Matejki', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 June 2020.

<sup>19</sup> 'Wacław Lednicki was right in arguing that our two most eminent Russian scholars, Kucharzewski and Zdziechowski, did more harm than good, despite their erudition'; J. Lewandowski (review), 'Zarubieznaja Rossija', *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vol. 287 (1978), pp. 231–32.

What, then, were Lednicki's views on Polish-Russian relations he expressed in his scholarly works? In considering whether he can indeed be viewed as an antagonist of Kucharzewski, it is worth referring to his studies on Zygmunt Krasiński, who undoubtedly influenced his thinking about internal changes in the Russian Empire. According to Lednicki, Krasiński was a prophet in noting the revolutionary element in the foreign policy of the tsars during the reign of not just Peter I but also of Nicholas I: "However, no one claimed that the Russia of the tsars, the emperors of St. Petersburg, and, especially, the Russia of Nicholas I, regarded in the world as the 'gendarme of Europe', as a defender of legitimism and the 'old order', could be an ally of the revolution. In this respect, Krasiński appears as a clairvoyant, as it were, a visionary. However, one possessed by a passionate hatred of Russia".<sup>20</sup> This quote is in concordance with the thinking of Kucharzewski, who also took note of Krasiński's observations and argued that the Russian Revolution erupted through "an element rising from the underworld of Russian life, cultivated by several centuries of tsarism".<sup>21</sup>

How strongly this observation by Krasiński influenced Lednicki is evidenced by the fact that in a survey on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the January Uprising, when answering a question about the effects of the uprising, Lednicki rejected the accusation (formulated particularly by Russian scholars and writers) that it stopped reforms in Russia.<sup>22</sup> According to him, many "reforms" were continued, and internal processes (rise of nihilism) occurred independently of the uprising, naturally leading to the revolution. Significantly, as a person whose family was affected by the post-Uprising repression, losing its property and social standing, Lednicki did not overestimate the importance of this process, arguing that the Polish elite would have been depleted anyway due to the impending revolution.<sup>23</sup>

In *Glossy Krasińskiego*, Lednicki formulated some strong but well-researched theses, praising Krasiński's predictions and criticising Fyodor Tyutchev's imperialism. In conclusion, however, he did soften his main message: "Fortunately, Krasiński did not live to see the uprising of 1863, but he also left this world too early to watch the splendid flowering of Russian culture that had begun during his lifetime; he did not have the opportunity to get to know the fine Russian elite, the Russian intelligentsia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, whose ranks included many sincere friends of Poland, many ideological advocates of independent Poland...".<sup>24</sup> Thanks to his undoubtedly great expertise in the subjects he tackled and his astuteness, manifested in his tributes to Russian émigrés, he was able to function in the American Slavist community, enjoying the

<sup>20</sup> W. Lednicki, *Glossy Krasińskiego do apologetyki rosyjskiej* (Paris, 1959), p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> J. Kucharzewski, *Od białego caratu do czerwonego*, vol. 2 (Warszawa, 1998), p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.124, [rough draft of Lednicki's reply to the *Wiadomości* survey on the centenary of the January Uprising], fol. 121.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 121–22.

<sup>24</sup> Lednicki, *Glossy Krasińskiego*, p. 44.

sympathy of his Russian colleagues, even though there were significant differences of opinion between them.

Lednicki deliberately avoided confrontation to avoid complicating his relations with the United States. In Henryk Paszkiewicz's discussion with Russian historians, he (together with Wiktor Weintraub) supported Paszkiewicz behind the scenes, informing him about reactions to his findings and planned reviews. The dispute concerned an issue of fundamental importance to the Russians, that is, the tri-unity of the Russian nations, which the Polish medievalist questioned in his 1954 study, *The Origin of Russia*.<sup>25</sup> Unsurprisingly, the book was met with a wave of criticism from Russian émigré scholars (including Dmitry Obolensky, Mikhail Cherniavsky, Valentin Riasanovsky, Georgy Vernadsky, Roman Jakobson, Ivan Lopatin) as well as Soviet academics (Vladimir T. Pashuto).<sup>26</sup> Regarding the Ukrainians, Ihor Shevchenko praised the book, while George Shevelov accused Paszkiewicz of anti-Russianism.<sup>27</sup> The Czech Francis Dvornik, too, "spoke caustically" about the book.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, favourable reviews came from Poles and Lithuanians.<sup>29</sup> Lednicki feared this confrontation, worrying that the Russians could shout Paszkiewicz down.<sup>30</sup> Officially, he did not take part in the discussion. Obviously, not being a medievalist, he did not have to become involved, but this does not change the fact that the dread of confrontation with Russians accompanied him constantly, a fact I will explore later. The fear that he might fall into disfavour with the Russians was not groundless.<sup>31</sup>

Lednicki's relations with the Russians are best illustrated by his posthumous tribute, included in his memoirs, to Karpovich, with whom he had a fairly close relationship. Alongside compliments, the tribute also included some criticism:

<sup>25</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.105, H. Paszkiewicz to W. Lednickiego, London, 16 Nov. 1954, fol. 71.

<sup>26</sup> S. Gralewski, 'Dyskusja wokół trylogii Paszkiewicza w światowej historiografii', in *Henryk Paszkiewicz wydobyty z zapomnienia*, ed. M. Dąbrowska (Łódź–Warszawa, 2019), pp. 151–55.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>28</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.106, W. Weintraub to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 16 Feb. 1955, fol. 82.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, H. Paszkiewicz to W. Lednicki, London, 3 May 1955, fol. 137.

<sup>30</sup> 'I have been touched by your goodness and concern, expressed in your letters, for the book not to be widely criticised and received negatively in the US. That it will not be very bad I can infer from various letters. [...] There is no doubt that the polemic over the origins of Rus' will flare up and will continue for a long time. Of course, I cannot predict how the discussions will develop. In any case, the 'big three' – Vernadsky, Dvornik, Jakobson – will not return triumphantly from the battlefield. I do not deny that my polemic with them (and a number of minor lapdogs), for which they are preparing, gives me considerable satisfaction. Polemics are not bad for the future of the book. At least the 'business will be brisk'. If you, professor, hear that someone new is preparing to attack me (or that he is going take a sympathetic stance), I would very much appreciate a gracious message from you', PIASA, WLP, 7.106, H. Paszkiewicz to W. Lednicki, London, 3 May 1955, fol. 137.

<sup>31</sup> 'I am surprised that since I made my homage to you in *Kultura*, which, by the way, prompted your 'friend' Jakobson to break off relations with me (though this happened two years ago!), I have not heard from you at all', *ibid.*, W. Lednicki to W. Weintraub, Berkeley, 9 May 1955, fol. 20.

I will never forget a particular experience in America. The professor, a Russian and grandson of a Polish 1831 insurgent, told me that another Russian, gravitating towards Stalin, had tried to arrange a reception at an American university for an Orthodox bishop from Soviet Russia. [...] A grandson of a Polish insurgent expects a blessing from the hand of a Bolshevik bishop, even using the terminology of the Orthodox Church! This scion of a Polish family, who had become wholly Russified due to historical circumstances, was close to me, mainly because of his great character qualities. He always enjoyed general respect as a righteous and very tolerant man. He opposed all Russian imperialist inclinations and constantly stressed his affection for Poland. There is no doubt that Polish traditions contributed to the emergence of a Russian of this type. Nevertheless, this loss saddened me, and I have to admit that his fervent Orthodoxy always irritated me.<sup>32</sup>

Lednicki was an anti-communist; he was irritated by the compromises to which Russian émigrés agreed when the Orthodox religion and the indivisibility of the Russian empire were at stake.

As I have mentioned, making Lednicki an opponent of Kucharzewski and Zdziechowski is unjustified. Like many representatives of the Polish borderland families, whose childhood and youth occurred during the decline of the Russian Empire, he recalled this period as a happy one. If we compare the period before and after the Russian Revolution, which deprived many Polish families of their estates and often their lives as well, it is not surprising that in many memoirs – including Lednicki's – the period up to 1918 is frequently presented with a degree of nostalgia, which is due to the privileged position and high material status enjoyed by nobles who were not involved in "subversive" activities against tsarism.<sup>33</sup> It is, therefore, necessary to separate Lednicki's political and scholarly views from his social life and family ties. Both when he was living in Moscow and when he was an exile, he had Russian acquaintances and friends, which, however, does not change the fact in political matters, he disagreed, as a Pole and as a liberal, with the imperial vision of international relations shared by most Russians. On the one hand, his opinion about the chances of cooperation with Russian émigrés was negative; on the other, he advised against confrontation with them, not quite believing that their influence could somehow be challenged by Poles or by subjugated nations, as he wrote in a letter to Waclaw Grzybowski, a friend from his student days.<sup>34</sup>

Well, the Russians, of one kind or another, have enormous influence everywhere. They always find it easy to say that [Belarusian] culture is nothing in comparison with Russian culture, that Gogol would have been nothing if he had written in the [Ukrainian] language [...] whether it is advisable at this point to accentuate Ukrainian and Belarusian separatism (very questionable to me in any case). Perhaps it would be better, for tactical reasons,

<sup>32</sup> Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, pp. 298–299.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 81f.

not to have all Russians against us, to include the Belarusians and the Ukrainians in the autonomy section. Let me remind you that this was the concept that [guided] my father in founding the Club in the First Duma [...]. Suggesting that Ukraine should be separated from Russia would put all Russians on the opposite side, and this would not be good [in any way] [...] They have a vast influence everywhere (primarily at universities). You have no idea how huge it is, for example, here, and how I myself suffer as a result.<sup>35</sup>

In terms of his worldview, Lednicki was a social and political liberal; in addition, he was a Freemason.<sup>36</sup> A similar worldview profile was that of his Russian interlocutors in the US, people like Alexander Kerensky and Alexander Kononov, as well as of his political mentor Professor Stanisław Kot, Minister of the Internal Affairs in the Polish Government and Polish Ambassador to Moscow from 1941 to 1942.

We may have the impression that Lednicki, because of his father, was automatically pigeonholed as a supporter of seeking an understanding with the Russians. As I have written, we can come to such conclusions after reading his memoirs,<sup>37</sup> which, however, were peculiar, often referring to personal relationships, and their task was to defend the political line taken by the author's father. Such an incomplete picture of Lednicki's views may sometimes be due to a desire to simplify problems. Thus, since Kucharzewski is widely seen as a "Russophobe" (although his conclusions were based on solid source research, not prejudice), his alleged opponent Lednicki must be a Russophile. As a result – like in Kucharzewski's

<sup>35</sup> Polish Library in Paris, Waław Grzybowski, no. 7896, W. Lednicki to W. Grzybowski, Berkeley, 22 Jan. 1948, n.p. Cf. 'I've been thinking about the question of Kerensky's article. Perhaps it would be better not to bring this up yet? I would maintain relations with him and with Russian writers in general, I would even try to deepen them – I see no benefit in provoking conflict, we have enough enemies in this world, why remove the masks, if it may turn out that we will reveal new enemies in this way? Believe me, a lot can be done through personal contacts – I could give you hundreds of examples from the life of my late father and even my own', AIL, KOR RED, 410, W. Lednicki to J. Giedroyc, Berkeley, 4 Dec. 1949, n.p.

<sup>36</sup> L. Chajn, *Polskie wolnomularstwo 1920–1938* (Warszawa, 1984), p. 178.

<sup>37</sup> Lednicki's memoirs were highly regarded by Józef Mackiewicz, who wanted to review them in *Russkaya Mysl*. The image of the Russian Empire emerging from them was undoubtedly to the Polish writer's liking – it was not without reason that Kot addressed his review to Russian readers (it would have been difficult for him to find a Polish journal that would have agreed with his assessment of imperial Russia), PIASA, WLP, 7.130, J. Mackiewicz to W. Lednicki, Munich, 1 Oct. 1965, fol. 110. Mieczysław Jałowicki, too, confided his fondness for Russians to Lednicki: 'Perhaps this subconscious fondness for tsarist Russia comes from my background. My line of the Perejesławskis-Jałowickis was Orthodox, which was never mentioned, of course [...] I have to admit, however, that many things in the Polish mentality are foreign and incomprehensible, often unpleasant to me'; PIASA, WLP, 7.106, M. Jałowicki to W. Lednicki, Beckenham, 21 Apr. 1965, fol. 30. It is doubtful that his train of thought was shared by the addressee of the letter, given what he wrote about on voluntary Russification: 'Whenever I see a Pole voluntarily Russified or a Pole Russified because of spiritual laziness, I have the impression of certain obtuseness and spiritual androgyny', Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 2, p. 298.



case – Lednicki's research is not given enough attention and is depreciated. Yet the two scholars' output and findings are largely complementary.

Lednicki, as a person well-known in the world of academia and fluent in several languages, was approached several times by various people seeking to exploit him to pursue their own vision of a rapprochement with Russia, a vision with which he himself did not identify. In 1948, Feliks Gros, who was open to cooperation with Russians, tried to persuade him to criticise Kucharzewski.<sup>38</sup> A year earlier, he had urged the professor to revise his piece on Panslavism to highlight “the desire of Poles and Russians to reconcile” even more.<sup>39</sup> The final version of the article, published in an edited volume entitled *European Ideologies. A Survey of 20th-Century Political Ideas*, does not suggest that Lednicki highlighted the themes Gros asked him to highlight.<sup>40</sup>

In 1944, an attempt to use the recognition that the professor enjoyed among the Russians was made by an anonymous friend of his from the Polish political and official circles in New York. The friend tried in vain to persuade him to change the content of the paper, to drop his criticism of Joseph Stalin and the issue of the eastern lands:

How far in this paper you departed from ‘Our Road to Russia’ - and it was a lecture that ‘gripped’ me. [...] Then you spoke about Czartoryski, Wielopolski and your father. All of these people sought to reach an understanding with Russia against the majority of Poles, they wanted to come to some sort of agreement with the tsarist (non-democratic) government; they would have waited in vain for a democratic one even to this day (and,

<sup>38</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.92, F. Gross to W. Lednicki, New York, 3 March 1948, fol. 38.

<sup>39</sup> “Panslavism” is excellent. [...] Your position, professor, well known to us, is a bit understated. [...] You respond to this with your sympathy for the *Zapadniks*, but perhaps it would be advisable to emphasise more strongly the desire to reconcile Poles and Russians – the mutual friendship and sympathy that emerged among people in the cold of tsarist or Stalinist autocracy. We do get an interesting description of Stolypin, but perhaps instead of Stolypin it would have been better to have included your clear and crystallised views on the issue of Polish-Russian friendship and cooperation – cooperation of democrats, people who abhor autocracy. The article ends under the impression of a great conflict – the reader looks for a solution and would be grateful for the author's answer. It seems to me that there is no broad answer. Perhaps the last three or four pages could be devoted to this, even at the expense of the present ending. [...] a somewhat informed reader [gets] the impression that you, professor, have laid down your arms before Kucharzewski. [...] It seems to me, however, that the future will award the palm to you, professor, and not to Mr Kucharzewski. [...] Who knows, perhaps it would be advisable for some prominent Russian – say, Kerensky or Chernov – to write a few words, a short commentary on the article. [...] This is also in line with the publisher's policy. It would be highly advisable to provide an opportunity to present your role, professor, in the Polish-Russian rapprochement. I could arrange this with Chernov – I haven't seen Kerensky for a long time, but I know that he is in New York, so I could communicate through Nicolaevsky', PIASA, WLP, 7.92, F. Gross to W. Lednicki, New York, 30 March 1947, n.p.

<sup>40</sup> W. Lednicki, ‘Panslavism’, in *European Ideologies. A Survey of 20th-Century Political Ideas*, ed. F. Gross (New York, 1948), pp. 805–912.

in any case, today Kerensky expressed his support for the Curzon Line). [...] If we stick to a non-interventionist stance concerning the Allies, we need to have the same position with regard to Russia – that is why, for example, the critical remark about Stalin was unpolitical [...] We cannot go with Germany, so we must go with Russia, provided, of course, that our independence, guaranteed by the Allies, is maintained. Russia must be drawn into cooperation. You have fought and worked all your life for the cause of Polish-Russian understanding, and it has been a terrific job despite all the current disappointments. You cannot write off the work of a lifetime today.<sup>41</sup>

## Wartime Period

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Lednicki managed to leave Poland for Brussels in March 1940. However, he could not stay there long and fled farther to the West from the German invasion. Like many Polish and Russian émigrés, he ended up in Lisbon, which was a stopover on his way to the United States, where he arrived on 16 August 1940.<sup>42</sup> He managed to find a job thanks to his recognisability quickly. Under a scholarship he received, between 1940 and 1944, he lectured at Harvard University and from 1941 at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in New York. A grant from the Polish Government in Exile also supported him. He did not find permanent employment until 1944, when he was hired as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley (he served as head of the Department of Slavic Studies in 1949–1950 and 1952–1958). His academic career ended in 1962.

Lednicki was given the job at Harvard, America's most prestigious university, thanks to the support of Professor Samuel H. Cross, a historian studying medieval Rus'. Initially, the American adopted a position unfavourable to Poland; within a year, however, his attitude changed so much that he submitted Lednicki's memorandum concerning Poland's borders as his own to Loy W. Henderson, who headed the Division of European Affairs at the State Department. The document was delivered to President Roosevelt shortly before his conversation with General Władysław Sikorski.<sup>43</sup>

Lednicki was also involved in lobbying for Poland. This required mobility and time, as most meetings and gatherings were held in New York. To this end, he decided to use his scholarly contacts and popularity (this is how he met Alexander Kerensky or Vasiliy Maklakov, among others),<sup>44</sup> which he enjoyed among the Russian émigrés, who often wielded considerable influence in the world of the media and American politics.

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<sup>41</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.81, [?] to W. Lednicki, New York, 1 May 1944, fols 182, 185.

<sup>42</sup> Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.74, W. Lednicki to S. [Kot], New York, 23 Oct. 1942, copy, fols 37–38.

<sup>44</sup> Lednicki, *20 lat w wolnej Polsce*, pp. 36–37.

Among the first people he contacted already in 1940 were Mark Aldanov, Fira Benenson, Eufrosina Dvoichenko-Markov, Alexander Kerensky, Alexander Kononov, Mikhail Karpovich, Mark Cetlin, Boris Nicolaevsky, Mark Vishniak, Viktor Chernov, Georgy Vernadsky and Dimitri von Mohrenschildt. Von Mohrenschildt invited him to join the editorial committee of the *Russian Review*.<sup>45</sup> Lednicki also remained in touch with members of the editorial boards of *Novyy Zhurnal*, *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, *New Leader* and *Novosele*.

Initially, his closest relations were with Eufrosina Dvoichenko-Markov. Like Lednicki, she managed to leave Poland after the outbreak of the war. She opted for a more typical escape route through Romania, where she supported the Polish ambassador Roger Raczyński in his propaganda efforts. As early as 1940, she moved to Turkey from where she eventually went to the US.<sup>46</sup> However, in 1940, Lednicki's most important acquaintances were Mikhail Karpovich and Boris Nicolaevsky, leading and influential representatives of the democratic Russian émigré community in the United States.

Professor Karpovich was a student of the renowned historian Vasily Klyuchevsky. From 1927, he lectured in history at Harvard, and his seminar was attended by future well-known professors: Marc Raeff, Martin Malia, Richard Pipes and Marian K. Dziwianowski. Karpovich was born in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in 1888. His father was the son of a November insurgent exiled to the Caucasus and a Georgian princess, Tumanova,<sup>47</sup> while his mother was Russian. He himself considered himself a Russian.<sup>48</sup> Karpovich was gentle and tolerant, which made him unique among Russians.<sup>49</sup> He helped Lednicki establish contacts with American

<sup>45</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.75, D. von Mohrenschildt to W. Lednicki, New York, 16 March 1941, fol. 15. His first article was published already in the second issue of the journal: W. Lednicki, 'D.S. Merezhkovsky, 1865–1941', *Russian Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1942), pp. 80–85.

<sup>46</sup> Lednicki learned about the fate of Dvoichenko-Markov from Mikhail Pechkovsky, who worked at Columbia University. Pechkovsky also sent him her Ankara address and asked him for help in obtaining for her funds from the Kosciuszko Foundation to buy a ticket to the US, arguing that both in Romania and in Turkey (where a translation of her book about Warsaw was to be published) she was involved in propaganda work for Poland, PIASA, WLP, 7.73, M. Pechkovsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 18 Oct. 1940, fols 159ff; *ibid.*, 7.74, M. Pechkovsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 27 Jan. 1941, fol. 360. Lednicki knew Dvoichenko from her academic work. She wrote an article on the life and work of Pushkin in Bessarabia published in a two-volume study devoted to Pushkin to which Lednicki wrote an introduction ('Pushkin 1837–1937', *Prace Polskiego Towarzystwa dla badań Europy Wschodniej i Bliskiego Wschodu*, vol. 16 [Kraków, 1939]). In 1941, the Russian scholar was corresponding with Lednicki already from New York (*ibid.*, 7.74, E. Dvoichenko-Markov to W. Lednicki, New York, 18 Sep. 1941, fol. 361).

<sup>47</sup> 'You are obviously right about Karpovich's grandfather: Karpovich was born in 1888, his father was a son from a second marriage, so his grandfather must have been an insurgent from 1830, not 1863', PIASA, WLP, 7.117, W. Weintraub to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 10 Apr. 1960, fol. 61.

<sup>48</sup> M. Filipowicz, *Emigranci i Jankesi. O amerykańskich historykach Rosji* (Lublin, 2007), p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*. Both Richard Pipes and Dmitri von Mohrenschildt as well as Jerzy Giedroyc agreed that he was not a typical Russian; *ibid.*, p. 215; R. Pipes, *Żyłem. Wspomnienia niezależnego*, trans.

Slavists.<sup>50</sup> Both men were political liberals and, in addition, were of the same age, which made it easier for them to find a common language. During the war, they promoted the idea of a Polish-Russian (not Soviet) rapprochement among their compatriots. According to Lednicki, their activities were coordinated,<sup>51</sup> although there was a fundamental difference between them: Karpovich believed that the question of the Polish eastern territories should be resolved through a national plebiscite, while Lednicki took the position that the Polish borders established by the Treaty of Riga were a gesture of goodwill on the part of Poland.<sup>52</sup>

Another important figure who provided Lednicki with access to Russian and Jewish leftist circles in the US was Boris Nicolaevsky, a Menshevik politician and historian with an interest in the Polish revolutionary movement. Unlike in Karpovich's case, this was not such a close and long-lasting relationship. Through Nicolaevsky, Lednicki got to know David Shub and the editorial board of *Forverst*, as well as Max Eastman,<sup>53</sup> a *New Leader* columnist, who came from the radically left-wing milieu of Greenwich Village, the southern part of Manhattan popular among bohemian artists.

Through Lednicki, Nicolaevsky managed to establish contact with the Polish Information Centre, which gave him some material on the underground state and the extermination of the Jews.<sup>54</sup> However, he complained that Polish institutions were not sending him further information that he could use for propaganda purposes. Thanks to Nicolaevsky Eastman wrote an article on this for *Reader's Digest*, a hugely popular magazine sold in the US and the British Commonwealth countries.<sup>55</sup>

It was with Nicolaevsky as well as old friends of his father's, Alexander Kerensky and Alexander Kononov, that Lednicki launched a series of Polish-Russian meetings

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D.M. Dastych, W. Jeżewski (Warszawa, 2003), p. 64; AIL, KOR RED, 253, J. Giedroyc to B. Heydenkorn, [Maisons Laffitte], 9 Dec. 1955, n.p.

<sup>50</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.74, M. Karpowicz to W. Lednicki, [?], 19 July 1941, fol. 367f.

<sup>51</sup> '1. I have become great friends with Prof. Karpovich (a Russian of Polish origin, a former cadet, v. influential, wildly popular at Harvard, he teaches a general course in history, and, specifically, Russian history). a) We have agreed on our actions – I gave a number of lectures on Russian-Polish topics to Poles and to Russians; he – to Russians, naturally, in a conciliatory sense and defending our borders. b) He wrote a pro-Poland article to *New Europe* at my request. c) This year he will hold a special course on Eastern Europe here, the lion's share of which will be devoted to Polish history. d) He attends my Polish language lectures. e) He has become a correspondent member of the Institute (at my request) and intends to actively cooperate with us', PIASA, WLP, 7.76, W. Lednicki to [S. Kot], New York, 23 Oct. 1942, copy, fols 38–40.

<sup>52</sup> The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (hereinafter: IPMS), B.2132, Professor Lednicki's paper, 1943, fols 10–11.

<sup>53</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.85, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, n.p., n.d., fol. 161; *ibid.*, 7.74, [Max] Eastman to W. Lednicki, New York, 21 Nov. 1941, fol. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Hoover Institution Library & Archive (hereinafter: HILA), B.I. Nicolaevsky Coll., box 477, fol. 19, J. Dembiński to B. Nicolaevsky, New York, 17 June 1943, n.p.; *ibid.*, J. Dembiński to B. Nicolaevsky, New York, 29 July 1943, n.p.

<sup>55</sup> HILA, B.I. Nicolaevsky Coll., box 488, fol. 4, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, n.p., 3 July [1943], n.p.

in early 1941. The gatherings were held in private homes; Kerensky's apartment was considered for the purpose, and at least one meeting must have occurred at Fira Ilińska-Benenson's.<sup>56</sup> Benenson was a well-known fashion designer who, in 1931, married Major Janusz Iliński, a Polish intelligence reserve officer, in New York. In the 1920s, Benenson and her two sisters lived in Paris. Sofia, her elder sister, was friends with Kerensky at the time.<sup>57</sup> This was probably when Fira got to know Kerensky and Nicolaevsky, as well as her future husband, who was on an assignment in Paris. It is hard to say how she met Lednicki, but the tone of their 1940 correspondence suggests that this may have happened before the war.<sup>58</sup> Her letter to Lednicki indicates that she was also in touch with Stefan Ropp,<sup>59</sup> co-founder of the Polish Information Centre and the journal *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, who, too, was privy to the probing talks with the Russians. In addition to the organisers, the Polish-Russian meetings featured or attracted the interest of Mikhail Karpovich, Mark Aldanov, Vladimir Zenzinov and Boris Bakhmeteff. Similar contacts maintained by the Russians with the Ukrainians, even scholarly in nature, raised far-reaching suspicions of supporting the separatists. It was enough for Georgy Vernadsky to write a foreword to *History of Ukraine* by the Ukrainian historian Mikhaïlo Hrushevsky to raise suspicions among his compatriots.<sup>60</sup>

Consul Gruszka was sceptical about the legitimacy of taking part in such meetings. As an official, he preferred to wait for instructions from Ambassador Jan Ciechanowski, who had newly arrived in Washington. He believed the matter required some preparation: "Mr Kerensky apparently said, after the last conference, that the Poles were afraid. It seems to me that if he did say that, he missed the

<sup>56</sup> A meeting at her home, which he was unable to attend, was mentioned by Aldanov; PIASA, WLP, 7.76, M. Aldanov to W. Lednicki, n.p., 22 May 1942, fol. 463. Fira Ilińska, née Benenson (1898–1977), born in Baku, daughter of Grigory Benenson, a Minsk-born Jewish financier and fuel magnate.

<sup>57</sup> N. Berberova, *Zheleznaia Zhenshchina 1892–1974* (New York, 1981), p. 254.

<sup>58</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.73, F. Benenson to W. Lednicki, [1940], fols 145–146.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Bakhmeteff accused him of supporting separatists. Karpovich sought to calm him down: 'Онъ просто старался быть любезнымъ по отношению къ украинцамъ, которые его просили написать предисловие и переборщить' (Columbia University Library Bakhmeteff Archive (hereinafter: CULBA), Michail Karpovich Coll, box 1, M. Karpovich to B. Bakhmeteff, Cambridge, 7 Oct. 1941, n.p.). The author of the letter did not shy away from contacts with Ukrainians either, which does not mean that he was an advocate of Ukrainian independence. He did, however, support the idea of Ukrainian autonomy, as he believed that this was the only way to keep Ukraine within Russia's borders. Despite the fact that his father was Ukrainian and that he himself became close to Ukrainian circles during the Second World War, Vernadsky remained a Russian historian till the end of his life. He kept a greater distance from Ukrainians than Karpovich, who supported Ukrainian scholars (see O. Avramchuk, 'The Ukrainian Island in the Eurasian Sea. George Vernadsky and the Origins of Ukrainian Studies in the United States', typescript lent by its author, pp. 21, 25, 31 [submitted for publication to *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*]).

point because I saw or felt no concerns anywhere; but we all realised that the whole thing needed to be explored and prepared, if we were to agree to any specific talks”.<sup>61</sup> He did not rule out the possibility that the ambassador would personally want to contact Kerensky: “Mr Ciechanowski asked me yesterday to [p]resent my card to Mr Kerensky, and I suppose they will meet here or in Washington at the earliest opportunity”.<sup>62</sup> The problems with formalising the meetings are evidenced also by Nicolaevsky’s letter of 22 January 1942, in which Nicolaevsky expressed his satisfaction with the fact that the meetings were becoming regular and downplayed the fact that neither side had been given political powers. According to him, the differences in views presented by the participants were similar to those between him and Milukov.<sup>63</sup>

The group’s meetings were not the only platform for contacts. Russians also attended the inauguration, on 15 May 1942, of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America. Encouraged by Lednicki, Karpovich became its correspondent member. In addition, he gave a lecture devoted to the nationalism of Slavophiles; the discussion participants included Professors Lednicki and Halecki.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Poles were invited to the Russian “Gorizont” club.<sup>65</sup> Asked by Nicolaevsky, Lednicki delivered a lecture there;<sup>66</sup> he also had meetings with Russians at Karpovich’s, for example.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>61</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.74, Consul General of the Republic of Poland S. Gruszka to W. Lednicki, New York, 12 March 1941, fol. 291.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Уверяю вас, характер моего расхождения с Вами качественно совсем тоже ствен с характером моего расождения з Мильюковым’, PIASA, WLP, 7.76, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 22 Jan. 1942, fol. 439.

<sup>64</sup> In March 1942, Karpovich delivered a lecture at the Polish Institute; CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 1, B. Bakhmeteff to M. Karpovich, New York, 16 Dec. 1942, n.p.; M. Karpovich, ‘The Nationalism of the Russian Slavophils’ [summary of the lecture], *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Art and Sciences in America*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1943), p. 556.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Gorizont’ Club – a cultural and educational association of Russian émigrés in New York. There were 25 people on the management board; the number of club members reached 200; the club was headed by Isaac Altshuler and Nikolai Avksentev, and after their death in 1943 by A. Jedvabnik; the committee in charge of lecture programme included Vladimir Zenzinov as well as Nicolaevsky and Aldanov; <http://nabokov-lit.ru/nabokov/pisma-nabokovu/letter-2.htm> (accessed: 4 March 2021).

<sup>66</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.74, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 9 Nov. 1941, fol. 207; HILA, B.I. Nicolaevsky Coll., box 488, fol. 4, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, n.p., 9 Nov. 1941, n.p.; *ibid.*, W. Lednicki to B. Nicolaevsky, Cambridge, 27 Nov. 1941, n.p.; *ibid.*, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, n.p., 4 Dec. 1941, n.p. The club members also included Marian Samiczek, a consulate official; HILA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Records 1919–1947, box 181, fol. 32, Consul General of the Republic of Poland Sylwin Strakacz sends a report by Marian Samiczek on A. Kazem-Bek’s lecture to the Ministry, New York, 23 June 1944, scan 518.

<sup>67</sup> His presence was noted by Vladimir Nabokov: ‘Вчера было много гостей – Евгений Рабинович (!), [...] Ледницкий – такой желтовато-смуглый поляк, который, когда рассказывает о своем бегстве, всякий раз повторяет: ‘...ну, захватил необходимые мелочи – одеколон,

The Polish professor had political ambitions. On the one hand, he tried to influence Russians and important American academic and political figures he knew, and, on the other, he sent his articles and memoranda to the Polish embassy in Washington and the prime minister.<sup>68</sup> He hoped for a position at the Polish embassy in Moscow, which was offered to him by its head, Prof. Stanisław Kot.<sup>69</sup> Despite advanced talks, he was not given the post in the end. Alongside Prof. Klemens Jędrzejewski, he was the person with the most extensive contacts among Russian émigrés in the United States. It could be said that he served as a liaison with the Polish world, which, as he rightly pointed out, the Russians knew very little about, focusing mainly on the issue of the “Polish intrigue”<sup>70</sup> as one of the most important elements of imperial mythology.<sup>71</sup>

Lednicki was an ideal candidate for the Russians to have discussions with, giving them the comfort of avoiding the most sensitive topics. As I have mentioned, his main interlocutor from the Russian side was Karpovich, who not only considered him a valuable person in promoting his vision of Polish-Russian relations but also held him in high regard.<sup>72</sup> He wanted the relations between Poland and Russia to be good, although he favoured maintaining a multinational empire. He lamented the scarcity of liberals on both the Polish and the Russian sides of the political scene, so he saw Lednicki as an ally. In his view, a confrontation with the Poles, at least at a time when the outcome of the war was not yet decided, would be disadvantageous to Russia.

Other Russian émigrés shared Karpovich's fears. At the beginning of the war, their caution about speaking out on matters relating to Poland, especially its

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зубную щетку’. С мертвыми глазами и идеально бездарный’, V. Nabokov to V. Nabokova, New York–Uesli, 21 March 1941, <http://flibusta.site/b/508763/read> (accessed: 4 March 2021).

<sup>68</sup> Archiwum Akt Nowych (Central Archives of Modern Records), Hoover Institution, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in the United States, box 46, fol. 22, W. Lednicki, ‘Russia and Her Culture’, reprint, *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, no. 10–11 (1941), n.p.; IPMS, B.2132, Professor W. Lednicki's lecture, 1943, fols 1–12. The same issue (10) included an article by Nicolaevsky (B. Nicolaevsky, ‘A Study of Polish-Russian Socialist Relations’, *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, no. 10 [1941], pp. 254–57), which may have been commissioned through Lednicki.

<sup>69</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.74, S. Kot to W. Lednicki, London, 8 Sep. 1941, fol. 143; *ibid.*, Consul General of the Republic of Poland S. Gruszka to W. Lednicki, New York, 25 Sep. 1941, fol. 294. In the letter the consul tells the professor that he has informed London that he agrees to go to Moscow.

<sup>70</sup> W.A. Lednicki, ‘“Polskaya poema” Bloka’, *Novyy Zhurnal*, no. 2 (1942), p. 310.

<sup>71</sup> The motif of the Poles’ ‘betrayal’ emerged with the Partitions and accompanied Russian interpretations of the uprisings, which, in their view, were an act of ingratitude for the brotherhood of the Russian people; A. Nowak, ‘Zamiast odpowiedzi ‘Oszczercom...’ (Kliewietnikam)’, in *id.*, *Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji* (Warszawa, 2014), p. 250.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Я бы въ этомъ смысле и ответилъ Вацлаву Александровичу, который очень стоитъ, между прочим, за то чтобы имя и фамилия его писались по польскому правописанию. Напишите ему ласково, чтобы онъ не обиделся’, CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 1, M. Karpovich to B. Bakhmeteff, Cambridge, 7 Oct. 1941, n.p.

borders, was dictated by the fact that they were waiting for developments at the front. In a letter to the renowned American historian and Slavist Samuel N. Harper, Karpovich wrote openly that all sides were aware of the sensitivity of the border issue, given that they were trying not to raise it for the time being, which he thought was very reasonable:

I am glad that you like my article. On the whole, it has been well received by [sic!] reasonable people are in the minority everywhere in this world, and, as you say, many Poles are still thinking in terms of the 'Russian menace' and of the 'cordon sanitary'. **On the other hand, there are only too many Russians who brush Poland aside and to whom 'might mean right'. I must say that the danger of a new Russian chauvinism, not only among the emigres but what is immense, more importantly, also in Soviet Russia, is ever present in my mind** [emphasis mine – Ł.D.]. As to the specific frontier problem, I think it is wiser not to touch it at this particular time. It is premature to talk about it now when we do not know what the situation will be at the end of the war.<sup>73</sup>

Karpovich's article mentioned in the letter was published in *New Europe*,<sup>74</sup> a journal controlled by the Ministry of Information and Documentation of the Polish Government in Exile. The journal promoted the idea of a Central European federation. Karpovich was assisted in his contacts with the journal by Lednicki, who was also consulted by the editors about the list of authors of the so-called Russian issue of 1941. An interesting analysis of the issue was carried out by Bakhmeteff (a friend of the Russian professor from his Tbilisi days, a former representative of the Provisional Government in the US, appointed to the position by Kerensky<sup>75</sup>): "If you have not seen that particular number of *New Europe* make a point of reading our friend Dewitt Clinton Poole's excellent article. It is a fate of irony that Poole's Russian statement appears on the pages of a periodical, the very purpose of which is to give vent to the feelings of refugees from Balkanized Europe. If you have not read Lednicki's article in the issue please read it. The contortionist character of the argument is really pathological".<sup>76</sup>

The above excerpt from the letter raises the question of how seriously Lednicki, as well as discussions with Poles and other nations in general, was taken in these contacts. Bakhmeteff did not like the tone of his article,<sup>77</sup> although

<sup>73</sup> CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 1, M. Karpovich to S.N. Harper, [no place], 6 Apr. 1942, n.p.

<sup>74</sup> M. Karpovich, 'Russo-Polish Relations', *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1942), pp. 97–100.

<sup>75</sup> Jagiellonian Library, Manuscript Department, Wiktor Weintraub Archive, 63/07, W. Weintraub, 'Michał Karpowicz', p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 1, B. Bakhmeteff to M. Karpovich, New York, 9 October, 1941, n.p.

<sup>77</sup> W. Lednicki, 'Russia and her Culture', *New Europe and World Reconstruction*, vol. 1, no. 10 (1941), pp. 250–53.



he did not criticise it at Karpovich's request.<sup>78</sup> Boris Nicolaevsky, too, had quite a few critical remarks about it.<sup>79</sup> It seems that few Russians shared Karpovich's idealistic vision. Even Bakhmeteff, who was close to him, doubted the effectiveness of the dialogue:

I have written him [Lednicki] on the lines you suggested and following your plea have been very sweet even, if on the day before I had read his article in the September issue of the *New Europe*. [...] I know you do not like when I say these things, but I cannot help it and I appeal to your objectivity and fairness. But you may be sure I was more than nice in my letter for I really do not take all these things too seriously. They remind me of our friend, the Latvian Minister, who used to ride horseback with Poole and me and profess his friendship for Russia and then, as you probably remember, would come out with a nasty statement, after which he would avoid meeting me face for a time.<sup>80</sup>

However, Karpovich's work and political concepts were treated as useful from a tactical point of view.<sup>81</sup> His article in *New Europe* was general enough to be indeed well received by both sides, all the more so given the fact that there were voices emphasising the need for good relations with Russia on the Polish side as well.<sup>82</sup> The Russian professor pointed out in the article that the Belarusian and the Ukrainian questions had always been a bone of contention, which is why he argued it was time to start thinking in terms of cooperation, to treat the Polish-Russian relations as part of a pan-European understanding, to abandon the instrumentalisation of the two nations to strengthen their irredentism against the other side.<sup>83</sup> He called for more attention to be paid to the present rather than the past to build a better future.<sup>84</sup> Karpovich no longer wanted to speak on such sensitive issues – he refused Zenzinov's request to publish on the subject in *Za Svobodu*.<sup>85</sup> Although he continued to publish in Polish journals, he tried to stick to more historical subjects. For example, in promoting the idea of understanding between nations, he criticised the radicalisation of the Slavophiles: "In its subsequent

<sup>78</sup> PIASA, WLP, B. Bakhmeteff to W. Lednicki, 8 Oct. 1941, fol. 326.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 4 Dec. 1941, fols 363–64.

<sup>80</sup> CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 1, B. Bakhmeteff to M. Karpovich, New York, 9 Oct. 1941, n.p.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., B. Bakhmeteff to M. Karpovich, New York, 2 Apr. 1942, n.p.

<sup>82</sup> Adam Pragier of the Polish Socialist Party leadership stressed that 'the attention of all the nations of the area needs to be focused on securing peace from the west. Its foreign policy must, therefore, be founded on a close relationship with Russia, based not only on political deals, but also on lasting economic cooperation [...]'; A. Pragier, 'Federacja Środkowo-Wschodnia. Sprawy polityczne', *Wiadomości Polskie*, no. 6, 10 Feb. 1944. A similar way of thinking was also that of his party colleague and one of the editors of *New Europe*, Feliks Gross.

<sup>83</sup> For a discussion of Karpovich's article, see L.L. Barrell, 'Poland and East European Union 1939–1945', *The Polish Review*, vol. III, 1958, no 1/2, pp. 111–112.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>85</sup> CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 3, M. Karpovich to W. Zenzinov, n.p., 2 June 1942, copy, n.p.

evolution, the nationalism of the Slavophiles began to follow the same fatal course which is familiar to the student of modern nationalism in Western Europe: it was becoming political, conservative, exclusive and aggressive”.<sup>86</sup> Naturally, Lednicki’s contacts could work both ways. On the one hand, he could publish in Russian journals (he was the only Pole during the war to publish in the *Novyy Zhurnal* quarterly)<sup>87</sup> and in Russian-controlled professional academic publications,<sup>88</sup> and on the other – Russians wrote for *New Europe* thanks to him. It was for this purpose that Mark Aldanov tried to use his acquaintance with him, promoting an article by Sergei Soloveychnik, who was by no means sympathetic to Poland.<sup>89</sup>

The Polish-Russian meetings did not evolve into some more concrete form of political cooperation – this possibility had been doubted by Consul Gruszka from the very beginning. The difficulties with continuing the talks were also evidenced by Kerensky’s letter.<sup>90</sup> Although Lednicki was encouraged by an official from the Polish Information Centre to continue the propaganda campaign,<sup>91</sup> the Polish scholar did not think this was possible. In 1942 he lost a part of his income, which, as he claimed, limited his possibilities of engaging in political activities. He wrote to Kot about this, asking him to help him get a monthly subsidy of 170 dollars from the Culture Fund.<sup>92</sup> As a result of a lack of any great interest on the part of the embassy in continuing the talks with the Russians and Lednicki’s fatigue, the intensity of these contacts diminished. By 23 October 1942, ten Polish-Russian meetings took place.<sup>93</sup> The last piece of information about such a discussion comes from mid-1943,<sup>94</sup> which does not mean that subsequent discussions did not take place in later years, for example, at Fira Ilińska’s. One of the benefits of these contacts for Poles was the publication of several articles favourable to Poland in the Russian press and the English-language socialist press associated with the Russian Mensheviks.<sup>95</sup> Nothing more could have been achieved in this matter

<sup>86</sup> M. Karpovich, ‘The Nationalism of the Russian Slavophiles’, *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1943), p. 555.

<sup>87</sup> W. Lednicki, ‘“Polskaya poema” Bloka’, *Novyy Zhurnal*, no. 2 (1942), pp. 309–24; id., ‘“Polskaya poema” Bloka’, *Novyy Zhurnal*, no. 3 (1942), pp. 260–87.

<sup>88</sup> W. Lednicki, ‘Marian Zdziechowski: 1861–1938’, *Slavonic Year-Book*, vol. 1 (1941), pp. 407–11; id., ‘Saltykov and the Russian Squire’, *ibid.*, pp. 347–54; W. Lednicki, ‘D.S. Merezhkovsky, 1865–1941’, *Russian Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (, 1942), pp. 80–85.

<sup>89</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.76, M. Aldanov to W. Lednicki, [New York], 15 May 1943, fol. 479.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, A. Kerensky to W. Lednicki, New Canaan, 2 July 1942, fol. 432.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, [Polish Information Center employee] to W. Lednicki, 20 March 1942, fol. 189.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, W. Lednicki to [S. Kot], New York, 23 Oct. 1942, copy, fol. 43.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 40.

<sup>94</sup> CULBA, Michail Karpovich Coll., box 2, M. Karpovich to A. Kerensky, n.p., 10 May 1943, copy, n.p.

<sup>95</sup> Nicolaevsky acted as an intermediary in contacts with Jewish socialists. On Sol Levitas’ article for *Reader’s Digest* (he had to remove the Katyn issue from the title at Washington’s request) and an article by David Shub for *Forverst/Forward*, a social-democratic periodical of American Jews, who wanted to draw on data from Lednicki’s book *Life and Culture of Poland as Reflected*

because the Russian émigrés did not agree to recognise the inviolability of the Riga border. Significantly, none of the Russians holding US citizenship signed the appeal of American scholars, writers and clergymen in defence of Poland's borders and sovereignty, published in *The Time* magazine.<sup>96</sup>

Lednicki maintained his academic contacts in both private and academic spheres. In addition, he gave numerous lectures on Russian matters, which naturally attracted the interest of Russians.<sup>97</sup> There were also comments on and reviews of his book *Life and Culture of Poland as Reflected in Polish Literature* (1944).<sup>98</sup>

## Post-War Period

After the war, Lednicki focused on research, moving mainly among Russian and Polish scholars and occasionally having contact with Ukrainian researchers.<sup>99</sup> Above all, however, he remained in touch with Mikhail Karpovich and Gleb Struve. Correspondence with the latter stopped in 1957 after his move to Berkeley, where Lednicki also taught.

With Karpovich's help, Lednicki also brought another Polish Slavist, Wiktor Weintraub, to the US, who quickly received an American visa and position at Harvard thanks to the Russian intercession.<sup>100</sup> Karpovich also promoted Poles on his own initiative: for example, he recommended to Lednicki Marian Kamil Dziewanowski, who was going to Stanford University, to conduct preliminary research.<sup>101</sup>

The two professors maintained an excellent relationship, which probably did not please some Russian scholars at Harvard. They criticised Lednicki for how he referred to Karpovich in an article published in *Kultura* and devoted to the issue of Slavic studies in the US. According to Weintraub, it was the Polish journal's

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*in Polish Literature* (New York, 1944), see PIASA, WLP, 7.82, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 26 Dec. 1944, p. 161; *ibid.*, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, n.p.d., fol. 161. Szub also prepared a review of Lednicki's book: *ibid.*, 7.85, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 30 May 1945, fol. 3.

<sup>96</sup> See the list of signatories in 'Rosja musi dokonać wyboru', *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*, no. 6 (20 March 1944). On the other hand, the appeal was signed by Herbert Agar, a *New Leader* editor, and Alexander Kahn, editor of the Jewish daily *Forverst/Forward*.

<sup>97</sup> Examples of topics of the lectures: 'Russian-Polish Relations', 'Polish Traits (Life and Culture in Poland)', see PIASA, WLP, 7.81, J. Pawlikowski to W. Lednicki, Montreal, 15 Feb. 1944, fol. 60.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, M. Aldanov to W. Lednicki, n.p., 25 Oct. 1944, fol. 372; *ibid.*, 7.82, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 26 Dec. 1944, fol. 161; a review of his book was published in *Forverst* by David Shub, *ibid.*, 7.85, B. Nicolaevsky to W. Lednicki, New York, 30 May 1945.

<sup>99</sup> His acquaintances included Manfred Kridl, Wiktor Weintraub, Marian Kamil Dziewanowski, Michał Kryspin Pawlikowski, Oskar Halecki; Russian scholars: Michael Karpovich, Vladimir Veidle, Vladimir Nabokov, Gleb Struve, Nicholas Vakar, George Vernadsky; Ukrainian scholars: George Shevelov and Roman Smal-Stocki.

<sup>100</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.96, W. Weintraub to W. Lednicki, Crovdon, 11 May 1950, n.p.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, M. Karpovich to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 30 June 1950, fol. 16.

one of the most widely commented article at Harvard, not only, it would seem, because of some inaccuracies concerning Karpovich's career,<sup>102</sup> but above all because of its primary content, which showed the Polish professor's dissatisfaction with the fact in most cases Russian language departments and Russian scholars dominated Slavic studies in the US.<sup>103</sup> The incident with Karpovich was patched up,<sup>104</sup> and an appropriate report was published in *Kultura*.<sup>105</sup>

Lednicki also highly valued Georgy Fedotov,<sup>106</sup> although he exchanged only a few letters with him.<sup>107</sup> The Russian philosopher became famous in émigré circles thanks to his article "Sud'ba imperii", published in the *Novyy Zhurnal* quarterly in 1947. He argued in it that to become free and democratic, Russia had to disintegrate.<sup>108</sup> For obvious reasons the article became highly popular among Poles and was strongly criticised by Russians, including Karpovich, who believed that Russia was capable of combining political liberalism with state imperialism like, for example, the United Kingdom. In recognition of his work, Fedotov was elected a correspondent member of the PIASA.<sup>109</sup>

In 1948, Lednicki went to Paris, where he renewed or established contacts with several leading figures among Russian émigrés. He used a lot of the conversations he had to collect information about his father – he was already planning to write a book about him that would defend his Russian policy.<sup>110</sup> Thanks to Gleb Struve's brother Alexei, he managed to get in touch with Sergei Melgunov.<sup>111</sup> When visiting the Russian historian, he met Ryszard Wraga, whose name would often appear in positive context in his correspondence with Poles and Russians.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>102</sup> 'Well, rumour has it here that you "threw yourself" at Karpovich. I've heard it from several people. I never imaged that a Polish article in *Kultura* could be so widely read here', PIASA, WLP, 7.102, W. Weintraub to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 20 Sep. 1953, fol. 27.

<sup>103</sup> W. Lednicki, 'Studia slawistyczne w USA', *Kultura*, no. 69/70 (1953), p. 23; '[...] without a proper knowledge of Eastern European countries there can be no good understanding of the history of Europe as well as the history of Russia', *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>104</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.102, W. Weintraub to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 6 Oct. 1953, fol. 29.

<sup>105</sup> W. Lednicki, [Letter to the editor], *Kultura*, no. 73 (1953), p. 155.

<sup>106</sup> "Судьба Империи" – will certainly be interesting to you. In issue XVII Timashev wrote a reply, but I don't find it convincing and think that in predicting the break-up and fall of the Russian Empire Fedotov is right. You theses go along the same lines and I fully agree with them'; Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu (Polish Library in Paris), Waclaw Grzybowski, no. 7896, W. Lednicki to W. Grzybowski, Berkeley, 22 Jan. 1948, n.p.

<sup>107</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.93, G. Fedotov to W. Lednicki, Cambridge, 31 July 1948, n.p.

<sup>108</sup> 'The loss of the empire is a moral purification, liberation of Russian culture from the terrible burden that distorts its spiritual image', G. Fedotov, 'Sud'ba imperii', *Novyy Zhurnal*, no. 16 (1947), p. 169.

<sup>109</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.92, I. Grabowska to W. Lednicki, New York, 11 June 1948, n.p.

<sup>110</sup> W. Lednicki, 'Aleksander Lednicki. Oszczerstwa i prawda', *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris), vol. 1 (1962), p. 68.

<sup>111</sup> PIASA, WLP, 7.91, G. Struve to W. Lednicki, Berkeley, 9 Jan. 1948, fol. n.p.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.106, G. Struve to W. Lednicki, Paris, 16 Apr. 1956, fol. 80.

## Conclusion

Alongside Ryszard Wraga, Józef Mackiewicz, Józef Czapski or Michał Kryspin Pawlikowski, Lednicki was undoubtedly one of those émigrés who had the most extensive contacts – both social and academic – among Russians, as is confirmed by the several hundred letters he exchanged with dozens of Russian émigrés (with Mikhail Karpovich being his most frequent correspondent). They included many important figures from the world of Russian academia, culture and politics. Unfortunately, much of that correspondence is work-related (regarding conferences, planned publications, materials he collected for a book on his father's politics, etc.). There is no actual exchange of opinions, which is no coincidence, as Lednicki followed the principle of not talking to Russians about politics and other sensitive issues on which he knew he would not be able to agree with them.

During the war, Lednicki was able to use his extensive contacts among the Russians to work for the Polish Government in Exile, to publish his articles on the Polish cause, and to inspire such articles by Boris Nicolaevsky as well as writers from the American left, mainly of Jewish origin. Professor Lednicki sought to win favour with influential democratic circles of the Russian émigré community in the US, thereby perhaps reducing the number of its attacks directed at Poland and even prompting some writers to defend Poland's interests. This was the result of the Polish-Russian meetings he organised, at least until 1943, in New York, which did not lead to an agreement but removed from the Poles the odium of Russophobes, which the Russian propagandist centres had been working on since the nineteenth century. He was one of the pre-eminent Polish Slavists in the United States. He undoubtedly contributed to the growth of the interest in Polish and, more broadly, Central and Eastern European literature. Lednicki was involved in promoting Poland both during and after the war.<sup>113</sup>

Despite being viewed as a liberal and a Russian sympathiser, Lednicki privately shared Prof. Jan Kucharzewski's opinion on the origins of the revolution in Russia. He also agreed with Ryszard Wraga's assessments, but rarely expressed his views in public, sticking instead to topics associated with his scholarly interests. A careful reading of his academic works reveals that his view on the history of Russian literature and thought was not uncritical. However, it was usually laced with sympathy for liberal Russian circles. The exception was his father's policy, Aleksander Lednicki, in the assessment of which he was by no means objective, an attitude that stood in contrast with his usually sober assessment of the impossibility of an understanding with the Russians.

<sup>113</sup> 'Thank you for your letter of the 21st of this month with the good news that the University of California Press has generally agreed to print a collective study on Mickiewicz. I immediately asked the Head of the Polish Desk at the State Department for further assistance, in purchasing 300 copies for libraries in the United States and abroad. Their attitude is generally favourable and I have no doubt that they will try to help', PIASA, WLP, 7.106, J. Lipski to W. Lednicki, Washington, 25 June 1955, fol. 198.

## Abstract

The article is devoted to Professor Waclaw Lednicki's contacts with the Russian émigré community. I analyse Lednicki's views and the results of his talks with the Russians based on his extensive correspondence and various publications. Lednicki was one of the pre-eminent Polish Slavists, contributing mainly to promoting Polish literature in the United States, where he achieved an important position in the academic community. Although he was a liberal in terms of his worldview, he did not, contrary to popular belief, advocate a rapprochement with Russia. On the contrary, although he maintained good relations with many prominent representatives of the Russian émigré community, he was aware of the severe obstacles to an understanding between the two nations. It may seem surprising, but he shared the views on Russian history presented by Prof. Jan Kucharzewski as well as of Prof. Marian Zdziechowski from his late period when his attitude to Russia (and not just Soviet Russia) was very critical. So, was Lednicki's dialogue with the Russians a waste of time? Not necessarily. Both during and after the war, these contacts enabled him to obtain some benefits for Poland.

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