

MARIA M. PRZECISZEWSKA
m.przeciszewska@bn.org.pl
National Library of Poland
ORCID 0000-0001-5266-3488

‘OFFICIAL PUSHKIN’. ALEXANDER PUSHKIN’S OEUVRE IN THE GYMNASIA OF THE KINGDOM OF POLAND (1869–1905)

DOI: 10.36155/PLib.10.00005

ABSTRACT

The work of Alexander Pushkin considered politically suspect and even potentially subversive in the first half of the 19th century, was finally approved by the Russian educational authorities in the 1860s. This resulted not only from the appreciation of the artistic value of his writing, but above all from the recognition of the poet as a Russian bard – a eulogist of the empire and Russian folk culture (*narodnost*). Since then, Pushkin’s literary work have permanently appeared on the pages of the school textbooks. With the education reform of Dmitry Tolstoy, the same school books that were used in other parts of the empire were introduced in schools of the Russian Poland (Kingdom of Poland). For Polish readers, Pushkin was considered as the central figure of Russian culture. The article presents which works of the Russian Romantic poet were included into school textbooks and books recommended for additional reading, what were the didactic and political functions of these works and how they were assessed by Polish readers. The aim of the article is therefore to present the role of school books in making of the ‘imperial Pole’ under-

stood not only as the subject loyal to the Russian state and culture, but also as one who accepts its ‘civilizing mission’ in Poland.

KEYWORDS: Alexander Pushkin, Kingdom of Poland, Russian folk culture, school textbooks, imperial Pole

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Already beginning with his tragic death on 10 February 1837, both the person and oeuvre of Alexander Pushkin turned into the subject to mythologization and varied interpretations. To his contemporaries he was both a ‘pure poet’ and the essence of a ‘Russian man’ (Gogol), while at the same time a conveyor of revolutionary and democratic principles (Belinsky). The two concepts did not essentially oppose one another until the publication of the book by Pavel V. Annenkov *Materialy dlia biografii A. S. Pushkina* when the democratically-oriented intellectuals distanced themselves from Pushkin seeing in the Russian poet only a ‘great stylist’ (Pisarev) and a hostage to aristocracy.¹ Simultaneously to the process of absorbing/rejecting Pushkin’s oeuvre by the Russian intelligentsia being formed at the time, the process of the reception of his oeuvre among the ‘official’ circles was taking place, thus among the higher bureaucracy and at court, including the Emperor himself.

Bearing in mind his quasi-revolutionary *Ode to Liberty* (*Vol'nost'*) and the poet’s unclear connections with the Decembrists (whom the poet dissociated himself from), the Russian authorities’ approach to Pushkin was ambivalent. Accompanying the mistrust best expressed by the poet’s exile to southern guberniyas, this followed by the personal supervision of Nicholas I, there grew interest in his oeuvre. In my view, this not only caused by aesthetical

1 O. S. Murav'eva, ‘Obraz Pushkina: istoricheskie metamorfozy’, in: *Legendy i mify o Pushkine. Sbornik statej*, ed. M. Virolajnen, St. Peterburg 1990, pp. 116–118; S. Sandler, ‘The Pushkin Myth in Russia’, in: *The Pushkin Handbook*, ed. D. Bethea, Wisconsin 2005, pp. 403–424; A. Nowak, ‘Pod kopytami Miedzianego jeźdźca – ‘geopoetyka’ rosyjska i polska’, in: *Metamorfozy imperium rosyjskiego, 1721–1921. Geopolityka. Ody i narody*, Kraków 2018, pp. 73–74.

values of his poetry, but also its setting in the imperial context. The expression of tribute that Pushkin paid to imperial Russia can be found in his poems, particularly *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822), *Poltava* (1828), and *The Bronze Horseman* (1834), the so-called anti-Polish lyrical trilogy composed of the poems *To the Slanderers of Russia*, *Before the Holy Tomb* (1830-31), as well as the novels *The Moor of Peter the Great* (1837), and *The Captain’s Daughter* (1836). Although not all the afore-mentioned works were published during Pushkin’s life, they boosted the poet’s prestige as the ‘state poet’ (*derzhavnyi poet*) and a great Russian patriot.²

The fact that Pushkin’s oeuvre was appreciated resulted in the gradual incorporating of his pieces into school curricula, both in central Russia and in its borderlands, including the Kingdom of Poland. Initially, the included works were mainly elegies and songs: Pushkin appeared in them as a continuator of classical poetry and heir to the poetics of Vasily Zhukovsky and Gavril Derzhavin, eulogists of the Empire of Catherine II.³ With time, the selection of Pushkin’s poetry increasingly extended, to reach its peak in 1899: on the hundredth birthday of the poet, when he was perceived both by the authorities and the intelligentsia as a national bard and a ‘Russian genius’.

The paper aims at describing how the oeuvre of Alexander Pushkin was presented in the government-run gymnasias of the Kingdom of Poland in 1869–1905. Following the January Uprising, this small state was finally deprived of its autonomy, gaining an equal status with the remaining provinces of the Russian state. The loss of autonomy also applied to education: from that time in Russian with a homogenous curriculum throughout the whole Empire. My intention is to present Pushkin’s oeuvre used in Russian Poland through the presentation of the canon of his works in textbooks and in studies advised for voluntary reading; through the presen-

2 C. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergiei Uvarov. 1786–1855*, North. Illinois Univ. Press 1984, pp. 153, 239

3 P. Debreczeny, *The Social Function of Literature. Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture*, Stanford 1997, pp. 163–165.

tation of the views of the authorities of the Warsaw Educational District and of the Russian intellectuals on the political and didactic functions of Pushkin’s oeuvre in the Kingdom of Poland, as well as through the reception of his poetry and prose by Polish readers.

PUSHKIN’S CANON AND EXTRACURRICULAR LITERATURE

As mentioned above, in the first half of the 19th century, Pushkin did not take a dominating position in chrestomathies addressed to secondary schools in the Kingdom of Poland. In the period between the Uprisings (when education was still in Polish), he remained overshadowed by authors of the Enlightenment. In compliance with the requirements of the didactics of the first half of the 19th century, at that time particular attention was paid to poetics and rhetoric which prepared for public activity. Thus school textbooks were merely to provide appropriate examples of poetic and prose texts for practical training.⁴ Nevertheless, already in that period there was a clear tendency to treat school classes as a means ‘to instil in Polish youth the closeness to the Russian people as belonging to the same tribe [through] the love of Russian literature and history’.⁵ This dual goal remained valid also in the period after the January Uprising, with the only difference that together with the reforms of Dmitry A. Tolstoy what increased was the importance of the poetry of the Romanticism making references not only to the grandeur of the state and the impact of particular rulers, but also to folk culture (understood in a protonational, and not just utilitarian way)⁶ meant to define Russian national identity.⁷

The reforms from 1869–1873 cannot be easily and unambiguously classified. Their basic goal was not so much to make education na-

4 J. Wołczuk, *Rosja i Rosjanie w szkołach Królestwa Polskiego, 1833–1862*, Wrocław 2005, pp. 119–135.

5 Ibidem, p. 119.

6 See footnote 8.

7 J. Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire. Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855–1870*, Madison, 2010, pp. 67–69; D. Aberbach, *National Poetry, Empires and War*, Routledge, New York 2019, p. 19.;

tional, but to approximate it to the Prussian model, with the first quality being its elitist character: gymnasia were to be available, first of all, to the children of the nobility and from affluent families; the emphasis was to be put on teaching ancient languages, logic, and mathematics, with much mistrust towards speculation and debate essential in natural sciences. The curriculum of teaching Russian and Russian literature was to be of philological character, strictly connected with teaching Greek and Latin literature. Such curriculum was seen as reliable and appropriately educating the minds of the future elites.⁸ On the other hand, however, the ideological basis of teaching was provided by the theory of ‘official folk character/nationality’ echoing the famous triad of Sergei Uvarov: ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality’ in which increasingly more frequently the stress was put on the last element. Together with appreciating Russian culture as mature and autonomous, growing tendencies aimed at perceiving the Russian Empire not only as an important actor on the international arena, but also as a representative of Slavic civilization as such, going beyond the narrowly perceived ‘European character’, additionally boasting the mission to unite all Slavs. Its basic quality was the autocracy of the tsar ‘by God’s grace’, the Orthodox religion regarded as the main element of the cultural identity of the Russians, yet, first and foremost, the culture of the Russian ‘people’ perceived as of the 1860s increasingly more in national-ethnic terms. In the conviction of the Russian pedagogues of the latter half of the century, Pushkin elevated this culture which found expression in songs, legends, and folk tales, to the rank of the basic source of inspiration for Russian high

8 A. Sinsel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery: State Educational Reform in Russia under Count Dmitry Tolstoy*, Cambridge, Mass. 1973, pp. 131–133, There is extensive literature on Dmitry Tolstoy’s reform of secondary schools in the Kingdom of Poland: W. Studnicki, *Polityka Rosji względem szkolnictwa zaboru rosyjskiego. Studium polityczno-histeryczne*, Kraków 1906, pp. 232–236; E. Staszyński, *Polityka oświatowa caratu w Królestwie Polskim*, Warszawa 1968, pp. 18–19, 23–26, 93–96; L. Szymański, *Zarys polityki caratu wobec szkolnictwa ogólnokształcącego w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1815–1915*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 39–42, 50–58; E. Kula, *Opera et studio. Wizerunek nauczycieli rządowych szkół średnich w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1862–1873*, Kielce 2012, pp. 39–54.

culture'.⁹ Poetry of the Russians was thus becoming both the imagined embodiment of the 'Russian spirit' and a convenient tool of patriotic upbringing of all the subjects of the Romanov Empire.¹⁰

Still before the official introduction of Tolstoy's reform, the list of readings in the higher classes of the classical gymnasium in Kingdom of Poland had been added the following pieces (the date of their first publication in parenthesis): *The Poet* (1827), *The Prophet* (1826), *Echo* (1831), *Wandering the Noisy Streets* (1829), *I Revisited Once Again/Once Again Did I Revisit* (1835), elegy *Frantic Years' Enchants and Feasts* (1834), *The Statue* (1841), *Boris Godunov* (1831), *Poor Knight* (1830), and fragments of *Eugene Onegin* (1833).¹¹

In subsequent years, the class reading lists included the following: the poem *Poltava*¹² (1828–29), the novel *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), *To the Slanderers of Russia* (1831), *The Song of Oleg* (1822),¹³ fragments of the drama *Mozart and Salieri* (1832), and *The Bronze Horseman* (1837).¹⁴ In junior classes excerpts from the poem *Eugene Onegin* were read, and also some fairy tales (e.g., *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish*) or lyrical poems (e.g., *Winter Morning/Winter Evening*, *The Cloud*, *The Winter Road*) with their brief analysis, explanation of the more difficult words and phrases, also accompanied by auxiliary questions facilitating the reading.¹⁵ The poems were mainly

9 *Tsirkuljar' po upravleniu Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga* (1867–1868) (from 1869 published as *Tsirkular' Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga*, *TsVVO*), 1, 1870, p. 39; V. Stoiunin, *Pushkin*, Sankt-Peterburg 1881 (2nd edition 1905), p. 84.

10 There is extensive literature on Dmitry Tolstoy's reform of secondary schools in the Kingdom of Poland: W. Studnicki, *Polityka Rosji względem szkolnictwa zaboru rosyjskiego. Studium polityczno-historyczne*, Kraków 1906, pp. 232–236; E. Staszyński, *Polityka oświatowa caratu w Królestwie Polskim*, Warszawa 1968, pp. 18–19, 23–26, 93–96; L. Szymański, *Zarys polityki caratu wobec szkolnictwa ogólnokształcącego w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1815–1915*, Wrocław 1983, pp. 39–42, 50–58; E. Kula, *Opera et studio. Wizerunek nauczycieli rządowych szkół średnich w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1862–1873*, Kielce 2012, pp. 39–54.

11 *Uchebnye plany – primernaia programma predmetov*, Varshava 1889 – *prilozhenie k*, *TsVVO*, 8, 1888, p. 5.

12 *TsVVO*, 11, 1874, p. 373.

13 *Ibidem*, 9, 1877, p. 33.

14 *Ibidem*, 10, 1880, p. 274.

15 See *Programmy prepodavania uchebnykh predmetov v muzhskikh gimnazijah i progimnazijah Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga*, Varshava 1868, pp. 4–8; *Programmy prepodavaniia*

meant to be memorized, this considered both memory training, rhetoric practice, and in the case of the Polish-speaking students also a reliable means of teaching correct stress in Russian and pronunciation.¹⁶ In senior classes, apart from learning the poems by heart, elements of the history of literature were included.

Gymnasium students could learn about Pushkin’s oeuvre from the book *New Russian Literature* by Pyotr Evstafiev (republished on numerous occasions in 1875–1909), which, although not enjoying the status of an obligatory text, served as a frequently used didactic aid. Pushkin’s oeuvre was analysed there in as many as 11 chapters (for the sake of comparison, Lomonosov was dedicated two chapters, Derzhavin two, Krylov one, Lermontov four, while Gogol was analysed in five chapters). In the author’s view, the poet was the most outstanding representative of Russian literature, while his output was presented in the biographical context interwoven with extensive quotes from poetic works.¹⁷ The *History of Russian Literature* by Alexey Galakhov presents Pushkin first of all as the national poet thanks to whom Russian literature had overcome the stage of imitating Western poetry, and gained its own unique qualities based on the ‘native existence’ and ‘Russian nature’. At the same time, as the author put it, ‘it is in this nature that authentic principles of the Russian spirit are rooted; these distinguish us as a nation-people (*narod*) from other nationalities (*narodnosti*)’.

The concept of national (natsional’nyj), in turn, should imply spontaneous (...) qualities of a (...) nation based on which members

uchebnykh predmetov v zhenskikh gimnaziakh i progimnaziakh Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga, Varshava 1868, pp. 3–4; Programmy prepodavania uchebnykh predmetov v zhenskikh gimnaziakh i progimnaziakh Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga, Varshava 1898, pp. 15–31; Programmy predmetov prepodavovaemykh v zhenskikh gimnaziakh Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga, Varshava 1907, pp. 15–31; E. Roshal’, Plany i kratkie obzory tem literaturnogo kharaktera, Varshava 1898–1901.

- 16 TsVUU; On teaching Russian in classical gymnasia: R. Kucha, *Szkola czterech wieków. Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Stanisława Staszica w Lublinie*, Lublin 1992; idem, *Szkołnictwo Lublina w latach 1864–1915*, Lublin 1995, pp. 95–117; on didactic in Russian secondary schools: I. Aleshincev, *Istoria gimnazicheskogo obrazowania v Rossii XVIII–XIX vek.*, Sankt-Peterburg 1912, p. 321.
- 17 P. Evstafiev, *Novaia ruskaia literatura. Ot Petra Velikogo do nastoiashchego vremeni*, Sankt-Peterburg 1879, pp. 131–208.

of the same nationality, regardless of their age, condition/?status, and development stage are akin, creating one whole distinguishing it from all the other nationalities.¹⁸

An intermediary form between a textbook and an anthology could be found in the *Guide to Teaching History of Russian Literature* by Pyotr Smyrnovsky (Moscow 1899) showing the poet's biography and output on over a hundred pages (of the total of 246). Classifying this oeuvre into poems, romances, and novels, plays and lyrical poems, he focused on their presentation and stylistic analysis; to him, Pushkin was, first and foremost, a master of the word, and an example to other authors of Russian literature.¹⁹ Furthermore, in the book *Sketches in History of Russian Literature of the 19th Century* by Vladimir Savodnik published between 1905 and 1915, apart from showing the poet's extensive biography (covering almost 40 pages), the author emphasized the aesthetical worth of Pushkin's prose, drama, and lyrical pieces,²⁰ this followed by the analysis of the poet's best known works.

Among the school chrestomathies the best-known work (and used for the longest period of time, since boasting almost 35 editions!) was the reader by above-mentioned Galakhov. In the first volume the poet's oeuvre was presented on the example of his lyrical pieces. Interestingly, a frequent means used by the author was to place Pushkin's works side by side with pieces by other authors dealing with a similar subject (e.g., *The Caucasus*/?*The Prisoner of the Caucasus* by Pushkin and *The Caucasus* by Lermontov, *Monastery on Kazbeck next to Lermontov's Ruins of the Gudala Castle*, or *Autumn and Winter* next to the autumn landscape description from Sergey Aksakov's writings), which provided students with the possibility to compare such two works and conduct their shared analysis. Another popular literature anthology could be found in the work by Lev Polivanov *Russian Chrestomathy* (Moscow 1889) who similarly

18 A. Galakhov, *Istoria russkoj slovesnosti*, Moskva 1907, pp. 186, 188, 192-193.

19 P. Smirnovskij, *Posobie pri izuchenii istorii russkoi slovesnosti. Kurs starshikh klassov*, Moskva 1899, ch. 4, pp. 1-124.

20 V. Savodnik, *Ocherki po istorii russkoj literatury*, Moskva 1908, pp. 173-271.

as Galkhov put together works by various authors to facilitate a comparative analysis.²¹

When analysing Pushkin’s works the authorities of the Warsaw Educational District proposed two apparently contradicting interpretation ‘keys’. The first of them was to present the Russian artist as a poet of the Romanticism: alienated, lonely, burdened with a challenging mission.²² The other was to show Pushkin as a patriot, a bard of the Russian state and of the Russian people. These two manners of interpreting the oeuvre of Pushkin provided Russian teachers, on the one hand, with the possibility to discuss Pushkin’s works from a formal perspective, with a particular emphasis on the correct identification of literary genres, discussion of the functions of structural elements, poems’ stylistic and aesthetic, while, on the other hand, this ‘dry’ analysis was a pretext to show the beauty of the poetics which reflected the beauty of Russian folk culture and the power of the Russian state,

As of the 1880s, apart from school readers and textbooks read and discussed in class, secondary-school students were also obliged to do some extra-class reading. Home reading (*domashnee, dopolnitel’noe chtenie*) did not imply only reading the fragments of literature discussed in class, but also whole works meant to be available in school libraries (using the libraries was to serve as a touchstone of students’ loyalty).²³ With respect to Pushkin, this applied mainly to his longer works, both poetry and prose. The central educational authorities, followed by those of the Warsaw Educational District, divided this literature into recommendable (*rekomendovannuiu*), used during classes, and admissible (*dopuskaemuiu*), meant for school libraries and forming a book collection which was to serve as voluntary reading. The latter included biog-

21 L. Polivanov, *Russkaia khrestomatia*, Moskva 1889, ch. 3 (dlja V, VI, VII i VIII klassov), Moskva 1889.

22 *TSVUO*, IX, 1880, p. 186, *TSVUO*, X 1880, p. 336. This was unquestionably reflected in Pushkin’s views, see S. Evdokimova, *Pushkin’s Historical Imagination*, Yale 1999, pp. 13-14; 31-56; S. Dixon, ‘Pushkin and history’, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Pushkin*, ed. A. Kahn, Oxford 2007, pp. 118-129.

23 A. Kraushar, *Czasy szkolne za Apuchtina...*, p. 12.

ographies of illustrious Russian writers. What enjoyed the highest popularity, in turn, was the work by Vladimir Stoiunin Pushkin (St Petersburg 1881 and 1905), as well as anthologies and collective editions of the works by the Russian poet and books from the St Petersburg ‘Social Benefit’ (*‘Obshhestvennaia pol’za’*) Publishing House owned by Florentiy Pavlenkov, a publisher and a pedagogue, who created a new edition type of classical works of Russian literature in a large format addressed to mass readers. Before Pushkin’s hundredth birthday, Pavlenkov published, among others, *A.S. Pushkin’s Collection of Works in One Volume* (St Petersburg 1890) and *A.S. Pushkin’s Collection of Works in Ten Volumes* (St Petersburg 1891) edited by the well-known and highly-esteemed promoter of Russian literature Alexander Skabichevsky. Another publisher of Pushkin’s oeuvre whose books reached the school libraries of the Kingdom of Poland was above-mentioned Lev Polivanov. The *A.S. Pushkin’s Works with Commentary* (Moscow 1893-1898) addressed to students and their families was composed of five volumes containing subsequently lyrical poetry, fairy tales and ballads, plays, *Eugene Onegin* (dedicated a separate volume), and finally prose.²⁴ Another editor of Pushkin’s works was Alexei Suvorin, a feature writer, journalist, and a theatre critic who won popularity thanks to the mass editions of the ‘Russian Calendar’ (as of 1872). An owner of a profitable publishing house, he focused on reasonably-priced editions of the Russian classics. Pushkin’s oeuvre was published in 10 volumes of *A.S. Pushkin’s Works* (St Petersburg, 1887), recension by Pyotr Morozov, an illustrious historian of literature.²⁵

24 Pavlenkov F. F., in: *Enciklopedicheskii Slovar’ Brokgausa i Efrona*, t. XXIIa, Sankt-Peterburg 1897, p. 557; *Dopolnenie k Enciklopedicheskomu Slovar’iu Brokgausa i Efrona*, Sankt-Peterburg 1906, vol. 2, p. 369; I. Barenbaum, N. Kostyleva *Knizhnyi Peterburg*, Leningrad 1986, pp. 239-244.

25 Suvorin A. S., in: *Eniklopedicheskii Slovar’ Brokgausa i Efrona*, t. LXXXII, Sankt-Peterburg 1901, pp. 894-896; Lists of books for libraries of the gymnasias of the Warsaw Educational District before 1889: Tsuvo, XII, 1884, p. 384; VIII, 1888, p. 352; V, 1894, p. 223; see the entry ‘Pushkin’ in the card file of the University of Warsaw Library.

An important element of school libraries were also magazines addressed to children. Pushkin’s life and works were extensively discussed in the following: *Child’s World* (*Detskij mir*), *Children’s Rest* (*Detskii otдых*), *Source* (*Rodnik*), *Reading of the Folk School* (*Chital’nia Narodnoi Shkoly*), and *Wizard’s Lamp* (*Vol’shebnyi Fonar*).²⁶ The magazines provided young readers with a different type of reading than extensive volumes with lengthy explanations and glossaries. Pushkin’s oeuvre was popularized in them not only through publishing fragments of his poetic works, a solemn report on the unveiling of the poet’s monument in Moscow (1880), but also through interesting and exciting fictionalized fragments of Pushkin’s biography with numerous illustrations (including the poet’s portraits and photographs of the sites related to him). These magazines emotionally bonded readers with the Russian bard and his poetry, making sure the readings were entertaining and private reading was fun.²⁷

It was the centenary of the poet’s birth in 1899 that yielded a real boom in literature dedicated to him. Organized throughout whole Russia in a truly solemn manner, the jubilee celebrated Pushkin as a national poet. It was for the first time that he united on such a grand scale representatives of the authorities, the intelligentsia, as well as the lower classes. The direct result of the anniversary celebration can be seen not only in raising the poet’s monument in Tsarskoye Selo and setting a commemorative plaque on the building of the former Alexander Lyceum, but also in giving Pushkin’s name to a large number of streets, squares, schools, and libraries in the whole territory of Russia.²⁸ On the occasion, the periodical of the Warsaw Educational District published reading recommendations for school libraries.

26 Tsuvo, V, 1894.

27 E.g., *Detskij otдых*, 5, 1899, pp. 24–49; *Rodnik*, 1899 (the whole issue). Their presence in a school library is confirmed by the stamps of the 2nd Warsaw Gymnasium on the copy in the University of Warsaw Library.

28 V. V. Sipovskij, *Pushkinskaia iubileinaia literatura 1899–1900, Kritiko–bibliograficheskij razbor*, Sankt–Peterburg 1901, pp. 1–34.

Similarly as in earlier years, what dominated among them were more recent editions of prose pieces, anthologies, and poetry collections, as well as the poet’s biographies. The jubilee literature contained albums, illustrated publications, occasional speeches, and even music pieces (e.g., cantata *Pushkin’s Monument*). Among the albums, let us mention here the ‘*Pushkin’s Recess*’ Album (*Al’bom ‘Pushkinskii Ugolok’, 1799–1899*) by Vasily Ostrogsky illustrated by Vasily Maksimov (Moscow 1899) and *A.S.Pushkin’s Works* with a portrait by Valentin Serov and ‘66 drawings by [e.g.,] Abram Arkhipov, Alexandr Benois, Apollinary and Victor Vasnetsov, and Ilya Repin’ (Moscow 1899). It was an ornamental edition, containing illustrations by the most outstanding Russian painters from the late 19th century, delineating modern publishing and artistic standards, which were first-class examples of the aesthetic of Modernism. Owing to their high prices such books most likely reached very few libraries of the Kingdom of Poland. A much wider circulation was certainly achieved by paperback editions containing occasional speeches or essays dedicated to Pushkin’s oeuvre as well as cheap publishing series, e.g., the famous *Pushkin’s Illustrated Library* (*Illustrirovannaia Pushkinskaia Biblioteka*) published by afore-mentioned Pavlenkov. Despite large editions and low prices, such books were published with exceptional care, while their artistic layout (co-created by Pavel Sokolov and Mikhail Mikeshin) reflected the artistic tastes of the Silver Age.²⁹

Additional readings, available in school libraries, contributed to promoting the oeuvre of the Russian bard, expressing the ‘Russian spirit’ idea to a much larger extent than that obligatory in the classes dealing with Pushkin’s oeuvre canon. For this reason Alexander Pushkin was becoming the nation’s artist in the eyes of the Russian authorities and the nation’s ‘symbol and icon’, while Romantic poetry was turning into a ‘secular religion of the nation’.³⁰

29 *Tsuvo*, 6, 1899, p. 132; 12, 1899, p. 308; 4, 1900, p. 90; 7, 1900, p. 206; 12, 1900, p. 90; 8, 1902, p. 246; 1, 1903, p. 46; 1., 1906, p. 62.

30 D. Aberbach, *National Poetry, Empires and War*, New York 2019, p. 19.

BETWEEN CLASSICAL AND NATIONAL EDUCATION

The task of school curricula was to, first of all, reflect the genre and style variety in the oeuvre of the Russian poet (naturally, excluding the poems which might incite suspicion of disloyalty). What dominated in classes was the classical analysis of a literary work based on the stylistic classification of a poem, and identifying its rhetoric, logical, as well as linguistic functions. Poetical works were understood in harmony with Aristotle’s poetics as a ‘form to express poet’s ideas’. Poetry was thus to reflect reality ‘not as it is, but as it should be according to the poet’. As emphasized by one of the authors of the official Warsaw Educational District’s periodical, ‘the moral and educational importance of poetry consisted in the impact of poetical images on man’s soul’,³¹ which meant that a poem’s aesthetic translated directly into its didactic and educational functions.³² The skills of a correct analysis were continuously checked with verifying questions found at the end of every fragment of a literary text in a school textbook, with written homework, and, finally, by means of essays written in class.

Along with the philological and logical analysis of literary texts, the importance of Russian patriotic upbringing was emphasized. For Polish students this meant both their linguistic Russification as well as the intention to turn Russian higher culture into the educational foundation for adolescent Poles.³³ This process was to demonstrate the ‘superiority’ of Russian culture over Polish culture, the latter regarded as weaker and peripheral³⁴ (thus

31 *TSVUO*, 12, 1882, p. 49.

32 *Tsuvo*, 12, 1882, s. 49.

33 As observed by A. Kraushar when describing the figure of the school superintendent of the Warsaw Educational District Alexander Apukhtin, ‘he seemed a minor land owner (. . .) self-confident about his uncontrollable power and convinced that it was only to him (. . .) that the grand Russian homeland will owe the inflow of thousands of “foreign” youth enamoured with the genius of Gogols, Pushkins, and Lermontovs, also fluent in the language they speak’ (*Czasy szkolne za Apuchtina...*, p. 45).

34 M. Rolf, *Rządy imperialne w Kraju Nadwiślańskim. Królestwo Polskie i cesarstwo rosyjskie 1864–1915*, transl. W. Woskowicz, Warszawa 2016, p. 129.

of local impact only, and not universal, this quality being attributed to Russian culture); it was also to prove the need to integrate Poles with the Empire. In practical terms, this was expressed in the depreciation of the value of Polish literature³⁵ and in the incessant tracing of ‘polonisms’: students’ interventions supposedly demonstrating an insufficient mastery of the state Russian point of view.³⁶ The goal to boost the knowledge of Russian was to be, first of all, served by the increase in the time dedicated to private reading and memorizing poetry. As mentioned above, such tasks were to eliminate wrongly put stress in Russian words, enrich the vocabulary,³⁷ and to help prepare independently written essays³⁸ in the ‘state’ language.

Already in the recommendations from the early 1870s the Warsaw Educational District addressed the issue of presenting to students the foundation of Russian cultural identity expressed both through the idea of *folk character* and that of an empire, which meant admiration for the state: ‘a European Empire’ and its native culture. Fascination with folk culture was present in central Russia already in the 1830s, while in the latter half of the century, it was gradually more distinctly identified with the primacy of Russian culture throughout the whole Empire and with the Slavophile ideal of ‘getting closer to the people’ (*sblizhenie s narodom*) serving as

35 Cz. Galek, ‘Wychowanie młodzieży szkolnej w Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIX i XX wieku w świetle literatury memuarystycznej i beletrystycznej’, in: *Szkolnictwo, opieka i wychowanie w Królestwie Polskim od jego ustanowienia do odzyskania przez Polskę niepodległości*, eds. H. Markiewiczowa, I. Czarnecka, Warszawa 2016, p. 140.

36 A. Kraushar, *Czasy szkolne za Apuchtina...*, p. 20; the concept of ‘polonism’, however, has a broader meaning: next to ‘Jesuitism’ it was understood as the greatest danger to the integrality of the Slavic community. As phrased by Samarin, ‘polonism’ transformed Poland into a sharp wedge stuck by Latinism into the very heart of the Slav world in order to splinter it to pieces’, A. Walicki, *W kręgu konserwatywnej utopii: struktury i przemiany rosyjskiego słowianofilstwa*, 2nd revised edition, Warszawa 2002, p. 360, H. Głębocki, *Kresy imperium. Szkice i materiały do dziejów polityki Rosji wobec jej peryferiów, XVIII–XXI wiek*, Kraków 2006, p. 170.

37 *Tsuvo*, 1, 1870, pp. 285–286.

38 *Tsuvo*, 12, 1870, pp. 586.

the expression of ‘native’ Russianness.³⁹ In the opinion of the educational authorities in Warsaw, among the Russian authors it was mainly Pushkin ‘whose works expressed most strongly Russian folk character/nationality’⁴⁰ and who responded to such formulated needs. His main quality was not only the knowledge of the ‘songs of the Russian people’, but the fact that he was ‘permeated with their spirit’. According to Pushkin’s biographer Vladimir Stoiunin, this meant that the Russian poet:

discovered in poetry one of the social sources which should incite the best emotions among the people. He realized that through poetry it was possible to introduce the sense of unity to society divided into classes, this unity determining the moral strength of the nation.

The task of a poet should be ‘to combine poetry with nation’s life, giving it the importance of a social force which could instil the best emotions and aspirations in people’s awareness’.⁴¹ Briefly speaking, the national poet drawing inspiration from folk culture bestowed a sense on this culture creating through it a ‘feeling of unity’ among the whole nation. In these words the echo of the famous speech Fyodor Dostoyevsky delivered on the occasion of unveiling Pushkin’s monument in Moscow on 6 June 1880 can be heard. The author of *The Karamazov Brothers* suggested in it two interpretation tracks in the oeuvre of the great poet. The first of them was the view that ‘Pushkin was the first to mark out the direction in the development of Russia’, this being the direction of ‘getting closer to the people’. The second Pushkin’s merit was, in turn, showing of the ‘artistic type of Russian beauty being born directly from the spirit of the Russian nation’.⁴² The central topic in Dostoyevsky’s

39 It is the oeuvre of Ivan Aksakov and Mikhail Pogodin that can be regarded as an example of the attitude of Slavophilia combined with ‘official nationality/ folk character’. On the evolution of Slavophilia from the period of ‘great reforms’, A. Walicki, *W kręgu konserwatywnej utopii...*, pp. 41–44, 366–411.

40 *Tsuvo*, 1, 1870, p. 39.

41 V. Stoiunin, *Pushkin...*, pp. 72, 84.

42 P. Draszek, ‘Puszkin w interpretacji Dostojewskiego’, *Acta Polono–Ruthenica*, 1998, vol. 3, pp. 373–375.

view was the necessity to ‘appease’ Russia in the era of intensified political terrors and assaults on the Tsar-Liberator and the historic reconciliation both between ‘the authorities’ and ‘society’, as well as between ‘society’ and ‘the people’ who were to become now one nation endowed with Messianic and Ptolemaic qualities.⁴³

In harmony with such an interpretation, in the book popular in schools Pushkin’s poem *Napoleon* was analysed. According to its author, the most glorious moment in the history of Russian higher classes (*obshchestvo*) was their 1812 defence of the Russian state together with the Russian people, and subsequently of whole Europe against Napoleon. Russian patriotism, according to Stoiunin, was not at the time selfish or particularistic, but vice versa: it was universalistic and generous. Fighting against the aggressors, the Russians sacrificed the most: their blood, thanks to which ‘a new subjugation of peoples was no longer possible’.⁴⁴ That war demonstrated the necessity to reconcile Russian elites with the state authorities, but also with the Russian people, so that the old patriotism of one class only: of the nobility, could extend to all social classes. In consequence, one community of shared goals and ideas was created: ‘all should consider themselves one nation’.⁴⁵ The use of the term nation (*natsia*) to define both upper and lower classes of the Russian people did not have here ‘an unlawful’ ‘French’ connotation according to which the idea of the nation would have independent political aspirations. On the contrary, Pushkin’s role of a ‘national poet’ was to consolidate all Russian classes under the unquestioned rule of the autocratic tsar- emperor, while the binder of this unification was to be found in folk culture given an artistic dimension by the poet thanks to his genius.⁴⁶

The bestowing on Pushkin of the rank of a national poet (bonding the people and the state into one organism) found expression

43 See E. Radziński, *Aleksander II. Ostatni wielki car*, Warszawa 2005, p. 408.

44 V. Stoiunin, Pushkin..., p. 100.

45 Ibidem, p. 1436, ‘vsem nakonets uznat’ sebia odnoj natsiei’.

46 See A. Miller, ‘Istoria poniatia natsia v Rossii’, in: *Ponjatia o Rossii. K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda*, eds. D. Sdvizhkov, I. Shirle, Moskva 2012, pp. 7–49.

in test tasks and topics of essays to be written as homework. From among many similar let us mention here the following: ‘Explain the importance of the term *national poet* and show what the national importance of Pushkin’s works consists in’; ‘Pushkin’s views following the 1812 events expressed in his poetry’; ‘The idea of folk character/nationality in Pushkin’s and Gogol’s works’:⁴⁷ ‘The battle of Poltava according to *Poltava* by Pushkin’; ‘What is the main motif of the poem *The Bronze Horseman?*’; ‘Discuss Pushkin’s ode *To the Slanderers of Russia*’.⁴⁸

In the view of the authorities of the Warsaw Educational District (and of many Russian intellectuals),⁴⁹ Pushkin’s oeuvre entailed the nation-building potential, and could be treated as a shared property of both ‘the people’ and ‘society’: namely the Russian educated classes. The question in this paper is, however, what impact was attributed to this oeuvre with respect to the Polish subjects of the Russian Empire, and how Pushkin’s works were supposed to affect Polish students in Russian schools of the Kingdom of Poland.

The research into the ‘colonial’ dimension of Russian literature, undertaken since the 1990s, has drawn attention to the representation of the peripheries of the Russian state among Russian writers.⁵⁰ With respect to Poland, this was expressed with the use of arguments justifying Poland’s subjection to Russia and the approval of the disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the map of Europe. Let us mention the most important of those arguments:

47 *Tsuvo*, 6, 1904, p. 472.

48 *Tsuvo*, 4, 1869, p. 187.

49 See the anthology of essays by Russian intellectuals dedicated to Pushkin: A.S. Pushkin: *pro et contra. Lichnost’ i tvorchestvo Aleksandra Pushkina v ocnke russskikh myslitelei i issledovatelei*, Sankt-Peterburg 2000, vol. 1, pp. 152-397 (particularly interesting are the texts by F. Dostoyevsky, Bishop A, Khrapovitsky, A. Veselovsky, and V. Rozanov).

50 See E. Thompson, *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, transl. A. Sierszulska, Kraków 2000, pp. 53-84; S. Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, Cambridge 2009; H. Ram, *The Russian Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire*, Madison, Wisconsin 2003.

- (1) argument of force; Poland should yield to a great Empire owing to its weakness;
- (2) argument of reason (or Reason): Poland’s partitions were a historical necessity;
- (3) argument of the reason of state: Poland is a legitimate Russian property, while its incorporation into the Romanov Empire was merely an act of the compensation of wrongs;
- (4) argument of defence: Russia had to defend against the ‘Seine spirit’ on the Vistula which constituted a direct threat to her; and finally: (5) the argument of the mission of the Empire blocked by the ‘littleness of a particular national idea’.⁵¹

Unquestionably, such an argumentation clearly present in the oeuvre of the poets stemming from the Russian Enlightenment was consolidated by the poets of the Romanticism. It is particularly strongly visible in Pushkin’s oeuvre. Without going into details here of the already investigated questions of how the Russian poet perceived Poland, I would like to merely signal the central motifs of his anti-Polish works (mainly *To the Slanderers of Russia* and *The Anniversary of Borodino* included in the collection *The Taking of Warsaw* from 1831).

According to Andrzej Nowak, the central topic of Pushkin’s oeuvre was the genius of Peter I who was presented as a great master safeguarding Russia’s ‘freedom of maintaining her own way amidst the nations of Europe’. This destiny was to assume the role of an empire: the only political empire of Eastern Europe bestowed with the task to promote its own version of ‘autocratic Enlightenment’,⁵² both within the vast Asian territories and in its western borderlands. This obviously meant the need to demonstrate the ‘backwardness’ of the conquered regions and the neces-

51 A. Nowak, *Metamorfozy imperium...*, pp. 107-126; quoted after T. Epsztejn, *Polacy a Rosjanie*: proceedings from the Conference ‘Polska-Rosja. Rola polskich powstań narodowych w kształtowaniu wzajemnych wyobrażeń’, Warszawa-Płock, 14-17 May 1998, Warszawa 2000, p. 82.

52 A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomah*, Moskva 1962, vol. 10, *Pis'ma 1831-1837*, pp. 307-308.

sity to take them into Empire’s care. In Pushkin’s view, Poland was dangerous to Russia, since its ‘unsatiated appetite’ threatened to push Russia far to the east, which would make it impossible for the state of the tsars to ‘hack a window onto Europe’, thus entering onto the path of a European empire. In the east of the continent there was room only for one empire which was part of the ‘civilized world’.⁵³ The danger of the existence of Poland as an independent entity was particularly prominent during the period of the Napoleonic Wars when Russia was haunted by the vision of the resurrection of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as well as during the November Uprising which Pushkin witnessed, and which, in his view, was predominantly inspired by an anti-Russian conspiracy among French revolutionary circles.

In school readings dedicated to Pushkin, and particularly in the afore-mentioned Stoiunin’s book, the reference to Polishness appeared, first of all, in the context of Pushkin’s attitude to the 1831 Uprising. The stand taken by the author of the poem *To the Slanders of Russia* resulted from a conviction that the ‘Polish question’ was entangled in the ‘European revolution’ headed by France.

‘Under the banner of undermining the people’s will and the principle of nations’ self-determination (*principa nacional’nosti*) France who has just declared this principle, placed itself...amidst the fiercest enemies of Russia. The struggle initiated between two Slavic tribes incited there in press and among the public a storm of hatred, threats, and various accusations against the Russian people and the government which has spread (*soobshilas*)’ also to Russia’s closest neighbours.’⁵⁴

The above quote from an essay by an illustrious specialist in Pushkin’s oeuvre, above-mentioned Pavel Annenkov, placed in a book for extracurricular reading was not so much to show the Russian poet’s hostility to Poles (as such), but was to demonstrate his protest against the ideological foundation of the ‘Polish revolu-

53 A. Nowak, *Metamorfozy imperium...*, pp. 23-27.

54 B. Stoiunin, *Pushkin...*, pp. 348-349.

tion’ supposedly constituted by ‘liberal’ principles derived directly from Helvétius and Rousseau. Pushkin was to oppose ‘historical principles’ to those ideas.

‘In his view, in this Polish-Russian struggle the question is not so much to distinguish the nationalities, but to merge them into one Slavic body; it is the Slavic issue that is decided [in it]. This question is *not* new: these two close and akin tribes have been shedding blood for centuries, while a family hostility and not national one can be solved only historically, in the future.’⁵⁵

The family hostility in which the West bearing in mind the victory of Russia over Napoleon and her ‘liberation of Europe’ should not interfere can thus be solved only through the approval and the ‘absorption of’ the Empire by Poles.

Such was the interpretation, attenuating the harsh anti-Polish undertone of Pushkin’s poem, at the same time showing Poland’s affiliation exclusively from the perspective of its relation with Russia, that the authorities of the Warsaw Educational District referred to. According to the author of the brochure *Russian School in the Vistula Land* (Warsaw 1897) the role of education was to instil in students ‘subservient emotions’ and loyalty to the monarch, as well as an outlook on their own national community from an imperial perspective. According to the educational authorities in Warsaw, the purpose of Russian education was to maintain loyalty of the unrestful ‘Polish element’ both towards the foundations of the Russian state and of the Russian culture.⁵⁶

55 Ibidem, p. 352.

56 This can be testified to by the following view of Minister Tolstoy expressed in the course of his inspection of the schools of the Warsaw Educational District: ‘There is no doubt that school should never and under no circumstance become a tool of propaganda, no matter what the school is like; neither there is any doubt that the government spending state money on upkeep of schools is fully justifiably entitled to, and, so to speak, is obliged to organize them in such a way that they would benefit the whole state. Without the least of propaganda, resorting merely to the organization of scientific departments, the instruction language, the selection and evasion of various subjects taught, it can serve to approximate or distance the generation being educated versus the ruling nationality, to inspire or suppress patriotic feelings, love for the state, and for the common homeland’, in: *Walka caratu ze szkołą polską w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1831–1870. Materiały*

This was not possible, according to the author, without a critical attitude of Poles to their own national tradition, while at the same time it justified reminding them of the negative elements from their own past (whose examples could be seen in the ‘Golden Liberty’ of the nobility, anti-royal confederations, and breaking of the *seym*). According to the authorities, the 1831 Uprising should be listed among the same negative tradition. Therefore, Pushkin’s words about the ‘faithful Ros’ and ‘boastful Lach’ published in the textbooks addressed also to Poles (the fact actually criticized by a part of the Russian public opinion)⁵⁷ were in his view accounted for both didactically and politically.⁵⁸ Pushkin’s role was thus to consolidate all the Russian social classes so that they could create one nation (*nacija*) under the leadership of an autocratic tsar. The cultural foundation was to be provided to that nation by the culture of the Russian people elevated by the poet-genius to the rank of a great world culture of its own civilizational potential. Although their national distinction was not questioned, Poles could do nothing else but yield to the Russian Empire, accept its hegemony, and ‘come closer’ to it as to the grandest Slavic power.⁵⁹

EPILOGUE. RECEPTION OF PUSHKIN AMONG POLISH STUDENTS

In late June 1880, a ceremonious closing of the school year combined with the commemoration of recently passed away Empress Maria Alexandrovna, wife of Alexander II reigning at the time, took place in the first Warsaw gymnasia (for girls and for boys). The ceremony may not have differed from other school events of the type except for the fact that it acquired a special character

źródłowe, selection, introduction, compilation K. Potkański, Warszawa 1993, p. 276

57 I. Skvorcov, *Russkaia shkola v Privilian’e*, Varshava 1897, pp. 41-43.

58 *Ibidem*, pp. 31-38.

59 A similar view on teaching Russian in the schools of the Kingdom of Poland in the post-January Uprising period was expressed by the Headmaster of the Radom Gymnasium for Boys, W. Smorodinow, *Tsirkular Varshavskogo Uchebnogo Okruga*, 10, 1884, pp. 25-27.

since simultaneously with paying tribute to the deceased of the ruling House of Romanov also mention was made of the ‘grandest from among the Russian poets due to the recent unveiling of his monument in Moscow’. Next to the portrait of the Emperor and Empress, set amidst ‘aromatic plants’, there was Pushkin’s bust. Having heard the occasional speeches and following the giving of prizes to the excelling students, the choir sang *Glory to you (Slav’sia)*, while a female student of grade 2 ‘read from the podium the poem *Before Pushkin’s Monument* by Fyodor Miller. The public applauded generously her excellent intervention. Owing to this poem, clearly showing the importance of Pushkin as a national poet, the choir sang one of Russian folk songs, concluding with the *God Save the Tsar (Bozhe, Tsaria khrani)* anthem’.⁶⁰

The above event perfectly illustrates the strong position Pushkin’s poetry had in Russian schools in the Kingdom of Poland. For state educational authorities it was becoming gradually more important to refer to their own high culture understood as national culture. Thus, promoting Russian culture must have been a task as important as the cult of the House of Romanov. Apart from all this, Pushkin’s genius was to combine in itself the highest mastery of European art with its rooting in the culture of the Russian people. It was not by accident that poetry reciting was accompanied in this case by the performance of Russian folk songs. A school assembly of this kind did not assume the presence of all Polish students. It is not, therefore, surprising that young Poles resented reading ‘official’ Pushkin.

The testimony to this reluctance, going, however, beyond the students’ circles, could be by all means found in the celebration of the poet’s hundredth birthday. The official celebration of Russian literature in the Kingdom of Poland never went beyond the formal state-commemorative character, involving the Polish population to a slight degree only. Focusing on the exhibition ‘of portraits, paintings, and photographs related to the celebration’ mounted

60 *Tsuvo*, 6, 1880, p. 186.

by one of the professors of the Imperial University of Warsaw and on the ‘preparation of six display cabinets’ featuring ‘works’ first editions, [...] autographs of Pushkin’s contemporaries, albums, watercolours, diaries, [and] translations of Pushkin’s works’, the celebration was a solemn event closed to the general public, and targeted mainly at the locally-living Russians. Another initiative forming part of the ‘official’ celebration consisted in a folk party organized in the Alexander (Praski) Park: there, apart from ballet dancers’ presentations and slacklining shows, volumes with the works by the Russian bard were distributed.⁶¹ Addressing such an event to the people incited a unanimous agreement to boycott it both within the National Democratic circles and by the Socialists⁶² who perceived it as a ‘farce’, objecting to being bonded with Russia either in the ‘Tsar’s’ or ‘Pushkin’s name’. The general silence on the jubilee in the Polish opinion-forming press published in the Kingdom, apart from some vague ‘anniversary’ presentations of the figure and oeuvre of the Russian poet,⁶³ confirms both lack of attempts by the Russian authorities to incite Poles’ interest in Pushkin, as well as the unfriendly attitudes of Poles themselves to his oeuvre.

One may undoubtedly find the reason for this status quo in the ‘official’ character bestowed upon Pushkin by the Russian authorities (both the central and local ones). According to the representatives of the Warsaw Educational District, the Russian poet perfectly embodied the Russian ideal of ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality’, testifying to the superiority of Russian culture over Polish one, while placing Russia at the head of the community of Slavic nations. For this reason, Pushkin was approached either with mistrust or even hostility by the majority of the Polish public opinion. The hostility may have stemmed from the reaction to pro-

61 *Varshavskij Dnevnik*, 1889, no. 142, p. 2 - <https://crispa.uw.edu.pl/object/files/672176/display/Default>.

62 *Robotnik*, 1889, no. 31, p. 2.

63 See *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1899, no. 147; *Przyjaciel Dzieci*, 1899, no. 23, p. 1; *Niwa Polska*, 1899, no. 23, p. 417; *Ziarno*, 1899, no. 24, p. 1; *Kurier Poranny*, 1899, p. 156.

moting Pushkin as an ‘official Russian poet’. As convincingly demonstrated by Marian Toporowski, among the Polish intelligentsia of the first half of the 19th century, Pushkin inspired friendly interest as a representative of the opposition trend in poetry, a Decembrist, and Mickiewicz’s friend.⁶⁴ Together with overtaking the Polish school system by the Russian Ministry of Education, the ‘dissident Pushkin’ transformed beyond recognition into a guardian of the Empire and a state poet (thus an enemy to Polishness). For these reasons the jubilee was regarded as a form of anti-Polish propaganda. Thus, representatives of Polish intelligentsia could fully agree with the view of the Russian revolutionist N. A. Tan (Vladimir Bogoraz)⁶⁵ who in his poem *To the Robbers of Pen* translated into Polish by Leon Belmont and published (legally!) in 1900, called for the following:

Away from our ceremony you go! This place is not for you:
There is no prey here that might sneering pen robbers entice;
On you, Judases, the monument of the bard casts shadow true,
And the glimmer of his wreath blinds your sight.⁶⁶

The silence of the Kingdom press about the anniversary celebration was forced by censorship. However, it can be supposed that the true attitudes were shown in the undertone of the articles published in Galicia’s press. There dailies and brochures showed sincere hostility when referring to the anniversary celebrations organized and inspired in Krakow by the editors of *Kraj* (thus having nothing to do with the Warsaw ‘state’ celebration of Pushkin).⁶⁷

64 M. Toporowski, *Puszkina w Polsce*, Warszawa 1950, pp. 13–18.

65 Actually Vladimir Bogoraz, member of the Narodnaya Volya, who benefitted from his exile to Kamtchatka to conduct ethnographic research and create poetry, see Bogoraz, *Bol’shaja Rossijskaja Enciklopedia* - <https://bigenc.ru/ethnology/text/3789984> [Accessed 10.11.2022].

66 Tan, ‘Rozbójnikom pióra (Z powodu jubileuszu Puszkina)’, in: L. Belmont, *Rymy i rytmy*, Warszawa 1900, pp. 208–211. Translation from Polish into English by M. Iwińska.

67 The organizers of the jubilee celebrations included such outstanding scholars as Marian Zdziechowski, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, and Karol Potkański, see M. Toporowski, *Puszkina w Polsce...*, p. 19.

What dominated in the press was the focus on the anti-Polish character of the Russian poet’s oeuvre, and on the ‘cult of wild force and (...) boastful chauvinism’.⁶⁸

Therefore, it is not surprising that we learn about the reading of the Russian Romantic poet by Polish students merely from several preserved sources. On the one hand, they emphasize the ‘official’ character of the texts read in school classes⁶⁹ and at school jubilee celebrations⁷⁰ simply because their reading was obligatory in the Russian literature curriculum. Reading of the Ode *To the Slanders of Russia or Before the Holy Tomb* incited understandable aversion among the young people, yet reports on reading them were not too frequent.⁷¹ On the other hand, there appeared mentions (e.g., in Stefan Żeromski’s *Sisyphus’ Work*) of fascination with pieces by Alexander Pushkin by those students who, revolting against their Polishness derived from home (for ideological or opportunist reasons), eagerly absorbed Russian high culture and interest in the poetry of the great Romantic.⁷² One way or another, not ‘neutral’ to Poles, the reading of Pushkin’s works was connected with the fear of losing one’s own national identity, with the constantly alarming question whether this might not lead to ‘Slavic streams being diluted in the Russian sea’.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Polish public opinion’s view on Russian school education in the Vistula Land was most appropriately summed up by Izabela Moszczyńska: a social activist, co-author of the educational programme of the Polish Socialist Party (PSS), as well as a co-organizer of the 1905 school strike:

68 *Mickiewicz i Puszkina oraz społeczeństwo polskie i rosyjskie*, Kraków 1899, pp. 14, 25-37.

69 Cz. Łatawiec, *Sandomierz – moja młodość*, Warszawa 1976, pp. 83-84; Z. Wasilewski, *Życiorys w: Kielce w pamiątkach i wspomnieniach z XIX wieku*, eds. A. Massalski, M. Pawlina-Međucka, Kielce 1992, p. 200.

70 S. Żeromski, *Dzienniki*, Warszawa 1964, ed. J. Kądziała, vol. 1, p. 98.

71 S. Surzycki, *Kartka z dziejów rosyjskiego wychowania państwowego w Polsce*, Warszawa 1933, pp. 40; - W. Lednicki, ‘Pushkin a my’, in: idem, *Pushkin. 1837-1937*, Kraków 1937 p. 55

72 S. Żeromski, *Szyfowe prace*, Warszawa 1934, p. 228.

‘Society’s reluctance to Russian schools resulted not only from the fact that there was a foreign language of instruction there, but from the fact that this school system was bad in every aspect, that it satisfied no needs whatsoever of the nation’s cultural development, contrariwise, causing only artificially amassed obstacles.’⁷³

Therefore, the government schools were assessed throughout all their duration as alien institutions, hostile to Polish society, blocking its cultural and social development. The fact that this educational system’s authority was to be consolidated by the genius of the Russian ‘national poet’ made his oeuvre as if automatically rejected as harmonizing with the intention to ‘deprive Polish students of their national identity’.

In the light of the analysis of the interventions of the authorities of the Warsaw Educational District and of the content of school books, however, in my view, one should not attribute to Russian schools the entire eradication of the Polish national identity in students and the ‘turning of the gymnasium students into Russians’. Alexander Pushkin, regarded to have been the great master of Russianness, was the patron of the Russian nation composed both of representatives of lower classes (*narod*) as well as of the higher ones (*obshchestvo*) under the leadership of an autocratic tsar, which, however, was not meant to include Poles.[to zdanie po polsku chyba nielogiczne, tu poprawiłam] In the understanding of Russian officials it was the Russian national territory inhabited by representatives of the ‘triune’ Russian nation bringing together Great Russia, Little Russia, and White Russia that constituted the ‘core of the Empire’. Poles, instead, belonging to the Russian state and not the Russian nation, should, first of all, stay loyal to the Empire, and thoroughly accept their submission and dependence.

Among Poles Pushkin was to symbolize the cultural power of the Russian state. This state, however, was predominantly represented as an empire, and not a national state. The Russian *narod*, translated both as the ‘people, folk’ and ‘nation’, was not actually

73 I. Moszceńska, *Nasza szkoła w Królestwie Polskiem. Uwagi na czasie*, Lwów 1905, p. 17.

treated as the subject of the Russian statehood, but as its cultural and ethnographic base defining the civilizational status of the Russian state. To conclude, the concept of *narod* did not coincide with that of the 'state', therefore the schools' role was more to acculturate Polish students to Russianness than to assimilate them.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska