

Introduction:

“Poles talk about Russians the same way that anti-Semites talk about Jews.”

-Gleb Pawlowski, adviser to President Putin, 2005¹

“You [Russia] are looking for an enemy and you find it in Poland.”

-Polish Foreign Minister Adam Daniel Rotfeld, 2005²

“[Poles loathing of Russia]...This is something that is deeply imbued in their tradition, their mentality.”

-Former Prime Minister of Israel Yitzak Shamir, 1989³

On January 16th, 2002 Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in the Polish capital of Warsaw for an official two-day visit, the first by a Russian leader since 1993. After a routine meeting with Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski and prominent legislators of the Sejm, all eyes turned to Putin to see how he would ease some of the political and historical tensions that have plagued relations between the two nations since the Second World War. First on the agenda were wreath-laying ceremonies in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and, perhaps not surprisingly, the War Monument of the Russian soldiers who were killed during the liberation of the city. Before departing back to Moscow, Putin made a last-minute but meaningful stop at the memorial of Poland's Home Army, which during Soviet times, was denounced as a criminal organization. Emotions were kept to a minimum, and Poles expecting a Willy Brandt-like genuflection were sorely disappointed when Putin refused to visit the monument for the Warsaw Uprising, which was crushed ruthlessly by Hitler's Wehrmacht as Soviet troops stood by on the eastern bank of the Vistula river, perhaps deliberately. Neither did Putin address

¹ Richard Bernstein, “After Centuries of Enmity, Relations Between Poland Are as Bad As Ever,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2005.

² “After Centuries of Enmity, Relations Between Poland Are as Bad as Ever.”

³ David Margolick, “Postwar Pogrom,” *New York Times*, July 23, 2006.

long-standing Polish bitterness at the forced departure of millions of their countrymen to Siberian camps after the Hitler-Stalin partition of 1939⁴.

Nevertheless, the very fact that the two nations were engaging in friendly diplomatic and economic discourse was reason enough to hail the event as a turning point for a relationship fraught with war, subjugation, and the occupation of each other's capitals at different points in history. Foreign media outlets reported that Putin's meeting signaled the true "end of the cold war⁵," and even the tone of some of the Polish media, if perhaps a little more cautious than one above from *The Scotsman*, was hopeful that this finally was the long-awaited breakthrough for a genuine Polish-Russian reconciliation, labeling it in one headline, "The End of Mistrust⁶." Both Putin and Kwasniewski played their parts as well in raising hopes. Putin proclaimed that a "new atmosphere" had emerged between the two nations, and emphasized the need for both sides to rid themselves of the "baggage of the recent and distant past." Kwasniewski, sitting beside Putin, agreed⁷.

Within a span of few years though, it became clear that this event, so lauded as a "milestone," was only a temporary breathing spell and both sides swiftly returned to their traditional verbal jousting. Putin, in his attempt to replace archaic Communist-themed holidays with nationalist celebrations, unveiled the creation of a new holiday: "Unity Day," to be celebrated on November 4th. On that day, almost four hundred years earlier, Polish troops were expelled from Moscow, ending the "Time of Troubles" in Russia. To compensate for the fact that only four percent of Russians nationwide knew the history

⁴ Michael Binyon, "Putin Eases Polish War Grievances," *The London Times*, January 18, 2002.

⁵ Jonathan Ledgard, "Putin's Poland Visit May Signal End of Cold War," *The Scotsman*, January 17, 2002.

⁶ Slawomir Kaminsky, "Koniec Z Nieufnoscia," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 16, 2002.

⁷ "Putin's Poland Visit May Signal End of Cold War."

behind the holiday⁸, the Kremlin backed the production of the recently-released film, *1612*, which has been questioned in the Polish *Gazeta Wyborcza* for being “anti-Polish⁹.” That same year, Lech Kaczynski, on the day that he was sworn in as Polish President, made sure to take a swipe at his Russian counterpart, saying that Putin had to come to Warsaw before he would visit Moscow, an obvious, though perhaps a bit childish, show of disrespect¹⁰. In the summer of 2005, hostilities took a violent turn, when two Polish embassy workers were assaulted by Russian “hooligans,” who according to Polish authorities, were influenced politically¹¹. By 2007, with the Kremlin standing firm on an embargo on Polish meat products¹², Polish-Russian relations had officially hit a new nadir. The glimmer of hope from five years earlier was revealed to be nothing more than an anomaly.

Polish commentators provided different explanations for this recent collapse of relations between the two nations. A sentiment among some was that simple opposing self-interest is the only stake driving the two nations apart, citing the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004 as a particularly polarizing issue¹³. After Kremlin-backed sitting Prime Minister Victor Yanukovych was ousted, Poland jumped at the opportunity to support the pro-democracy and European-leaning Victor Yushchenko. Russia, meanwhile, perceived this interference by Poland as hostile meddling in what used to be, and still remains, her sphere of influence. The joining of Poland in the European Union also caused an earlier rift, as Poland was now clearly looking West

⁸ “Police Brace For Holiday Rallies,” *The Moscow Times*, November 2, 2007.

⁹ Anna Zebrowska, “Tasmy Kremla. Smuta Krzepi,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 31, 2006.

¹⁰ Anatoly Medetsky, “Kaczynski Knows Moscow’s Pressure Points,” *The Moscow Times*, October 26, 2005.

¹¹ “Assaults Sour Poland-Russia Ties,” *BBC News*, August 11, 2005.

¹² “Talks On Russian Embargo On Polish Meat, No Date Set For Lifting,” *BBC Europe*, January 17, 2007.

¹³ Richard Bernstein, “For Poland and Russia, Old Enmity Persists,” *New York Times*, July 4, 2005.

rather than East for allies. Other Polish pundits assessed the blame for the tensions on the incompetence of short-lived Polish Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski's foreign ministry. Most, however, sung a tune familiar to the ears of Poles: the fault, as usual, lies with Russia. For example, in an editorial entitled *Getting to Moscow via Berlin*, author Slawomir Debski wrote that the Russian government has cunningly "trapped" Polish politicians¹⁴. According to Debski, Polish lawmakers, under heavy pressure from a public eager for a Russo-Polish reconciliation, are increasingly tempted to achieve anything which can be presented to voters as the long-awaited breakthrough of relations between the two nations. Hence, the politicians' main concern is to make any move that will look as spectacular as possible, with the actual consequences being of secondary importance. Meanwhile, the Russians, being perfectly aware of how this pattern works, keep on playing for time and increase the chance of maximizing their profits, since the longer they wait, the greater the pressure on Polish authorities to make relations with Russia look friendly. The result, of course, is an artificial and short-lived peace. Meanwhile, In a *New York Times* piece analyzing "bad as ever" relations, Jacek Cichocki, the director of the Polish Center for Eastern Studies commented that, the recent hostility is "not a result of Polish policy but of the internal processes of Russia¹⁵."

Though all the aforementioned arguments provide valid points, one factor that is not given much consideration to the chill between Russian and Poland is the importance of Russophobia in the minds of everyday Poles. It is no secret that Poland has had a turbulent history that has inevitably led to the demonization of its two historic adversaries - the overbearing "Niemcy" to the West and the uncivilized "Rosjanie" to the East. But

¹⁴ Slawomir Debski, "Polish-Russian Relations: Getting to Moscow Via Berlin," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 17, 2007.

¹⁵ "After Centuries of Enmity, Relations Between Poland and Russia Are as Bad as Ever."

as Professor Marek Czajkowski of the Jagiellonian University put it, whereas Poles consider Germans to be more or less “healed from dirty ambitions,” the same cannot be said of Polish perceptions of Russia¹⁶. Instead, a common perception is that Russians have not properly understood and atoned for their sins and hence, a lingering feeling of mistrust and hostility still pervades literally every issue relating to Russia. Czajkowski points out that Poles differentiate between the Russian state, which they undoubtedly hate, and the Russian people, whom Poles consider to be “cell-mates” sharing a common bond, “as for two hundred years we suffered the brutal oppression of the Polish/Russian state.” But even this is debatable. In a recent survey taken by the Polish Public Opinion Research Center, 46 percent of Poles surveyed expressed negative views of Russians; only Arabs, Roma, and Romanians scored worse. In terms of sympathetic views, of the 36 nationalities listed, Russians were listed as the 10th lowest¹⁷.

Certainly one cannot make the over-generalization that all Poles have negative stereotypes of Russians and all Russians hate Poles. Intellectuals from the Polish Romantic movement, for example, perpetuated the belief that both Poles and, in the words of Adam Mickiewicz, their “Muscovite Friends” were together locked in a struggle against a common enemy—the tyranny of the tsarist government. But one cannot also deny that demonization of Russia and Russians has at times been, and to a certain extent remains, a central tenet to the national identity of Poles. Many of the commentators previously mentioned, especially subscribers to the “blame Russia” argument such as Debski, argue that Poles have a kind of “alibi” in the inability for Russia and Poland to

¹⁶ Marek Czajkowski, “Some Remarks On History Factor In Current Russo-Polish Relations,” Johnson’s Russia List, <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/9246-24.cfm> [accessed December 13, 2007].

¹⁷ “Sympatia I Niechec Do Innych Narodow,” Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_144_07.PDF [accessed December 11, 2007].

strike an understanding between each other. The assumption is that Poles inherently desire a friendship with their Eastern counterpart but it is the scheming Russia that, for several reasons, is the one impeding progress. But is this assumption correct? Are Poles really innocent in this matter? And with such a hatred of Russia so deeply ingrained among Poles, is a genuine long-term reconciliation even possible at this point?

The purpose of this thesis is to provide insight into these questions by examining the roots of Russophobia in Poland and how deep it runs in Polish culture. First and foremost, the thesis will focus on how Russians have been characterized by Poles in mediums such as art, literature, and music. The common theme that emerges is that Poles ascribe to themselves a moral, religious, and cultural superiority over their Russian counterparts, while at the same time fostering a sense of fear and suspicion against Russians, who have, at least in recent centuries, played a dominant role over Poland. At first glance, this characterization is oxymoronic; after all, how can a people be “superior” in all senses of the word yet at the same time be subjugated by the “inferior” people? To fully understand how this seemingly contradictory picture emerged, the thesis will include a history of Polish-Russian relations and how it has affected this perception of Russia among Poles.

It will also be shown how, despite profound changes in the political, economic, and social spectrum of Poland after 1989, similar, if not identical, beliefs about Russians have lingered onto the present day. A popular view among many Polish commentators today is that the current thaw between the two nations is strictly, as one writer put it,

“about politics and the new role Poland is playing in the region than about history¹⁸.” I assert that this view is false and that legacy of past still plays a crucial role in relations between the two nations. Finally, I will prove how Poles’ Russophobia renders any kind of possibility of reconciliation between the two nations impossible and that for any kind of enduring dialogue to take place, Poles will have to do their part by rejecting these characterizations imbedded in their culture.

Among Western historians, a comprehensive study of Russophobia in Poland has not been attempted, though several writers have made important contributions to the debate. One of these is Brian Porter’s When Nationalism Began to Hate, a study of Polish nationalism during the 19th century. Porter asserts that, by nature, nationalist movements draw lines of inclusion and exclusion around social groups, with Poland during the *fin-de-siecle* being no exception. Using a variety of sources, including political speeches and posters, newspaper articles and editorials, underground brochures, published and unpublished memoirs, personal letters, and nineteenth-century books on history, sociology, and politics, Porter demonstrates how Polish revolutionary patriotism turned into a violent ideology and how the language of hatred and discipline was crucial to Polish national identity during the 19th century.

However, Porter’s focus is on Polish nationalism as a whole, rather than the specific anti-Russian aspect of it. In fact, Russophobia plays a secondary part in Porter’s work, as he instead focuses on anti-Semitism as the predominant ingredient in Poland’s supposedly “hate”-based nationalism. Porter also only focuses on the 19th century in Poland, which is just one, albeit incredibly important, chapter in the saga of anti-Russian

¹⁸ Valentinas Mite, “Eastern Europe: Russian-Polish Tensions Rise Over Attack On Russian Children In Warsaw,” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/08/8b87a178-6993-48f7-b7e3-f7b9701b49fc.html> [Accessed December 7, 2007].

nationalism. Regarding Porter's thesis, I agree with his assertion that Polish Russophobia did indeed take a more violent turn during the 19th century. But the implication that Porter makes that it was only until the 1800's that Poles began to "hate" Russians is simply incorrect; in reality, the seeds of this were in place long before the 19th century.

A work a bit more in line with the theme of this thesis is a work entitled Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present by the great British author of Polish history Norman Davies. Written initially during Communist-era Poland, Davies' work suggests that much of (what was then) the Solidarity crisis in Poland can be explained by examining Polish history. As Davies put it himself, "Such is the burden of History in Polish consciousness, that any full appreciation of the Polish crisis requires a full examination of the way in which the chief actors on the political scene perceived their roles in relation to the nation's traditions." By pointing to the legacies of spiritual mastery, defeat, self-rule, and several others, Davies illustrates the profound mark that history has had on the perspective of Poles.

Though Davies does not tackle the issue of Russophobia directly, Davies' broader thesis on importance of the past to Poles is one that I fully agree with and forms the basis of my study. Aside from adding to Davies' work by specifically focusing on Russia rather than more abstract themes, I contribute to his work by furthering the chronological scope. Davies' work, though certainly exquisitely researched, does not stray many times from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, while the years before this form a key component to my argument.

Two other works of relevance are Larry Wolff's Inventing Eastern Europe and Martin Malia's Russia Under Western Eyes. Wolff's main thesis is that Enlightenment

philosophes ascribed to the people east of the Elbe River barbaric characteristics to foster the idea of Eastern Europe as the uncivilized “Other” to Western Europe’s supposedly progressive and ideal society-stereotypes that, in many ways, persist today. Wolff shows how despite having little knowledge of the region, authors such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Louis-Phillipe Segur, and even Giovanni Casanova, all published travel accounts about “these demi-savage figures” inhabiting Eastern Europe and portrayed crossing the Elbe as a kind of time-warp where Western civilization meets Asiatic barbarism. Wolff describes in meticulous detail how Western Europeans “invented” an image of Eastern Europe through a combination of conceptions put forth by Enlightenment thinkers, such as the idea of Western Europe “possessing” its Eastern neighbor. Malia, meanwhile, asserts that characterizations of Russia in Europe have not necessarily coincided with Russia’s position on the world’s stage or its internal politics. Instead, European views of Russia have depended mostly on the “fears and frustrations, or the hopes and aspirations, generated within European society by its own domestic problems.” According to Malia, Europeans have welcomed Russia with open arms when she was at her most expansionist (Peter the Great and Catherine the Great) and have perceived her to be despotic and dangerous when she was at her most vulnerable (Nicholas I and Stalin).

Both Malia’s and Wolff’s works approach the subject of Russophobia from a European perspective, rather than from a Polish one; Wolff’s sources, in fact, combine Poland and Russia into one “Eastern Europe,” seeing little difference between the two nations. Both works are also heavily dependent on the Enlightenment for their rationale. Most of all though, Malia’s thesis that characterizations of Russians are not influenced by

Russia's foreign actions and internal processes is one that I vehemently deny. Perhaps Malia's assertion may be correct regarding Western Europe, but in Poland, it is clearly not the case.

Of final interest are the numerous cultural histories written on Poland, such as Manfred Kridl's "A Survey of Polish Literature and Culture," Czeslaw Milosz's "The History of Polish Literature," and the Polish-language "Polish Literature: From the Beginnings to Modern Times" by Julian Krzyzanowski. Though all three of these works allude to Russophobia in certain sections, there is no overarching theme of anti-Russianism that the studies strive to point out.

The chronological scope of the thesis is vast and is split into three chapters. The first covers the years 966, when Poland under King Mieszko I entered Christendom, and ends with the year 1492, the year before Tsar Ivan III adopted the title of "Tsar of all Russia," officially beginning the project of expansion that would eventually engulf the Polish lands. During this time, few works that explicitly mention Kievan Rus and Muscovy have been written or have survived. Nevertheless, I maintain that this is a crucial period to study, since much of both Polish and Russian national identity stems from this time. During these years, both nations diverged on two completely different paths, religiously, culturally, and politically. The differences that resulted-Catholicism vs. Eastern Orthodoxy, "European" vs. "Asiatic," liberalism vs. autocracy, etc.-are all stressed in Polish works about Russia. These, however, do not begin to appear en masse until Ivan's declaration, i.e. when Muscovy truly began to be perceived as a threat to Poles. It is this era, between 1493 to 1795 that is the subject of the Second Chapter. The reader may notice that at first, the religious difference between Russians and Poles is the

subject that is most discussed among Polish chroniclers. But fairly quickly, the conception of the Russian as inferior, savage, and barbaric, yet at the same time, as an oppressor and an exploiter, comes into shape. The third chapter, meanwhile, covers the years 1796 to 1918, when most of the Polish lands were under Tsarist rule. Special attention is paid to the Polish Romantic movement, Adam Mickiewicz in particular, which perceived Russia and Russians in a novel way. Though these men were Polish nationalists, some dedicating their lives to an independent Poland, they were not Russophobes in the sense that they despised Russians; instead, their hatred was against the Russian state, which oppressed both Russians and Poles, creating a common bond between the two people. It is debatable though, whether or not the majority of Poles made this distinction between the state and the people. By analyzing other works from this time period, this question will be answered. Finally, the thesis will end with a conclusion, summarizing my thoughts and illustrating how Polish perceptions of Russians have stayed almost exactly the same since the image created during the 16th century and why reconciliation between the two nations is so difficult under these circumstances. The title, meanwhile, is taken from a quote by the Polish leader and legendary Russophobe Joseph Pilsudki, who in the midst of Poland's independence debate, said that "Germany will destroy our body, but Russia will destroy our soul." I felt that this quote, coming from so eminent a leader in Poland, captured brilliantly the nature of Russophobia in Poland.

Readers familiar with the topic at hand may find it peculiar that as an American of Polish descent, I have chosen to focus on the Polish contribution to the historic enmity between the two nations rather than the Russian. But as was demonstrated in the

examples of the Polish media, one of the inherent problems of this debate in both nations is that it has been notoriously one-sided and charged with a nationalistic bent. When prompted on the issue, Polish commentators and historians will be expected to cite the usual dates that spring to mind in the collective memory of Poles: 1795, 1830, 1863, 1940, etc., while asking a Russian historian for his or her input will yield the same results but with different dates. The intelligentsia and politicians of both sides have expressed a need to move past the tragedies surrounding these years, but little, if any, of this actually has been achieved up to this point.

Therefore, it is not my goal to take sides regarding this matter and analyze which of the two nations bears more responsibility for the inability of Poland and Russia to improve relations between each other. Although I have decided to strictly concentrate on the creation of Poles' Russophobia and how it has affected these relations, certainly the Russian half of this argument is one that requires its own fair share of analysis. Neither do I wish to diminish the numerous crimes that have been committed on both sides and propose that Russians or Poles simply forget them as if nothing had happened; to do that would be not only naïve and unrealistic, but ignorant of the complexity of the situation. Instead, by analyzing the violent and turbulent relations between Poland and Russia, I seek to shed light on a lesson that can be found in not just one chaotic corner of Europe, but in many other places around the world as well: how the scars of history serve as a quite formidable roadblock to the healing of the present.

CHAPTER 1: 966-1492

On a blazing July day in 1410, a dual force of Polish and Lithuanian knights led by King Wladyslaw Jagiello were about to enter the annals of history. The year before, Jagiello and Grand Duke Vytautas held a council of war in Brest-Litovsk during which it was decided that the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom would stage a major offensive against the Teutonic Order. By then, the “Dual Kingdom” of Poland, the stronghold of Catholicism, and Lithuania, the last European pagan state, had been a unified entity for twenty-five years. With such two radically different parts comprising one kingdom, tensions occasionally and inevitably arose, but if there was one thing that could unite the Poles and Lithuanians to act as one, it was the specter of the Teutonic Knights. Crossing the Prussian border, the great banner of Krakow was raised, and with the troops singing the hymn *Bogurodzica* (Mother of God) the invasion of Prussia began. The battle that ensued in Tannenberg was a stunning victory for the Polish-Lithuanian army, striking a near-fatal blow to the Teutonic threat. It also symbolized a kingdom in its ascendancy, militarily formidable and poised on the threshold of a cultural renaissance that would come to fruition in the next century.¹⁹

Several hundred miles to the east lay the center of the Russian lands, the Grand Duchy of Muscovy. Just two years before the Battle of Grunwald, Muscovy’s cities, such as [Rostov](#), Dmitrov, Pereyaslavl, Serpukhov, and Vereya were plundered by the Tatar emir, Edigu, in response to Muscovy not paying its tribute. Its capital, Moscow, was placed under a siege that was only lifted when a costly ransom was paid²⁰.

¹⁹ Turnbull “Tannenberg 1410” 31-35

²⁰ http://russia.rin.ru/guides_e/6884.html

The Middle Ages and early Renaissance period was a time like none other in the history of Poles and Russians in its imbalance between a dominant Poland and a weak Russia. In 1237, a Mongol army under Batu Khan embarked on a westward campaign, ravaging every Russian city in its wake. The Russian state of Kievan Rus was fractured into pieces, with the principality of Muscovy holding on to a limited amount of autonomy under the Mongol “yoke” that was imposed on the Russians beginning in 1240. Until 1480, when the domination of the Mongol Golden Horde officially ended, Russia also had to deal with threats and invasions from the Teutonic Knights, Swedes, Lithuanians, and Poles. The result was not kind to Russians; while in its heyday, Kievan Rus was, in the words of Russian historian Grekov, “ahead of many European countries,” Russia during Mongol times lay in a state of dormancy²¹.

Battles were frequently fought between Poland and Kievan Rus and later Muscovy, with many resulting in resounding Polish victories. In 1018 for example, the Polish king Boleslaw invaded Kievan Rus, the predecessor to the later Russian state of Muscovy. The official reason for doing so was to install his son-in-law on the throne, but as historian James Fletcher wrote, an added incentive was to make “the Russians feel the weight of the Polish arms.” The Poles marched into the country and advanced as far as Kiev, at the time the most celebrated city in Eastern Europe, comparable to Constantinople in its opulence and grandeur. As legend tells it, the Golden Gate of Kiev opened before Boleslaw and his sword, while his troops rampaged the city. After installing the Polish prince on the Kievan throne, war was renewed, with Boleslaw and the Poles emerging victorious again. The greatest opposition that that they encountered was on the banks of the river Bug, but the Russians were routed with great slaughter,

²¹ Dukes 24.

staining the river with blood²². Three hundred years later, under the king Casimir the Great, Poland again invaded Russia, resulting in eastern territorial gain for the Polish kingdom²³. These, however, were relatively minor squabbles stemming from controversies over eastern land, with little ideological struggle behind them.

Instead, during the 15th century Polish in particular, military designs mostly concentrated on the Teutonic Knights. As a result, references to foreign people in Polish culture were saved almost exclusively for Germans. One Polish legend dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, for example, tells of a Polish princess named Wanda, who upon her father's death, became queen of Poland. A German prince offered his hand to Wanda for marriage but she, appalled at the thought of being betrothed to a German, refused. Angered at the rebuff, the unnamed German prince invaded Poland, leading Wanda to commit suicide by drowning in the Vistula river, ensuring that the German prince would not invade her beloved Poland again²⁴.

Another obstacle facing the historian investigating perceptions of Russians in Poland is the nature of literature published in Poland during this period. In the fourteenth century, the majority of writings was written in Latin and comprised predominantly of religious works. Even the works written in Polish, such as the *Psalterz Florjanski* and *Kazania Gneznienski*, were intricately decorated manuscripts of Catholic sermons. Medieval secular literature, meanwhile, consisted mostly of poetry about love or trivialities, such as Slota's *Table Manners*. The early Renaissance authors who contributed to Poland's "Golden Age," wrote predominantly on religious matter as well,

²² Fletcher, 13-14

²³ Fletcher, 35.

²⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Wanda

and when dabbling into secular literature, focused mainly on social issues, such as the evils of corruption and injustice²⁵.

But the greatest contributor to the lack of sources pertaining to Russians from this period stems from the fact that the modern definition of the term “Russian” had not yet come into fruition. In fact, until the 17th century, there was no term “Russian” used in the public discourse. Instead, the term “Rus” (or Ruthenia in English) was used to signify all of the lands to the east of Poland²⁶. The people that inhabited these lands are today referred to as Ukrainians, Belorussians, and of course, Russians.

Yet, a number of allusions to these people of “Rus” can be found in some of the earliest works of Polish writing. The medieval chronicler, the Anonymous Gaul, holds the distinction of being the first Polish author to mention Rus. While in Kiev, he marveled at the “splendor” and “wealth” of the city, though he does not provide any characterizations of the people inhabiting this area. The first to do that was Wincent Kadlubka, writing sometime between the 12th and 13th centuries, who already perceived the Ruthenians as the natural enemies of Poles. He wrote that the Ruthenians “do not neglect a single opportunity soak in blood their deep-rooted hatred and vengeance against Poles.” In another instance, he called the Ruthenians “barbaric savages,” and the “worst kind of bandits,” comparable to “blood hungry lions²⁷.”

Aside from these few works, it is useful to examine the history of the two peoples during this time, as it is crucial to understanding how Poles came to later perceive themselves compared to their eastern counterparts. During these years, Poles and Russians in their respective states diverged on two radically different paths religiously,

²⁵ Kridl, pp. 21-54.

²⁶ Mikos e-mail

²⁷ Polish book 77.

culturally, and politically. These differences would profoundly influence the conventional Polish perception of a “Russian,” when the term first began to appear in the early years of the 17th century.

It is not a coincidence that most Polish history books use the date 966 AD as their point of beginning. That year, the Polish king Mieszko I and his court were baptized, resulting in Poland entering the kingdom of “Christendom.” However, it was not piety or a religious awakening that led Mieszko to take this action; political reasons were the driving force. To the west of Mieszko sat Otto I, the king of the Germans, who had won a series of victories over eastern provinces and small bands of Slavic warriors. Soon, Otto and Mieszko were sharing borders, forcing Mieszko to end his isolation to the outside world. In 962, Otto gained even more power when he was crowned the Roman Emperor by the Pope, providing him with a religious dimension to his exploits. Hence, only by converting to Christianity could Mieszko avoid the wrath of Otto, and also give him a useful political instrument. After receiving approval from Otto, Mieszko and his Duchy of Polonia embraced Christianity.

About twenty years later, Kievan Rus, under Vladimir I, also converted to Christianity, though under the guidance of Constantinople. Like Mieszko, Vladimir was most influenced by political factors. By the late 980’s, Kievan Rus was one of the last outposts of paganism, though for years, leaders from various religions clamored for Vladimir to convert to theirs. After sending envoys to study all the known religions, Vladimir settled on Byzantine Christianity, whose churches carried such a splendor that the advisors did not know whether they were “from heaven or from earth.” After helping the Byzantine Emperor to conquer a town in the Crimea, Vladimir forced him to send a

reluctant Princess Anna for marriage. Since the notion of a Christian eloping with a pagan Slav was out of the question, Vladimir was baptized and married into the Byzantine orbit. Upon returning, pagan statues were destroyed and the entire population was baptized in the Dnieper River²⁸.

Though both Mieszko's and Vladimir's conversions were of a fairly cynical nature, using religion to sustain or increase the ruler's political power, Christianity, and more specifically, the type of Christianity that both Poland and Kievan Rus embraced came to be one of the central dividing forces between Poles and Russians. Catholic Polish clerics held a deep animosity for the "schismatics" towards the east, while the Orthodox members maintained that they are the "correct" version of Christianity.

Although historians such as Norman Davies contend that the Polish kingdom had always been a "haven of toleration" to all religions, Catholicism undoubtedly held the most popular appeal among Poles. In fact, one of the earliest known compositions in the Polish language, the hymn of the *Bogurodzica* (Mother of God), radiated with fervent Catholicism. Its verses, sang before the victorious Battle of Grunwald, begged the "Virgin, Mother of God/Maria, honored by God/Your son's patroness/Maria, Chosen Mother!" to "assist us!"²⁹ Meanwhile, the earliest Polish historians propagated the notion that Catholicism and the Polish kingdom were forces whose fates were entwined together. An example indicative of this mindset would be Jan Dlugosz, who wrote the monumental work *Cronicae Regni Poloniae* (Chronicles of the Kingdom of Poland) between 1455 and 1480. Deeply patriotic, he implies that Poland, under Catholicism, has God on her side. In describing the Polish-Lithuanian king Wladyslaw Jagiello, Dlugosz

²⁸ Dmitryshyn 48-49.

²⁹ Davies 126.

explains his greatness due to him being a “pious and devout follower of the Catholic religion.” He also “observed the fasts and vigils so ardently that he won more victories by praying to God than by fighting with arms³⁰.” While recounting the Battle of Tannenberg, Dlugosz cites a speech that Jagiello made before the battle. After listening to the boasts of the Teutonic deputies, Jagiello replies that he is of utmost confidence that he will win the battle, because he is a “Christian and a Christian king” and is prepared to leave the result of the battle to God himself³¹.

Unsurprisingly, Dlugosz was hostile to what he termed “Eastern schismatics³².” In his work, the “Greek faith” is looked down upon with suspicion; Jagiello, though a Catholic, is criticized for retaining some of his older “superstitions,” which were, of course, taught to him by his Orthodox mother³³. He refers explicitly to the people of “Rus” as “unfaithful,” grouping them together with the Muslim Tatars and the recently baptized Lithuanians, who he still perceived as pagans. Their greatest sin is wallowing in the “heretical” and “mistaken Greek faith,” and believing that they are superior to the correct and virtuous dogma of Catholicism³⁴.

Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church, under Kievan Rus and later the state of Muscovy, perpetuated their superiority over Catholics. The idea first started to appear under Kievan Rus, when Byzantine and South Slavic anti-Latin polemical writings were translated into Church Slavonic and entered into important Russian Orthodox texts laying the groundwork for the late anti-Catholic rhetoric. Conflicts between Russians against the Teutonic Knights and their allies the Swedes were seen through a religious

³⁰ Mikos 39.

³¹ Mikos 49.

³² Milosz 19.

³³ Mikos 38.

³⁴ Polish book 79.

prism: Eastern Orthodoxy against a militant form of Roman Catholicism. Muscovite chroniclers interpreted the resounding victory by Novgorodian Prince Alexander Nevsky as the embodiment of the superior Russian Orthodox against a rapacious and expansive form of Western Christianity³⁵.

Hence, even before the concept of a “Russian” was fully formed, Christianity was used as a wedge to drive Poles and Russians apart. Being “Polish” became synonymous with “Catholic”, while Eastern Orthodoxy was the central to how Russians came to perceive themselves.

Culture also played a part in forming the disparate identities of Poles and Russians. After 966 and the subsequent acceptance of Christianity, the culture of Poland became closely intertwined with the activities of the Catholic Church. The educational system, for example, centered on cathedrals and churches, where Latin *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) and *quadrivium* (mathematics, geometry, astrology, and music) were taught in schools to aspiring priests. It then spread to the countryside where vigorous religious orders (e.g., Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican, Franciscan) established their monasteries and houses and propagated religion and schooling. The first Benedictine monasteries, for example, built in the eleventh century in Tyniec (near Cracow) and Lublin (Great Poland), served not only as centers of religious education but also as outposts of instruction in new techniques of industry and agriculture of Western origin³⁶. A turning point, however, came in the fourteenth century when Casimir the Great realized that the nation needed an educated class of people, especially lawyers to codify laws for the newly powerful Polish state. In 1364, he received official permission from

³⁵ Skinner 31.

³⁶ *Polish Literature from the Middle Ages to the End of the Eighteenth Century. A Bilingual Anthology*, by Michael J. Mikoś, Warsaw: Constans, 1999.

the Pope Urban V to open the University of Krakow, which was the second university to be opened in central Europe³⁷.

As Poland entered the Renaissance, there emerged a period of intense cultural exchange between Poland and the rest of Europe. Since Italy was considered the most important center of learning, many Polish scholars who began their studies in the University of Krakow completed them in the universities of Padua, Bologna, and Ferrera³⁸. Almost all of the great writers who contributed to Poland's "Golden Age" were educated abroad, with the notable exception of Mikolaj Rey, who was raised in Poland.

Poland embraced the ideals of the Renaissance with full force. The standard of education was raised, contributing to a flowering of literature in both poetry and prose. Manners and morals also became "Europeanized," emphasizing elegance and sophistication in social forms, dress, and dining. In daily life, a distinct type of secularization set in. Although the Church was still powerful, its influence in many regards decreased. Faith began to waver, strict rules in matters of religion were disregarded, and religious liberalism became accepted³⁹.

In Russia, however, notable cultural achievements were few and far between. Architectural flowering, for example, in Muscovy had to wait until the reign of Ivan III. As historian Paul Dukes wrote, the Renaissance was weaker in Russia than in many other areas of Europe and arrived far later than. Some historians, in fact, would deny they ever touched Moscow at all.⁴⁰ The first university in Russia was founded only until 1755,

³⁷ Mikos

³⁸ Milosz 17.

³⁹ Kridl 47.

⁴⁰ Dukes 58.

several centuries after the establishment of universities in Poland and other cities in Europe.

The theory propagated by historians such as Martin Malia of a “cultural gradient” that began in Western Europe and eventually found its way to Russia was first evident during this time. It sometimes took hundreds of years for a certain work from Germany, France, or Poland to appear in Russia. Czeslaw Milosz describes a popular folk character named Eulenspiegel, who originated in Flanders or Germany. His exploits of traveling from town to town playing tricks on people were first published in Germany in 1510, and then translated into Polish around 1530, where he was called “Sowizrzal.” It took Sowizrzal until the end of the eighteenth century to first appear in Russia⁴¹.

As previously mentioned, the Renaissance had a profound effect on the way that Poles identified themselves. But nowhere was this more evident than in the political sphere. Influenced by the ideas of Greco-Roman philosophers, Polish commentators began to talk about the Polish state in classical terms. For example, the Polish word *Rzeczpospolita*, a literal translation of the Latin *respublica*, was used as the official designation for the Polish state, despite the fact that kings ruled over it. The Polish state’s rulers and creators, the gentry, perceived their “republic” as carrying the torch of democracy and sought to recall the ancient republics of Greece and Rome. After 1505, during the “Golden Liberty” period when the nobility held a significant amount of power over the king, the Polish senators tried to imitate externally the Roman senate in their proceedings (Kridl 46).

Muscovy, meanwhile, carried no such pretensions. Before the reign of Vasilii II between 1425 and 1462, Muscovy was a monarchical system with the rulers perpetually

⁴¹ Milosz 52.

fighting over power with the landholding boyars. As Vasili emerged on the throne though, Muscovy became a true autocracy in all senses of the word. He adopted knout, mutilation, and other torture devices to punish his enemies, and deliberately disregarded laws that had before limited the powers of the throne. The position of absolute autocrat was then passed on to his son and successor, Ivan III, and finally, Ivan the Terrible. Under the latter Ivan, autocracy in Muscovy reached new heights, with the tsar's secret police, the *oprichniki*, imposing terror on its adversaries.

In conclusion, though explicit mention of Muscovy in Polish works dating from 966 to 1493 is rare, the period is a crucial one. The later portrayal of Russians as the "inferior oppressor," can be found to have its roots here. While the latter half of that perception is not evident yet, since Muscovy did not serve as much of a threat as it would in subsequent years, the notion that Poles are superior to their eastern counterparts began during this time. Religiously, the dogma of Catholicism was used by Poles to differentiate themselves from the "schismatics" to the east. Culturally, the ties that Poland created with Renaissance Europe fostered a sense of solidarity with the rest of "civilized" Europe, contrary to the barren cultural landscape in Muscovy. And politically, Poles ascribed to themselves republican values that were opposite to the "Asiatic" authoritarianism of Muscovy.

Chapter 2: 1493-1795

In 1609, the Republic of Poland-Lithuania was embroiled in yet another war with Muscovy. This time, the aim was to recover Smolensk, an extremely contested city that unwittingly became a pawn in the long struggle between Poland and Muscovy. A siege of the fortress in Smolensk was laid and an army under Polish hetman Stefan Zolkiewski scored a remarkable victory over a combined Tsarist and Swedish force at nearby Klushino. Zolkiewski in his memoirs noted how the Poles, outnumbered 48,000 to 12,300⁴², caused the Muscovites to run *“by God’s grace for a mile, while we slashed at them and grabbed the rich ones, who, carrying what they owned, tried to get away⁴³.”* Events took an unexpected turn though, as the Tsar of Muscovy, Vasili Shuyski, was overthrown by a rebellious faction of court boyars. Aching to take advantage of this moment of vulnerability, Polish king Sigismund III sent Zolkiewski to march onto Moscow, where he was allowed in unopposed by the Muscovite boyars.

A Polish garrison was sent in to control the Kremlin while King Sigismund vacillated in deciding his next course of action regarding Muscovy. Tsar Vasily, meanwhile, was sent to Warsaw, where he was paraded as a victory token before dying in detention in the castle of Gostyn. At first, Sigismund promised to install his popular son Wladislaw on the Muscovite throne, but obsessed at the opportunity to Catholicize the Orthodox lands, decided to rule Muscovy himself. As a result, the Poles wore out their welcome swiftly and Moscow descended into chaos; Zolkiewski wrote how in 1611, *“There was great slaughter among the press of human beings, and much weeping, with*

⁴² <http://www.kismeta.com/diGrasse/kluszyn.htm>

⁴³ Zolkiewski memoirs.

the cries of women and children...Moreover, many men threw themselves into the flames together with their families, and were burned.”

By then it had been over a century, when in 1493, Tsar Ivan III adopted the title of “Sovereign of All Russia,” beginning a project to unite all of the “Russian” lands under the leadership of Moscow. Polish elites at first scoffed at this posturing. As Norman Davies wrote, “The ‘gathering of the Russian lands’ by this ‘Third Rome’ had as much rationale in Eastern Europe as might have been professed in Western Europe by some Irish prince who thought to gather the Celtic lands France, Spain, and Britain under the aegis of Dublin⁴⁴.” Earlier, the Poles could have counted on the Tatar Golden Horde to crush any of Muscovy’s delusions of grandeur, but in 1480, the Mongol “yoke” was finally overthrown. Nevertheless, Poles still believed that their military strength would easily serve as a check on Muscovy’s ambition.

The results of this policy, however, were mixed. A key war took place between 1512 and 1522. It began when the Tsar had made alliances with the Teutonic Order, allowing him to go to battle with a more modern army. Although a Polish army under Hetman Ostrogski won a decisive victory at the Battle of Orsza in 1514, by the war’s end, Muscovy ceded Smolensk⁴⁵. Poland’s sister kingdom, Lithuania, lost a quarter of its land during the war.

It was during this time, as Muscovy started to assert herself, that the first works written specifically about her began to appear in Poland. A few of these were unbiased attempts to “discover” the little-known region; after all, by then, few Poles and even fewer Europeans had personally traveled there. The most famous of these is a small

⁴⁴ “God’s Playground” 323-324.

⁴⁵ Polish way 130

thirty-six page work published in 1517 entitled *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis*.

Miechowita had never been to the area that he so eloquently described and his knowledge of “Sarmatia,” the expansive territory stretching from the Vistula River to the Caspian Sea stemmed solely from accounts of political emigrants, soldiers, merchants, and prisoners of war. Before Miechowita’s *Tractatus*, the image of the lands comprising Muscovy in European minds was based chiefly on the legends of Aristotle and Herodotus. One story, for example, claimed that people inhabiting these lands lived eternal lives and when they grew tired of living, voluntarily drowned in the sea. Miechowita, confident in the accounts that he received from eyewitnesses, corrected these outrageous tales. He gave credible data on the geography of the land, the nature of the rivers that flowed through the area, characteristics of the towns and the people that inhabited them, and even offered distances between them. Most importantly to Polish readers, he also devoted much effort to describing the political, military, and religious organization of the Grand Principality of Muscovy⁴⁶.

Most of the works written during the early 16th century, however, were nationalist-tinged odes to the stunning victory at Orsza. The year of the battle, 1514, brought a slew of works in Latin, such as Jan Dantyszek’s “Carmen extemporarium de victoria insigni ex Moschis,” in which Muscovy is denoted as a nation comprised of schismatics. Andrzej Krzycki’s “Cantilena de victoria e Moscic parta,” and Zygmunt Stary’s Epistle to Pope Leo X’s, which describes the king’s battles with the “heretical, schismatic Muscovites” also contributed. The anti-Russian works, aimed at European audiences, was not just limited to literature as well; Polish artists also made a notable contribution. In 1520, a painter anonymous to Poles today brought light on the Battle of

⁴⁶ Jstor: The Discovery of Modern Russia

Orsza with a painting bearing the title of the battle, reminding viewers of the Polish defeat in the battle, despite the victory of Muscovy in the war itself. The painting depicts a scene of chaos, with men falling on the battlefield, and blood running into the adjacent stream. In the center, though, lies the grand Polish cavalry, emblazoned with heavy armor, in contrast to the Muscovite boyars clad in onion –domed helmets and far less advanced weaponry. The painting also gives the impression of the Polish cavalry being massively outnumbered by the Muscovite horde, a fact that Polish accounts of the battle stressed, citing numbers of 80,000 Muscovites against 20,000 Poles.



Tempers between Poland and Muscovy flared up again in what became known as the “Livonian War.” It began in 1577 when

Ivan IV invaded Livonia in hopes of Muscovy gaining a passage to the Baltic Sea. The Polish king Stephen Batory staged a series of offensives, the most notable being the third and final campaign, the Siege of Pskov. By then, Ivan was ready to sue for peace. As the Polish army was freezing outside the city, negotiators from both sides arrived, signing the Treaty of Jam Zapolski. In the treaty, Ivan renounced any territorial claims in Livonia but also did not give up any of his territory. His dream, however, of Muscovy bordering the Baltic Sea had failed⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Zamoyski 130-131.

The result of Ivan's policy was another surge of anti-Muscovy works in Poland. In 1568, the eminent Renaissance author Mikolaj Rej outlined the earliest "stereotype" of Muscovites:

*"Moscow, we already know, what kind of men those are,
We know them by their traditions, We know them through conversations,
The serf, like a bird locked in a cage, can sing,
But he can't express in words what he is thinking."*

Clearly, even in the sixteenth century, the concept of Russia as a prison, where serfs are "caged," was already in place. Rej continues by characterizing the Muscovites as uneducated scoundrels. The serfs are "stupid" with "very little mind," but are also "clever," and stop at nothing to cheat or lie. According to Rej, this is simply the Muscovites' nature, and they are not shameless about it.

The contradictory tone of Rej's poem by was mirrored in Andrzej Krzyckiego's dedication to Polish king Stefan Batory:

*"Thus our neighboring country is humiliated,
A country, that has lost all its defenses.
We did not fight our false enemy without vain:
He wanted to steal from our neighboring provinces' soldiers,
But in the end humbly retreated.
The heathen pays the highest price."*

One may notice the oxymoronic nature of Krzyckiego's work. Muscovy is perceived as an aggressor, violent in its intentions to "steal" the Baltic region of Poland-Lithuania. Yet, the gloating of the work, reveling in the glory of Batory's victory over Ivan, is implying that the victory came with relative ease. Since the Poles are superior, it was, of course, inevitable that they would defeat Muscovy, forcing her to "humbly" her head in shame in retreat. This violent coward is also a "heathen," demonstrating that the

religious differences between Poland and Muscovy that began in the Middle Ages have continued unabated.

The most important, however, of the Batory-era polemics came courtesy of Jan Kochanowski. As the Polish historian Tadeusz Ulewicz notes, to Kochanowski, “the Muscovite is an enemy,” and like many Poles after him, views the source of the antagonisms to be the inherent differences between the civilized “Western” world and the “Asiatic” one of the Muscovites. In various works of his, Kochanowski alludes to this: “savage Moscow” in *Elegia III*, “haughty Muscovite,” “unfriendly land” and “unfriendly people” in *Journey to Moscow* and “savage and belligerent enemy” in *Epinicion abo Piesn Zwycieska Do Stefana Batorego*. Kochanowski also has a tendency to dehumanize Muscovites; in describing the serfs, he admires their height and vigor, but comes to the conclusion that looking at them is like looking at a “cyclops.”

As seen since the early Middle Ages, much of the Polish sense of superiority among elites over the Muscovites had stemmed from the differences in political nature. In 1595, Christopher Warszewicki, a diplomat raised in the intellectual circles of the “Golden Age” of Polish culture, reflected on his ambassadorial work in his *De Legato et Legatione* (On Ambassadors and Embassies). Warszewicki criticized the Muscovites for their “ridiculous arrogance” and “perfidy.” The diplomat dealing with Muscovy should be reserved for “wary men, for there ‘The Greek Faith’ is practiced, and nothing can be obtained without lengthy disputes.” Clearly, Muscovy is not to be counted as one of the Western civilized nations. Whether or not this perception was well-deserved is debatable; supporters of it would certainly point to stories such as the one dating from 1570 that told how, upon suspecting that a gift was underappreciated, Ivan IV had

ordered King Zygmunt-August's gift of a stud of stallions to be served as mincemeat. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the view of among Poles about Muscovites, such as a comment by King Zygmunt about "those barbarians," was a common one⁴⁸.

The writings of the Polish noble Jan Pasek serve as a prime example of this attitude. In his *Memoirs*, Pasek describes at length his experience as a soldier in the epic conflict known as Russo-Polish War, a victory for Russia which marked the beginning of Russia as a "great power" in European politics. Regardless, Pasek travels the Russian countryside with a chauvinist attitude towards the eventual victors that is reflected in several comments that he makes throughout the work. The Russians eat with gusto, but their food tastes badly. They invite him to their house, but he is forced to sit on "his knees and ass." Even their taste of vodka is not up to par; "to them, the worse it smells, the more it is worth." He is befuddled and insulted when a Russian offers him the smellier of two vodkas while making a toast, not realizing that this in fact is supposed to be perceived as a compliment⁴⁹.

The most telling episode, however, of Pasek's memoirs comes in battle. He recounts an incident when a fellow soldier, a young lad with a penchant for humor. The Russian soldiers had gained a reputation of utmost loyalty to the Tsar, crying out his name. Amused by this, the young Polish soldiers showed his backside to a garrison of Russian soldiers while yelling, "Your Tsar can kiss me here!" Infuriated, the Russian soldiers raced after him, leading them into a trap, where Pasek and his fellow Poles "hacked and slashed through them and took them prisoners." Pasek is puzzled by the foolish Russian soldiers-"to them there's greater offense in a slight to the tsar's name

⁴⁸ Davies 292-297.

⁴⁹ Polish book 94.

than to God⁵⁰.” Hence, Pasek attributes to Russians subservience and blind obedience to their ruler, a sharp contrast politically to the “Golden Freedom” of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

But despite Polish assertions of submissive, weak, and “barbaric” Muscovites, there was also a lingering sense of fear about their growing power. In 1569, Poland and Lithuania were forced to replace their old system of two loosely united personal monarchies with a real union ruled by one elected king. It was necessitated by the reoccurring threat that Muscovy posed for Poland and, because of its proximity, Lithuania⁵¹. Of the series of wars fought between Poland and Muscovy during the 16th century, all resulted in either a victory for Muscovy or a stalemate despite a few memorable battles that were triumphs for the Poles.

In literature, this sense of anxiety over the increasing Muscovy threat was reflected in several works. An example of this can be found in Jan Kochanowski’s metaphorical tragedy *Odprawa Poslow Greckich* (The Dismissal of the Greek Envoys). The subject matter borrows heavily from Homer’s *Iliad* in depicting the legendary controversy surrounding the kidnapping of the beautiful Helen by the Trojan prince Paris and the subsequent tension that resulted while both the Greeks and Troy were on the brink of war. After the play, a poem addressed to Poles opens with the phrase:

*Poles, what hopes and what designs do you nourish in your hearts?
It is no time for laziness, no time for sleep, believe me; neither for festivities with a lute, a
cup, and light dances.*

It continued by warning Poles of their enemies abroad:

*From the east, the rider throws his poisoned arrows, he is as dangerous in attack as in
flight.*

⁵⁰ Pasek 81.

⁵¹ Fletcher 58.

*He leads his troops from hyperborean fields.
He is hardened in the Ural snows and frosts of his country.
And if I am to tell the truth, his glory is due only to your inertia.*

The fact that Ivan IV invaded Livonia at the exact moment when the play was being staged struck a deep chord among Poles. There are many ways that the play itself can be interpreted; Kochanowski never revealed who “Troy” and “the Greeks” were. But the timing of the play led many of its audience members to assume that, whatever the playwright’s original intentions, it was a call to arms against the threat from Ivan and his Muscovy⁵².

In another one of Kochanowski’s works, the poem *The Satyr*, readers are introduced to an inhabitant of Poland called The Satyr, who bemoans the loss of virtues among his countrymen. Striking a similar tone to the poem that closes the *Dismissal*, he warns of the rapacious ambition of the Muscovite tsar, who not only has taken an area of previously Polish land called Polotsk, but also insists that Galicia is his by “natural law.” The Satyr advises that war is the only remedy to the Muscovy threat, because the “Muscovite despot has never paid much heed to constitutions⁵³.”

Some Polish thinkers, perceptive to the growing power of Muscovy, actually sought to unite Poland with Russia. One of the first of these texts was Jan Zabczyc’s *The Bloody Muscovite Mars*, written in 1605. One would assume by reading the title that it was an anti-Muscovy rant typical for its time, alluding to her people as violent and haughty, due to the expansionist policy of the tsars that ruled it. However, this would be a mistake. Zabczyc, in fact, admires the Muscovites, for their fighting ability and the dominant theme throughout his work is for closer ties between the two states. Zabczyc

⁵² Milosz 74.

⁵³ Milosz 63.

apparently was trying to convince the Polish nobility to support this early precursor to the later pan-Slavic sentiment. Although a minority, it was expressed by other intellectuals such as Sebastian Liffel. In one poem, he bemoaned the inability of the monarchs of Poland and Russia to peacefully co-exist. The result of this unity would not only be a powerful state, but also peace for its citizens⁵⁴.

Unfortunately, this was never to occur, as the Polish king Zigmunt III tried to install a Catholic king on the Russian throne in their time of vulnerability, while the Polish troops in Russia unleashed a particularly merciless form of occupation. By the time of the partitions, any dream of a Polish-Russian state that would rule on an equal footing was out of the question. The Russian state was far more powerful than its decaying western neighbor, exercising almost complete control over its affairs. Not surprisingly, hatred of Russia in Polish works was frequent and particularly vitriolic. One writer named Franciszek Makulski summed up the typical view of Russia in his *Portrait of Moscow*: “Greed, hypocrisy, lawlessness, perjury, stealing, alcoholism, violence, disrespect for national law, those are the traits that characterize this Monarchy.” The first Encyclopedia written in the Polish language by priest Benedykt Chmielowski contained an entry about Russians that they “make promises that they do not keep, have a tendency for alcoholism, punish thankfulness.” Chmielowski goes on by saying that the Russian people were a “simple,” folk until Peter I came to the throne and civilized the country using knout, hatchet, and whip. The implication, of course, is that civilization can only come to Russia using force.

The partition-era works pointed to a new trend in Polish discourse regarding Russia. The focus started to be placed on the Russian state, which was seen as autocratic

⁵⁴ Polish book 89-90.

and the epitome of “absolutist rule,” which destroyed the freedom of Poland. The harshest words, for example, were saved for Prince Nikolai Vasilyevich Repnin, who controlled the country at the behest of Catherine the Great. Repnin was a “tyrant,” “swine,” and a “son of a bitch⁵⁵.” This idea, of perceiving the enemy as the Russian state rather than the people, would come into full bloom in the subsequent Romantic movement, discussed in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Polish book 97.

Chapter 3: 1796-1919

The seats of Warsaw's Teatr Wielki were filled to the rafters with Polish theatergoers, awaiting the premiere of Stanislaw Moniuszko's four-act opera, *Straszny Dwor* (The Haunted Manor). Though a relatively obscure musical figure today, Moniuszko in 1865 was at the peak of his fame in Poland's occupied lands, commanding much respect among compatriots for his decision to stay and compose in Poland, rather than emigrate to Paris or Vienna, as was the typical path of the Polish *intelligentsia* during the nineteenth century. On the surface, the play's libretto promised a riotous comedy about two officer-brothers falling for the charms of two lovely daughters of an aging officer. Meanwhile, the young men's aunt has already arranged brides for them and determinedly takes it upon herself that any further communication between the potential suitors and the beautiful daughters is prevented. She even tells them that the old officer's manor is haunted, contriving spooky effects and events in the house to scare off the brothers-in the end, all to no avail.

But was there a possible metaphorical interpretation of the play itself? Perhaps the "haunted manor" was Poland itself, with the warrior brothers serving as the potential dragon-slayers of Russian rule? Are not the old officer and his daughters, Hanna and Jadwiga, the embodiment of the nation itself? And with props such as aging portraits, an eerie clock, and a general sense of time at a standstill, was not Moniuszko attempting to portray Poland as a sleeping giant, only awaiting its call to arms⁵⁶?

The Russian authorities certainly seemed to think so, banning the play after only its third viewing in Warsaw. After all, it was only a year before that the second of the

⁵⁶ <http://www.mvdaily.com/articles/2001/04/dwor2.htm>

great Polish revolts against Russian rule, the January Uprising, was finally crushed. From the beginning, there was never really hope of achieving an independent Poland, a dream harbored by many aspects of Polish society since the final partition of 1795. Although the necessary groundwork was laid beforehand, ensuring that the radical “Red” forces and the moderate “White” forces were united in the common goal, the numbers were simply not in favor of the Poles. The insurgents numbered no more than about 20,000 and were ill-equipped, separated into disparate bands of 50 to 500. It is estimated that by the time the uprising was over, perhaps about 100,000 people fought at one point or another for the Polish side, but it was no match for the 300,000 Russian regulars concentrated against them. The only hope for the Poles lay in the possibility of foreign aid. And while many volunteers from other European countries arrived in Poland to provide help, foreign governments were far less eager. Aside from a few token protests from Britain, France, and Austria no help arrived, effectively ending the uprising⁵⁷.

In the eyes of Poles, the most demeaning of the Russian policies during the time of occupied Poland was the policy of “Russification,” which sought to turn the Poles into loyal servants of the tsar by attempting to remove all traces of Polish identity and replacing it with a distinctly Russian one. Tsarist authorities used censorship as a way to remove Polish culture, banning all works in non-Russian language and on non-approved subjects, such as politics, sex, or Catholic theology. Works in Polish literature that made mention of the “Golden Freedom,” “Elections,” and the “Constitution,” were particularly targeted. Hence, almost all the Polish classics during this time were published abroad and smuggled into the country. At the same time, Russian culture was extolled, implying that all others were markedly inferior. Tsarist commentators propagated the notion that

⁵⁷ Polish way 281-285.

the Russian language, as one Polish-born writer described it, “without doubt holds first place in melodiousness and in the richness and ease of word construction, is the language of poetry and literature in all the countries of the globe.” Education, in particular, played a key role in the Russian strategy. In schools, children were required to learn the titles and birthdays of the imperial Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses. Students would be tested impromptu on “the Tsars who have reigned over our Holy Russia since Catherine II” and “the title of the Tsar in the scale of dignities.” But what infuriated Poles the most was the compulsory use of the Russian language, and by extension, the branding of Polish as a “foreign language.” Citizens who did not learn Russian could not defend themselves in court, and the possibility of employment in the government bureaucracy was out of the question without knowledge of the language.

As a result of the policy of “Russification,” which pervaded so much out of daily life, even rendering street signs in Cyrillic, many of the Polish works pertaining to Russia in the beginning of the 19th century target the Russian state, rather than the Russian people. The enemy, tsarism, was viewed as one front in a worldwide war against tyranny. Russia was not the enemy because of its historical antagonism with Poland; in fact, international hatred was viewed as the “fruit of oppression.” Instead, it was because its regime embodied tyranny in the world, just as the Poles represented freedom. As Jan Szaniecki wrote in an 1831 newspaper piece, “Our revolution ought to be a revolution of nations. All of Europe, the entire world ought to support it,” while inviting the “nations of the world” to “see how holy is our cause!⁵⁸” Hence, the fight for the independence of Poland was seen not as a national struggle, but as one that united both Poles and Russians against a common enemy—the oppression of the tsarist government.

⁵⁸ When Nationalism 22.

This novel approach to the discussion of Polish-Russian relations was one that found much appeal among the Romantics in Poland, and in particular, their unofficial leader Adam Mickiewicz. Mickiewicz was born in Lithuania to a noble family and became involved in Polish nationalism while studying at the University of Vilnius. After being arrested for political activity, he was taken by tsarist authorities to St. Petersburg, where a teaching job awaited him. During his time there, he wrote a collection of poems entitled *Digression*, which serve as the most accurate summation of the Romantic conception of Russia.

Digression is split into six sections, each describing a different aspect of Mickiewicz's Russian experience. It begins with "The Road to Russia," continues to "The Outskirts of the Capital," through "Petersburg," where he comments on "The Monument to Peter the Great," watches a "Military Review," and finally sees "The Day Before the St. Petersburg Flood of 1824." The first is a trip traversing Russian's countryside through the eyes of Mickiewicz. The scene he describes is one of a barren landscape, as if it was "created the night before." The visitor's eye "will not see a city/nor mountains/ No statues of people/Nor nature." He views the people he meets as if they are locked in a frozen prison, and laments the future of the countryside when the "springtime" of this people will come:

*But when the sun of freedom will shine,
What insect will fly out from that envelope?
Will it be a bright butterfly soaring over the earth,
Or a moth, dirty tribe of the night?*

In other words, when the inevitable collapse of the tsarist system occurs, will a new era of liberty and cultural achievement replace it? Or have the years of neglect already sowed the seeds of an even uglier and more oppressive future?

The second and third poems present Mickiewicz's impressions of St. Petersburg. While on the way there, he mocks the lack of originality in the architecture. Nothing in the city is distinctly Russian, and its structures are simply "aped" from foreign styles, resulting in a hodge-podge of buildings. A "Corinthian"-columned building is placed next to the "Italian"-influenced Winter Palace, which is next to "Japanese" and "Mandarin" kiosks. But most revolting of all is how the city was built. While the great Western cities such as Rome or Paris have sprung up organically by the will of the people, the image that Mickiewicz provides of the building of St. Petersburg is of one man directing his slaves to build a personal fiefdom:

*Here the earth doesn't bear fruit nor bread,
The winds only carry snow and poor weather;
Here are too hot or too cold skies,
Harsh and fickle like the nature of a despot.
The people didn't want it-muddy surroundings.
But the tsar took a liking, and gave the order.
The city not for the people, but his own capital;
Here the omnipotent tsar shows his will.*

The image of a card-game also arises in both "Military Review" and "St. Petersburg," when Mickiewicz describes the regimented and oppressive nature of military life under the tsar. The soldiers are simply pawns, or "cards" for the tsar, the "gamester" to play with. They "fall to this side and that," entertaining him, but in the end, even he becomes bored with the spectacle and power, and "hides" among his generals⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ "Russia and the West" 53.

The next poem portrays a conversation between Mickiewicz and Pushkin standing beside the statue of Peter the Great. The most profound image is the closing of the poem, where “Pushkin” compares the statue of Peter the Great to a waterfall frozen at a precipice. Again, the question arises as to what will happen once this “winter” of tsarism will end:

*But when the sun of freedom will throw its rays
And the western wind will warm those states,
What will happen to the waterfall of tyranny?*

Mickiewicz finally answers this question in the last poem of the cycle, by using the “flood” as a metaphor for the calamity that awaits Russia once its despotic government will collapse. Clearly in the eyes of Mickiewicz, it will be a disaster, a time of immense misery.

The culprit for this, of course, is the tsarist government, and not the people of Russia, a point that Mickiewicz makes in an addendum to Digression, entitled “To My Muscovite Friends.” The poem is a commemoration to the Decembrists, whom Mickiewicz became friends with during his time in St. Peteresburg. He recollects their faces, and is haunted by their fate—the “noble” Ryleyev was killed, while the sympathetic Beztuzhev was sentenced to hard labor. He also expresses resentment against the tsarist authorities, who shame themselves by helping the tsar rule with his despotic hand. Throughout, Mickiewicz makes a clear distinction between the Russian state and his Russian friends. While deluding the former by “crawling like a snake,” he loved the latter with a “dovelike simplicity⁶⁰.”

Other Polish Romantics joined Mickiewicz in attempting to perpetuate a feeling of solidarity between Poles and ordinary Russians, while condemning the Russian

⁶⁰ Milosz 225.

government. In Juliusz Slowacki's play *Fantazy*, the character Jan, an ex-Decembrist exiled from Russia, is one of the most admirable and honest seen in Polish drama. Many times throughout the story his Russian background becomes an issue, with one character admonishing him for speaking Russian "in my kingdom" and warning Jan that her dog is trained to sniff out Muscovites and grab them by the heel. After all, "he's had some education⁶¹." It turns out that Jan has come to Poland from Siberia, risking his life, solely to return a ring that he stole years before. Despite encountering much Russophobia during his trip, he comes to the conclusion that "There are good people in Poland⁶²."

A different version of the same theme appears in a poem by Julian Niemcewicz. Niemcewicz allows a fictional Russian officer to express his side of the story and attempts to show that even the occupier of the country feels remorse at the present state of affairs. In one section, the officer criticizes the motivations of the state that commands him, believing the state to have taken advantage of the Poles' goodness and inflicting much suffering. He ends by questioning the morality of the government's policy:

*We are to chase the innocent ones with a sword full of vengeance?
What is it to me, how one rules themselves in their own country⁶³?*

Certain historians, such as Adam Zamoyski, have pointed to works such as the ones from the Polish Romantics as proof that the "view of Russians and Poles hating each other is a cliché which ignores the facts." Though he acknowledges that relations between the governments of Poland and Muscovy were tense from the earliest times, contacts between Poles and Russians were almost always friendly. There was

⁶¹ Slowacki 269.

⁶² Slowacki 279.

⁶³ Polish book 99.

“considerable cordiality” between the two peoples when fighting was not taking place. The problem, however, was the overreaction of the Russian state to Polish uprisings, which inevitably drew the two nations apart. Whenever Russian armies marched in, “the Poles would veer towards the attitude that the Russians were hopeless primitives incapable of grasping the concept of civilization and too brutish to allow others to enjoy it.” The Russians, for their part, would retreat into their stereotypical view of Poles as arrogant and ungrateful rogues⁶⁴.

As proof that indeed the Romantic dream of a Russo-Polish friendship was a realistic goal, Zamoyski cites an article from a Polish newspaper in 1831 that printed as its headline “We love the Russian people.” Conventional wisdom holds that the Uprisings of 1830 and 1863 were rebellions against the Russian state, and not the Russian people. That may be true, but it is doubtful however that this “love” between Poles and Russians ever existed as strongly as Zamoyski implies. Looking at the evidence, Poles have negatively characterized Russians since the beginning of the 16th century, or the 15th if one counts the anti-Orthodox commentaries of Jan Dlugosz. It was only until the 18th century that the distinction between the Russian state and the Russian people was being made; one headline and a smattering of intellectuals certainly is not enough to overturn these facts. And even during the early nineteenth century during the peak of the Romantic movement all the way through to 1918, Russophobia and the demonization of Russians by no means stopped, calling into question how widespread the Romantic view in fact was.

A particularly well-known poem among Poles is Rajnold Suchodolski’s *Kosciuszko Polonaise*, which contained the famous lines:

⁶⁴ Zamoyski 308.

*Whoever said, that Muscovites,
Are brothers of us Lechites
It is him who I'll smack in the head by the Carmelite Church⁶⁵.*

While the rest of the poem is full of nationalist chest-thumping, with calls for defending the country with “blood, blood, blood,” the three lines above are the most telling for several reasons. First, one may notice the identification with Lechites, a name signifying Western Slavs compared to the more uncouth Eastern counterparts. Then of course is the allusion to the Carmelite Church in Warsaw, one of the most famous Roman Catholic Churches in Poland, clearly showing that the religious differences between the two peoples is still a point of division. Identifying oneself as Catholic is synonymous with being “Polish,” despite the numerous other religions practiced at this time in Poland.

Another Russophobic polemic disguised as a poem was *To Russians* by Bruno Kicinski:

*Is it nice for you,
That for half a century the blood of Slavs has run?
That where Slavic blood runs through one's veins,
It will end up a barren desert⁶⁶?*

As Kicinski sees it, the “annexation” (with a connotation of “rape”) of Poland is placed squarely on the shoulders of the Russian people. The view that somehow ordinary Russians have an alibi regarding the policy of their state is not one that Kicinski subscribes to. Blood is on Russians’ hands for the actions that they have taken against their fellow Slavs.

Polish historiography during the nineteenth century also contributed to anti-Russian sentiment in Poland, especially regarding the characterization of Russians as

⁶⁵ Polish book 104.

⁶⁶ Polish book 104.

“Asiatic.” Stanislaw Kutrzeby in a work about Russian-Polish culture written in 1916, wrote that since Russia was closer culturally to Byzantium and the Tatars, the Western culture of “knighthood” and chivalry did not reach the country. As a result, there is no conception of honor in Russia, explaining why there is rampant “cheating” and “cruelty” in the country. Another trait handed down from the Byzantines, according to another historian, is an inflated sense of power. The juxtaposition between “East” and “West” was perhaps best exemplified by historian Wladyslaw Smolenski. To him, Russia was a symbol of the “eastern civilization,” where “a person will not find a feeling of self-worth and in his soul will implant lower tendencies, characteristics of a slave, like subservience, lying, cheating, etc.” Smolenski sees a perpetual clash of civilizations between the two, with Russia embodying its Asiatic traits, while Poland will always fight on the side of its “Western Latin” counterparts. Finally, historian Stanislaw Krezeminski’s remark that Russia is a nation that is “Slavic only in language, Byzantine in creed, and Mongol in its insatiable hunger” more or less sums up the view of the majority of Polish historians regarding Russia.

Artwork of Polish nationalists also carried a particular brand of anti-Russianism that is best reflected in two paintings dating from the 1863 Uprising.



The first is Jan Matejko's "Polonia," a metaphorical depiction of a defeated maiden of "Polonia," holding out her arms to be handcuffed. The second is an anonymous and untitled black and white portrait of a group of Russian



soldiers looting a Polish manor. In the first, the image of Poland is represented as a woman, symbolizing vulnerability. The fate that awaits this fair maiden is one of certain future punishment and exploitation. Her demeanor suggests a type of humility mixed with hopelessness, as if reconciled she is going to the gallows. In the right corner of the painting, the absolutely terrified look on a child's face is particularly revealing; the Russian soldiers look incredibly imposing, clearly showing who the dominant figure in this relationship is. In the second painting, although in the background a Polish man is being taken away, the focus is also placed on the women, who are front and center in the painting. Again, the impression one is left with is one of the Polish maiden oppressed at

the hands of an exploiter. The innocent women are seen being beaten and with the male “protector” dragged away, vulnerable to further violence and exploitation.

At the same time though, the characteristics ascribed to the Russians in the paintings are ones of inferiority and barbarism. In the black and white painting, for example, one of the soldiers is not even taking part in the beating, preferring to steal objects from the cupboards, presumably amazed at the “European” luxuries of the Polish upper class. Another, an overweight officer, is sleeping, most likely in a drunken stupor. The overall image of the Russians is one of savages, incapable of anything but violence. Again, the earlier perception of Russians as an oppressive barbarian, in the dominant position but still inferior, is depicted here.

Therefore, while certain historians maintain that the Polish Romantic view of a dual Polish-Russian hatred of despotism rather than each other is one that held sway among the majority of Poles, it is more accurate to view this idea as an aberration in the long narrative of Russophobia on Polish culture. The focus on the Russians in particular never went away, and by the end of the Romantic movement, continued in the same manner as it did before.

Conclusion:

The fall of Communism in Europe in 1989 was a unique opportunity in the history of Polish and Russian relations. With Poland free to carve its own foreign policy, one would assume that the hostility between Poland and Russia would gradually subside, as pragmatism and rationality would trump ideology and archaic hatreds. Certainly, this would take time, as the wounds of Communist oppression were still fresh. But a logical course would have been analogous to the one taken by Poland regarding Germany. Though a chill has recently set in (the farcical “Potato War” being a recent example) and the year of Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski’s term have been particularly damaging due to notorious statements such as “All I know about Germany is the toilets in Frankfurt Airport, and that is enough anyway⁶⁷,” events since 1989 have suggested that the two nations are slowly working over their differences. The 1990 treaty ended the ambiguity that surrounded the border issue since 1945, and both nations are partners in NATO and recently, the EU. Recent surveys show that Germans “like Poles⁶⁸,” and a prevailing mood among many Poles is that Germany has “atoned” for the sins committed during World War II⁶⁹.

But relations with Russia have stayed consistently poor since 1989 and in the past few years, have collapsed. The issues that are driving this are numerous-the North European Gas Pipeline, the proposed US anti-missile shield, the Russian stance on the Katyn Massacre, among others. But the reason why so much controversy surrounds these issues though is the because of legacy of Russophobia in Poland. For example, the

⁶⁷ <http://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/meldung20628.html>

⁶⁸ “Most Germans Like Poles-Magazine Poll,” *DDP News Agency*, Berlin, June 27, 2007.

⁶⁹ Czajkowski.

European Gas Pipeline, the proposed offshore pipeline between Russia and Germany that that would bypass Poland was seen in Poland as part of a long-term goal of the Kremlin to exert political pressure on Poland by eventually cutting off its gas supplies. The foreign minister of Poland, Radek Sikorski, compared the pipeline to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact⁷⁰. Poles are correct to question the intentions of the Kremlin, but to couch the issue by comparing it to the infamous treaty of collusion between Hitler and Stalin that wiped Poland off of the map is simply incorrect.

Political discourse is not the only area of Polish life where Russophobia can be found. A cursory glance at modern Polish culture shows how it is still a prevailing ideology. In film, a comprehensive study has shown that Russians are continually characterized in the stereotype familiar to Poles-an uncouth, uncivilized simpleton⁷¹; an exception is sometimes made, when Russians are portrayed in another unflattering portrait-a Mafia boss. In literature, a recent best-seller by Dorota Maslowska entitled Snow White and Russian Red mocked the rampant Russophobia in Poland. *Russkis* are blamed for controlling the black market in fake cigarettes, pirated CDs, even Polish sand. They also sleep with grubby-faced dirty girls, demonstrating their lack of taste and culture. The common thinking, as phrased by one character, is that “Either you're Polish or you're *Russki*. To put it more bluntly, either you're a person or you're a prick⁷².”

What is most striking about these examples is the way these current characterizations of Russians are identical to the ones dating back literally centuries ago. The inferiority that Poles ascribe to Russians is a never-ending occurrence, propagated in Polish culture incessantly. At the same time though, the Russian is viewed as the

⁷⁰ “Poland to Overhaul Ties With EU,” *BBC News*, December 3, 2007.

⁷¹ Polish book 327.

⁷² <http://americareads.blogspot.com/2007/07/review-3-works-by-dorota-masowska.html>

cunning oppressor; in the book written by Maslowska, Russians are blamed for raising the salinity of the Niemen river and are responsible for the arrival of gale-force winds—a form of environmental degradation.

Under conditions such as these, where a culture of hostility towards a particular nationality is so deep-rooted that the same characterizations have lingered on for literally centuries, a genuine reconciliation will be difficult to achieve. A recent “accomplishment” in improving relations has been the end to the embargo of Polish meat products in Russia. Though it will affect few Poles economically since little Polish meat was sold inside Russia before the embargo in the first place, it is seen as a political victory of sorts for new Polish MP Donald Tusk. Certainly, Tusk’s efforts are admirable, but for true change to occur, a long-term approach has to be instilled.

First Poles have to reject the stereotypes imbedded in their culture of Russians, taking the first step to ending the culture of mistrust between the two nations. Enduring dialogue has to be implemented, such as the suggestion given by a Polish commentator for “a lot of Poles studying the Russian language and Russian culture at Russian universities. Poland must start to conduct soft diplomacy. It should invite Russian students, since it is easiest to shape positive attitudes in young people.” Though this is expensive, is it clear that it is a strategy that produces significant results and is used by many other countries, most notably America. Also, there is a disconcerting shortage of realism in the political discourse of the two nations regarding each other. An example is Russia’s relations with Japan; although they have had a dispute with each other over the Kuril Islands, they are able to identify their non-conflicting interests and subordinate their

rivalries to accomplish diplomatic breakthroughs. If this is possible with Russia's historical enemy to the east, it is imaginable that the same can be achieved with Poland⁷³.

Again, I maintain that the inability of Poland and Russia to get beyond the hatreds between each other is not only Poland's fault, and that the Russian side of the coin is one also fraught with exaggeration, demonization, and an inability to move past historical stereotypes. One recent interview with a Russian analyst, for example, revealed that much of Russian discourse regarding Poland revolves around the idea that Poland is a pawn to its American "master." He quoted that "we are convinced that now Poland is a satellite of the United States, similarly to the way it was in the past when Poland was a satellite of the USSR. In this sense, Poland is not a sovereign country. The new government differs positively from the previous one by virtue of its policy and we expect it will not only listen to the master from beyond the ocean⁷⁴." This notion is about as equally ridiculous as the paranoid belief in Poland that Russia today under Putin is somehow attempting to re-create the Tsarist Empire.

One of the most admirable traits of Poles is the extent to which they have clung on to their national heritage. History in particular is given incredible importance, ensuring that Poles are taught the triumphs as well as struggles of earlier generations. Names such as "Jagiellon," "Kosciuszko," and "Pilsudski" appear on everything from soccer clubs to food products and the film industry repeatedly churns out movies using history as the subject matter. This year, for example, when asked which film should represent Poland in the Academy Awards, Poles chose Andrzej Wajda's "Katyn," which

⁷³ Wojciech Lorenz, "Polish, Russian Analysts Comment on Warsaw Policy Towards Moscow," BBC Europe, December 8, 2007.

⁷⁴ Lorenz.

commemorates the 1940 massacre⁷⁵. Needless to say, the maxim “those who forget the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it,” is one that Poles hold dearly to their hearts.

But there is a dark side to this as well, as Poles have also clung on to their traditional hatreds. As a result, much of Polish culture is centered around a virulent and contradictory strain of Russophobia, which stems from centuries ago and has changed little from its original form. Even worse, it shows little signs of abating. By doing so, Poles are not heeding their own advice of learning the “lessons” of history; instead, they are continuing a mistake that has only contributed to enduring hostility between the two nations.

⁷⁵ “Wajda's "Katyn" candidate to the Academy Awards,” *Poland.pl*, http://www.poland.pl/news/article.Wajdas_Katyn_candidate_to_the_Academy_Awards.id.293868.htm, [Accessed March 20, 2008].