

# POLAND AND MUSCOVY

## Memoirs of xxx\* Begun in 186...

**Apollo Nałęcz-Korzeniowski**

*'Vitam impendere vero'*<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The last morning in the Citadel. – A tableau vivant of Muscovy-style social order. – Captain Żuczkowski. – ‘Paper’ from Muscovy. – Verdict.

The Citadel clock struck the fifth hour of the day.

The Warsaw Citadel is the city’s ever-ready machine of destruction, and at the same time an immense dungeon where tsardom buries Polish patriotism. As a machine it simply awaits the whim of some satrap. As a dungeon – opening and closing in turns – it devours thousands of innocent victims. The Citadel was built by Tsar Nicholas [I], who named it the Alexandrian Citadel after his brother and predecessor.

Following the great national cataclysm, some Poles who saved their property and titles called Alexander I ‘the benefactor, renovator and reviver’ of Poland – names lisped out by renegades; Tsar Nicholas, after the 1831 Revolution, fomented and provoked by the tsar’s ‘charity’, built his comment in stone and dug it firmly into the ground – a heap of boulders, bristling with guns and crawling with the vermin of thugs and torturers. This ‘charity’, bearing the name of our Renovator and Reviver, Tsar Alexander I, presents a constant threat of extinction to the Polish capital and inside its walls throttles one generation of Polish patriots after another.

\* Although the author of this diary is no longer alive, we refrain from printing his name from fear of arousing Muscovy’s wrath against his surviving family. (ed.)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To devote life to the truth (Juvenalis, *Satirae*, IV, 91).

<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly the editors knew that the author of the anonymously published ‘memoir’ was alive, but under police supervision in Russia.

Such is the Book of Genesis of the Alexandrian Citadel in Warsaw. The last chime of the hour died away. Suddenly the double bolts moved with a grating sound. The key rattled in the lock. The door of my cell opened with a bang.

A new day of the second half of my eight-month stay in the Citadel began.

I had been lying for a long time on my bed wide awake and fully dressed. Through the open door of my cell, as if from a theatre box, I saw a *tableau vivant* of the ‘Social Order’. I was to pay for that theatre box with many days of my life.

At the end of the corridor, opposite my door, stood four *soldats*. Holding their rifles they stood as stiff as pokers, stone-like. Their chests, faces and guns were directed at me; but their gaze turned suddenly cross-eyed as they looked towards the end of the corridor, whence a noise of steps and a rattling of swords was approaching.

I am using the word *soldat* instead of soldier. The concept ‘soldier’ invokes noble-minded courage and valour ready for self-sacrifice. Muscovy never had nor will have any soldiers. Poland, whether flourishing or fighting deadly battles, has always had armed citizens. Other nations have soldiers. A *soldat* is a product of Muscovy. *Soldats* are armed and organized plunderers and bandits, from the commander-in-chief down to the last camp-follower. Their civilian status – thievery in uniform and without arms; military status – the same thievery only armed for plunder.

I raised myself and sat up on my bunk. Through all that noise of clattering and banging in the corridor I could somehow sense an imminent and unknown crisis in my life as a prisoner. Social order would not exert itself with such pomp and circumstance for nothing. Thus the *tableau vivant* was gradually becoming more complete and perfect.

In front of the afore-mentioned wall composed of the four *soldats* two gendarmes passed and took up guarding positions by the door of my cell; Muscovite gendarmes are but armed spies.

Between that main wall and the two supporting pillars of tsardom slid into the cell the captain of the gendarmes – a man named Żuczkowski.

He had been for many years host, steward, administrator, housekeeper, watchman, spy, torturer and master of ceremonies, in the dungeons of Warsaw Citadel. Prisoners unknown to each other and unable to communicate referred to Captain Żuczkowski as ‘Morok’.<sup>3</sup> The more appropriate name, however, would have been ‘Judas Iscariot’, for the man was a Pole.

He was an example of the effect that the Muscovite spirit had on human nature. Later I shall try to show the effects of that spirit on the already degraded nature of the Muscovites themselves. In my memoirs, devoted to the Polish question which for countless years has had to force its way through the dense jungle of ignorance and Muscovite tyranny, I shall aim at presenting the spirit of Muscovy, their customs and way of life. It is important, however, to make clear right from the beginning that Muscovy has its own, special civilization: terrible, depraved, destructive. To that civilization,

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<sup>3</sup> Darkness (Russian).

nurtured under the Tartar whip and tsarist knout, Muscovy swears allegiance; but she does so surreptitiously, under the cloak of affected Western refinement.

The aim of Muscovy's development is to bring to a standstill all progress of humankind. So it is not surprising that Muscovy should keep this aim secret, and if it were not for her history, I could be accused of exaggeration. Muscovy's history, however, shows that ever since she wriggled her way into European affairs, she has launched passionate attacks against every holy principle which happened to bloom in the civilized world, devouring or maiming it dangerously. As soon as she became defeated, however, she would go under cover and whine in all possible human languages, imitating all nationalities in turn, so as to convince humanity of her own human nature.

It is not my intention to write a dissertation about all that. The very subject of these memoirs will bring to my mind thousands of events which, related dispassionately, will clarify, justify, explain and prove that Muscovy is now the plague of humanity and that her civilization means envy and the negation of human progress; that it has been more than once dangerous to that progress but may in the future cause its arrest and ruin.

Let me go back to my last morning at the Citadel prison.

Right behind Żuczkowski there entered a military man of higher rank, a *geroy*<sup>4</sup> not known to me by name. In his hand he held a sheet of paper.

The 'paper' is an official document of Muscovy, printed or handwritten. The significance of Muscovy 'paper' could not be described in several extensive volumes even if they were written with poisonous bile and with the spit of the most terrible scorn. France paid for the destruction of the Bastille and of what were called *lettres de cachet*<sup>5</sup> with the lives of thousands of her citizens. What would have happened if but one Muscovy 'paper' landed there?

We Poles have suffered slaughter, conflagration, robbery, rape and torture in the hands of Muscovy. We have perished by their sabres, bayonets and guns. Our defenceless chests were targets for their rifles. We are familiar with their truncheons, knouts and nooses. We have got used to their prison dungeons, to the foul mines of their Siberia. We have seen the greatest disgrace of all: our human shoulders clad in their uniforms. We neither turned deadly white nor shook from fear of their scourge. The past ninety years of our existence have proved our civil courage. Nevertheless, the very sight of Muscovy 'paper' makes us shake with uncontrollable indignation. We cannot get used to it. We cannot bear the sight of it and we cannot bring ourselves to look at it with proud indifference, in spite of the strength of our spirit hardened by a century of suffering. He who has not been a Pole under the tsars cannot possibly understand and divine the magnitude of that official ignominy, whether handwritten or printed.

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<sup>4</sup> Hero (Russian).

<sup>5</sup> 'Sealed letter', an envelope sealed with a royal seal and containing an order of imprisonment or exile.

Ever since that pack of patient jackals called itself *hosudarstwo*<sup>6</sup> (not daring to use the word ‘nation’), and ever since they mastered the art of writing, beauty, goodness and truth have never appeared on any piece of paper whether covered with handwriting or print. Lies, brazen and rousing lies have been the contents of their official documents from the first to the last letter [ . . . ]

The consequence of these brazen lies of Muscovite p a p e r cannot be calculated even by the measure of the vilest debasement, as they outgrow it, but they are visible, tangible in their church, their government, in schools, in Muscovite homes. And us, the Poles, they smother with such fear that we are unable to breathe.

More than once have foreign moralists, as well as our own, if not accused us then at least imputed to us a weakness for fabrication. This remark has some basis and support in our temper, or rather, in the history of our nation. Thus the irrepressible disgust felt by Poles with regard to Muscovite falsehoods could surprise, as we ourselves are apparently skilled in inventing. However, there is nothing more natural. Those who have accused us of fabrications have failed to add, as if unwittingly compelled by their own feel for truth, that Poles are born poets. Alas! This is true: *ubi crux, ibi poesia*.<sup>7</sup>

We fabricate beauty, fabricate good, fabricate truth itself. Such is our historical fate that all we can possess is the sense of these three conditions of the God-human state. Our invention dreams up, invents, and expresses the forms of life ever and ever more perfect, more worthy, and more sublime, although it is unable to put them in shape, although their realisation is impossible, because out of necessity they have to remain in the domain of utopia. Often God Almighty rewards our impotence, even if not in us ourselves, but in other nations. *Sic vos non nobis*.<sup>8</sup> All our dreams, all our fabrications, all that we have expressed for the glory of God and for the happiness of man, all that our creation God turns into a truth which exists for other peoples. Hence our whole weakness for invention is grounded in the fact that we express something we have not ourselves attained, realised – but only attested to by our blood and our lives. And such Polish life as shaped by all eternal principles of humanity – faith, nationhood, family – has its antipodes in the life of Muscovy. In Muscovites Polish inspired fabrications turn into systematic, rank lies. The whole system of Muscovy’s falsehood is directed to evil and thus not confined to a utopia. Having material means, it is always possible to realise evil. Muscovy possesses such means. Europe does see this, and only occasionally, in moments of danger or impotence, has a clairvoyant foreboding of it.

Muscovy’s falsehood possesses all the characteristics and nature of that epidemic falsehood, rampant in overcrowded, badly run prisons for criminals.

But then, the whole of Muscovy is a prison. Beginning with the Ruryks, and then with the Tartar thralldom, the oppression of Ivan, under the knouts of various tsars and

<sup>6</sup> Russian *gosudarstvo* (Korzeniowski uses Ukrainian spelling), ‘state’.

<sup>7</sup> Where cross [=suffering], there poesis (Latin).

<sup>8</sup> Thus you [do] but not for yourself (Latin).

empresses and so forth, Muscovy has been, is and always shall be a prison – otherwise it would cease to be itself. In that prison committed crimes and flourishing deceit copulate obscenely. The law and official religion sanctify those unions.

Their offspring: the falseness and infamy of all religions, of all social, political, national and personal relations.

If by some miracle prisons and penitentiaries all over Europe opened up suddenly, and if criminals armed, organized and ready for everything, were to flood society, peoples and governments would tremble with fear and make superhuman efforts to save themselves from impending extermination. The supposition is impossible but its results cannot be denied.

And yet governments and peoples watch Muscovy without anxiety. Governments and peoples look at Muscovy, and although she makes them sometimes shudder with disgust, they fail to notice the urgency of danger. Meanwhile, in all likelihood, the release of the world's criminals is but a trifle in comparison with Muscovy, standing unrestrained, organised and ready to spew out millions of her criminals over Europe. All the prisons of the world, taken together, do not hold forty million convicts; looking through all the prisons and their worst criminals it would be difficult to find one who could equal the Bibikovs,<sup>9</sup> Muravevs,<sup>10</sup> Bergs<sup>11</sup> [...] Countless swarms of Muscovites, corrupted and infested with vermin, are out to destroy everything that man, conscious of his human dignity, has built, in the course of a centuries-long effort of the mind, and for the price of blood. These swarms, consisting of government, clergy, bureaucracy, army, and all social classes, wait, ready to attack Europe. Meanwhile, to keep in training, Muscovy chews living Poland as if she were dead. Poland has been swallowed but not digested.<sup>12</sup> The process of digestion has just begun. When it ends, the turn of other nations will come. The most hideous slavery, because inflicted by a debased hand, hangs over Europe. The portents of things to come are already visible. Where? In that fear and horror of Muscovy displayed by the English government in its dealing with the *hosudarstwo*; in that docility towards Muscovy shown by the governments of Prussia and Austria; and lastly in the vacillation and wavering towards Muscovy so characteristic of the attitude of the most noble government, the government of France.

The design of Muscovy's civilization is to smear her own deceit over the rest of humanity.

Holding such a 'paper' the afore-mentioned *geroy* stepped into my cell. Next to him stood the prison warder, Żuczkowski, and behind him the *soldats* and gendarmes – to make sure that Muscovy's falsehood became truth and reality for me.

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<sup>9</sup> Dmitri Bibikov (1792–1870), 1837–52 governor-general of Kiev, 1852–5 Russian minister of the Interior, an arch-reactionary.

<sup>10</sup> Mikhail Muravev (1796–1866), 1863–8 governor-general of Vilnius, famed for ruthlessness, nicknamed *Veshatel* ('hangman' in Russian).

<sup>11</sup> Fyodor Berg (1790–1874), 1863–74 the viceroy of the Polish Kingdom.

<sup>12</sup> Allusion to J.-J. Rousseau's advice to Poles: "If you cannot forestall being swallowed, at least try not to be digested." (*Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*, III).

The *geroy* bowed.

Ever since European journalists tried to console Tsar Alexander II and sweeten the bitter taste of his defeat in the Eastern [Crimean] War, they have kept calling him progressive and liberal; Muscovy seized on that name as a means of pulling wool over Europe's eyes.

All cogs and wheels in the machine received orders: to carry on all the crushing, smashing, breaking, torturing and robbing but to do so with propriety and, as far as possible, politeness. The name given to that scheme was 'concessions' or 'tsar's own noble impulses'. Wielopolski<sup>13</sup> supported that scheme, and among its representatives were Sukhozanet,<sup>14</sup> who boasted that he 'could not be called a murderer', and Lambert,<sup>15</sup> who used to faint when given orders to slaughter defenceless people in churches, and also the tsar's brother Constantine.<sup>16</sup> To this day the Muscovites cannot forgive their ruler his 'kindness and the policy of concessions'. Anyway, it has all come to an end, and now we have another scheme which cannot be described in human language because no precedent for it exists in world history. By comparison Ivan the Terrible appears but a tame figure; the new scheme bears the most contemptible and despicable name: it is called the Muravev system.

At the time of my arrest the operative scheme was the 'tsar's goodwill towards the Polish nation'. And so it was fully expressed by the *geroy's* bow. As to the 'paper', it expressed Muscovite nature in its pure form.

I sat motionless.

'Please be so kind as to stand up and listen while I read out the sentence,' said the *geroy*.

A long time ago we decided that all our relations with Muscovy were to be determined by orders and compulsion. Without orders or compulsion neither Muscovy nor her government would exist for us. Anyway, this is part of our general cause. At the present moment, however, the order was given and it was enforced by the presence of armed men, therefore I stood up.

The *geroy* cleared his throat.

'Your name, Sir?', he asked in an official voice.

One wonders at the number of voices the Muscovites have! They have a special voice to address their inferiors; another one to talk to superiors; another in Moscow; still another in Europe; a different one in salons; and a different one at home. The *geroy's* voice was official.

<sup>13</sup> Aleksander Wielopolski (1803–77), Polish conservative politician and the main proponent of appeasement of Russia; 1862–3 head of the civil government in the Polish Kingdom.

<sup>14</sup> Nikolai Sukhozanet (1794–1871), Russian minister of war, May–August 1861 acting viceroy of the Polish Kingdom.

<sup>15</sup> Count Karl Lambert (1815–65), general, acting viceroy of the Polish Kingdom from August to October 1861.

<sup>16</sup> Grand Duke Constantin Nikolaievich (1827–92), brother of Tsar Alexander II, viceroy of the Polish Kingdom June 1862–August 1863.

While imprisoned in the Citadel, I heard that question at least a dozen times; and my answer was always put down in writing. If my name does not pass to posterity, it will not be the fault of Muscovy's military bureaucracy.

I gave my name.

There must have been a note of surprise in my voice, for the *geroy*, apparently always set on keeping up appearances, considered it necessary to offer an explanation.

'Even at the Citadel the government may be deceived,' his voice sounded dogmatic, 'somebody else might have been substituted for you and although innocent, subjected to punishment. A just government does not wish it to happen.'

'The justice of the government is known to all,' I replied, 'but the sensitivity of its conscience may, under the circumstances, concern only the present Captain Żuczkowski, the omnipotent ruler of the Citadel's inmates. He is the only person able to exchange prisoners. It is therefore he who must be left to ponder the sensitivity of the government's feelings and his gratitude for the recognition of his many years of meritorious services.'

The *geroy* spoke in Muscovite, I in Polish. Under those circumstances there was no reason for anyone to feel dissatisfied: each of us had the right to understand only what he wanted.

Żuczkowski, as a Pole in Muscovy's service, did not have that advantage; and as one of the 'faithfuls' he was just about to open his mouth to point out to the *geroy* the immoderation of my style, when the latter stopped him by a gesture. Obviously he was pressed for time and the paper he held contained replies to everything I could say either now or later.

Thus he unfolded several sheets covered with beautiful handwriting and started reading out the verdict!

I should have been able to judge the time the reading would take by the thickness of the scroll. However, I was disappointed.

The *geroy* read:

'Such and such (here came my name), as the authorities are well aware, was not only a participant in but the principal leader of the entire rebellious movement and the demonstrations designed to overthrow the government of our most gracious tsar. Moreover he presided over a clandestine committee, distributed brochures, and gave rebellious orders; he maintained criminal relations with Galicia and the Great Duchy of Poznań, and by perfidious endeavours instilled in the population of Warsaw and the Congress Kingdom of Poland a conviction, an unshaken belief, that Lithuania, Bielo-Russia and the western provinces of the tsarist empire, Volhynia, Podolia and Kiev, form an inseparable part of Poland. Therefore, although the court martial commission of enquiry is not in possession of any evidence against the accused, could not find any witnesses against him in the misled populace, was not able to extract any statements from the accused – nevertheless, relying on its moral conviction and bearing in mind the brazen answers of the accused as well as his written statement that he is a Pole, always has been and always will be striving for Poland's happiness, the commission

has ordered the deportation of such and such (name), to xxx (name of place), under the strictest military escort during the journey and then under constant police surveillance in the place of his exile.'

That was all. The Muscovite reader lapsed into silence. I looked up, surprised. His eyes rested on the first half of the first sheet; and I had made out four or six sheets covered with writing.

'That's all,' said the *geroy*, noticing that I expected him to continue.

'You have to sign the verdict to show that you've heard it.'

He turned over to the last page and at the bottom of the fourth or sixth sheet pointed out the place where I was to certify with my own signature that I had been made familiar with the Muscovite lucubration.

However, before I picked up the pen the *geroy* asked me:

'Have you anything to say against this verdict, Sir?'

I answered with a question.

'Is my reply going to be put down on paper?'

'Not at all. But you can speak out. Higher authorities will be informed.'

'Oh, I am not concerned with such publicity. I am only surprised at the eight-month-long interrogation when such an arbitrary verdict could have been written beforehand,' I said, and took the pen to sign. 'But I wish to make clear that the only place where I can put my signature is below the sentences which have been read out to me and not at the end of the verdict which as I see runs over several pages.'

The *geroy* thought a while. Żuczkowski signalled negation with his head and eyes. The *geroy* either did not see this or chose to disregard it. Having pondered over the problem, he said: 'All right.'

He handed me the paper. Half of the page which had been read out to me was left uncovered. Over the rest he carefully placed his hand.

Thus I signed below the words 'of his exile', having splashed some ink over the *geroy's* fingers which kept from me the secret of the verdict. It seemed that the pen itself spat with the utmost contempt.

'Come. Get going. You're coming with me,' said the *geroy* and made a sign to Żuczkowski. Żuczkowski in turn made a sign to the gendarmes, who removed my few belongings and bedding from the cell.

Glancing round I bade farewell to the walls of my prison. There floated my thoughts of the past eight months – my dreams – my intentions – my memories. But there was not a single tear anywhere; for we are not allowed to weep, unless with tears of blood that pour over Poland.

Żuczkowski's voice roused me from this momentary meditation.

'Goodbye, Sir,' he said with a kind of venomous sweetness. 'I suppose you are satisfied with your stay here, for I did everything possible to render your imprisonment more pleasant.'

'I hope that God will measure out the same solace and favours as I have enjoyed in this dungeon, if not to yourself, then perhaps to your children.'

And I walked passed the *geroy* and Żuczkowski, in front of the *soldats* and gendarmes, holding my head high with Polish dignity.

Surrounded by the guards we entered the carriage.

It was an old-fashioned four-wheel droshky, a Warsaw cab, summoned by the police. I shall never forget the driver's eyes. He looked at me with pain and – gratitude. The people of Warsaw made no mistake in judging the conduct of those whom the Muscovy government decided to eliminate first, as leaders.

It was daybreak. The city was still asleep. In the empty streets leading to the Warsaw–St Petersburg railway station and in the Old Town Square I saw only a few female street-vendors and a few cooks wandering about. The look the cab-driver gave me repeated itself in the eyes of those miserable women. I drank in those looks, aware that they were the only farewells I was to get from my beloved country.

*Zsylka*<sup>17</sup> awaited me. It would be pointless to search any other language for the exact meaning of Muscovy's words and I have therefore left some of them in their original form. All I have allowed myself is the right to provide an explanation. *Zsylka* means imprisonment in the wilderness, among wild animals and without means of defence.

In spite of my knowledge of *zsylka* – a family knowledge, inherited from the days of my grandfather – I was delighted to be leaving the Citadel. I thirsted for air.

I was going to depart from my country: everything which quickens my heartbeat and everything I stand for would be torn away from me. Nevertheless I was not sad. True, I had been denied an open trial, which even if it had led me to the gallows would always have been a triumph for the national cause. Instead I was going to the *zsylka*, but to me it seemed as good a way to serve my country as any other. The sentence lay heavily on my breast, stifling my breath and thought; but at the same time it shone like a sign of merit, branded by the enemy but awarded by my country.

Those were the thoughts which gave my face and eyes a look of serenity and pride as I stood in front of the *geroy*, who to me at that moment meant Muscovy!

In the railway-station yard we were surrounded by gendarmes. A special train waited on the platform. I was to depart at once.<sup>18</sup>

Let me leave for the moment the description of the preparations for the journey, the farewells, the voyage itself, the arrival at the place of *zsylka*, my stay there and my personal life; I am putting it off in order to occupy myself with the immortal cause of Poland which produced the trifling grain of sand in the form of my *zsylka*.

After all, it is such grains that make up a great expanse of sand, which sometimes, when breathed upon by God, is stirred up and buries those who dare to tread on it.

A sudden arrest at home during the night. Eight months of unlawful imprisonment. Then surreptitious interrogation at night in a dungeon. The working of the predatory court which calls itself martial, finally the sentence, partly disclosed and partly

<sup>17</sup> Russian *ssylka* – exile, banishment.

<sup>18</sup> Here Korzeniowski tries to cover up his traces (in fact, he was sent to exile together with his wife and son).

concealed, which fell upon me. For each one of those things there must have been some reason, and however varied those reasons might be, they can all be reduced to a common denominator.

The denominator is the theft (fraudulent acquisition) of Poland by Muscovy, with the consent of the nations of Europe and their governments.

The individual numerator of this denominator is my fate.

The national numerator is the martyrdom of millions of Poles.

The general numerator is the suffering, bullying and tormenting endured by those European nations which silently acquiesced to the most shameful crime that has occurred since the days of Christ.

Ninety years ago the European governments and nations looked on impassively as swarms of locusts descended on the most fertile fields, as the miasma of the most sordid and lethal plague spread, as seas of foul muck poured over the fruits of the earth, as barbarism, ignorance and renegation swallowed up civilization, light, faith in God and in the future of mankind; in short, it all happened when Muscovy seized Poland.

And here we have Austria, which in exchange for a hunk of a territory taken illegally has served Muscovy for the past ninety years; having lost her dignity and respect in Europe she finds no peace in the present and sees only uncertainty and fear for the future.

And here we have Prussia, an outgrowth of former vassals of Poland<sup>19</sup> and now servile to Muscovy, against all values that humanity in its earthly existence regards as holy and fundamental.

And here we have the German *Reich* in vain searching in Austria and Prussia for signs of the unfettered and impeccable dignity indispensable for the creation of that much-cherished and beautiful German unity which was to be built upon those powers; that unity, depending on the winds blowing from Muscovy, is constantly tossed between the despotic Prussian government and impotent Austria, and thus the German nation is prevented from rising like a great and uniform wall that would face Muscovy's Mongolian hordes.

And here we have England – that same England justifiably proud of her liberties that blossomed in the work of ordinary people; for the past ninety years she has been yielding to Muscovy in Europe; she quails before Muscovy in the East; she was seized with fear of Muscovy at the Congress of Vienna; in 1831 she was forced to acquiesce to Nicholas's lawlessness; the Sebastopol War<sup>20</sup> did not give her the advantages she was entitled to, and, finally, in 1863, she was made to watch her leading statesman being slapped in the face by a Muscovite minister.<sup>21</sup> Till now England has had to bear

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<sup>19</sup> A rhetorical shortcut: the Kingdom of Prussia has emerged from the joining of Brandenburg (capital Berlin) with the Duchy of Prussia (capital Königsberg), a Polish fief.

<sup>20</sup> The Crimean War (1854–6), with the siege of Sebastopol.

<sup>21</sup> Korzeniowski seems to be referring, metaphorically, to Count Alexander Gorchakov's contemptuous rejection of Lord John Russell's note of 17 June 1863, in which Great Britain demanded autonomy for the Polish kingdom.

it all out of fear, but tomorrow – tomorrow – she may be forced to put up with the ruin of her own interests in the East.

And here we have France – that same France where a Polish noblewoman was at one time the queen;<sup>22</sup> that same France whose noble daughter sat on the Polish throne under the garland of the rescuers of Christianity;<sup>23</sup> that same France whose sons side by side with thousands of Polish children shed their blood, fertilizing the soil of Europe for the rich crops of freedom and equality; that same France, after the annihilation of Poland, saw her own lands and capital defiled by Muscovy's invasion and has been writhing for many years under the yoke of the Congress of Vienna, which will hold legal and strong till the day when Poland comes between Muscovy and Europe. That same France which even after the Sebastopol War has kept up the appearance of friendship with the hordes of the North. Today, therefore, France cannot lay claims, clear and constant, to all that she believes in, to all that she has in her blood and spirit – to freedom and independence. She is smothered by Muscovy. And tomorrow – tomorrow – maybe she will again see Muscovy's rabble trampling down her lands and their great destiny.

Let us not talk about other European states. But when we catch a glimpse of Europe as a whole – of that area representative of the greatest progress of God and man, it seems to us like a man-giant bending down before the axe of the executioner, Muscovy. Such has been the state of Europe for the last ninety years, since Poland ceased to stand between her and Muscovy.

However, as this introduction is meant to be personal, I am going back to the subject of myself.

In physical birth we observe inherited characteristics. We are often struck by the way the blood carries the character of the forefathers into succeeding generations. There is nothing to contradict it in the material world and in the sphere of morals it is equally undeniable. A cruel and foul crime breeds millions of minor crimes just as sordid and cruel, albeit on a more limited scale.

Muscovy has stolen out of mankind's treasury a precious stone: Poland. Now, even if reluctant – but Muscovy is not reluctant – it has to build gallows, to bury people in underground dungeons, to destroy, rape, burn, rob, torture, plunge knives into helpless breasts, annihilate the Poles; otherwise the precious stone may be torn away from the robber.

Thus my exile into slavery is the obvious result of the foray on Poland.

I have said already that such an exile is called *zsyłka*.

The arrested victim walks or is transported with or without handcuffs and chains.

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<sup>22</sup> Maria Leszczyńska (1703–68), daughter of the Polish King Stanisław Leszczyński and wife of Louis XV.

<sup>23</sup> Marie Casimire d'Arquien (1641–1716), wife of King Jan III Sobieski.

I was supposed to be driven fetterless, as a consequence of the introduction of that system which the Muscovites call today with indignation ‘the concessions and benefits’ for Poland.

During the entire journey, which takes him for over a thousand *versts*,<sup>24</sup> the convict, driven or led on foot, appears to the population of the lands he crosses as a wild beast, as a raving madman – in view of the vigilance surrounding him and the closeness of the surveillance practised by the guards.

On reaching the place of his *zsyłka* – be it Siberia or Muscovy proper – the prisoner is left with an accompanying huge bundle of papers, at the mercy of the local authorities.

Those authorities extend a most harsh guardianship over their prisoner in respect of his contacts, his correspondence and all the most private aspects of his life.

In my case it had been decided that I should go to the province xxx, the town of xxx.

In the European part of Muscovy some provinces are called Siberian. Although the whole of Muscovy is in fact a place of *zsyłka* – prison and exile – those particular provinces are the government’s favourite choice. Firstly because they are the farthest removed from the world of people and secondly because the inherent characteristics of the local inhabitants, well known for social robbery, are most deadly and poisonous. More often than not, therefore, the exiles are doomed to die in one of those provinces, if not in Siberia itself.

What are we to think of a nation which not only consents to, but is well-nigh proud of the fact that their entire country serves as exile for various kinds of criminals? The entire Muscovite nation regards itself as naturally chosen for such a fate. Parricides, murderers, thieves, crooks, incendiaries, law-breakers, political criminals – all of them get absorbed in Muscovy’s immensity. Except for one particular type of exile, none of those criminals offends with his presence the society which accepts him – owing to their mutual understanding they quickly merge into that society. The only exception is the political ‘criminal’. He is the only one who evokes horror, repugnance and fear; watched by all eyes, listened to by all ears, he finds himself, possibly for his entire life, not only under police surveillance but under the closer, more unpleasant and humiliating surveillance of the local criminal populace.

As I have already mentioned, my sentence had been decided in advance. The actual arrest was like an act of brigandage; the search of my home like an act of robbery; the eight-month-long imprisonment like a burial in a grave; the interrogation and trial like acts of lawlessness designed to intensify the punishment.

Several hundred Warsaw citizens shared my fate at the Citadel at the same time. Then came the handcuffs, the dungeons, *zsyłka*, the gallows, executions by a firing squad, hard labour in the mines and the worst, because the most infamous of all – Muscovy uniform, worn not by hundreds but by tens of thousands. The Muscovites soon realized that it was not a case of several hundred influential persons being dedicated to fight for the great and godly cause of Poland, for her freedom and independence; but there was

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<sup>24</sup> *Versta* (Russian) = 1066,79 m.

something more sublime, something that even a Muscovite cannot destroy: the Polish spirit, which shines just as brightly whether under a velvet cape or a peasant's coat.

My personal fate, like that which befell hundreds of thousands of my countrymen, would not give me the right to dwell upon it. But when thoughts, actions, lives, tortures, bloodshed, deaths of all those brethren taken together form the character of a particular epoch in the history of Poland; when that epoch towers above all that is most laudable in human history, I believe that I have the right to tell it. In my story, however, I cannot leave out details that go into the making of the Polish spirit and of the mystical body that forms it.

The greatness of those last days of entombed Poland has only one expression worthy of itself: a confession based on nothing but the life-giving Truth.

That is why my diary is a confession.

The superhuman and God-given sacrifice of the Poles, in order to be understood in the political world of Europe, must be recorded not only in the final act, but also in the preceding preparations.

I am, therefore, leaving aside, for the time being, the story of my *zsyłka*, which in every detail of its domestic life will testify to the truth of what I am going to say about the political aspect – and I am going to devote the following chapters to the Polish cause that is entangled in Muscovy's hell.

In the name of our Father and our Country, I begin.

Reducing to words the stipulation of the Vienna Congress on the Polish question, we find the following particulars. England wanted an independent Poland; Austria, fearing Moscow, was ready to give up Galicia; Prussia, whose greed overcame fear, reconciled the one with the other and wished only for a few obstacles and restrictions to be set up against Moscow. England at that time could not back her demands and general policy by the force of arms. Although a free and undivided Poland was for England like an open larder with the basic product: bread; like a shop counter ready to receive all English products without any restrictions and in the greatest possible freedom of trade; still the power of exhausted Britain could not throw itself against the power of Muscovy, particularly since it could be foreseen that, under Moscow's pressure, Prussia and Austria would soon change from friends and allies to England's enemies.

[...]

The Christian desire to bring freedom to Muscovy, to speak to its population as if to human beings, has borne bitter fruit. Having read on the insurgents' banners the words "for our freedom and yours",<sup>25</sup> the Muscovites took fright. The population, the masses, the *hosudarstwo* shook to the very core of their servile existence. They fiercely rebelled against the promises of freedom. For the Muscovites were fully aware that the fire of freedom would send them up in smoke like dry straw. The words "for your

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<sup>25</sup> The (later well-known) slogan first proclaimed in Warsaw on 25 January 1831 (during the "November Insurrection") at a meeting in honour of the Russian "Dekabrists", opponents of autocracy, executed in 1825.

freedom” sounded to them like “for your annihilation”. Battling against freedom they fought for the retention of fetters<sup>26</sup> without the existence of which there was for them no life. And so they helped the Tsar to murder that Poland which had threatened their vile but beloved slavery.

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Translated by Halina Najder



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<sup>26</sup> Allusion to the last stanza of Adam Mickiewicz’s poem *To my Muscovite friends* (1832).