

POLAND AND THE CONRAD PROBLEM: THE CONTROVERSY OVER JOSEPH CONRAD- KORZENIOWSKI'S PATRIOTISM

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Abstract: The following article is a contribution to the history of Conrad's critical appraisals in Poland. It refers to the most contentious issue, which arouses a plethora of emotions and controversies. There are critics who claim that within this context some compatriots pursued a legalistic process against Conrad. Because this literary "trial" does not seem to have been resolved definitively, I decided to shed a different light on it by drawing from Karol Ludwik Koniński, a critic and publicist of the interwar period whose role is that of an unbiased expert (what's most important: he did not get involved in the arguments about Conrad). In his numerous articles Koniński articulates his insightful and substantial opinions regarding patriotism, on the one hand, and deviation from it, on the other hand. The below article examines a problem first posed (in a rather unfortunate way) by Eliza Orzeszkowa at the end of 19th century, but from various intertwining perspectives: historical, moral, psychological and biographical. This multilateralism facilitates the most objective approach to this complicated issue, as well as helps to eschew various simplifications and stereotypes. Hence, in Koniński's hypothetical expertise, one finds surprising statements about Conrad and his approach to the Polish cultural heritage.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, Karol Ludwik Koniński, Polish reception of Conrad, the concept of loyalty and betrayal, the history of Poland in times of captivity, the deviation from national loyalty, argument about the emigration of talent, the seminal moments in Conrad's biography, Conrad's inner feeling vs. the concept of patriotism, Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski's Polish background

The topic of the following examination will be the complex relationship of Poles to Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski and his life path. This topic, however, should be considered in parallel with another, by no means less complex, issue: the relationship of Conrad to the Polish cultural heritage; the heritage in which the author of *An Outcast of the Islands* grew up, and from which he, eventually, distanced himself, as a result of multifarious circumstances. Even though these two sides of the coin were never a gracious object of research, paradoxically they accrued a rich bibliography.¹

¹ Cf. Wanda Perczak. *Polska bibliografia conradowska 1896–1992* [*Polish Bibliography of Conrad 1896-1992*]. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 1993, pp. 203-209. Cf. *Joseph Conrad a Polska* [Joseph Conrad and Poland], vol. I 2011 and *Polskość i europejskość w Josepha*

Especially the second side, as Józef Ujejski wrote in 1936, seemingly “out of fashion,” and lacking the “*bon ton* of the intelligentsia,” exorcised or not, imposes itself every time the author of *Lord Jim* is mentioned.² Hence, one of the most sensitive issues in the Polish reception of Conrad has usually been undertaken willy-nilly. Because, objectively speaking, the relationship of the English author to his Polish heritage was (and had to be) ambiguous,³ often, far-fetched conclusions have been drawn about Conrad, as well as accusations of treason and desertion.⁴

Taking precedence in this latter respect was Eliza Orzeszkowa, who at the end of the nineteenth century discredited Conrad in the eyes of his compatriots.⁵ However, also later in the interwar period (in the reborn Poland), there were occurrences of extremely critical, if not accusatory, claims regarding the author of *Lord Jim*. Just to mention one of them, Jan Nepomucen Miller could not reconcile himself with the fact that Conrad, seemingly, “managed to forget about his country, motherland, and his background, to the extent that in his prolific writing, he did not display any outstanding evidence of his interest in Poland.”⁶ Even Stefan Żeromski, before he enthusiastically proclaimed Conrad “an author-compatriot,”⁷ published, just after Conrad’s death, an elaborate article in “Wiadomości Literackie” [“Literary News”], in which, besides his tribute to “one of the most phenomenal writers of literature,” he also claimed that Conrad “ran away from his country and the city most immersed in the history, routine and awareness of public thought.” Recalling Conrad’s visit to the Jagiellonian Library during his 1914 visit, Żeromski rebuked the writer for “turning his son into an Englishman, while holding in his hands the remains of his father’s letters.”⁸ Also, Karol Wiktor Zawodziński, Conrad’s genuine admirer and a defender,

Conrada wizjach historii, polityki i etyki [Polishness and Europeanism in Joseph Conrad’s vision of history, politics and ethics], vol. II 2013. Ed. W. Krajka, Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press.

² Józef Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* [On Konrad Korzeniowski]. Warszawa: Dom Książki Polskiej Sp. Akc., 1936, pp. 9-10.

³ Cf. [Zdzisław Najder]. “Wstęp” [“Preface”]. [In:] *Polskie zaplecze Josepha Conrada-Korzeniowskiego. Dokumenty rodzinne, listy, wspomnienia* [Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski’s Polish Background. Family Documents, Letters and Reminiscences]. Eds. Zdzisław Najder and Joanna Skolik. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Gaudium, 2006, vol. I, p. 13. Cf. Andrzej Busza. “Conrad’s Polish Literary Background and Some Illustrations of the Influence of Polish Literature on His Work.” *Antemurale*, [vol.] X (1966), Romae & Londinii, *passim* (i.e.: p. 239).

⁴ Cf. Stefan Zabierowski. *Conrad w Polsce: wybrane problemy recepcji krytycznej w latach 1896-1969* [Conrad in Poland. Selected Problems of Critical Reception in 1896-1969]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1971, pp. 90, 101.

⁵ In a Petersburg journal “Kraj” (1899, No. 16), in an article *Emigracja zdolności* [The Emigration of Talent].

⁶ Jan Nepomucen Miller. “Kilka słów o Conradzie i o godności narodowej tu i tam” [A Few Words about Conrad and National Dignity Here and There]. *Kurier Polski* 1924, No. 232; quoted by: Zabierowski. *Conrad w Polsce...* [Conrad in Poland...], p. 101.

⁷ See: Stefan Żeromski. “Autor-Rodak” [“An Author-Compatriot”]. *Naokoło Świata* 1925, No. 2. [Reprint in:] *idem. Pisma literackie i krytyczne*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1963, pp. 161-167.

⁸ Stefan Żeromski. “Joseph Conrad.” *Wiadomości Literackie* 1924, No. 33. A sentence in question came from Conrad’s *First News* (1918): „The attention of t h a t y o u n g E n g l i s h m a n was mainly attracted by some relics of Copernicus in a glass case”. Joseph Conrad. “First News”. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1949, p. 176; my underlining – Ł.F.

in one of his articles (dedicated to Conrad's difficult life choices) made it clear that his interpretative hypotheses aimed to eliminate the necessity to suspect the English author of being a renegade and a deserter from the Polish case.⁹

Fortunately, there were the opposite voices as well: balanced and showing how complicated the issue was, both in psychological and moral terms. In this context two voices: that of Rafał M. Blüth¹⁰ and Maria Dąbrowska¹¹ should be called to attention.

Nevertheless, within many years of discussions and disputes, a lot of hasty judgments, simplifications, as well as misrepresentations (often born out of ignorance) had been formed which inevitably affected the entirety of Polish reception of Conrad. Succumbing to various stereotypes (just to mention, phrasing Conrad's biography in a stereotypical and stylized way; in the spirit of Romanticism)¹² also became the order of the day, thus, facilitating over-interpretations, and establishing a false (if not at least distorted) image of the writer and his works in the minds of his Polish readers.

I. A DISPUTE ABOUT CONRAD: TOWARDS RESOLUTION?

Taking into account the particularity of the whole issue, one could compare the Polish reception of Conrad—at least in some aspects—to a c o u r t t r i a l, to follow the approach of a contemporary Bulgarian Conrad scholar, Margreta Grigorowa.¹³ During this “court trial”, both bigoted accusers and declared defenders of the writer voiced their opinions. In this article, referring to such trial nomenclature,¹⁴ I would like to give voice to a subject-matter expert, who could potentially also serve as an expert witness. I would like to add that the voice belongs to a competent and unbiased expert whose intellectual and moral qualifications are indubitable.

The person in mind is Karol Ludwik Koniński (1891-1943), a literary critic, publicist, essayist, and a thinker, about whom Kazimierz Wyka voiced a significant opinion: that he was “one of the deepest minds of interwar Poland and one of few moralists, so hard to come across, in our country.”¹⁵

⁹ Karol Wiktor Zawodziński. “Nieuwzględnione motywy decyzji życiowej Conrada” [“Unconsidered Motives of Conrad's Life Decision”]. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1927, No. 39.

¹⁰ See: Rafał Marcei Blüth. “O tragicznej decyzji krakowskiej Konrada Korzeniowskiego. Parę myśli i uwag w związku z książką profesora Ujejskiego ‘O Konradzie Korzeniowskim’” [“About Conrad-Korzeniowski's Tragic Cracovian Decision. A Few Thoughts and Comments Regarding Professor Ujejski's Book ‘On Konrad Korzeniowski’”]. *Verbum* 1936, No. 2, pp. 296-337. [Reprint in:] *idem. Pisma literackie*. Ed. Piotr Nowaczyński. Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1987, pp. 238-262.

¹¹ See: Maria Dąbrowska. *Szkice o Konradzie* [Essays about Conrad]. Ed. Ewa Korzeniewska. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1974, *passim*.

¹² See: Zabierowski. *Conrad w Polsce...* [Conrad in Poland...], pp. 13-18, 25, 43-48.

¹³ See: Маргрета Григорова. Джоузеф Конрад Коженъовски. Творецът като мореплавател. Велико Търново: Университетско издателство “Св.св. Кирил и Методий”, 2011, pp. 316-327.

¹⁴ *Nota bene* J. Ujejski used it in 1936. (See: Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* [On Conrad Korzeniowski], pp. 26-27).

¹⁵ Kazimierz Wyka. “O jedności i różności literatury polskiej XX wieku” [“About Unity and Diversity of the Twentieth Century Polish Literature”]. [In:] *idem. Nowe i dawne wędrówki po tematach*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978, p. 53.

Hence, I propose that we reexamine the above-mentioned disputes (and their causes), in a factual and meritorical way, as well as, not devoid of moral references, in order to take a reliable position regarding the accusations of treason and desertion (by no means trivial) of an outstanding English writer of Polish descent.¹⁶

Here I would like to recall Wyka's acute observation:

Koniński [...], like none other of our critics, was predestined to examine Conrad's problem in the entirety of its moral complexity.¹⁷

Mostly, first of all, as an author of the extensive article (1929) entitled *The Issue of National Apostasy in the Polish National Thought (1831-1863)*, as well as a few other shorter articles revolving around the same issue.

Even though above-mentioned subject-matter expert did not take part in the disputes and discussions about Conrad, he followed them attentively, because, as Wyka claims, he talked willingly about Conrad.¹⁸ However, what's most important, he happened to mention Conrad in the most pertinent for us context. I would like to pay special attention to Koniński's short mention of Conrad, formulated in one of his footnotes. It appeared in an article, *A Complete Man, Creator, and Nation. On occasion of Tagore's Book* published in "Przegląd Współczesny" ["Contemporary Review"] 1923, volume VI, No. 16 (August issue).

Before we acquaint ourselves with the full content of Koniński's footnote, first we need to tackle a multitude of issues, inevitably accompanying the posed problem. Therefore, a few longer organizing and synthesizing comments need to be formulated, among which there will be references to the above-mentioned Koniński's texts, but also other significant statements of selected authors who took part in the dispute. Finally, Conrad's own pronouncements will be recalled as well. The most pertinent facts from Conrad's biography will also be recalled.

Despite the attitude one might have towards past accusations of Conrad, these allegations remain an undisputable fact in the history of Conrad's reception, requiring an interpretative analysis. In fact, we need such interpretation, which would first throw light on the historical and psychological genesis of the issue, and, then, capture it, so to speak, in a "structural" way, in other words, a factual way, devoid of emotional stereotypes and taking into account objective circumstances of a moral and formal nature. Only after this double-interpretative perspective is included, in my opinion, will one be able to potentially venture into verification (or falsification) of the legitimacy and credibility of these allegations (of "betrayal" and "desertion") towards Conrad.

¹⁶ Especially that already J. Ujejski complained that "all *pro* and *contra*" in this matter are impetuous and random (*idem, op. cit.*, p. 10).

¹⁷ Kazimierz Wyka. "'Kamienna ironia Absolutu' (O Karolu Ludwiku Konińskim)" ["Stone-like Irony of the Absolute (on Karol Ludwik Koniński)"]. [In:] *idem. Odeszli*. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1983, p. 23.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

II. THE ISSUE OF THE SO-CALLED NATIONAL APOSTASY VS. AN EXPERIENCE OF “THE AGE OF CAPTIVITY”

While recalling the term “national apostasy” (or, “treason”), one should be aware that the term is historically justified in the Polish context. It is strictly interwoven with concrete historical circumstances, concrete social and mental conditions, as well as concrete human attitudes and actions—with all these factors springing from the difficult experience of national captivity.

In the previously mentioned article entitled *The Issue of National Apostasy in the Polish National Thought (1831-1863)*¹⁹, Koniński, speaking about the psycho-moral situation of Poles under the partition, strongly emphasized the motif of national dignity. It was rather a sense of a wounded dignity, because, as the author of the essay noted, the issue referred to people “destined by their birthright to live as free citizens,”²⁰ just as during the Republic of Poland before the partition.

It could not be otherwise, as Koniński ascertained, that Polish émigré thought, over the course of the inter-uprising period, would not consequently claim this sense of dignity—in the name of the national *raison d'être*. Hence, one could say, that almost all intellectual energy of the émigré social elite (aristocratic elite, of course), out of necessity, focused on sustaining and solidifying the sense of Polish identity. The primary, although long-term, goal of these undertakings and efforts was to rebuild the sovereign Polish statehood with the pre-partition borders. At the same time the goal was to reevaluate current (not always fair) societal relationships, so as to include the interests and the position of individuals and groups that did not come from the nobility. As much as it might be a simplification, this was the spiritual work of emigration: both the work of will and of thought.²¹

It was not an easy work, however. Émigré thought had to ceaselessly grapple with the symptoms of national depression: with an acute sense of failure, increasing pessimism and with a natural tendency toward moral and mental breakdowns. The symptoms of exhausted national vitality among some individuals²² posed particular danger, because they created fertile ground for apostasy.

Moreover, other trends and phenomena occurred, which were equally perilous from the point of view of national cohesion. Among them, one should mention first the idea of Pan-Slavism, which was an effective tool of Russian expansionism. Any support of the idea by representatives of the Polish-émigré elite was paramount with apostasy (the followers were Michał Grabowski, Adam Gurowski and Waclaw Jabłonowski, among others). Also an exaggerated sense of provincialism, as an involuntary way of challenging the national geographical cohesion, was considered to

¹⁹ Karol Ludwik Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa na tle polskiej myśli narodowej (1831-1863)* [*The Issue of National Apostasy in the Polish National Thought (1831-1863)*]. Rkps Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich: Dział Rękopisów, sygn. akc. 127/05/1 (manuscript held by the Ossolineum, Wrocław).

²⁰ *Ibid.* (modified quotation).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

border on apostasy²³ (Henryk Rzewuski should be mentioned in this context). Finally, last but not least, everything that weakened “the sense of reality” (in Koniński’s words) among the émigrés and led to “ideological teasing”²⁴ constituted a potential danger. In this category, all the ideas akin to messianism, which emphasized mystical faith in “the power of the spirit” could be found. One should note that this excessive idealism (or irrealism), both in aims and ways, resulted sometimes in the *sui generis* “derailment of patriotism.” The best example of that derailment, as Koniński evinces, were Towiański and [Hoene] Wroński’s letters to the tsar to convert him to messianism – these facts bordered on apostasy.²⁵

Even though evidently intentional national apostasy, due to psychological or ideological reasons, was not a common occurrence, there were sometimes cases of conscious—and what’s important—definitive parting with ancestral heritage.

In this respect, Polish historiography notes one definitive, undisputable and irreversible case of apostasy. This classic apostate²⁶—to use Koniński’s term—was Count Adam Gurowski (1805-1866), who “confessed baldly, with demonic passion that it would be better for Poles, if Poland did not exist.”²⁷

Only shortly prior was he a member of Piotr Wysocki’s conspiracy group, a supporter of the Romanovs’ deposition and social revolution, a member of the November Uprising, Knight of the Cross of the Virtuti Militari (for the Battle of Grochów), and then—during his emigration—a co-founder of the Polish Democratic Society, as well as a political activist of the radical left émigré group. In 1834, however, he announced his apostasy unexpectedly, which he later justified in a leaflet “*La vérité sur la Russie et sur la révolte des provinces polonaises,*” in which not only did he condemn the November Uprising and appealed to the tsar for amnesty, but—what’s most important—he also rejected Polish claims for independence (as false and absurd at their base), as well as the entire Polish cultural and political tradition. Moreover, inspired by Saint-Simonian faith in progress, without hesitation he acknowledged Russia’s superiority (not only over Poland, but also over the West). With time Gurowski, in his other significant publications (i.e., *La civilization et la Russie...* [1840], *Le panslavisme...* [1848]), will also formulate—with great precision and consistency—a specific philosophy of the Fall of Poland,²⁸ considered as a historiosophical necessity...

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*; cf. Edmund Kołodziejczyk. *Prądy słowianofilskie wśród emigracji wielkiej 1830-1863* [*Slavophile Trends in the Great Emigration of 1830-1863*]. Kraków: published by “Towarzystwo Słowiańskie”, 1914, pp. 29-30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Karol Ludwik Koniński. “Człowiek i naród” [“The Man and the Nation”] [1942]. [In:] *idem. Kartki z brulionów* [*Pages from a Note-paper*]. Ed. Bronisław Mamoń. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Arcana, 2007, p. 56.

²⁸ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

This propagator of the “Russian-Slavic patriotism,”²⁹ a proclaimer of the civilizational mission of the Russian Empire, predicting a Polish future in organic unity with Russia (which would be—so to say—an encapsulation of the best Slavic features) and, hence, perceiving an urgent need for a deep and thorough transformation (in the Slavic spirit, of course) of the entire Polish cultural tradition, represents a live symbol of national apostasy motivated by panslavic ideas.³⁰ Gurowski was prominent and widely acclaimed; therefore, his departure caused a huge shock in the Polish émigré community in France. Since his departure, the above-mentioned community took the problem of national apostasy very seriously, as a real threat with concrete and personalized reference to reality.

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The historical background of the issue delineated by Koniński refers solely to the inter-uprising period. However, one could easily extend this period into later times, marked by the failure of the January Uprising. Also, then, various instances of the widely-understood issue of denationalization manifest themselves. This issue—alive and alarming—was often undertaken and commented on by accomplished representatives of Polish social elite (both in the country and abroad); unexpectedly it also emerged in the context of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski’s life and writing, in the form of a series of articles in the Petersburg journal “Country” in 1899. The dispute between Eliza Orzeszkowa and Wincenty Lutosławski transpired then and echoed widely.

It’s worth, I think, paying attention to the ideological and social context of these statements, as well as to grasp—using Koniński’s term—“the psycho-moral situation” of Polish society at that time.

It’s hardly a secret that the end of the 19th century was marked by a serious crisis of values, including patriotic values. On the one hand, we have something that Orzeszkowa named the distortion and degradation of slogans about organic work and knowledge,³¹ on the other hand—the alarming and growing occurrence of economic emigration. Orzeszkowa was not alone in her diagnosis. A bit earlier—already in 1887—a well-known publicist and critic, Jan Ludwik Popławski, complained about an apathy, common in Polish society, with its ideal of a prosaic “bread-eater with its

²⁹ Henryk Głębocki. “Adama Gurowskiego patriotyzm rosyjsko-słowiański (o kontekstach apostazji narodowej – w świetle materiałów z archiwów rosyjskich)” [“Adam Gurowski’s Russian-Slavic Patriotism (About the Context of National Apostasy in the Light of Russian Archives)”]. [In:] *Formuły patriotyzmu w Europie Wschodniej i Środkowej od nowożytności do współczesności*. Eds. Andrzej Nowak and Andrzej A. Zięba. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2009, pp. 169-205. All the above information about Gurowski came from this article.

³⁰ See: *ibid.*; cf. also: Henryk Głębocki. «Diabeł Asmodeusz» w niebieskich binoklach i kraj przyszłości. Hr. *Adam Gurowski i Rosja* [“Demon Asmodeus” in *Blue Pince-nez and the Country of Future. Count Adam Gurowski and Russia*]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Arcana, 2012.

³¹ Eliza Orzeszkowa. “The Emigration of Talent” [“Emigracja zdolności”. *Kraj* 1899, No. 16]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*. Ed. Zdzisław Najder. Transl. Halina Carroll-Najder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 184.

accompanying philistine mediocrity of thoughts and feelings.” Hence, as the co-founder of the National League concluded, “callous and impertinent egoism” ran rampant, which contributed to the “worsening of social ideals,” and to the “fall of the spirit” at the same time.³² In this context, one should not be surprised by Orzeszkowa’s fiery speech, warning, firstly, against, a blind pursuit of money, and, secondly, against a rush resignation of lofty ideals (as well as of a higher, moral aim of work); thirdly, against forsaking patriotic duty to serve one’s nation, as well as – implicitly – against the possibility of national apostasy (and from the lowest, material motives).

Fighting with the phantom of denationalization, with the side effects of social apathy and indifference to basic, socio-moral values, Orzeszkowa put the ethos of national service on a pedestal, not for the first time, in fact. It was not an easy service, as it was marked by suffering and self-renunciation. Hence, everything that is at odds with this ethos, such as egoism, pettiness, opportunism, materialism, consumerism, should be met with highest disapproval. This recrimination refers primarily to those representatives of the social elite who display creative talent, which constitutes—as Orzeszkowa neatly put it—the very crown of the tree, the pinnacle of the tower, the life-blood of the nation.³³ From that point of view, even the thought of the emigration of talent has to be considered as deeply immoral, unethical and—at its roots—unthinkable.³⁴

Hence, the author of the famous 1899 article would certainly agree with this authoritative statement, formulated many years later by Koniński:

The national idea would not hold up to its moral standards, if certain individuals were forgiven their national denial, due to their personal civilizational effort.³⁵

³² Jan Ludwik Popławski. “Obniżenie ideałów” [“The Deterioration of Ideals”] [1887]. [In:] *idem. Pisma polityczne*. Przedmowa [*Political Papers*. Preface] Zygmunt Wasilewski. Kraków & Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1910. Vol. I, pp. 3-8.

³³ Orzeszkowa. “The Emigration of Talent”. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 188.

³⁴ Lutosławski saw it differently, even though *ex post*. He responded to Orzeszkowa in July 1910 (even though she had been dead for two months), closing the earlier discussion revolving around the emigration of talent:

Emigration of talent is usually dictated by other reasons than an economic one [...] we don’t have the right to assess everyone under the same label. We need to respect the diversity of vocations. Particularly, let’s not undermine truth and beauty as independent aims of human existence, instead of treating them as means for social goals [...] Even though artistic creation is sometimes a means, tendential art never lives up the standard of the ideal of Beauty [...] Orzeszkowa’s mistake arose from a particular handicap that spread during captivity. It was a spiritual blindness that did not treat truth as an independent ideal and aim of life. In captivity, moral energy is so drained that we get used to utilitarianism and we lose the sense of selfless love for Truth and Beauty” (Wincenty Lutosławski. “Response to Orzeszkowa Written on July 14, 1910 in Kosovo” [Odpowiedź Orzeszkowej napisana 14 lipca 1910 r. w Kosowie]. [In:] *Iskierki warszawskie*, seria pierwsza. Warszawa: published by Księgarnia St. Sadowskiego, 1911, pp. 98-99, 103-104).

³⁵ Karol Ludwik Koniński. “Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród. Z powodu książki Tagorego” [“A Complete Man, Creator, and a Nation. On Occasion of Tagore’s Book”]. *Przegląd Współczesny* 1923, Vol. VI, No. 16 (August), p. 250. [Reprint in:] *idem. Pisma polityczne [Political Papers]*. Ed. Maciej Urbanowski. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Arcana, 2014, p. 38 (further—simultaneously, according to this publication, as *PP*, with page number).

However, let us pose a question at this point: can one automatically equate “national denial” and the “emigration of talent,” as was so lively discussed at the time? Let us attempt to make sense of this complicated matter and its not-always-clear terminology.

III. MORAL ASPECT OF THE ISSUE. FORMAL DEFINITION OF THE “DEVIANCE”

The moral significance of the idea of nation (or nationhood) was also noted by K.L. Koniński who sketched the following perspective, which now seems seminal:

The possibility of choosing between personal success achieved by getting rid of some native characteristics, and keeping such characteristics regardless of success, is the basis on which the moral issue of nationhood manifests itself in an archetypal form.³⁶

The content of the above formulation (as well as the formal and moral sense of the alternative contained in it) will be understood only when we acknowledge the validity (or verity) of another formulation: that the concept and practice of national patriotism should be defined through the “awareness of historical responsibility.”³⁷

Meanwhile, critical sense leads to a question: “what is that responsibility in its essence, and what is its axiological base; what are its claims based on?”

Nationhood—in Koniński’s understanding—should be viewed as a kind of “developmental terrain for reliable, native cultural creativity”³⁸; the same creativity that gives birth to, and later solidifies, the societal idea of political and economic independence. According to Koniński, the “morality of nation-building,”³⁹ or, “the commandment of closest reality,” which is to say, “a deep regard for the workplace and intimate life,”⁴⁰ always remains a condition of the possibility (but also a conveyer) of fruitful cultural creativity. In another text, Koniński notes, moreover, that the following—inalienable—conviction constitutes an indispensable element of this awareness:

In the ideal of a nation, an ideal admittedly only in force for a certain historical epoch, a significant part of universal morality—that which is “eternal”—gets expressed in current circumstances.⁴¹

³⁶ *Ibid.*; original underlining (PP, 38).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248; original underlining (PP, 35).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 249; original underlining (PP, 37).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 250; underlining – Ł.F. (PP, 37).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 252; original underlining (PP, 39).

⁴¹ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

One could say, then, that this “commandment”—as delineated above—constitutes not only a “psychological incentive,” but also an “ethical norm,”⁴² unexpectedly legitimizing its validity in spheres transpersonal and transhistorical.

In that context, one should not be surprised by Koniński’s statement about the existence of a fundamental “opposition between a national and rational psyche,”⁴³ which means that in the framework of a patriotic system of valuing (based—as we already learned—on an interiorized system of loyalty), there should not be a place for underlying doubt, “rational” in its essence:

“Why should one sacrifice, sometimes profoundly, for this civilization, if this and some other civilization will fulfill the needs of the consumer or the cultural creator? Bearing such heavy sacrifices is n o n s e n s e ! . . . ”⁴⁴

The civilizational dynamic, through which national and cultural creativity flourishes, rejects the temptation of rational minimalism or reductionism. However, a temptation of this kind—one has to admit honestly (and Koniński acknowledges this)—transpires wherever there is social and cultural underdevelopment.

In this context, radical solutions arise which verge, desired or not, on deviance, from a nationalistic perspective. Even though such desperate endeavors are undertaken in the name of material or spiritual self-development,⁴⁵ both treason in the name of private fulfillment or cultural development, and treason in the name of creativity⁴⁶ (which should be equated with “the emigration of talent” in Orzeszkowa’s sense) are unacceptable from the vantage point of nation-making morality.⁴⁷ Why?

The vital argument for morally legitimizing national patriotism understood in this way is “man himself,” man who “like a hero lovingly embraces a civilizational oeuvre”⁴⁸; who serves his nation loyally and devotedly; who “mobilizes the p s y - c h i c b o n d s o f n a t i o n h o o d ”⁴⁹ in the cultural-historical sphere (language,

⁴² Cf. Koniński, *Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród... [A Complete Man, Creator, and a Nation...]*, p. 252. (PP, 40).

⁴³ Karol Ludwik Koniński. “Struktura i symbol narodu” [“The Structure and the Symbol of the Nation”]. *Przegląd Warszawski* 1924, No. 29, p. 153. [Reprint in:] *idem. Pisma polityczne [Political Papers]*, p. 58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; original underlining (PP, 58).

⁴⁵ Koniński. *Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród... [A Complete Man, Creator, and a Nation...]*, p. 251 (PP, 39).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251 (PP, 38).

⁴⁷ What’s characteristic, some literary works of the partition period confirmed the weight of this problem. Especially romantic literature—such as, Maurycy Gosławski’s narrative poem “Odstępca” [“Apostate”], or, Stefan Gorczyński’s “Wacława Dzieje” [“Wacław’s History”]—“knows the temptation of apostasy [...] whispered by the tempter-civilizer.” (Koniński. *Struktura i symbol narodu [The Structure and Symbol of a Nation]*, pp 147-148 [PP, 52]. The aforementioned Adam Gurowski’s attitude, as Koniński noted, also found a literary resonance in Zygmunt Krasiński’s “Dzień Dzisiejszy” [“Today’s Day”] in which “satan appears to a dying person and verbally imitates Gurowski’s deterministic and rational philosophy.” (Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstęstwa... [The Issue of National Apostasy...]*, *op. cit.*). Cf. Koniński. *Człowiek i naród [A Man and a Nation]*, p. 56.

⁴⁸ Koniński. *Struktura i symbol narodu [The Structure and Symbol of a Nation]*, p. 155; original underlining (PP, 61).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157; original underlining (PP, 63).

faith, ideas, values), as well as the sociopolitical one (the sense of community and civic belonging).

This personalistic understanding of the genesis and the structure of the nation leads in a natural way to the formulation of the following conclusion: because the spiritual and mental bond (to use Koniński's language: "compassion," "honor," or "friendship") with "the strong and reliable personalities of national activists"⁵⁰ is a driving force and a stimulant in the process of shaping national and cultural identity, only by having in mind the indefeasible and irreducible value of "the ideals of intercreative preferences,"⁵¹ can one comprehend both the moral significance and the formal definition of apostasy.

Therefore, one can safely characterize an apostate as one who:

Sins by overlooking a man. Overlooking a man, who put all his heart in this, and not the other, civilizational work, moreover; who sweated over it and maybe even shed his blood.⁵²

In turn, through this lens, the *quintessence* of apostasy would be a conscious and voluntary "abjuration of solidarity with the closest creative community," such as with native civilizational effort. At the same time, this "abjuration" should be judged—as Koniński stresses—with "inner feeling."⁵³ Hence—objectively speaking—apostasy does not have to mean "treason," as long as we treat the latter one as a "transgression in the category of practicality":

One can be an apostate without being a traitor. One can even detest treason. On the other hand, [...] even if these activities could be *de facto* treason-like, they might not be the result of conscious and voluntary treason [...]. Let's establish that the term <<treason>> should be applied to activities aligned with the nation's enemies, and caused by low incentives, as well as the breakdown of a character (as a result of terrorization, *etc.*).⁵⁴

If this "inner feeling of the break with the nationality" is connected to the "treason-like activities," one can assume "active apostasy," which constitutes—according to Koniński's terminology—the third and the highest degree of "denationalization." If the aforementioned "feeling" does not go together with "treason-like activities," we can assume "passive apostasy," or the "collapse of patriotism," which would be the second degree of "denationalization." Finally, the first degree, *i.e.*, an introduction to "passive apostasy:" "national apathy," such as an "alienation from the spiritual life of the nation, without confirmed resentment towards it, or at least, without a permanent feeling of such resentment."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155; original underlining (PP, 61).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157 (PP, 63).

⁵² Koniński. *Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród...* [*A Complete Man, Creator, and a Nation...*], p. 251; original underlining (PP, 39).

⁵³ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*; underlining – Ł.F.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Besides that, in Koniński, we encounter one more, unexpected, option, which formally does not go together with apostasy. It is a “derailment of patriotism”; this term should be always modified as: “a tragic derailment of patriotism.”⁵⁶ Because it is a peculiar phenomenon in its genesis and structure, let us illustrate it in a nutshell, following Koniński.

Wacław Jabłonowski was a publicist associated with Hôtel Lambert, co-member and an editor of the journal “Trzeci Maj.” In social reception, he was treated and ostracized as an apostate. For what reason? For the “rejection of the ideal of independence,” as Koniński writes, due to his Slavophile fascinations. He became well known—first—as the author of the treatise *La France et la Pologne. Le slavianisme et la dynastie polonaise*, published at the end of 1842, in which he called to reconciliation with Russia in the name of higher, Pan-Slavic ideals. The publication reeked havoc among the Polish émigré community, just as the one authored by Gurowski a few years before. At the same time (1843), Jabłonowski came up with the project of publishing the journal “The Slav” [*Le Slave*], to be able to deliberate—as he put it—about “the means and conditions of a political unification of all Slavic peoples.”⁵⁷ Finally, a decade later, he became known as the author of a servile manifesto *His Highest Excellency of All Russia, the Emperor Nicholas I, the King of Poland* (published together with another text entitled *A Flyer on Behalf of the Slavs, Friends of Poland, To the Old and New Emigration*).

Let’s immediately inquire, however, about the motivations of this publicist and thinker’s behavior. Well, as a declared monarchist, convinced about the need for strong state power and having lost faith in the nation’s ability to form a uniform organization (government), Jabłonowski, unexpectedly, “found solace in his illusion that a reborn Romanov dynasty and reformed Russia (such as reformed in the spirit of liberal monarchism—Łukasz Front’s note) will provide the dependent Poland with steady, conservative social progress.”⁵⁸ It is not a coincidence that Jabłonowski’s ideological and political beliefs were a derivative of his disillusionment with the civilizational “accomplishments” of the West after the French Revolution, especially the expansion of republicanism and the social emancipation of the lower classes. By succumbing to the mirage of Pan-Slavism, which was, in Andrzej Nowak’s words, “a huge projection of political imagination at the turn of the 1830s and 1840s; the imagination of its potential victims, primarily”⁵⁹, Jabłonowski agreed conditionally to the political (but by no means cultural!) subordination of Polish territory to the Russian Empire.⁶⁰ Even though, as Koniński writes, we can find an objective charac-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; underlining – Ł.F.

⁵⁷ In: Kołodziejczyk. *Prądy słowiańskie...* [*Slavophile Trends...*], p. 32.

⁵⁸ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ Andrzej Nowak. “Oblicza panslawizmu. Zapomniana karta dziejów politycznej myśli Wielkiej Emigracji”. *Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* [“The Faces of Pan-Slavism. The Forgotten Page of the History of Political Thought of the Great Emigration.” *Studies in History of Russia and Central & Eastern Europe*], XXVII (1992), p. 12.

⁶⁰ More on Jabłonowski’s ideo-political concepts: [In:] Kołodziejczyk. *Prądy słowiańskie...* [*Slavophile Trends...*], pp. 31-32; Nowak. *Oblicza panslawizmu...* [*The Faces of Pan-Slavism...*], pp. 16-22. Besides Koniński’s text, above brief information was taken from these sources.

teristic of apostasy in Jabłonowski's attitude (*nota bene*, an outcome of post-depressive irrationalism), we cannot consider him an apostate, because he did not denounce his Polishness; just the contrary, his behavior sprang from his patriotic and social concern."⁶¹ What's more, Koniński took the risk to identify apostates among his compatriots, for example, in line with the whole patriotic elite, he considered the previously mentioned Adam Gurowski as one such apostate.

One could say that the phenomenon of national apostasy (as well as the attempts to describe it) is often met with many paradoxical situations and diverse conclusions and Jabłonowski's case serves as evidence of the complexity of the issue. Yet, the above-mentioned case also confirms that the most important and decisive criterion of moral judgment regarding the apostate (whether imaginary or real) must be the criterion of intent. Moreover, each case must be considered individually; such as, one has to take into account all motives and conditions (psychological, social, historical) in order to formulate a reliable judgment of somebody's behavior.

It is high time, then, to inquire about Conrad within this context...

IV. THE ISSUE OF THE "EMIGRATION OF TALENT"

Once again, we must return to Eliza Orzeszkowa's controversial article "Emigration of Talent." The author fully noticed, just as Koniński did later, the moral significance of the issue of so called national apostasy (even though, as we know, she did not use this term *expressis verbis*). In her opinion, similarly to Koniński's beliefs, conscious and intentional apostasy of accomplished, creative individuals would be a sin and a betrayal of basic moral principles, as well as of social justice. As Orzeszkowa wrote:

The idea of absolving talented individuals from bearing their share of the work and suffering common to all of society seems to me highly unjust. Since when is it fair for him who is most richly endowed by nature to be expected to give least to others? Just because his greater gifts offer him better possibilities of escape from 'unpleasant circumstances'—he escapes, leaving his less gifted and weaker brothers to their fate.⁶²

We can infer then that Orzeszkowa was not convinced by Lutosławski's argument about the noble need to "compete with each other for command of the globe."⁶³ In this noble competition, many accomplished individuals from various countries took part. Orzeszkowa disbelieved Lutosławski's optimistic belief that the majority of the talented émigrés will return to their motherland and "they will be constant and faithful in their love; they will not forget the mother who fed them."⁶⁴ Orzeszkowa, as it

⁶¹ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

⁶² Orzeszkowa. "The Emigration of Talent." [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 188.

⁶³ Wincenty Lutosławski. "The Emigration of Talent" ["Emigracja zdolności"]. *Kraj* 1899, No. 12]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, pp. 180–181.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

seems, perceived this issue more realistically and this is why she would not succumb to easy and shallow optimism. As a consequence, her attitude towards the “emigration of talent” became negative (which should be identified with an “apostasy in the name of artistic creation,” in Koniński’s understanding⁶⁵). Orzeszkowa seems to indicate that thought about emigration is conducive to potential “apostasy,” and facilitates a “national indifference,” to use Koniński’s term.⁶⁶

Unfortunately, the argumentative and rhetorical power of persuasion of Orzeszkowa’s article ends in the moment in which she—as an *exemplum* (and a *momento*)—points to the life path and the literary works of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski. What’s important, this accomplished writer did not take into account Conrad’s “inner feeling,” as Koniński would say. Just the opposite, she is content with the outer manifestations of the apostasy, such as the fact of emigration itself, and secondly—the fact of writing in a foreign language.

Meanwhile, Orzeszkowa’s negative moral evaluation (formulated with accusatory passion) of these two above-mentioned facts from Conrad’s life, moreover, interpreted in a superficial and extreme way, sprang mostly from a misunderstanding, whose main culprit, surprisingly, was Wincenty Lutosławski. This outstanding philosopher, in his earlier article *The Emigration of Talent*, called Conrad “en émigré from 1863.”⁶⁷ Moreover, he suggested unequivocally that the author of the later-written *Lord Jim* left his country as an adult and that his writing in a foreign language was solely the outcome of material considerations (even though—let’s add—it was not Lutosławski’s intention to depreciate Conrad).⁶⁸ Orzeszkowa received Lutosławski’s formulations and suggestions (which, in fact, as later turned out, also sprang from misunderstanding and misinformation⁶⁹), in an unequivocal and uncritical way, and accepted them as factual.

After all, Conrad was not a “post January Uprising” émigré. Neither did he leave his country as an adult, nor did he start writing in English as a parvenu. Therefore, in

⁶⁵ This identification would be justified only in the reference to the emigrant, who willingly and consciously denied national heritage and broke off any psychic bonds with it.

⁶⁶ But truly? Lutosławski, responding to Orzeszkowa after years, pointed to the fact that the reasons for emigration were multifarious, including the ones caused by patriotism (See: Lutosławski. *Odpowiedź Orzeszkowej... [Response to Orzeszkowa...]*, pp. 96-97). It is sufficient to mention the fact of the Great Emigration after the failure of the November uprising.

⁶⁷ Lutosławski. “The Emigration of Talent.” [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 178.

⁶⁸ Lutosławski captured the same issue later in an identical way: “Let’s not envy Englishmen a second-rate writer who would not enrich our national literature anyway, especially after having admitted that he wrote for money.” (Lutosławski. *Odpowiedź Orzeszkowej... [Response to Orzeszkowa...]*, p. 105, underlining – Ł.F.

⁶⁹ Lutosławski based his opinion on a conversation with Conrad in June 1897. Conrad, when asked why he did not write in Polish, responded: ‘I value our beautiful Polish literature too much to bring into it my clumsy efforts, but for the English my gifts are sufficient and secure me my daily bread’. (Lutosławski. “The Emigration of Talent.” [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 179). Lutosławski took Conrad’s ironic and playful sentence too literally. More on that topic see: Jerzy Illg. “‘Dusza polska w ciemności żyjąca’. Listy Josepha Conrada-Korzeniowskiego do Wincentego Lutosławskiego” [“Polish Soul Inhabiting Darkness.’ Letters of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski to Wincenty Lutosławski”]. *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1981, No. 4, pp. 261-278.

the light of the above, “Orzeszkowa’s accusations were partly beside the point.”⁷⁰ Despite that, for many years this unfortunate fragment of Orzeszkowa’s article cast a shadow on the Polish reception of Conrad by deforming it significantly.⁷¹

In that sense, it is even more important to examine thoroughly and diligently the real motives and effects of Conrad’s Cracovian decision,⁷² as well as the state of his human and literary self-awareness.

V. JOSEPH CONRAD-KORZENIOWSKI’S “INNER FEELING” VS. THE REAL MOTIVES AND EFFECTS OF HIS “CRACOVIAN DECISION” FROM 1874

With the existing state of research, it is hard to find any “secret ground” in Conrad’s “Cracovian decision” (as Karol Wiktor Zawodziński would say)⁷³, nor a hidden agenda.⁷⁴ As Zdzisław Najder claims, it was not young Konrad Korzeniowski, but his uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski,⁷⁵ who made the decision. What influenced the decision could be boiled down to a number of, prosaic as it turns out, issues and circumstances.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Zdzisław Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*. Transl. Halina Najder. Rochester & New York: Camden House, 2007, p. 295.

⁷¹ Lutosławski himself, presenting later various versions of Conrad’s statements during the memorable meeting in 1897, would recall the unfortunate motif of financial profit, both in 1911 (*Iskierki warszawskie*, *op. cit.*), and in 1925 (“Odwiedziny u Conrada” [“A Visit with Conrad”] *Tygodnik Wileński* 1925, No. 1), as well as in 1933 (in just published diary *Jeden łatwy żywot* [*One Easy Existence*]). However, in two last texts, Lutosławski hinted finally that Conrad’s explanation about his financial motives for writing was deeply insufficient (I quote after Jerzy Illg. “*Dusza polska w ciemności żyjąca*’...” [“*Polish Soul Inhabiting Darkness*’ ...”], pp. 264-266).

⁷² The term “Cracovian decision” has been borrowed from an article by R.M. Blüth (*op. cit.*).

⁷³ Zawodziński. *Nieuwzględnione motywy*... [*Unconsidered Motives*...], *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ As was often practiced in the interwar period. It became the order of the day to highlight the unfathomable mystery of the whole issue. Despite that, various more or less far-fetched hypotheses were formulated. Most often their purpose was to justify Conrad and his actions. The first example that comes to mind is Karol Wiktor Zawodziński’s univocal suggestion that Conrad chose England because it was the most serious opponent of Russia (which could not be said about France). Hence, according to this critic, Conrad may be considered as “one of the first proponents of English orientation in Poland.” (Zawodziński. *Nieuwzględnione motywy*... [*Unconsidered Motives*...], *op. cit.*). Cf. Zabierowski. *Conrad w Polsce*... [*Conrad in Poland*...], pp. 39-52.

⁷⁵ See: Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 44-45.

⁷⁶ See: *ibid.*, pp. 41-47. One should treat Conrad’s suggestions with a pinch of salt, because—*ex post*—he looked at everything that happened to him from the point of view of irrational Higher Providence. In that matter, Stefan Kołaczowski offers a quite down-to-earth explanation: “is anybody’s life a realization of higher plan? If not, why should we search for the fiction of such a plan? [...] At the beginning there was impulse, then plans could have emerged, but can we explain the impulse by means of these plans? I don’t see anything unfathomable in the first impulse. [...] The rest can be explained simply by “life that keeps running.” [...] I don’t believe in Conrad’s premeditated plans!” (Stefan Kołaczowski. “O decyzję życiową Conrada” [“On Conrad’s Life Decision”]. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1927, No. 52). To follow this interpretative trend, also Najder claims that Conrad—as a writer with a highly complicated biography—

First of all, let's take into account that the teenager had to finally acquire some education and a profession. Until now he did not do too well in school (maybe besides his favorite, geography), and his behavioral problems manifested themselves more and more. Additionally, there were his health problems and his chronic predisposition to depression. In a natural way, in the realities of that time, it was nothing extraordinary; a plan was formulated to send the boy abroad, in order for him to gain necessary life experience in an entirely different environment. More so that he could not return to his native Ukraine, because as a child of parents condemned to exile, he would be inevitably drafted into the Russian army. His attempts to obtain Austrian citizenship (so he could stay in Galicia permanently) failed. At the same time, already in 1872, the young Conrad unexpectedly expressed his desire to become a sailor. It could have been an outcome of his fascination with adventure-travel novels that were in fashion then (especially those of Cooper and Marryat),⁷⁷ even though, as Najder noticed, there were also plenty of native inspirations (just to mention "A Wanderer" ["Wędrowiec"]). Anyway, for Bobrowski it became more and more obvious that his *protégé*, "the young Konrad, egocentric and neurasthenic, a sickly and ambitious dreamer who could not forgive the world for not fulfilling his expectations, and who thirsted for adventure and probably above all for independence and freedom of movement, was impatient to take a leap into the wide and colorful world."⁷⁸

To fulfill youthful whims and having present circumstances under consideration, the uncle set off his 17-year-old nephew for a long journey to Marseille. On October 13, 1874, Konrad left his motherland.⁷⁹

These are the true motives of the Cracovian decision, as Najder puts it, "the turning point in his life, [...] provoking the most heated arguments."⁸⁰ Let's immediately inquire about the consequences.

So in 1878 the young Korzeniowski joins—as a sailor—the flag of the British Navy. Eleven years later (in 1889) the first chapters of *Almayer's Folly* are written, the first of his *oeuvre* (naturally written in English), which were then published in 1895.

Polish compatriots often blamed Conrad for writing in a foreign language. As Józef Ujejski wrote:

It is clear that the Polish case started and could only start the moment when Konrad became an excellent writer.⁸¹

Indeed, regardless of a wider biographical context, one could treat Conrad's work, to use Koniński's words, as "the factual feature of apostasy," especially in that the "objective verification" of, often recalled here, "solidarity" with "a native, civiliza-

throughout many years consequently created his own "autobiographical legend." (Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 577).

⁷⁷ Cf. Joseph Conrad. "Tales of the Sea". [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, pp. 53-57.

⁷⁸ Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 45-46.

⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 44.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim [On Konrad Korzeniowski]*, pp. 26-27.

tional *oeuvre*” is “to sustain intellectual and artistic culture in a native tongue.”⁸² One could conclude that Conrad did not satisfy one of the most important requirements of national patriotism.⁸³ However, this was due to—as Koniński would say—Conrad’s “life momentum”⁸⁴...

It is not a coincidence that Conrad explained later the origin of the phenomenon of his literary creation in the following way:

English was for me neither of choice nor adoption. The merest idea of choice had never entered my head. And as to adoption—well, yes, there was adoption; but it was I who was adopted by the genius of the language, which directly I came out of the stammering stage made me its own so completely that its very idioms I truly believe had a direct action on my temperament and fashioned my still plastic character. It was a very intimate action and for that very reason it is too mysterious to explain. The task would be as impossible as trying to explain love at first sight.⁸⁵

Even if we were to treat Conrad’s autobiographical remarks with a pinch of salt, even if we were to distrust this continuous dazzle of mysteriousness, we can be assured of one thing: Conrad, as Najder notes, in that moment of his life, in foreign circumstances, “did not ‘choose’ the language.”⁸⁶ Because for eleven years he had been in an English-speaking environment, assimilating and acquiring naturally “the English point of view on political matters.”⁸⁷ In that sense, it is even more valid to ask: did Conrad indeed renounce his first motherland, or, did he fall “out of sync with his nationality”?

Therefore, we must, using Koniński’s term, dig into Conrad’s “inner feeling.” Let’s attempt that, to the extent we are able, of course, on the basis of available biographical materials (such as letters and other testimonies). In that way, let’s try to untangle “the tragic knot of his life” (as Maria Dąbrowska put it).⁸⁸

⁸² Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

⁸³ Although, as often indicated before, Conrad’s English-language works contain “Polish”—as intertextually understood—literary elements (such as motifs, themes, stylistic tools, character creations, *etc.*). Cf. Busza. *Conrad’s Polish Literary Background...*, pp. 209-238; Kazimierz Wyka. “Wyspa na polskiej zatoce” [“An Island in the Polish Bay”] [1967]. [In:] *idem. Wędrując po tematach [Wandering about Themes]*, Vol. 2. *Puszczyna*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1971, pp. 51-75.

⁸⁴ Koniński. *Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród...*, p. 251. (*PP*, 38). Indeed this “life momentum” resulted in Conrad’s being unresponsive to his uncle Bobrowski’s suggestions and encouragement (in June 1881) to initiate literary ties with Warsaw’s publication “Wędrowiec” (“The Wanderer”). Cf. Tadeusz Bobrowski to Konrad Korzeniowski, 16/28 June 1881. [In:] *Conrad’s Polish Background. Letters to and from Polish Friends*. Ed. Zdzisław Najder. Transl. Halina Carroll. London: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 71-72.

⁸⁵ Joseph Conrad. “Author’s Note”. [In:] *idem. A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1946, pp. v-vi.

⁸⁶ Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 136.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Dąbrowska. *Szkice o Conradzie [Essays on Conrad]*, p. 61. [Szkic pt. *Tragizm Conrada*] [Essay “Conrad’s Tragism”].

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The question of Polish origin always posed a problem for the Polish writer. It was a difficult and touchy problem, which he never fully tackled. As Najder writes: “Conrad was throughout his life disturbed by the thought that he had not abided by his parents’ heritage,”⁸⁹ (his parents being passionate Polish patriots). More so, as Koniński would say, “the national apostasy occurs when the child rearing was national and when as an outcome of that raising, the part of the personality visibly [...] inherited from the ancestors, is considered as a national heritage.”⁹⁰ And, undoubtedly, the young Konrad Korzeniowski’s raising was patriotic, national, and this is how the author of *Lord Jim* comprehended it after many years.⁹¹

It is worth quoting here Apollo Korzeniowski’s longer formulation, expressed in one of his letters to Stefan Buszczyński (dated March 17, 1868) in which he baldly stated that his aim was “to bring up Konradek not as a democrat, aristocrat, demagogue, republican, monarchist, or as a servant and flunkey of those parties—but only as a Pole.”⁹²

Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski had to wrestle with issues of memories and obligations, as the son of recent organizers of an independent conspiracy within the Russian Partition (the day before the January Uprising), as well as the nephew of Stefan Bobrowski, the Governor of Warsaw during the Uprising and an actual Prime Minister of the conspiratorial Polish National Government until the beginning of April 1863.

Conrad’s commentators more than once claimed that throughout his adult life the writer grappled with “betrayal syndrome” (or a “guilt complex”)⁹³ caused by his emigration, and manifesting itself indirectly in his literary work, which revolved around the topic of loyalty. Whether these biographical and literary⁹⁴ parallels are relevant or not, one is certain: as time went by, the writer realized more and more his complicated mental circumstances, particularly in reference to the issues of national and cultural identity.

All the complications in that matter—both biographical and psychological—could explain in a rational way the term “homo duplex,” which the author used in 1903 in his letter to Kazimierz Waliszewski:

⁸⁹ Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 296; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 461-462.

⁹⁰ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy...*], *op. cit.*

⁹¹ Another matter is that the issue of taking up heritage after Ewa and Apollo Korzeniowski—even in Polish conditions—was complicated by the fact that after his father’s death, Tadeusz Bobrowski became Conrad’s guardian—, a psychological opposite and an ideological opponent of both of his (Conrad’s) parents”. ([Najder]. “Wstęp” [“Preface”]. [In:] *Polskie zaplecze Josepha Conrada-Korzeniowskiego...* [*Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski’s Polish Background...*], vol. I, p. 25). It did not mean, however, that Bobrowski was not a patriot!

⁹² Apollo Korzeniowski to Stefan Buszczyński, 5/17 March 1868. [In:] *Conrad’s Polish Background...*, p. 113.

⁹³ Cf. Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* [On Konrad Korzeniowski], p. 10; Dąbrowska. *Szkice o Conradzie* [Essays on Conrad], p. 174 [*Pożegnanie z Conradem/A Farewell to Conrad*]; Busza. *Conrad’s Polish Literary Background...*, pp. 193-194, 241.

⁹⁴ Cf. Najder. *Joseph Conrad...*, p. 432; Busza. *Conrad’s Polish Literary Background...*, pp. 194-195.

Both at sea and on land my point of view is English, from which the conclusion should not be drawn that I have become an Englishman. That is not the case. Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning.⁹⁵

However, the psychological necessity of “dual loyalty,”⁹⁶ (towards both Poland and Great Britain) springing from that state of awareness, generated more often than not painful inner conflicts. As Aniela Zagórska recalls: “There is no doubt that Conrad’s dual loyalty to Poland and England—with the evident supremacy of the latter—constituted a constant source of distress for him.”⁹⁷ Then, it should not be a surprise that it was not until later, in 1908, that Conrad took up the topic of his Polish origin in his work, *A Personal Record* (published in 1912). *Nota bene*, it is worth recalling his famous statement from this collection:

It would take too long to explain the intimate alliance of contradictions in human nature which makes love itself wear at times the desperate shape of betrayal. And perhaps there is no possible explanation.⁹⁸

Conrad’s life situation, as well as his mental one, abounded in paradoxes; nothing was explicit in these circumstances.

Indeed, during one of his long sea voyages, he wrote the following words to a Polish emigrant’s son who settled in Cardiff: “When speaking, writing, or thinking in English, the word ‘home’ always means for me the hospitable shores of Great Britain.”⁹⁹

However, despite the advanced assimilation and his later (undoubted) literary successes, Conrad felt alienated in England, both as an émigré and an artist.¹⁰⁰ And even though he had quite a few committed friends there (not to mention his family: a wife and children), he still felt quite foreign; a feeling that could be neither eliminated nor alleviated.¹⁰¹ It is not a coincidence, then, that Conrad deliberately shirked his engagement in official governmental structures, even though he remained a loyal Citizen of the United Kingdom.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Joseph Conrad to Kazimierz Waliszewski, 5 December 1903. [In:] *Conrad’s Polish Background...*, p. 240. As can be seen, Conrad searched desperately for the ways to rationalize his troublesome situation. (Cf. Busza. *Conrad’s Polish Literary Background...*, p. 241).

⁹⁶ Cf. Maurycy Staniewski. “Mixed loyalty Conrada”. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1929, No. 25; Józef Hieronim Retinger. “Dwie narodowości Józefa Conrada”. [In:] *Conrad żywy*. Ed. W. Tarnawski. London: B. Świdorski, 1957, pp. 129-133.

⁹⁷ Aniela Zagórska. “A Few Reminiscences of Conrad” [“Kilka wspomnień o Conradzie”. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1929, No. 51]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 213.

⁹⁸ Joseph Conrad. *A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*, p. 36; underlining – Ł.F.

⁹⁹ Conrad N. Korzeniowski to Joseph Spiridion Kliszczewski, 13 October 1885. [Quoted by:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Zdzisław Najder. *Życie Josepha Conrada-Korzeniowskiego*. [Life of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Gaudium, 2006, vol. I, p. 369.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 326, 398.

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 392.

On the other hand, as a longtime émigré, mentally embedded in the foreign environment, he did not share all the opinions and feelings of his Polish compatriots. Sometimes he maintained a distance towards them, and during some social events, he even reacted impulsively. For example, the time when he paid a visit to his uncle (Tadeusz Bobrowski) in Ukrainian Kazimierówka, as Jan Perłowski recalls: “Left alone for a moment, he would raise his head and stare into a corner of the living-room as if his thoughts were miles away.”¹⁰³ On another occasion, in 1896 during his visit in Cardiff with the Kliszczewski family, he became outraged when the hosts suggested that Conrad should “use his talent to glorify Poland’s name and to depict in his novels the unhappiness of his native land.”¹⁰⁴ Conrad could not embrace this suggestion, because it would have negatively affected his readership, as well as his financial situation, already fragile, as well as his ability to support his family.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, it would contradict his understanding of art.¹⁰⁶ At this very time, Conrad, as Rafał Kopkowski noted, “aimed at full identification with his adopted country,” hence the legitimization of his position as an English writer became a priority to him.¹⁰⁷

However, despite these sporadic misunderstandings and conflicts with his compatriots; despite the psychological complications, even despite his “aim at full identification with his adopted country,”¹⁰⁸ Conrad (and this needs to be emphasized) never broke off his bond with Poland and Poles. There has been a record of reliable testimonies preserved, which could confirm this.¹⁰⁹ One should note that these are not just his friends’ testimonies (there were quite a few of them), published after Conrad’s death, but also—and maybe first of all—the correspondence in which Conrad declares his attitude unequivocally. Just to mention his 1901 letter to Józef Korzeniowski, a Cracovian librarian (who, though sharing the same name, was not Conrad’s relative):

It is widely known that I am a Pole and that Józef Konrad are my two Christian names, the latter being used by me as a surname so that foreign mouths should not distort my real surname—a distortion which I cannot stand. It does not seem to me that I have been unfaithful to my country by having proved to the English that a gentleman from the Ukraine can be as good a sailor

¹⁰³ Jan Perłowski. “On Conrad and Kipling” [“O Conradzie i Kiplingu”. *Przegląd Współczesny* 1937, No. 4]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ Witold Chwalewik. “Joseph Conrad in Cardiff” [“Józef Conrad w Kardyfie”. *Ruch Literacki* 1932, No. 8]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁵ See: *ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Najder. “Wstęp” [“Preface”]. [In:] *Polskie zaplecze... [Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski’s Polish Background...]*, vol. I, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Rafał Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada*. [Polish Heritage of Conrad]. Kraków: Universitas, 2014, p. 190.

¹⁰⁸ The aim, which – let’s repeat it – was a natural result of the “life momentum.”

¹⁰⁹ One cannot underestimate here Conrad’s correspondence with his uncle. For example, in one of the letters to his nephew, Bobrowski states: “What you write about our hopes for the future has really delighted me, for I see in it a sign of your interest in our national affairs and of your preoccupation with them in spite of your remoteness. True, that is your duty and I counted on your remaining faithful to it, but many people although they live in their own country don’t give it a thought. Thus you please me greatly, and for this reason I bestow a double blessing on you—may it bring you all happiness”. (Tadeusz Bobrowski to Konrad Korzeniowski, 11/23 September 1881. [In:] *Conrad’s Polish Background...*, p. 79).

as they, and has something to tell them in their own language. I consider such recognition as I have won from this particular point of view, and offer it in silent homage where it is due.¹¹⁰

It would be worth noting that Conrad spoke in a similar manner when interviewed later, in 1914, by Marian Dąbrowski:

Two personal things fill me with pride: that I, a Pole, am a master in the British merchant marines, and that I can write, not too badly, in English.¹¹¹

However, Conrad's inner bond with Poland is not just evidenced by these and similar pronouncements, formulated mostly in his private correspondence with his compatriots. The author of *Lord Jim*, despite all his psychological complications (already mentioned above), was able to manifest his Polish patriotism in other ways as well.¹¹²

VI. CONRAD-KORZENIOWSKI'S "INNER FEELING" AND "OBJECTIVE" DETERMINANTS OF PATRIOTIC ATTITUDE

Following Koniński we can confidently say that to define somebody's patriotic attitude (or to determine the lack thereof), one needs to consider not only a "subjective" sense (such as what we call here "an inner feeling"), but also an "objective" sense. First, a few primary expressions (general as it seems) and approaches are established, in which a concrete person manifests his attachment to national civilizational values. Next, these manifestations are treated as objective verifications of national patriotism.

One of these forms was discussed earlier: literary creation in one's native language. However, in the case of Joseph Conrad, this option was out of question, due to known and analyzed-above reasons. Therefore, one cannot consider this form as a decisive criterion for the evaluation of the writer's patriotism, even though he conversed in fluent Polish with his compatriots until the end of his life.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Joseph Conrad to Józef Korzeniowski, 14 February 1901. [Quoted by:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 311-312.

¹¹¹ Marian Dąbrowski. "An Interview with J. Conrad" ["Rozmowa z J. Conradem". *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1914, No. 16]. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 201.

¹¹² In order not to convey this issue too statically, one needs to remember that "throughout Conrad's biography, his engagement in Polish issues underwent evolution and re-evaluation, starting with significantly emphasized distance towards Polish issues and changing to open manifestations of patriotic attachment". (Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada* [Conrad's Polish Heritage], p. 240).

¹¹³ It is worth recalling here one more significant fact that throws positive light on Conrad. When, after its era of occupation, Poland regained independence, Conrad responded in a friendly way to the idea of translating his works into Polish. In fact, he entrusted this initiative to his cousin Aniela Zagórska. (See: Joseph Conrad to Aniela Zagórska, 10 April 1920. [In:] *Conrad's Polish Background...*, pp. 261-263. Cf. Jolanta Dudek. *Miłosz wobec Conrada 1948-1959* [Miłosz and Conrad 1948-1959]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014, p. 162).

Searching further, we discover such “objective” determinants of national patriotism as “vibrant contact with its own historical tradition.”¹¹⁴ In this context Koniński mentions “historical research,” as well as fine arts research, “respecting monuments,” and “commemorative ceremonies, etc.”¹¹⁵ Let’s pose a question: how to refer these criteria to Conrad?

I think Conrad’s visit to Poland in 1914 could be considered as fitting in these categories.¹¹⁶ We should add that this visit would not take place, if not for Conrad’s previous contacts with his compatriots, specifically with the Retinger couple (especially with Józef Hieronim Retinger), who not only encouraged Conrad to visit Poland, but also organized his trip. Even though Conrad visited Poland twice earlier (in 1890 and 1893)—to his uncle’s place (T. Bobrowski) in Ukraine—he did not pay too much attention in these two visits, nor did he experience them emotionally. It was different in 1914. The ultimate aim of his visit was Kraków (and its surroundings), the city sanctified by Polish history and tradition. The organizers of the trip meant it as Conrad’s return to his youth, and succeeded in it.

As Conrad recollected later, this was indeed “a journey in time, into the past”¹¹⁷, to some degree truly evoking “the romantic feeling.”¹¹⁸ This sense was not solely because the view of the Cracovian Market Square contributed to this retrospective perception of the old capital of Poland:

I noticed with infinite satisfaction that the unnecessary trees the Municipality insisted upon sticking between the stones had been steadily refusing to grow. They were not a bit bigger than the poor victims I could remember. Also, the paving operations seemed to be exactly at the same point at which I left them forty years before. There were the dull, torn-up patches on that bright expanse, the piles of paving material looking ominously black, like heads of rocks on a silvery sea. Who was it that said that Time works wonders? What an exploded superstition! As far as these trees and these paving stones were concerned, it had worked nothing.¹¹⁹

Living memory of his father, Apollo Korzeniowski, was a much more important and serious issue from this retrospective point of view. Let’s quote again a fragment of Conrad’s recollections:

Cracow is the town where I spent with my father the last eighteen months of his life. It was in that old royal and academical city that I ceased to be a child, became a boy, had known the friendships, the admirations, the thoughts and the indignations of that age. It was within those historical walls that I began to understand things, form affections, lay up a store of memories and a fund of sensations with which I was to break violently by throwing myself into an unrelated existence. It was like the experience of another world. The wings of time made a great dusk over all this, and I feared at first that if I ventured bodily in there I would discover that

¹¹⁴ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [*The Issue of National Apostasy*], *op. cit.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ See: Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 458-468.

¹¹⁷ Joseph Conrad. “Poland Revisited” [1915]. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 149.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

I who have had to do with a good many imaginary lives have been embracing mere shadows in my youth.¹²⁰

His stay in Kraków would not be complete without a visit to the Rakowicki Cemetery where Apollo Korzeniowski was buried. There, at his father's grave, Conrad was said to kneel and meditate for a while in the presence of his own son.¹²¹ The memory of his father was also sustained in a different way: a visit to the Jagiellonian Library, where Conrad was granted access to his father's manuscripts and letters.¹²²

From Kraków, "[the] old royal and academic city"—where Conrad conversed with various representatives of the local social elite, he went with his family to Zakopane. This visit was strictly related to new political circumstances in the international arena, which soon resulted in the outbreak of turmoil across the whole world. This unexpected and burdensome migration made Conrad's visit to Poland not just "an enticing mirage".¹²³ However, we will discuss Conrad's two-month stay (reasonably long) in the Tatra Mountains, as well as its mental consequences, later and in a different context.

Meanwhile, I would like to recall another—crucial—manifestation of Conrad's vibrant contact with his "own historical tradition." What I have in mind here is Conrad's short story written in 1908-1910¹²⁴ entitled *Prince Roman*, which is undoubtedly "Conrad's most 'Polish' work," according to Stefan Zabierowski.¹²⁵ In its entirety, this work is dedicated to the theme of Polish struggles for independence. The protagonist of these struggles turned out to be Prince Roman Sanguszko, a hero of the November Uprising. What's important, Conrad did not hesitate to mention in his work:

[...] Polish nationality, that nationality not so much alive as surviving, which persists in thinking, breathing, speaking, hoping, and suffering in its grave, railed in by a million bayonets and triplesealed with the seals of three great empires.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹²¹ See: Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 461.

¹²² As far as Conrad's attitude to his father is concerned, the visit to Kraków in 1914 seemed to be a breaking point. Until now, Conrad looked at his father through the prism of his uncle, Tadeusz Bobrowski, who was critical towards Apollo Korzeniowski. Meantime, soon after his return to England, Conrad summoned up a gesture of mentioning his father publicly in his writing and with appropriate reverence (See: *ibid.*).

¹²³ Conrad. "Poland Revisited". [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 148.

¹²⁴ Cf. Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 396, 421.

¹²⁵ Stefan Zabierowski. "Conrad and Piłsudski". Transl. R.E. Pyłacz. *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)*, vol. IX (2014), p. 11. Cf. Busza. *Conrad's Polish Literary Background...*, pp. 231-238.

¹²⁶ Joseph Conrad. "Prince Roman". [In:] *idem, Tales of Hearsay*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926, p. 29.

He did it with “a profound and deep feeling” and the “power and purity of patriotic tone” as Witold Jerzy Chwalewik indicated years ago.¹²⁷ It turned out quickly, however, “that the subject of Poland [...] was of little interest to his public.”¹²⁸

Therefore, the above-mentioned story came out posthumously in 1925, as part of the collection *Tales of Hearsay*. It is, however, a testimony to Conrad’s growing sense of awareness and valuing of his own origin, as well as the need to express artistically in his writing that fact from the psychology of his personality. Even before that, in 1897, in a private letter to Wincenty Lutosławski, Conrad said, unequivocally referring to Mickiewicz’s archetype: “[...] wandering around the world I have never left the ‘Country of Memories.’”¹²⁹

*

Also “the deliberate attempts to sustain the traits valuable to its own psychic type (understood as an “ideal”)¹³⁰ belong to “objective” determinants of national patriotism. In this area, as it seems, Conrad passes the test successfully. Most of all, thanks to a positive attitude of the writer to “the national temperament, which is about the only thing on earth that can be trusted”—as he wrote in *The Crime of Partition* [1919].¹³¹ This crucial statement was not just a vague cliché, but concretely referenced Polish history and a Polish mentality, such as Polish national character, formed

¹²⁷ Witold Jerzy Chwalewik. “Conrad a Polska i Anglia” (II) [Conrad vs Poland and England, II]. *Myśl Narodowa* 1926, No. 11, p. 166.

¹²⁸ Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 422.

¹²⁹ Joseph Conrad to Wincenty Lutosławski, 9 June 1897. [Quoted by:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 295. Cf. Stefan Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada* [Polish Mission of Conrad]. Katowice: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982, p. 114. In this context one should also consider Conrad’s alleged desire to return permanently to Poland at the end of his life. This desire was recalled by a few persons in their later recollections after their visits to Conrad, during which Polish issues were discussed. (Cf. Irena Rakowska-Luniewska. “U Konrada Korzeniowskiego”. *Pion* 1934, No. 50. [Reprint In:] *Polskie zaplecze... [Conrad’s Polish Background]*, vol. II, p. 309; Aniela Zagórska. “Conrad a Polska. Do redaktora «Wiadomości Literackich»”. *Wiadomości Literackie* 1924, No. 36, p. 4). Zdzisław Najder, however, refers very skeptically to these alleged plans of Conrad: “Especially when he was emerging from depression, Conrad was wont to devise lots of various stimulating and ‘liberating’—if only momentarily—plans, without considering them really seriously”. (Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 571).

¹³⁰ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa... [The Issue of National Apostasy...]*, *op. cit.* This “psychic type” can be understood (at least to some degree) by the concept of the “cultural model,” used at that time in the field of cultural anthropology. Cf. Marek Pacukiewicz. “Cultural aspects of Joseph Conrad’s autobiography. On the digressive structure of ‘Some Reminiscences’”. Transl. R.E. Pyplacz. *Yearbook of Conrad Studies (Poland)*, vol. VII (2012).

¹³¹ Joseph Conrad. “The Crime of Partition” [1919]. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 129. Cf. Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 576: “He [Conrad] regarded ‘the national spirit’ as the only truly permanent and reliable element of communal life”. Cf. also: Joseph Conrad to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, 8 February 1899. [In:] *Joseph Conrad’s Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*. Edited by C.T. Watts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, pp. 116-122. Not coincidentally W.J. Chwalewik noted this aspect of the writer’s consciousness by stating: “Thinking in national categories was native to Conrad.” (*Myśl Narodowa* 1926, No. 40, pp. 208-209). As an evidence the critic pointed to the fragment of *The Mirror of the Sea* which, in a charmingly poetic way, evoked the Battle of Trafalgar. (Cf. Joseph Conrad. “The Heroic Age”. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea*. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*, p. 194).

throughout the centuries under the specific historical circumstances. That's why, in *The Crime of Partition*, Conrad unabashedly enumerates the merits of this character. For example, he writes:

The spirit of aggressiveness was absolutely foreign to the Polish temperament, to which the preservation of its institutions and its liberties was much more precious than any ideas of conquest.¹³²

The history of pre-partition Poland, perceived through the prism of “the national temperament” appears to be a near-perfect manifestation of “an extremely liberal administrative federalism,”¹³³ which guarantees the peaceful coexistence of various nationalities and creeds, as well as social groups, within one country. Drawing its energy from “a complete unity of feeling and purpose,”¹³⁴ the Polish Republic had to grapple with its apparent opposite, Russian despotism (or, autocracy), which brutally destroyed any manifestations of nobility in human nature.¹³⁵ In light of above, idealized conceptualization,¹³⁶ one can assume, that the crucial values of Polish national character are delineated clearly, when compared with innate mental and cultural characteristics of Russians (typical Slavs, as Conrad thought). As he wrote in 1916:

[...] between Polishness and Slavonicism there is not so much hatred as a complete and ineradicable incompatibility.¹³⁷

Somewhere else and earlier Conrad will say:

Nothing is more foreign than what in the literary world is called Slavonicism, to the Polish temperament with its tradition of self-government, its chivalrous view of moral restraints and an exaggerated respect for individual rights: not to mention the important fact that the whole Polish mentality, Western in complexion, had received its training from Italy and France and, historically, had always remained, even in religious matters, in sympathy with the most liberal currents of European thought.¹³⁸

Poles, according to Conrad, could not be in any way “forced into the social and psychological formula of Slavonicism,” because Poles “are in truth not Slavonic at all.” Just the contrary, “in temperament, in feeling, in mind, and even in unreason, they are Western,” as we read in *A Note on the Polish Problem* [1916].¹³⁹

¹³² Conrad. *The Crime of Partition*, p. 119.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Cf. Joseph Conrad. “Autocracy and War” [1905]. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, pp. 83-114.

¹³⁶ Cf. Najder. *Życie... [Life...]*, vol. II, p. 131; Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada [Conrad's Polish Heritage]*, pp. 178-179.

¹³⁷ Joseph Conrad. “A Note on the Polish Problem” [1916]. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 136.

¹³⁸ Conrad. “Author's Note”. [In:] *idem. A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*, pp. vi-vii.

¹³⁹ Conrad. *A Note on the Polish Problem*, p. 135. In that sense, as Chwalewik noted (*Czy Conrad... [Is Conrad...]*, *op. cit.*, p. 208) “through his Polishness—Conrad was a representative of the Western-European psychic type.”

The critique of Slavonism, is undoubtedly, a frequent motive in Conrad's journalism and correspondence.¹⁴⁰ It is worth recalling in that context a short fragment of Conrad's letter to Edward Garnett (8 October 1907):

You remember always that I am a Slav (it's your *idée fixe*) but you seem to forget that I am a Pole.¹⁴¹

The author of *Under Western Eyes* was extremely irritated when the outstanding representative of English literary criticism (among which there were also Conrad's friends, such as above-mentioned Garnett) thoughtlessly labeled him as a Slavonic writer.¹⁴²

As I think, also this attitude of Conrad's could be construed as a manifestation of deeply encoded solidarity with a native, Polish "psychic type" (or, the cultural model of personality). This attitude—let's add (and highlight!)—would have been extremely valuable and important in the context (described by me earlier) of the negative attitude of the Polish patriotic elite towards the panslavic concepts of the nineteenth century.¹⁴³

On the other hand, however, the crucial values of Polish national character—in Conrad's opinion—manifest themselves when compared with inborn mental characteristics of our western neighbors; about Germans (Prussians), the author also did not speak favorably.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ However, Conrad's attitude to his own "Slovanism" in the years 1898-1899 was not entirely negative yet. (See: Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada [Conrad's Polish Heritage]*, pp. 187-188, footnote 11).

¹⁴¹ Joseph Conrad to Edward Garnett, 8 October 1907. [Quoted in:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 380.

¹⁴² Cf. Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 551.

¹⁴³ The truth is, notably, that the rhetoric of Pan-Slavism seduced the young, 24-year-old Konrad Korzeniowski. Moreover, in Pan-Slavism he saw the way for Poland to regain its due political and cultural position in Europe, without yet understanding the Russian ambiguous position in the whole movement. It was not until his uncle, Tadeusz, made him fully aware of the naivety of these beliefs and explained to him that Pan-Slavism was, in fact, an ideological camouflage for Russian expansionism. (See: Tadeusz Bobrowski to Konrad Korzeniowski, 11/23 September 1881. [In:] *Conrad's Polish Background...*, pp. 79-80). One can see, then, clearly that Conrad's attitude to Pan-Slavism evolved over the years, so during the writing of *Autocracy and War* [1905] or—later—*The Crime of Partition* [1919], the author distanced himself from this ideology (Cf. Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada [Conrad's Polish Heritage]*, pp. 171-173, 177-178, 186-189). Were he to remain with his youthful ideas, he would have risked derailing his patriotism (compare: earlier comments regarding Waław Jabłonowski).

¹⁴⁴ Just to give an example, in a reportage *Poland Revisited*, Conrad included the following fragment regarding Germans: "I had never lingered in that land which, on the whole, is so singularly barren of memorable manifestations of generous sympathies and magnanimous impulses. An ineradicable, invincible, provincialism of envy and vanity clings to the forms of its thought like a frowsy garment." (Conrad. "Poland Revisited". [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 164). In another example, in a newspaper interview conducted by M. Dąbrowski, Conrad will recall the circumstances when in Singapore during one of his cruises he was "addressed for the first time as captain." Conrad recalls this incident with great satisfaction: "A German boat. Ha! Ha! Ha! They had to recognize me as a captain. You understand: the Prussians recognizing us, saluting us..." (Dąbrowski. "An Interview with J. Conrad". [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 200).

Anyway, taking into account this dually uneasy neighborhood, Conrad perceived Poland as *antemurale christianitatis*—"advanced outpost of Western civilization,"¹⁴⁵ "placed between the great might of Slavonism [...] and the organised Germanism"¹⁴⁶—

[...] between the methods of Russian barbarism, which were both crude and rotten, and the cultivated brutality tinged with contempt of Germany's superficial, grinding civilization.¹⁴⁷

And because another important element sustaining national awareness during partitions was "in instinctive solidarity against any confiscatory attempts from outside,"¹⁴⁸ one could inquire whether Conrad, through his numerous disdainful statements about German politics, and especially Russian politics (towards Poland as well), did not fulfill criteria of this "instinctive solidarity," and at the same time fulfilled the patriotic duty of defending its country. Especially that as Conrad claimed: "it may be reasonably advanced that the long course of adversity of the most cruel kind has not injured the fundamental characteristics of the Polish nation which has proved its vitality against the most demoralizing odds."¹⁴⁹

When it comes to literature on this topic, in this context, a longer journalistic text emerged *The Crime of Partition* (1919), aimed at both invaders of Poland (and their past, as well as current politics). However, private correspondence of the writer does not lack the manifestations of like-wise "instinctive" solidarity with the motherland. Following Najder, I will recall the most representative of Conrad's letters in this matter: (1) to John Quinn (June 6, 1918) and (2) to Hugh Clifford (January 25, 1919).¹⁵⁰

In the first one, written a few months after the Bolshevik Revolution and one month after President Wilson's famous "Polish" declaration, Conrad expressed his unfeigned concern about the future fate of Poland. Mostly, he was concerned about the negative effects of "the Russian infection" and "its decomposing power," as he called them. On the other hand, he pointed to the incessant threat of "the immense power of Germanism."¹⁵¹ Moreover, risking—inevitably—the conflict of "double loyalty"—he expressed his far-reaching skepticism about the sincerity of the western powers' declarations regarding the restoration of Polish independence.

Conrad shared similar concerns with Clifford later. However, he expressed his concern regarding Lloyd George's current British politics; its pettiness and the lack of political imagination of its creator. But what Conrad found truly inconceivable was

¹⁴⁵ Conrad. "A Note on the Polish Problem." [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 138.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 137. Cf. Najder. *Życie... [Life...]*, vol. II, pp. 289, 299; Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁴⁷ Conrad. "The Crime of Partition". [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 124. In turn, Conrad in his letter to Hugh Clifford (dated January 25, 1919) spoke even more emphatically: he notices that Poland's historical and geopolitical misfortune was (and remains) that one of its neighbors, on one side, is a *Russian mangy dog*, and the other one, on the other side—a *German learned pig*. Quoted by: Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 508; cf. Ujejski. *O Konradzie Korzeniowskim [On Konrad Korzeniowski]*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁸ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstęstwa... [The Issue of National Apostasy]*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁹ Conrad. "The Crime of Partition". [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ See: Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 500, 508-509.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 500.

that out of “British initiative,” a representative of Russia was invited to the Peace Conference to sit at the same table. Conrad commented on it with a scornful tone: “Poland will have to pay the price of some pretty ugly compromise.”¹⁵²

These examples could be multiplied, but that is not the point here. The point is that they have descriptive and interpretative credibility. I believe that Conrad’s so-often-mentioned distance towards Germany and Russia (and especially toward the latter) cannot be considered without widely understood references to the psychological and cultural realm. While it is true that Conrad could have used this kind of rhetoric in an instinctual and spontaneous way,¹⁵³ on the other hand, one finds here traces of mental “stereotypes” that would point an interpreter to a certain historiosophical schema (common especially in the Romantic tradition), as well as a model of political emotionality.¹⁵⁴

However, besides a presumed psycho-cultural context,¹⁵⁵ we must also consider yet another (perhaps even more important) factor, mainly, if you will, for the purpose of these studies, Conrad’s moral instinct. Otherwise, it would not be possible to understand the intention of the writer’s statement about “an essentially immoral transaction”¹⁵⁶ of two powers: Prussia and Russia. The inevitable consequence of the aforementioned transaction was the “the crime of partition.” In that sense, as Conrad acutely conveyed in *Autocracy and War*, “the common guilt of the two Empires is defined precisely by their frontier line running through the Polish provinces.”¹⁵⁷ Hence, one could say that observing and evaluating the world of politics, and the rules governing it, through the lens of thorough moral insight was innate for Conrad.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 508.

¹⁵³ This “instinctiveness”—if we are to use the accepted terminology—led often to extreme cases. Particularly, one example is mentioned in source literature. The case refers to the invitation Conrad received from the Committee of Helping the Victims of the War in Poland—established in 1915 by Antoni Osuchowski, Ignacy J. Paderewski and Henryk Sienkiewicz. Unexpectedly, Conrad refused to take part in it, justifying it by his resentment towards its two honorary members: Aleksander Beckendorff and Aleksander Izwolski, who served as Russian ambassadors in London and Paris. (See: Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada* [*Polish Mission of Conrad*], p. 93; Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada* [*Conrad’s Polish Heritage*], pp. 123-125).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Czesław Miłosz. “Stereotyp u Conrada”. [In:] *Conrad żywy*, pp. 92-99; Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada*, p. 101; Jolanta Dudek. *Miłosz wobec Conrada...*, pp. 165-199.

¹⁵⁵ The most far-fetched interpretation in this matter suggests that Conrad’s cultural distance towards Russia could be explained by “the depth of the psychological shock experienced by him in childhood as the result of suffering imposed on his parents and himself before he even understood the violence done to his country” (Aniela Zagórska. “A Few Reminiscences of Conrad”. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, pp. 218-219. Cf. Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada* [*Conrad’s Polish Heritage*], pp. 116-125). Meanwhile, Conrad’s attitude towards Russia was not so much *en bloc* personal animosity toward Russia (as evidenced in a later essay, *A Note on the Polish Problem*), as it was based on a very sober appraisal of Polish-Russian nature; in this appraisal the notion of *c u l t u r a l d i f f e r e n c e* was included (See: Jolanta Dudek. *Miłosz wobec Conrada...* [Miłosz and Conrad], pp. 165-199).

¹⁵⁶ Conrad. “Autocracy and War”. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada* [*Polish Mission of Conrad*], pp. 51, 101-103.

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Meanwhile, we should also add a “desire for restoring the country”¹⁵⁹ to earlier mentioned manifestations of patriotic solidarity. This is how Koniński speaks about an “integral factor of patriotism,” the last one to include in our examination:

Our patriotism, as I already observed, was a symptom of the historical momentum of our fallen Republic; the symptom of sustaining the Polish type, a *hominus politicus* type, despite captivity. And the most significant and most outstanding factor of our national creativity was the impetus for political creativity, such as toward the collective organization of life. A post-partition Pole would have crushed and denied one of more essential and innate characteristics of his being, if he were to abandon the ideal of regaining his Republic of Poland, which is to say, the only terrain, where his political type could flourish without limits.¹⁶⁰

In the context of Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski's patriotism, this aspect, as we will see, plays the leading role. It plays it, however, in a paradoxical way, because, as biographers note (and as is evidenced in the surviving correspondence)—the innate characteristic of the writer (as well as the essence of his worldview) was his *pessimism*. As we know, this characteristic could potentially favor “the national indifference,” to use Koniński's term, or, even “the breakdown of patriotism.” What's more, even young Conrad's uncle and guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski, tried to straighten out Conrad's attitude from a philosophical stance.¹⁶¹ To no avail. Therefore, to the question of regaining independence, Conrad did not leave his interlocuters with any illusions.

The words that he included in 1885 in his letter to Joseph Spiridion Kliszczewski are probably well known:

[...] whatever may be the changes in the fortunes of living nations, for the dead there is no hope and no salvation. We have passed t[h]rough the gates where «lasciate ogni speranza» is written in letters of blood and fire, and now the gate is shut on the light of hope and nothing remains for us but the darkness of oblivion.¹⁶²

In an interview conducted by Marian Dąbrowski (1914), Conrad uttered yet another symptomatic statement that corresponds with the above words:

I can't think of Poland often. It feels bad, bitter, painful. It would make life unbearable. The English say “good luck” when they part. I cannot say this to you.¹⁶³

The source of Conrad's pessimism, including a historiosophical one, could be found in the failure of the 1863 Uprising. Recollecting the January Uprising after years, Conrad admitted that it was

¹⁵⁹ Koniński. *Zagadnienie narodowego odstępstwa...* [The Issue of National Apostasy], *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Cf. Tadeusz Bobrowski to Konrad Korzeniowski, 28 October / 9 November 1891. [In:] *Conrad's Polish Background...*, pp. 152-156.

¹⁶² Conrad N. Korzeniowski to Joseph Spiridion Kliszczewski, 13 October 1885. [Quoted in:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 104.

¹⁶³ Dąbrowski. “An Interview with J. Conrad”. [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 201.

[...] an event which affected the future of all my generation and has coloured my earliest impressions.¹⁶⁴

Taking into account the vicissitudes of Conrad's life, as well as his political opinions, and his worldview, it might not be an overstatement to say that this unusually lasting influence impacted, in fact, his whole life.¹⁶⁵

In an incisive way, as it seems, this potent and fatal influence of January Uprising trauma on Conrad's psyche and mentality manifested itself also during Conrad's memorable visit to Poland in the summer of 1914, subconsciously affecting his attitude toward the historical drama taking place there under his eyes. Aniela Zagórska, recollecting Conrad's trip to Zakopane and analyzing the relationship of the author of *Lord Jim* to these national issues, stated:

He had great respect and enthusiasm for the then-commander-in-chief [Józef Piłsudski]. But he did not believe that the efforts of the Polish Legions would bring about positive results; he feared that more blood would be spilled unnecessarily. He came to Poland after more than twenty years to find himself amidst preparations for an armed attempt to reenact childhood experiences (in 1863 Conrad was six years old) of defeat, mourning, hopelessness. Conrad's youth coincided with the post-insurrection atmosphere. His beloved guardian, Tadeusz Bobrowski, his mother's brother, was on the side of the Whites in 1863. He was a man of great kindness and intellect but a staunch opponent of the insurrection.¹⁶⁶

In consequence, as Zagórska concluded:

It must have had an effect on Conrad: he did not believe it was possible to regain independence. All his childhood memories revived that memorable summer of 1914. I shall never forget his expression when he looked at marching Legionnaires or listened to their songs.¹⁶⁷

It would be a mistake, however, to limit Conrad's stay in Cracow and Zakopane solely to unpleasant, albeit inevitable, reminiscences of his childhood. It turned out

¹⁶⁴ Conrad. "A Personal Record". [In:] *idem. A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*. [In:] *idem. The Mirror of the Sea. Memories and Impressions; A Personal Record. Some Reminiscences*, p. 56.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Najder. *Życie...* [*Life...*], vol. I, pp. 344-345; vol. II, pp. 329-330. Cf. Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada* [*Polish Mission of Conrad*], p. 112. "Conrad saw the failed 1863 Uprising as the swansong of the idea of Polish independence, for which there was no longer any hope whatsoever"—Stefan Zabierowski writes (*idem. Conrad and Piłsudski*, p. 18). It seems that the image of the January Uprising (as well as the whole insurrectional tradition) was formed in Conrad's consciousness under the strong influence of Tadeusz Bobrowski who thought of the causes, course and duration of the 1863 insurrectional push very negatively (probably following Włodzimierz Spasowicz's example). It is worth underlining Bobrowski's general, also pessimistically tainted, influence on Conrad in the political and historiographical realm (See: Kopkowski. *Polskie dziedzictwo Conrada* [*Conrad's Polish Heritage*], pp. 67-80).

¹⁶⁶ Zagórska. "A Few Reminiscences of Conrad". [In:] *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, p. 222; my underlining – Ł.F.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; underlining as above. "Legions—sacrificial pyre...desperados' lot"—the truth behind this song was for Conrad undoubted, as J. Ujejski writes in his monograph (*idem. O Konradzie Korzeniowskim* [*About Conrad Korzeniowski*], p. 41). It must have been an unbelievable (and highly positive) experience for Conrad to witness, in 1918, Poland regaining independence and, two year later, its victorious Battle of Warsaw with Bolsheviks. As it seems, in both cases, he credited this victory to Józef Piłsudski, whom he sincerely admired and respected (Cf. Zabierowski. *Conrad and Piłsudski, passim*).

soon that the visit was pregnant with consequences, also in reference to political impacts and views. Paradoxically, in such a turn of events, not only did Retinger help enormously, but also Conrad's pessimism, which, unexpectedly, became a driving force for the writer's independence-related activity. The political engagement of an English author in Polish issues should be considered, mostly, in the category of *sui generis* moral imperative, that is to say—in this case—the duty to be loyal to a cause doomed to failure.¹⁶⁸

It would be worth referencing, once again, Conrad's correspondence to realize more fully the weight and the meaning of this moral idealism within the challenges the author of *Victory* faced in his worldviews. In a letter to Cunningham Graham (February 1899), Conrad wrote:

I look at the future from the depth of a very black past and I find that nothing is left for me except fidelity to a cause lost, to an idea without future.¹⁶⁹

Then, in a later epistle to Garnett (October 1907), Conrad will soberly observe:

It's you Britishers that 'go in to win' only. We have been 'going in' these last hundred years repeatedly, to be knocked on the head only—as was visible to any calm intellect.¹⁷⁰

Let's go back, however, to Conrad's visit to Poland and to the hypothetical projection of the worldview that I mentioned before in the given context. Well, as it turned out, in October 1914 in Zakopane, overcoming his own pessimism and turning it into activism,¹⁷¹ as was so desired by the community, Conrad edited his *Memorandum on the Polish Question*,¹⁷² which in his mind was “an attempt to promote the Austrian-Polish solution,” as Stefan Zabierowski claims.¹⁷³

Meanwhile, after his return to England, in the years 1914–1915, Conrad did not undertake any political action for the Polish cause, but, nevertheless, he financially and morally supported Retinger's pro-Polish activities.¹⁷⁴ It quickly turned out that “Polish issues”—as Zabierowski writes—“look differently from Cracow or Vienna's perspective than from London's perspective.”¹⁷⁵ As the critic observes further,

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada*, pp. 111-112, 118.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph Conrad to R.B. Cunningham Graham, 8 February 1899. [In:] Joseph Conrad. *Collected Letters*. Vol. II: 1898-1902. Eds. Frederick R. Karl & Laurence Davies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. [Quoted by:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 290.

¹⁷⁰ Joseph Conrad to Edward Garnett, 8 October 1907. [Quoted by:] Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, pp. 380-381.

¹⁷¹ See: Joseph Conrad. [“Political Memorandum”] [1914]. [In:] *Conrad's Polish Background...*, pp. 303-304. Cf.: Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁷² See: *ibid.*

¹⁷³ It was even more difficult because “at that time a citizen of Great Britain did not share the same point of view as a Polish citizen living in Galicia.” Meanwhile, as Zabierowski writes, “during his stay in Poland in 1914 in Cracow, and most of all in Zakopane, Conrad was under the constant influence of the proponents of activism and the Austrian-Polish solution.” (*Idem. Polska misja Conrada*, pp. 40, 91).

¹⁷⁴ See: *ibid.*, p. 92; cf. Najder. *Życie... [Life...]*, vol. II, p. 249. What's more, in 1915 he delivered four reportages about his stay in Poland for “Daily Mail”, which were later included in the volume *Notes on Life and Letters*, under the collective title: *Poland Revisited*.

¹⁷⁵ Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, p. 73.

“Conrad could not undertake any action in favor of the Austrian-Polish solution, because it would have been ridiculed in England, to say the least.”¹⁷⁶

It was not until 1916 when Conrad finalized, with Retinger’s significant help, *A Note on the Polish Problem*, and then delivered it to the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷⁷ From the content of this document, we can unequivocally deduce that “Conrad abandoned Polish-Austrian orientation and joined those who linked Poland’s fate with the victory of The Triple Entente.”¹⁷⁸ This attitude corresponded to then-requirements of British politics.

Despite the fact that Conrad’s diplomatic intervention did not bring its intended result, it, nevertheless, constituted an attempt to internationalize the Polish case, and it positioned its author—*volens volens*—as a political activist.

Regardless of how we evaluate the content of *A Note* from today’s perspective (pointing to its lack of political realism),¹⁷⁹ preparing this document was, for Conrad, a breakthrough moment in a mental and psychological sense, that is to say, in a mentioned-earlier sense of “inner feeling.” Therefore, it could not be overestimated, from the perspective of the writer’s biography – in which Polish issues play a crucial role.

Therefore, for Conrad, the trip to his motherland in 1914 was not “an enticing mirage,” and his country was not “a mere *pays de rêve*, where you can travel only in imagination.”¹⁸⁰ The intention of the trip’s organizers was a political goal: it was to prepare the soil to develop a pro-Polish informational action on the British Isles. As Zabierowski observes, it was an “original idea”¹⁸¹ to use a known writer in the Anglo-Saxon world for this aim. In a sense, this idea succeeded and the main protagonist, Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski, inevitably transformed into “a Polish politician,” “the defender of Polish case.”¹⁸²

It is really hard to find a better testimony of patriotic engagement in the case of a man who spent all his years in a foreign land, who felt painfully the drama of

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91. “Undertaking political activity on English soil, Conrad created a challenge tantamount to squaring the circle.” (*ibid.*, p. 46).

¹⁷⁷ See: *ibid.*, pp. 95-96; cf. Najder. *Życie... [Life...]*, vol. II, pp. 262-265.

¹⁷⁸ Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Najder. *Joseph Conrad: a Life*, p. 483.

¹⁸⁰ Conrad. “Poland Revisited”. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 148.

¹⁸¹ Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, p. 86.

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26, 36-37, 117. Despite the fact that he often defended the Polish case “in an anachronistic and naive way” (*ibid.*, p. 118). In this context, a fragment from the recollections by Stanisław Kozicki, an outstanding activist of independence, connected to National Democracy who visited Conrad in England in 1918: “[...] one could feel that [...] it was not a contemporary Pole, but as if he came from several tens years ago. I had an impression as if I conversed with somebody who came from the past.” (Stanisław Kozicki. “Wizyta u Conrada” [The Visit with Conrad]. *Kierunki* 1958, No. 14-15. [Quoted by:] Zabierowski. *Polska misja Conrada [Polish Mission of Conrad]*, p. 100). Not without reason, also M. Dąbrowska noticed later: “Conrad’s Polishness did not develop and could not be developing. It was just guarding the treasures and memorabilia acquired in the first seventeen years of his life.” (Dąbrowska. *Szkice o Conradzie [Essays about Conrad]*, p. 179 [fragment of an essay *Pozegnanie z Conradem [Farewell to Conrad]*]).

“double loyalty,” and who continued to treat Polish independence as “a political necessity,” as well as “a moral solution,”¹⁸³ as we read in *The Crime of Partition*.

To sum up the above examinations, let's evoke a final opinion of our “subject-matter expert” (or “expert witness”). As I signaled in my introduction, Koniński only once, in a written form, addressed the question that interests us here. However, this short and seemingly innocuous remark is of the utmost significance in the context of the perennial Polish debate on Conrad. To conclude then, not without satisfaction, we want to recall an appropriate fragment of Koniński's essay “A Complete Man, Creator and Nation...”¹⁸⁴:

[...] excluding in advance any relationship between treason and persons, who as a result of life impetus entered another civilization, but never denied their background and concomitant tastes and preferences [...]¹⁸⁵

Transl. Ewa Chruściel

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¹⁸³ Conrad. “The Crime of Partition”. [In:] *idem. Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 128.

¹⁸⁴ Koniński. *Człowiek zupełny, twórca i naród... [A Complete Man, Creator, and Nation...]*, p. 251 (PP, 38).

¹⁸⁵ Here Koniński added the following footnote: “e.g. [Joseph] Conrad-Korzeniowski”.

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