

Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?¹

Karel Svoboda

CONFLICTING CONTEMPORARY VIEWS FROM RUSSIA AND EUROPE ON THE POLISH NOVEMBER UPRISING 1830–1831

The paper uses a comparative method to approach the different views on the problem of the Polish Uprising of 1830–1831. It focuses mostly on public opinion matters, while the official policies create only the background of such moods. Based on letters, diaries or other literary accounts, the paper presents the clashing views of the two sides: Russian and Western/Polish. Accounts of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery hold a special place among these materials. How was it possible that the points of view contrasted so much? How come that even such a notorious liberal as Pushkin supported the tsarist regime in its struggle against the Polish insurrection while liberal Europe turned against Russia almost without exception? The structure of the paper proceeds as follows: the first part presents the positions of public opinion towards Russia in Europe in most cases as reflected by Russian diplomats; the second part mirrors such views with the Russian public ranging from the highest levels of society to the opinions found among the ordinary people of the street.

VIEWS ON RUSSIA BEFORE THE POLISH REVOLT

The anti-Russian stance of the European public opinion had been formed a long time before the 1830s. One of the motives for such a turn in the European perception of Russia was the wave of romanticism that spread during and after the Napoleonic wars. With emphasis placed on national movements, romanticism proved to be incompatible with Russia. Reluctance to support the Greek matter, moves against the Polish Kingdom or the post-Decembrist uprising arrests and the execution of five of the leaders of the uprising turned European opinion sharply against Russia.

Russia's army, once one of the most important parts of the anti-Napoleonic coalition, turned to a menace in the years after the war. Among the most prominent accounts that depicted the Russian army as the strongest force on the European con-

¹ The paper has been supported by the grant call PRVOUK P17 and the UNCE project of the Faculty of Social Sciences Charles University, Prague.

continent was Charles Lesur's book published in 1812, *Des Progrès de la Puissance Russe*.² Although written during the Napoleonic era, it portrayed Russia, the same as *A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia in the year 1817* written by sir Robert Wilson, as a force that aimed at getting the shore of the Atlantic Ocean.³ Among such works that described Russia's ideals as aggressive was colonel De Lacy Evans' book *The Designs of Russia* published in 1828. De Lacy Evans stated: "foreign policy of a state [Russia] whose grandeur is founded upon conquest, must characteristically be that of conquest."⁴

Although such works about Russia's strength and designs were relatively popular, the Greek insurrection may be characterized as a milestone in the perception of the country under scrutiny. The Tsar, Alexander, was had been lauded by European liberals for the Polish constitution of 1815, but in the last years of his reign, he turned back to a legitimist stance towards international relations.⁵ Therefore, when the Greek revolution broke out, Russia, despite contemporary expectations, did not support rebels. Alexander saw the revolution as a rebellion against the legitimate ruler of the state. Even the fact that it was the fight of an Orthodox nation against the Muslim ruler did not shake his preference for the legitimist rule over the national movement.⁶ The Russian position caused disappointment among the liberal circles in Europe, even fear.⁷ As Dorothea Lieven, the wife of the Russian Ambassador in London and the sister of Alexander Benkendorf, the chief of the Russian secret police, wrote to her brother in September 1829: "Russia was never so much respected, feared. Public opinion is divided into two parts here. Some laud us for the peace conditions while others put shame on us for the very same."⁸ Nevertheless, these feelings also added to the common suspicions about Russia's designs. Nesselrode, for instance, complained to Dibitsch in his letter of 25 October 1829 about the criticism of the conditions of the peace treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in foreign journals.⁹

Concerning Poland, Russia was seen as an oppressor, especially in France. Despite the fact that the Polish question was not primary a matter of attention for the French press, as the country was preoccupied with its internal problems, criticism was much stronger in France than in Britain or, indeed, any other country. The Tsar's brother, Archduke Constantin Pavlovich, in his letter to Alexander Benkendorf, bitterly complained about two articles in the *Journal des Debats and Constitutionnel* published on 13 and 15 July 1829. He claimed they were full lies, exaggerations and half-truths about

2 Ch. LESUR, *Des progrès de la puissance russe: depuis son origine jusqu'au commencement du XIXe siècle*, Paris 1812; A. CROSS, *Peter the Great through British Eyes: Perceptions and Representations of the Tsar since 1698*, Cambridge 2000, p. 113.

3 R. WILSON, *A Sketch of the Military and Political Power of Russia in the year 1817*, London 1817; R. T. McNALLY, *The Origins of Russophobia in France: 1812–1830*, in: *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1958, p. 173.

4 DE LACY EVANS, *On the Designs of Russia*, London 1828, p. 48.

5 Not everybody shared the enthusiasm about the constitution. Metternich warned Alexander that the Polish constitution might bring serious consequences to the existing order.

6 *Papers relative to the affairs in Greece 1826–1830*, London 1831, p. 160.

7 *Vospominaniya grafini A. D. Bludovoy*, in: *Russkiy arkhiv*, No. 11, 1873, p. 2054.

8 *Kn'yaginya D. Ch. Liven i ea perepiska s raznymi litsami*, in: *Russkaya starina*, No. 6, 1903, p. 679.

9 N. SHILDER, *Imperator Nikolay Pervyy, ego zhizn i tsarstvovanie*, Vol. 2, Sankt Peterburg 1903, p. 256.

Constantin Pavlovich and Novosiltsov.¹⁰ Interestingly, Constantine expected that Europe would be thankful to Russia and its Emperor for the approach he adopted towards the Polish Kingdom.¹¹

For these reasons, Russia's reputation was extremely low not only in liberal countries such as France or Great Britain, but also in conservative Prussia. A somewhat favourable stance towards Russia was held by only in highest places, but the general sentiment was directed against Russian actions in Poland. The Prussian government tried to control negatively-sounding news about Russia; however, its possibilities to influence them face-to-face to the liberal press were only limited, to say the least. Furthermore, Prussia was influenced by the local Polish nobility. Countess Bludova, for example, recalled that she could not talk to the Polish ladies belonging to higher society, because they had lot of wrong and misled thoughts and feelings. She believed: "*It was only up to the war. I personally carried on with reading [Mickiewicz], but later we only argued and I could hear a lot of misled and incredible talks.*"¹² Later, she wrote about the sentiment in Prussia: "*All the Russians here were disappointed by such unfriendliness that has its source in Paris, because also the Polish uprising had its roots there and it was only phony in the masses.*"¹³ Public opinion in Prussia also prevented the Prussian King from any active cooperation with Russia during the Polish revolution.¹⁴ A similar situation reigned in Austria, especially in the province of Galicia. Both Prussia and Austria cooperated with Russia through limited measures, such as sales of foodstuff or through strengthened controls of the borders during the revolution, but when it came to sending Polish insurgents back to Russia, they were more than reluctant to do so. This was the case due to public opinion that obviously favoured Polish revolutionaries over the Russian army.¹⁵

REVOLUTIONS IN 1830

European revolutions in 1830 underlined Russia's position of the main enemy of the liberal movement on the continent. Although Nicholas I was by no means the only ruler on the continent who fiercely opposed liberalism, Russia became the main object of fear and suspicion. The strength of public opinion further intensified because of serious economic problems. Countries such as France or the Netherlands still fought with the results of the 1827 crisis; in fact, high unemployment further increased the risk of disturbances. Any ruler, even in countries such as Austria, had to take into account the voice of the street, especially when his or her country found itself in a state close to bankruptcy.

10 C. P. BENKENDORF, *Iz perepiski Konstantina Pavlovicha s A. Kh. Benkendorfom*, in: *Russkiy arkhiv*, No. 1, 1885, p. 27.

11 *Ibidem*, 8th (20th) January 1831, p. 31.

12 *Vospominaniya grafini*, p. 2077.

13 *Vospominaniya grafini A. D. Bludovoy*, in: *Russkiy arkhiv*, No. 4, 1874, p. 843.

14 J. A. BETLEY, *Belgium and Poland in international relations*, s'Gravenhage 1960, p. 248.

15 Tatishchev — Nesselrode, 30th September (12th October) 1831, in: *Vneshnaya politika Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka: Dokumenty Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Tom XVII., Avgust 1830g. -Janvar 1832 g.*, Moscow 2005, p. 492.

The French Revolution of 1830 brought a significant change to the European order. In his first reaction, Nicholas I rejected to acknowledge the change and he let the new French King Louis Philippe know that any effort to export revolution outside of France would turn into a military intervention led by Russia and its allies. However, Nicholas' response to a letter by Louis Philippe concerning his accession to the throne had the worst possible effect on French public opinion. Nicholas, despite the habits, did not call Louis Philippe "Monsieur, mon frère" in his answer to the new King's personal letter. Indeed, such a handling of affairs was perceived as a direct insult. Paris press reacted very intensely and it was full of attacks on Russia and its Emperor.¹⁶ According to the remarks written personally by Nicholas I, the insult was intentional.

Russia was generally accused of its intention to wage a war against France. Despite the fact that Nicholas planned to act in strict accordance with his allies — Prussia and Austria, Russia was the main object of fear, although not the only one of course. The Russian Tsar therefore went as far as to assure the French Charge d'Affaires that Russia would never attack France if France did not start war itself.¹⁷ The most active voice in the warnings against Russia as a threat to the European order was the French journal *National*.¹⁸

Paradoxically, the fear of Russia was used for the purpose of peace. Nicholas I bet on the European public opinion when he ordered that preparations for a campaign against Belgium to be as public as possible. His main idea consisted of an expectation that the strength of Russia's army would prevent France from any active move in support of the Belgian revolutionaries. Nevertheless, such move was perceived as another proof of Russia's aggressiveness in Europe and the sentiments, especially those in France, turned in the very opposite direction than had been expected in Saint Petersburg.¹⁹ Military preparations were significantly exaggerated in the French press. Laffit's government, as a result of the military preparations taking place in Russia and also because of the tense situation in Belgium, increased the personnel of the country's army to 300 thousand plus the same number for the National Guards as a backup force.²⁰

The Polish uprising further intensified moods against Russia that prevailed in the most important European cities. Up to this event, the Polish question was not in the centre of attention of French society. When the Polish revolution erupted on 29 November 1830, it was seen as a fight of a noble nation against its long time oppressor. Another motive that was widely propagated, described the Polish uprising as a barrier against the Russian campaign directed against France. In Paris, a wave of demonstrations and even attacks on the local Russian Embassy occurred. Dorothea Lieven in her conversation with lord Grey wrote: "By the way, my dear lord, take the trouble to get and read last evening's *Courier*, and tell me candidly if you ever have seen anything more insulting

16 *Mezhdu dvumya voynami*, in: *Russkaya starina*, No. 7, 1881, p. 381.

17 SHILDER, p. 294.

18 M. BROWN, *The Comité Franco-Polonais and the French Reaction to the Polish Uprising of November 1830*, in: *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 369, 1978, p. 776.

19 BETLEY, p. 52.

20 Pozzo di Borgo — Nesselrode, 20th November (2nd December) 1830, *Arkhiv Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Imperii*, Fond Kantselyariya, g. 1830, op. 469, d. 202, l. 407–408.

and injurious than what is written here of a Sovereign and a Power in friendly alliance with England.”²¹ On the very same day, Grey replied to the Princess: “But when there is a strong general feeling, as in the case of Poland, it is quite impossible to control them.”²²

Paris press was full of articles that spoke in favour of the Polish insurgents and that were openly against Russia. As Countess Bludova mentioned, Paris public greeted any news about failures of the Russian army. She also added excerpts from French newspapers where she found anti-Russian sounding.²³ Among the strong motives that were used in public debates was the idea that Poland with its revolution saved Europe from a general war. In January, one Paris newspaper wrote: “Poland lies on the road between Russia and France. Without this noble revolution that is going on now, enemy would be on our borders in a moment.”²⁴ Adam Matuszewicz, a Russian Plenipotentiary Ambassador at the London Conference of 1830, who was in fact of Polish origin, had the duty to write to the Western newspapers articles defending Russia and place them into Western newspapers. However, as he complained, he could not place his writings even to the most conservative papers.²⁵ News and articles on Poland were numerous, especially during the tense times around the Battle of Grokhow of February 1831, Ostrolenka of July and the final fall of the whole revolution.²⁶ Nicholas recalled that after the fall of Warsaw, demonstrations against Russia took place several days. In contrast, England accepted this as a fact and without any emotional reactions.²⁷

Public opinion, most notably in France, was strongly influenced by the activities of Polish emigrant groups. Polish emigration to the country reached approximately 7,000 people. Some of these people had strong ties to the highest levels of society in the West. Most prominent among them was Adam Czartorysky who had open access to Lord Grey. Vice-Chancellor Nesselrode complained to Prince Lieven in his letter from August 1831 about the access of Polish envoys to Lord Palmerston.²⁸ The Poles had strong defenders also in France as well, namely Marquis de La Fayette. He demanded arm deliveries to the Polish insurgents as well as other means of support to be offered to them during three different parliamentary sessions that took place in January 1831. He likewise continued with his campaign in following months. The French government did not want to step up its pressure exerted on Russia and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sebastiani, refused to accept Polish envoys as official representatives. Yet, pressure constantly grew with the inability of the Russians to suppress the Polish revolution.²⁹

21 Dorothea Lieven — Earl Grey, 8th March 1831, *Knyaginya D. Kh. Liven i ea perepiska s raznymi litsami*, in: *Russkaya starina*, No. 9, 1903, p. 691.

22 Earl Grey — Dorothea Lieven, 8th March 1831, *Correspondence of Princess Lieven and Earl Grey*, Vol. 2, London 1890, p. 184.

23 *Vospominaniya grafini*, 1874, p. 476.

24 J. DUTKIEWICZ, *Francja a Polska w 1831 r.*, Lodz 1950, pp. 11–31 ; BROWN, p. 774.

25 DUTKIEWICZ, p. 147.

26 A. R. Falck and Baron van Zuylen to Baron Verstolk van Soelen, 20th September 1831. BETLEY, p. 284.

27 SHILDER, p. 380.

28 Nesselrode — Lieven, 5th August 1831, in: *Vneshnaya politika Rossii*, p. 431.

29 Nesselrode — Pozzo, 12th (24th) August 1831, in: *Vneshnaya politika Rossii*, p. 443.

Russia made some efforts to influence public opinion in the West through releasing information favourable about the country. Matuszewicz's task of writing such articles to the press in London had been already mentioned, but it was not the only initiative. Russia tried to bribe some of the newspapers in order to publish news and opinions that would be a little friendlier towards the country. This kind of policy was nothing new in Europe. Indeed, Muhammad Ali, for instance, improved his popularity by ordering newspaper articles in his favour.³⁰ Later, Russia tried to employ Alexander Dumas for example; however, he did not prove to be suitable for playing the role of a bearer of Russia's interests. The other Russian attempt, Marquis de Custine, proved to be a complete disaster. In fact, his *La Russie en 1839* became the most famous volume of anti-Russian literature.³¹

PUBLIC OPINION IN RUSSIA

Although considered to be less important in the sense of their impact, public opinion and moods were not ignored even in such a country as Russia in the 1820s and early 1830s. Alexander Benkendorf, Chief of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery, closely monitored moods in Russian society and gave very detailed accounts of prevailing opinions. As he mentioned in his accounts of public moods in 1827: "Public opinion means the same for a ruling class as a topographic map for a commander of an army."³² As a result, Russian subjects in Russia and also outside the country came under close observation on the part of official places.

Russian administration adopted measures to prevent the spread of revolutionary thoughts coming from France right after the first news about the revolt reached Russian soil. Indeed, it was forbidden to disseminate any news about the clashes taking place in Paris, even foreign journals were to be halted at the post offices.³³ Only after the violent events ended, the ban was released. Foreign news could be published only as a reprint from *Preussische Staats Zeitung*. In addition, news about foreign affairs was monopolized to *Severnaya Pchela*, the official daily published by Nikolai Grech. As the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, who thought of publishing newspaper in St Petersburg, wrote to his friend poet Pyotr Vyazemsky: "Does really Grech have monopoly on foreign news? Is it really fact that only *Severnaya Pchela* can publish news about the earthquake in Mexico or about the next parliamentary session in September? Is it really impossible to get permission? Try to contact young ministers and Benkendorf. It is not about publishing views, but only facts."³⁴

Despite the blockade of information about the Paris events, news got to Russia anyway.³⁵ Even Benkendorf had no illusion that the censorship would be able to prevent the

30 WEBSTER, p. 47.

31 V. MILCHINA, *Rossiya i Franciya: Diplomaty, literatory i shpiony*, Sankt Peterburg 2006, p. 206.

32 Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg., in: Krasnyy arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 141.

33 O. V. ORLIK, *Rossiya i frantsuzskaya revolyutsiya*, Moscow 1968, p. 113.

34 Pushkin — Vyazemskiy, 2nd (14th) May 1830, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 2, 1874, p. 442.

35 ORLIK, p. 38.

spread of revolutionary thoughts throughout the country.³⁶ Despite the lack of information on the Paris events, they were widely discussed.³⁷ Russian youth, according to Alexander Benkendorf, greeted the revolution and drank with their toasts hailing Leontiy Vasilevich, which was a direct allusion to Louis Philippe.³⁸ Professor of Moscow University and later one of the censors Alexander Nikitenko wrote about the July revolution: “Paris managed to reject the hand that tried to tie it with chains. In three days, only ruins remained from despotism that Charles X. wanted to impose.”³⁹ Others, such as Vyazemsky, also greeted the July revolution, however, at the same time they did not hide their suspicion that a revolutionary wave may spread to other countries and later to Russia as well.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, liberal feelings about the victory over despotism in France prevailed.

Although official persons did not applaud to the July revolution, they had to accept it as a reality. Most of them agreed that Charles X and his Minister Polignac caused the situation by their unacceptable and wrong policy. Dorothea Lieven did not hide her disgust for the latter, when she wrote: “He is the staunchest Jesuit I know. He is an enemy of any free and enlightened thinking, true embodiment of medieval ideas.”⁴¹ Nicholas I in his conversation with the French Charge d’Affaires Baron Bourgoing regretted that the mob in Paris did not rob the Russian embassy in Paris. As he said, the public in Paris would then realize how many times he had warned Charles X that his policies were dangerous and, indeed, destructive.⁴²

The revolution in Belgium only supported the officially held position that the revolution was organized from one centre and that it aimed to “poison” the whole of Europe. Nicholas wrote a note on one of Nesselrodé’s reports concerning Belgian affairs: “It is not Belgium we want to be fighting against, but the revolution, which would gradually endanger us. It will come even sooner, than anybody of us might expect. It is enough for her to see that we are trembling by fear before her.”⁴³

THE POLISH UPRISING OF 1830–1831

If the Polish uprising was greeted in Western Europe with enthusiasm, the same cannot be said about Russia. According to Alexander Benkendorf, the views could be divided into three groups. Patriots demanded Suvorov-style bloodshed that would

36 Benkendorf — Konstantin Pavlovich, 17th March 1831, *Pisma grafa A. Kh. Benkendorfa k velikomu knyazyu Konstantinu Pavlovichu vo vremya polskogo myatezha*, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 1, 1885, p. 34.

37 Iz Pisem K. Ja Bulgakova k jeho bratu, in: Russkiy arkhiv, Vol. 12, 1903, p. 418.

38 *Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg.*, in: Krasnyi arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 138.

39 Alexander Nikitenko, *Zapiski i dnevnik*, http://www.imwerden.info/belousenko/books/memoirs/nikitenko_dnevnik_1.htm, [2014-09-11].

40 SHILDER, p. 382.

41 Dorothea Lieven — Alexander Benkendorf, 29th September 1829, in: *Knyaginya D. Kh., Liven i ea perepiska s raznymi litsami*, in: Russkaya starina, No. 6, 1903, p. 679.

42 SHILDER, p. 563.

43 F. MARTENS, *Recueil des traités et conventions conclus par la Russie avec les Puissances étrangères*, Vol. 11, St Petersburg 1895, p. 437.

eventually prevent Poland from any uprising. The second part was represented mostly by inhabitants of St Petersburg who preferred diplomacy, as more appropriate tool for solving the situation, over a military campaign. The third part, the liberals, was, according to Benkendorf, more French than Russians. They loved constitutions and expected a European war which France would win and, consequently, spread the revolution to the whole of Europe.⁴⁴

The Polish Kingdom was regarded as a preferred part of the Russian Empire and uprising was seen as ingratitude on the part of Poland.⁴⁵ According to Benkendorf, the general public “*joined the patriots and demanded not only blood, but also destruction of the part of Polish nation and its full enslavement*”.⁴⁶ Nicholas I even in his manifest declaring war reminded that the war is not waged against Poland, but against the revolutionary party that took over in Poland temporarily. He later changed his mind, but in the beginning this position dominated.⁴⁷ This view was shared not only by official figures, but also by the educated public. Vyazemsky, for instance, wrote to A. Ya. Bulgakov, the Head of Imperial Post-Office, on 17 December 1830: “*I am embittered by Polish events, I must admit. I did not expect them, I do not understand them. The more I think about them, the less I understand them. I do not see national uprising in these events, but just insurrection of several criminals, similar to that of 14 December [1825]*”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, such a view was based only on the first news about the uprising in Warsaw. Vyazemsky later changed his mind when he started to see the Polish insurrection as something dangerous even for Russia.

Russian cultural representation in vast majority supported tsarist policies towards Polish insurgents. In 1831, Pushkin published his poem “*Klevetnikam Rossii*” [To the Slanderers of Russia], where he attacked western critics of Russia’s army. Count Komarovsky recalled that Pushkin even compared the gravity of the situation to the situation in 1812.⁴⁹ In July, Pushkin went even further, beyond his previous idea of establishing a literally-political journal. He proposed to Alexander Benkendorf publishing a journal that would defend Russia’s interests and that would attract talented writers to the service of the state.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, his idea was not supported by higher places and it came to naught. Zhukovsky published his poem *Staraya pesnya na novyy lad* [Old song on a new style] in the same volume entitled *Na vzyatie Varshavy* [On the Fall of Warsaw].⁵¹ Even such a well-known liberal as Chaadaev, who wrote his *Philosophical Letters* between the years 1826–1831, rejected any foreign interference to what he called an “internal Russian affair”. A common state with Russia was, according to him, undisputed good and therefore even Polish people were to be thankful to Russian Tsar.⁵²

44 Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg., in: Krasnyy arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, pp. 140–141.

45 SHILDER, p. 222.

46 Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg., in: Krasnyy arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 139.

47 SHILDER, p. 580.

48 Iz pisem Knyazya P. A. Vyazemskogo k A. Ya. Bulgakovu, in: Russkiy Arkhiv, No. 5, 1879, p. 100.

49 F. TYUTCHEV, *Na vzyatie Varshavy*, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 3, 1879, pp. 385–386.

50 A. PUSHKIN, *Novye materialy dlya biografii: pereziska ego s gr. A. Kh. Benkendorfov 1826–1886*, in: Russkaya starina, 5–8, 1874, p. 710.

51 *Na Vzyatie Varshavy*, Sankt Peterburg 1831.

52 P. CHAADAYEV, *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy v dvukh tomakh*, 2, Moscow 1991, p. 205.

Benkendorf pointed out the group of patriots, predominantly centered in Moscow, as especially dangerous as it had strong influence even on the General-Governor.⁵³ They saw the struggle between Poland and Russia as a struggle between the two friendly nations. The young historian and writer Mikhail Pogodin got public attention with his article *Polsky vopros* [Polish question] published in *Teleskop* journal in 1831. He argued that Russia had the right to hold Poland. Based on his argument, after-partition Poland came to Russia by the right of the first capture. Therefore, Russia only got what belonged to it.⁵⁴ Another future Slavophile Alexei Khomyakov fully supported the struggle against Poland. In September and October 1831, he published verses against Polish insurgents in the journal *Invalid*. He laid the whole responsibility on those who initiated the uprising of one Slavic nation against the other.⁵⁵ Similarly, Tyutchev, who stood outside the group of Moscow patriots, published his ode on the defeat of Warsaw in 1831.⁵⁶

Despite the general sentiment being directed against the Polish insurgents, there was really a small minority of thinkers who supported them. Initially, liberals were supportive of the Polish uprising, based on complaints of numerous violations of the Polish constitution on the part of Constantine Pavlovich and Novosiltsov. However, such support was conditional and it waned after the de-thronization of Nicholas I and after claims of Polish Russian provinces from the Polish insurgents. From these small groups of liberals, only several individuals who had supported the revolutionaries remained.⁵⁷ Among the most prominent, Nikolay and Alexander Turgenev should be mentioned. Alexander Turgenev was under close surveillance of the Russian Embassy in Paris during his stay in France. After his return to Russia, he was accused of supporting the Polish revolution and invited to interrogation in November 1831. Nikolay Turgenev held close relations with some of the Polish revolutionaries. Indeed, he could not return to Russia due to his participation in the preparations Decembrist Uprising of 1825 as the subsequent court sentenced him to exile in Siberia (he was tried in absentia). He as well found himself under close surveillance of the Russian Embassy in Paris.⁵⁸ Similarly, Prince Kozlovsky, who was consequently deprived of almost all means for living, was also close to the Polish insurgents.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, these people were only a tiny minority in generally anti-Polish moods reigning in Russian society.

The opinion that Congress Poland enjoyed enormous advantages over other subjects of Russian Tsar was, not without basis, common in Russian society. The Polish Kingdom got a special tariff regime and it had its own army and constitution, among other advantages. As a result, Russian merchants and industrialists felt disadvantaged and used the opportunity of an anti-revolutionary campaign for their own interests. In January 1831 they reached the ban on all the imports from the Polish Kingdom. Later, when the war was over and the ban was released, they demanded

53 Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg., in: Krasnyy arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 145.

54 M. POGODIN, *Polsky vopros: Sobranie rassuzhdeniy, zapisok i zamechaniy*, Moscow 1867, pp. 1–3.

55 *Vospominaniya grafini A. D. Bludovoy*, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 6, 1874, p. 137.

56 TYUTCHEV, pp. 385–386.

57 Graf A. Kh. Benkendorf o Rossii v 1827–1830 gg., in: Krasnyy arkhiv, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 139.

58 Pozzo di Borgo — Nesselrode, 8th October 1831, in: *Vneshnaya politika Rossii*, p. 489.

59 A. NAMAZOVA, *Belgiyskaya revolyutsiya 1830 goda*, Moscow 1979, p. 106.

that the custom tariffs for Polish Kingdom should be the same as for any other foreign country. Nevertheless, the Finance Minister Kankrin preferred the system where tariffs for imports from the Polish Kingdom to Russia were set at the same level as in the opposite direction.⁶⁰

The Polish campaign coincidentally coincided with a cholera wave that spread across Russia and later through Europe. Cholera riots had their consequences *per se* when the General-Governor Stolypin was killed in Sevastopol during the disturbances. Other riots occurred in Nizhny Novgorod, etc. Mobs in some of the Russian cities and towns even linked cholera to the Polish events. They believed that it was not cholera, but the result of water or grain poisoning by the Polish insurgents.⁶¹ Doctors were even beaten as Polish agents. Rumours that the spread of the disease was caused by the Polish side as a means of fight against Russia were, indeed, quite common.⁶² Similarly, fires in some Russian cities caused violent acts aimed at people of Polish origin because mostly peasants saw a plot behind the fires. Nevertheless, investigations of the fires did not reveal any connection between them and the Polish revolution.⁶³

The general sentiment did not stay the same during the whole campaign. At the beginning, it was expected by the Russian society that the revolution would be suppressed by one direct hit. Instead of this, the public got news about a prolonged campaign, about more and more recruitments. This caused rumours, not only about treason among the doctors, but also in the commandment of the army. General Field Marshal Dibitch (Diebitsch) as well as some of the members of his headquarters was accused of treason due to their German names.⁶⁴ This situation did not happen for the first time, as it was repetition of the hesitant moves during the Russian-Turkish War of 1828–1829. As a result, Nicholas planned to replace Dibitch with more aggressive, but also Russian by name, Paskevitch. Only Dibitch's death saved him from this humiliating replacement.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed the diverging paths of the Russian and Western public opinions. During the Napoleonic wars, the enemy of Europe was clear. Nevertheless, Russia gradually retained the French position. Russia had been regarded a threat even before the revolutionary movement in the West started and its position further worsened after the French July Revolution of 1830. Such feelings reached their panacea after the Polish November Uprising of 1830–1831 broke out. During the revolution, the Polish question was matter of continuous debates in the French Parliament, as well as in the press. Furthermore, the inability of Russian army to defeat Polish troops quickly increased criticism of the Western public aimed at their respective governments.

60 A. V. SEMYONOV, *Izucheniye istoricheskikh svedeniy o Rossiyskoy trgovle i promyshlennosti s XVIIgo stoletiya do 1858 goda*, Sankt Peterburg 1859, p. 249.

61 *Vospominaniya grafini*, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 4, 1874, p. 841.

62 S. SCHERBAKOVA (Ed.), *Rossiya pod nadzorom*, Moscow 2006, p. 80.

63 *Ibidem*, p. 72.

64 *Vospominaniya grafini*, in: Russkiy arkhiv, No. 4, 1873, p. 730.

Russian liberals such as Pushkin left their liberalism for the sake of national pride. Although they were perceived as oppositionists, they were fully supportive of the tsarist actions in Poland, especially after the Polish claims over the territories that Russians regarded as natively Russian. Romantic ideals in Russia turned in favour of Russian uniqueness; need to defend Russia's right to hold the territories that once belonged to the Russian state. As a result, liberalism lost its battle for the soul of Russian intelligentsia to patriotic feelings. Only an insignificant minority of liberals retained their conviction of the need to support for Polish matter. For the rest, it became a matter of national pride. However, even this mobilization effect began to wane in the last months of the campaign and Tsar felt the need to hasten the moves of the army, even by the replacing General Field Marshal Dibitsch.

To conclude, the Polish revolution revealed the disparity between Russian and Western optics on the situation in Europe. Russia, with the exception of its small group of liberals, saw the revolutionary movement as something harmful. Even the very word "liberal" got negative connotation. In addition, in liberal countries such as France or Great Britain or in conservative countries such as Prussia and Austria, Russia was the main threat to freedom. Although temporary coalitions between the rulers existed, the general public feeling was set on disbelief.

ABSTRACT

The divergence of public opinions in Western countries compared with the development in Russia's public moods became particularly obvious during the revolutions of 1830. In Western Europe's public opinion, Russia changed in public perception from one of the main contributors of victory in the anti-Napoleonic coalition to the main threat for peace. Due to Russia's hard stance against the French July and later the Belgian revolution, negative perception of Russia in the West hardened. The Polish revolution was seen as an uprising against oppressive Russian rule by the Western public and journals. This represented a break with Russian public opinion, including that prevailing among Russian liberals. Russians saw the struggle against Polish insurgents as a matter of national survival. Such a view was supported almost unanimously.

KEYWORDS

Nicholas I; Polish November Uprising; Public Opinion; Russia

Karel Svoboda | Faculty of Social Sciences Charles University Prague
Smetanovo nábřeží 6, 110 01, Prague 1, Czech Republic
svobodak@fsv.cuni.cz