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WASYL SHCHURAT ABOUT KOLIYIVSHYNA IN POLISH LITERATURE BEFORE 1841

Wasył Szczurat o koliszczyźnie w polskiej literaturze do 1841 roku

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcono tematowi koliszczyzny w polskiej literaturze w ujęciu Wasyla Szczurata (1871-1948), galicyjskiego poety, tłumacza, literaturoznawcy, historyka i pedagoga, którego życie przypada na jeden z najbardziej burzliwych okresów w relacjach ukraińsko-polskich. Monografia Szczurata mieści opis koliszczyzny w utworach polskich autorów do 1841 roku i pokazuje proces wchodzenia tematu koliszczyzny w polską literaturę. Dla nas praca jest ciekawa, gdyż nie tylko przedstawia ukraiński punkt widzenia, ale jednocześnie pozwala zrozumieć rolę literatury pięknej w kształtowaniu obiektywnej prawdy historycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: koliszczyzna, Szczurat, konflikt polsko-ukraiński, literatura do 1841 roku

No matter how obvious the problem of “truth and lies” may seem when talking about the presentation of historic events in fiction, there is one aspect which to a great extent complicates its solving. By that we mean the presentation of “stormy” moments in the common history of neighboring nations, when facts’ interpretation is always shown in the subjective light by the historians on both sides of the boarder. No matter, how hard such a researcher may try to avoid bias in his works, he cannot eliminate it totally. Only time and lack of self-engagement on the part of the author allow to look at historic events objectively enough. That is why the fresher the events in the memory of the peoples – the harder it is to evaluate them objectively.

When it comes to historic works, historians are more accurate in their description of the events than writers and poets, as they base their

opinion on real facts and documents, while writers may use legends, rumors, not to mention their own imagination. Any “stormy” event provokes the appearance of both, historic and literary works. Early historic and literary works usually represent the same point of view which is similar with the peoples’ opinion of the event. With the time, though, certain differences appear as the writes try to look at it from a different point of view, to understand its reasons. Through their literary works they make the people, including historians, to look at the event more objectively, which leads to forgiveness in its turn. One may find numerous examples of this process in Polish-Ukrainian history.

A bright example may be the difference in evaluation of Koliyivshyna by Polish and Ukrainian historians of the end 18th - 19th and 20th centuries. Only in the second half of the 19th century Polish historians began to define it as a peasant uprising with religious and social background whereas Ukrainian historians acknowledge the mass slaughter of Poles and Judas done by the insurgents. Worth mentioning is the fact that a lot of discrepancies remain as to the cause of the event and its assessment.

The end 18th - 19th century historians were much more rigoristic and partial than the 20th century historians in their assessment of those events which were reflected in the literary descriptions of Polish and Ukrainian writers. The most vivid differences can be detected if to compare such known pieces of literature as *The Kaniowski Castle (Zamek Kaniowski)* by Seweryn Goszczyński and *Wernyhora, a Ukrainian bard: a historical narrative from 1768 (Wernyhora, wieszcz ukraiński: powieść historyczna z roku 1768)* by Michał Czajkowski on the one hand with the epic poem *Haidamaky* by Taras Shevchenko on the other hand. Goszczyński and Czajkowski both depict the untamable cruelty of Haidamaks towards Poles with minor differences. Goszczyński creates the picture of aggressive, cruel Ukraine, irrepressible in its hatred to Poles, in fact, its hostility was the main reason of Koliyivshyna for him. Czajkowski depicts Ukrain as a wild and benighted country where innocent people surrender to the evil influence of Russia. For Czajkowski there would have been no Koliyishyna without Russian interference. It is obvious that both writers could see no other reason of Koliyivshyna than the influence of inner or outer evil (Naumova 2008, 151-155). On the other hand, Taras Shevchenko’s epic poem *Haidamaky (Гайдамачу)* (1841)

which was written in response to the two abovementioned literary works, presents Koliyvhyna as a peoples' liberation uprising and was a try-out of the objective depiction of the movement. Worth mentioning, though, is the fact that the poet did not conceal his unfriendly feelings towards Poland.

Vasyl Shchurat was the first among Ukrainian researches who tried in his work *Koliyvhyna in Polish Literature before 1841* (*Коліївщина в польській літературі до 1841р.*) to show Polish vision upon those historic events in the early literary works that were prior to the abovementioned ones. The researcher took up a heavy task of showing the Polish point of view being himself a representative of Ukrainian intelligentsia of Lviv at the Austro-Hungarian times when the disputes among Polish and Ukrainian researchers were often quite sharp and ended in reciprocal accusations in facts' garble to one's own advantage.

Dealing with depicting Koliyvhyna events in Polish literature, Shchurat did not try to point out historical falsifications on the side of Polish writers, as it could have been expected in his life-time circumstances, but tried to trace the way how the historical truth had gradually penetrated into Polish fiction. In his work the researcher did not analyze the abovementioned famous Polish literary works, for he was more interested in those preceding them. As for the memoirs of the witnesses of those events that had sometimes been written in the form of poetry, Shchurat treats them as historic documents. It is clear from his work that he was familiar with at least some of them, but his point was to study the description of Koliyvhyna in Polish fiction before the appearance of the abovementioned prominent literary works.

The first work that Shchurat turns to is Jan Kamiński's *Helena or Haidamaks in Ukraine* (*Helena, czyli Hajdamacy na Ukrainie*) [In our times the manuscript is in the library of UKSW, Poland – N.S-C.], the play's first night of which took place in the Lviv theatre on December, 20 1819. The researcher did not have a chance to see the manuscript of the play with his own eyes, so he was forced to base his opinion upon the Polish and Ukrainian reviews from the magazines of that time. Hence, he was not able to draw wide conclusions. The play had been a remake of a more famous play *Hedwig* by Theodor Körner from 1812: the place of the action had been moved from Italy to Ukraine, and the cruel Italians had been replaced by blood-thirsty Haidamaks. Basing only on the re-

views, Shchurat concludes that the play was quite popular with the Polish audience as it remained in the repertoire of the theatre for rather a long time. To his mind, the fact that the play was based upon Körner's play, but not upon the memoirs of the eye-witnesses of those events, reveals the doubtful interest of Kamiński in the real truth as to the events (Shchurat 1910, 4), while the choice of the subject could be explained by so called "folk fashion" of the time.

A very similar way of dealing with those historic events can be seen in Stefan Witwicki's ballad *A Master and a Servant* (*Śługa i pan*) and Aleksander Groza's epic poem *Śmieciński, a Gentry-Ukrainian Tail* (*Śmieciński: powieść szlachecko-ukraińska*). By "similar" we mean the usage of those historic events as a background for the work without even trying to understand their reasons. As it appears from both literary works, for Witwicki and Groza Koliivshyna was caused by villains and criminals while Ukrainian peasants were good and honorable people that had nothing in common with Haidamaks. In Witwicki's ballad Grzegorz, a servant, saves his master's little son from Haidamaks, while in Groza's epic poem the role of a savior is performed by Gonta's wife. Here Shchurat concludes that the atmosphere in which both literary works were created was "soaked to the brims with optimistic faith in Ukrainian people, the very faith with which the uprising of 1830-1831 had been prepared. It was ... the atmosphere of self-delusion ... anything that disagreed with that faith in Ukrainian people was the deed of villains, thugs and not descent people. The same was the case of Koliivshyna" (Shchurat 1910, 6) [here and on the translation is mine. – N. S-Ch.]. Worth mentioning is the fact that such point of view was not common for all Poles and as a confirmation of this fact Shchurat presents the further destiny of Witwicki's work: after the ballad had been published in the first book of the compilation *Ballads and Romances* in Warsaw it received a negative opinion from Adam Mickiewicz and as a result the whole issue was destroyed.

In 1825 an epic poem *The Haidamaks* (*Hajdamacy*) by Stanisław Jaszowski came out in Lviv. It depicted the siege of a Polish castle by the Haidamaks, one of whom, young Stefan protects a beautiful hetman's daughter Emma from his fellow rebellions. The young manage to escape. Emma's father recognizes in Stefan the rightful heir to the slaughtered by Cossacks Polish sword-bearer. The poem ends with the wedding of the

young couple. As well as in the case of Kamiński, Jaszowski, according to Szczurat, was not interested in finding the truth about the Haidamaks uprising, but rather something sensational, what at that time was “discovering a noble soul among the villains, so the author simply followed a long-beaten road in literature” (Shchurat 1910, 8) [N. S-Ch.]. As a confirmation of it Shchurat points out the fact that the author did not distinguish Cossacks from Haidamaks, for “he does not care ... he only wants to weave something sensational” (Shchurat 1910, 8) [N. S-Ch.]. In this case we can agree with the researcher that the plot is not only well known, but easily composes into different historical and ethnical contexts. Having shortly analyzed the abovementioned literary works, Shchurat surmises that such works where Koliivshyna was used only as a background could incline Goszczyński to write his *Kaniowski Castle* which, consequently, could be the explanation for the predominance of private motives in it. Shchurat also tries to explain the small popularity of the abovementioned works among Polish readers: according to him Jaszowski and Witwicki’s epic poems together with Kamiński’s drama “are only good enough to illustrate that high level that Goszczyński managed to bring his poem to” (Shchurat 1910, 8) [N. S-Ch.].

According to Shchurat the first work about Koliivshyna worth paying attention is Michał Suchorowski’ melodrama *Wanda Potocka or the shelter in St. Sophia’s wood, a great military melodrama with songs and dances*. [*Wanda Potocka czyli schronienie w lasku ś. Zofii, wielkie melodrama wojenne ze śpiewkami i tańcami*] In the prologue Suchorowski depicts the vision of Koliivshyna that was created in his mind on reading various manuscripts, memoirs of participants as well as different publications on the topic alongside with Goszczyński’s epic poem, having repeated, in fact, the description of Koliivshyna done by his predecessors: as a very cruel, but pointless thing. One thing is really interesting: according to Suchorowski not only uprising was cruel, but also the punishment of the Haidamacks:

Thirty thousands of armed Haidamacks were coming from Ukraine to Wolyn and Podilla, threatening with bloodshed and devastation ... the cruelty of punishment was equal to the brutality of those barbarians ... people were impaled, burned alive, quartered and hanged in households, villages and towns of

Ruski, Podilski, Wolynski regions and other parts of Ukraine (Suchorowski 1832, -o-) [we do not give the page number for all three pages In the prologue are marked as «-o-»].

Though Suchorowski tried to relate the events of the uprising most objectively, the event he had chosen for his play had already been an acknowledged fake by historians in the times of Shchurat: there existed rumor about a group of Haidamacks planning to burn down Lviv in order to free their fellow-rebellions that had been imprisoned there. For more credibility the author introduces real historic personalities of Wanda Potocka and Jan Jabłoński what ends the prologue. The main character is called Szwaczka, the ring-leader of Haidamacks planning to burn down Lviv. Szwaczka gives himself out as Potocki's son and tries to persuade the province governor Jabłoński of the attack upon being prepared. Szwaczka talks Jabłoński into his persuading the richest inhabitants of the city to hide their wealth in the chapel of St. Sophia in order not only to burn down Lviv, but also to rob it. Szwaczka's plans are ruined by a girl who turns out to be the real daughter of Potocki, Wanda. She exposes Szwaczka in revenge for her brother's murder. In the fierce struggle the Lviv citizens win while Wanda disappears. Basing on St. Yuriy's chronicles dated 1763-1771 Szczurat proves in his research that the rumors about possible arson of Lviv were intentionally spread by the commandant of Lviv guard, colonel Krytowski, in order to prevent the Ukrainian citizens of Lviv from collaborating with the rebellions. The researcher believes that the rumors were not widely spread, but from what we can see now they survived long enough for Suchorowski to hear them.

Though the abovementioned fact seems quite interesting, Shchurat does not pay much attention to it. Much more interesting for him is the dialog that takes place between Szwaczka and the new recruits. Among them Suchorowski depicts a Rusin (Ukrainian) whom daily tortures forced to kill his master and escape, a Góral (Polish Highlander) who is searching revenge after his bride was dishonored by the master. There is even a Mazur who was robbed of his land by his master, after the lost trial the Mazur set on fire his master's mansion and escaped. In fact, Suchoreowski was the first in Polish literature who tried to show realistically the other side of Koliivshyna, though it was not mentioned in the

prologue. Another interesting moment that drew Shchurat's attention was Szwaczka's speech addressed to his fellow rebellions:

Listen to me, brothers! Here comes the moment we've been long waiting for, we'll no longer be the outcasts, a better future is dawning ... who was deprived of his beloved, who lost his freedom, meaning, existence, whose soul cries – fallow me! ... For how long should we remain deepened in the dim fortune, work in cold and hunger as slaves, shed our blood over other men's sheaf and then moan and complain under the smutty roof that our worked-out body has fallen from heat, cold or blood lost? No! Never! Enough of that slavery! (Suchorowski 1832, 49-50).

In fact, we can make a conclusion that Suchorowski managed to show more from Koliivshyna than he had planned: real social cause of the uprising that had nothing in common with betrayed love of its leaders as it could have been understood from the earlier literature works. For Shchurat the most important thing that stems from Suchorowski's melodrama is that one can see that Haidamachyna was “ a burst of revenge of suffering people for themselves and their kin. Haidamachyna has no national colouring. It embraces people with no difference in their national origin” (Shchurat 1910, 12) [N. S-Ch.]. Shchurat specially emphasizes that the author was able to depict the uprising as something not exclusively Ukrainian because Rusins (Ukrainians) are joined by Poles and together they sing Polish and Ukrainian songs, perform kolomyikas, krakowiaks, polonaises. They even speak Ukrainian and Polish in turns. “National differences are vanishing; social injustice is towering over everything else, and it unites the people and makes their leaders heroes” (Shchurat 1910, 12) [N. S-Ch.].

We cannot absolutely agree with the last statement of the researcher for, apart from the abovementioned speech, Szwaczka is constantly exhorting to bloody revenge on Lviv citizens, while his disposition is far from being heroic. On the other hand, we can accept other conclusions of Shchurat. A question remains: where does such a change in the assumption of Koliivshyna come from? Shchurat explains it by means of the historic period in which the melodrama was written - a year before an unsuccessful Polish uprising of 1830-1831: “ the Polish-Ukrainian

peoples' reunion that was propagated by Padura ... was tried to reach in the name of social revolution" (Shchurat 1910, 12) [N. S-Ch.]. One must admit that it is difficult to believe that Suchorowski could have had such far-reaching plans when writing the melodrama. It seems much easier to assume that it was a reflection of those literature tendencies that were mentioned by Shchurat, a so-called fashion for using Koliivshyna as a background, just as it had been in previous cases.

Another literary work that, according to Shchurat, was supposed to unite the Poles and Ukrainians was *Serby Village* (*Wieś Serby*) by Lucian Siemieński that appeared in Lviv in 1835. The main plot depicts the capture of Gonta, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian uprising by Polish troops not far from the village of Serby. Gonta and a Polish warrant officer fall in love with the same woman – the wife of the local miller. It is that very warrant officer that later brings the troops to capture Gonta and brings him in chains to Kontna. In his monograph Shchurat points out that through Gonta Siemieński creates a ghost of new Koliivshyna in order to scare and "bring Polish nobility to their senses" as he considered nobility to be the main cause of misunderstandings between Polish and Ukrainian peasants. The fear of a new Ukrainian uprising amidst Polish nobility can also be seen in the poem *Ukraine (Ukraina)* by Michał Jeziński that was published in the book *Poetry* in Vilnius in 1837, while Shchurat bases his statement upon the research of Volodymyr Antonovych *Anxiety in Volyn in 1789* (*Вольнская тревога 1789 года*) (Kyiv, 1902) where the author mentions a legend that was spread among peasants concerning Gonta's son who was supposed to return in order to revenge for his father.

For Shchurat the most interesting Polish literary work about Koliivshyna was the epic poem *The First Penance of Zliznyak* (*Pierwsza pokuta Żelizniaka*) by Aleksandr Groza that had been published in 1841 in Vilnius in "Rusalka" magazine. Just as in case of Suchorowski's melodrama, Groza's epic poem has a prologue in which the author presents the story that he happened to hear from a beekeeper from khutor Verbovetsky concerning the cruel death of Maxym Zalizniak's parents sentenced to death by the Polish authorities for sacrilege. Zalizniak had sworn to revenge for that. After spending some time in Zaporizzha he went to Kyiv for penance in the monastery where one of the monks persuaded him to lead the uprising. Curious is the fact that in the edition

from 1843 the prologue was extended by means of explanation for writing the epic poem: “it was not because of the fancy for the subject, but for the lively story of an old mad, a beekeeper from khutor Verbovetsky, the eyewitness to a great number of events” (Shchurat 1910, 22) which was justly called by Shchurat an excuse. The necessity for the excuse Shchurat sees in the description of the death of Zaliznyak’s parents: “quiet, descent people were attracted by a group of villains that slaughtered them and escaped into nowhere as from nowhere they had come. From the note [added - N. S-Ch.] to the poem, we learn that the group of villains were, in fact, Polish judges and justice executives” (Shchurat 1910, 20) [N. S-Ch.]. Another drastic scene in the epic poem, apart from the description of parents’ terrible tortures and murder, was the scene of Maxym Zaliznyak’s return home:

W chacie pan ojciec w ostatniej męce
 Poopalone wyciągał ręce:
 „Dobijcie! – wołał – kto w Boga wierzy!
 Na ziemi matka w skonaniu leży,
 A z niej krew rzeką do progu bieży.

[In the hut his father in final agony is stretching out his burnt hands: “Finish me! – he cries – who believes in God!” On the ground his mother is laying dying, and from her body blood is running like a river towards the threshold. – N.S-Ch.] (Shchurat 1910, 20)

On reading this, the conclusion of Shchurat seems quite logical that those scenes could cause the dissatisfaction of Polish readers for in their eyes Zaliznyak’s revenge looked quite justified. In addition, the fact that Groza depicts the monk as a black raven which causes his partaking in the guilt for the uprising as he represents religious fanaticism.

Truly, one may say that Groza’s epic poem was the first try to look upon Koliivshyna and its causes more critically: “This way he [Groza] is close in the view upon Koliivshyna that was presented by Shevchenko and Kulish. It is the result of the most recent presentation of such historic events as Khmelnitchyna and Koliivshyna” (Shchurat 1910, 20) [N. S-Ch.]. At the end of his research Shchurat expresses his opinion about Goszczyński’s literary work which he does not analyze in his work:

“Goszczyński, one of the greatest artists among Polish writers, that have ever reached out for Koliivshyna, possesses an outstanding place among them – the most poetical one. His work is to great extent the result of romantic-artistic inspiration” (Shchurat 1910, 20) [N. S-Ch.].

Nowadays the question of Koliivshyna in Polish literature is still on the mat among Polish and Ukrainian literary researchers though their attention is paid to the works of Michał Grabowski, Bronisław Zaleski and Seweryn Goszczyński as well as their successors. For example, a Polish researcher Marek Kwapiszewski in his work points out that after the defeat of Polish rebellion the topic of Cossacks’ revolts including Koliivshyna was often dealt with Polish literature and scientific publications with a special accent upon religious, social and class differences:

Depending upon ideological orientation, the authors were either burdening themselves with the responsibility for their “fathers’ blames” and basing their hopes for the resurrection of the Polish statehood upon the idea of the changed attitude of nobility to commoners ... or treated Ukrainian outbursts as a destructive factor of history that fastened the discomposure and hence inevitable falling and even destruction of The Poles (Kwapiszewski 2002/2003, 413).

But what does Shchurat’s work mean to us in the present times, when one may say that its only value is a historical one? Nadiya Naumova in her work says that the greatest value of of Shchurat’s research is that he was the first who tried to present the Polish point of view upon Koliivshyna to Ukrainians (Naumova 2008, 155). It is obvious that the author managed to show the process of entering Koliivshyna into Polish literature as well as gradual emerging of historical truth about the uprising and its causes into literature: from a popular background to attempts of showing its real causes; from considering Koliivshyna as something not connected with Ukrainian people to destroying the national boundaries of the event. What is the most important is that in his research we can try to find the answer to the question of what history and literature have in common. They influence and help each other in order to create the objective vision of historic events.

If we think about Koliivshyna, we may see that Polish and Ukrainian historians managed to come to the agreement accepting other side’s

arguments only in the 50s of the 20th century, after Shchurat's death. It took them more than a century and that was not done without the change of the social mind that had been caused by literary works of Polish and Ukrainian writers.

There are many aspects of Polish-Ukrainian history that still evoke harsh discussions on both sides, e.g. Polish-Ukrainian war, Wolyn, etc. As it seems from Shchurat's work, only a great deal of effort on behalf of Polish and Ukrainian writers can make the historians come to the objective truth in time. Of course, there is always danger that fiction will be used to whiten or erase the dark crimes from people's memory and from history, like in case of Katyń or Holocaust. That is why constant cooperation between historians and literary researches is so important.

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