

SEMANTYKA ROSJI NA BAŁKANACH [SEMANTICS OF RUSSIA IN THE BALKANS].
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*Reviewed by Bogdan Trifunović**

In 2011 Balkan studies have been enriched with a new series "Colloquia Balkanica" and its first volume, a collection of works in Polish and English titled *Semantyka Rosji na Bałkanach* (The Semantics of Russia in the Balkans). The editor of the entire series and this volume is Prof. Jolanta Sujecka of the University of Warsaw Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies "Artes Liberales", and the members of the Editorial Board are Ilona Czamańska, Victor Friedman, Robert Elsie, Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, Irena Sawicka and Jolanta Sujecka. The publishers of the series are the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies "Artes Liberales" and DiG Publishing, Warsaw.

In her *Introductory remarks (Uwagi wstępne)*, Jolanta Sujecka explains that the "Colloquia Balkanica" series has been started as an international forum for researchers concerned with Balkan studies, one of the youngest disciplines in Poland. The nine articles assembled in this volume (six in Polish and three in English) are focused on the images/mythologems of Russia in the Balkans, primarily as they figure in literature, culture, religion and historiography. In the editor's words, this volume "can sketch a map of Russian influence in the region, but it also enables the presentation of cultural mediation of Russian civilization in the transmission of symbols and meanings".

The contribution of Jolanta Sujecka, "Obraz sąsiedztwa w kręgu Slavia Orthodoxa na Bałkanach w XVIII wieku" (The Image of Neighbourhood in 18th-Century Balkan Slavia Orthodoxa) opens the first segment of the volume, *Historyczne uwarunkowania/Historical Conditions*. "The Image of Neighbourhood"

should be understood as a multilayered structure — the sources used shaped the way of thinking of the analyzed authors and verbalized "the image of the history" of the Balkans. The analytical materials for this paper are histories written from the mid-eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth by polymaths from the *Slavia Orthodoxa* circle in the Balkans: Paisius of Hilandar, Jovan Rajić and Gjorgjija Pulevski. The author argues that all histories are linked together through language, the Ruthenian redaction of Old Church Slavonic, which is a genetic reason for choosing them, beside typological reasons. The other feature linking these texts is common sources used by all authors: Mavro Orbini, Djordje Branković, Charles du Fresne du Cange, the sixteenth-century *Chronicles* by Marcin Kromer, etc. These texts, where ancient history is highlighted writers, created an image of the Balkans where ancient rulers are transformed into Slavic tsars, kings and princes. Sujecka concludes that the main "supplier of antiquity" in the writings of these authors was the Byzantine tradition, as it was throughout the period of Ottoman rule, "domesticated" by iconography and transferred to native traditions of contemporary writers.

The central topic of Kazimierz Jurczak's article "Religijnie bliscy, etnicznie obcy, kulturowo niepojęci. Rosja i Rosjan-

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ie w odbiorze rumuńskim od końca XVIII do początku XX wieku” (Religiously related, ethnically foreign, culturally different. Russia and Russians in Romanian perception from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century) is the image of Russia and Russians in the Romanian culture of the (long) nineteenth century. The author argues that these nineteenth-century images shaped the way, essentially negative, in which Romanians perceived Russia throughout the twentieth century. The main negative characteristics of Russians, or the negative image of Russia as perceived by Romanians, were imperialistic behaviour and Asian mentality. These negative images led to a Russophobic sentiment in Romanian society during the period under study.

The first segment of the volume is concluded by the article “The role of Russia in the publication of the collection of folk songs by the Miladinov brothers”, by Valentina Mironska-Hristovska. This interesting title, however, offers a problematic text, ridden with tendentious conclusions and one-sided interpretations of historical events, and aiming to prove that “political interests of England, France, Russia, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and other countries did not prevent the period of Macedonian revival”, or claiming that “in line with the Berlin Agreement” [the 1878 Congress of Berlin] Macedonia was “also supposed to gain independence”. This article is arguably the weakest point of the volume, given that the author has unnecessarily introduced loose facts or false statements, which do not support the main thesis of the article and stand as an ideological construction lacking any firm foundation in research. Otherwise it would be very difficult to understand why only a lesser part of the text deals with the clear influence of Russia on the Miladinov brothers, in their effort to publish the collection of folk poetry before 1861, which the author has used to, again, raise

the old and well-known dispute between Macedonian and Bulgarian researchers over the name of the collection, its origin, language, character, etc, which is awkward way in presenting the topic supposedly discussed here.

The second part of the volume, titled *Mit. Wspólnota krwi. Ideologia* (Myth. Community of Blood. Ideology), is devoted to the image of Russia, analyzed in literature and cultural contexts (Nikolay Aretov), cultural narratives (Maciej Falski) and the sphere of consciousness (Rigels Halili). It starts with the article by Nikolay Aretov “Forging the myth about Russia: Rayna, Bulgarian Princess”, which analyzes the role of the figure and narrative of the Bulgarian Princess Rayna, daughter of King Peter (927–969), as a mythologem used in Russian nineteenth-century literature for ideological and mythological constructions about Bulgarians. The image of Rayna — “charming but helpless” — was the dominant image of Bulgaria among Russian Slavophiles before 1878. This image was and still is the main mythologem of the Balkans in the western “imperialism of the imagination”. Alexander Veltman’s novel *Rayna, Bulgarian Princess* (1843) for the first time in the history of Russian culture linked Bulgarian identity with that of Russian identity, introducing ideological construction of imagined conflict between Russia and Bulgaria (represented by Grand Princess Olga and Princess Rayna) with Byzantium (in the figure of Empress Theophano). Veltman’s intention was clear: to connect Bulgaria with the historical and political traditions seen favourable to Russia and, at the same time, to broaden the gap with the Bulgarian heritage based on the centuries of close relations with Constantinople, which could be seen as a symbol of both Greeks and Turks. This approach made *Rayna* popular in Bulgaria during the national revival among unprejudiced readers, because of its patriotic pathos and the

image of Russian-Bulgarian friendship. Aretov also discusses another variation of the figure of Rayna, created during the Bulgarian national revival, whose primary intention was a radical revision of Bulgarian national mythology, with a shift from narratives about a glorious or traumatic past towards narratives about the present. This shift introduced the contemporary figure of Rayna Popgeorgieva Futekova (1856–1917), who took activities during the April uprising and later were caught and outraged in Turkish imprisonment. Aretov emphasizes that this historical figure “pushed out” similar figures (in this case her namesake) and replaced them as their collective image or as a symbol “partly purged from concrete elements”.

Maciej Falski’s article “Wspólnota krwi, różnica wyznania. Rosja jako znak w chorwackich narracjach historiozoficznych do roku 1914” (Of the same community but of different faith. Russia as a symbol in Croatian historiosophic narratives before 1914) analyzes the presence of Russia as a political and historical factor in Croatian public discourse, thus emphasizing the role of narratives in creating the image of the other. Although Russia rarely appeared as a topic among Croatian writers before the First World War (Falski analyzes the writings of Juraj Križanić, Andrija Kačić Miošić, Ljudevit Gaj, Josip Juraj Štrossmajer, Ante Starčević), it can be traced as a “historiosophical and political” symbol, which in their writings from the sense of belonging to the same Slavic origin (*narod*) to the negative image of Orthodox Christianity, connected with Serbian nationalism (as it was seen by Starčević). Falski traces two prototype meanings of Russia, as a symbol of an Orthodox state and of a Slavic people, perceived as two models of interpreting Croatian narrative identity through their relation to Russia as a symbol; the former is represented by Štrossmajer and the latter by Starčević.

The article “Daleko i blisko — kilka uwag o obrazie Rosji w albańskiej świadomości kulturowej” (Far and near — a few remarks about the image of Russia in Albanian cultural consciousness) by Rigels Halili addresses the image of Russia and the Soviet Union in the Albanian context, mainly with cultural origins, political ties and developments from the early nineteenth century to the second half of the twentieth. Halili analyzes how this image of Russia shifted from traditional enmity in the period before and after 1912 and the creation of the Albanian state to a positive image after the Second World War, to become again negative image at the end of the twentieth century, during the Kosovo crisis. Admitting that his article is far from being a full catalogue of Russian-Albanian relations, needed for a proper portrayal of the image of Russia, Halili emphasizes that there is one interesting development among Albanians themselves, regarding the image and feelings towards Russia today: a mainly negative attitude among the Albanians living in Kosovo and a rather ambivalent and sometimes positive attitude towards Russia among the Albanians living in Albania. Halili identifies the recent political events in the Balkans and Kosovo as the main source of such division within one nation.

The third and final part of the volume, titled *Rosja podróżników. Rosja lewicy. Bizantyjska Rosja* (Russia of Travellers. Left Russia. Byzantine Russia), comprises three articles, concentrated on left-wing and socialist images of Russia (of the Soviet Union at the time) and on connections between Byzantine and Russian cultures and implications on the Balkan cultures.

Alexandra Ioannidou, in her article “Travel writing: Greek intellectuals in the Soviet Union”, tackles the question of the ideological position of Greek intellectuals towards the Soviet Union. She analyzes

the writings and memoirs of four Greek travellers to the Soviet Union between 1925 and the 1960s: Nikos Kazantzakis, Themis Kornaros, Giorgos Theotakos and Elias Venezis. These intellectuals had different political views (belonging to the left and right), which enabled not just an insight in their views and opinions about a different country, culture and political system, but also about specific differences among themselves, according to their political beliefs and expectations. Ioannidou chooses several subjects presented in their memoirs, for comparison and analysis: the relationship between Greece and Russia (USSR), thoughts about Soviet political leaders (Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky and Khrushchev), social situation in the USSR, Russian and Soviet literature. She concludes that regardless of their political views, the narratives of all Greek travellers carried strong prejudices about the Soviet Union (which they sometimes identify as Russia), both positive and negative. Most of them sought ties between Russian culture and Greek-Byzantine civilization.

The article "Obraz Rosji w pismach lewicy jugosłowiańskiej okresu międzywojennego. Miroslav Krleža i August Cesarec" (The image of Russia in Croatian left-wing writings of the interwar period. Miroslav Krleža and August Cesarec) by Adam F. Kola deals with the perception of Russia in Croatian left-wing literature between the two world wars. He chooses to analyze texts of Krleža and Cesarec, which dealt both with the two authors' postwar disappointment with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and with their fascination with the October Revolution and the socialist model of the state in the USSR. Both Krleža and Cesarec aimed in providing different perspective over the future, criticizing the current situation in interwar Yugoslavia (where, in their eyes, little had changed since the time of Austria-Hungary) and

giving an image of Russia (Soviet Union) as a modernized and industrialized country and as a state of general social and political advancement. Krleža identified Moscow as a Third Rome after his tourist visit to the USSR, as a reflective view over the communist capital and over an imagined role that communist revolution and Third International will have in the world. Against these images of Russia, in the concluding part of the article, Kola contrasts later changes among intellectuals in socialist Croatia, with the general negative view over the Russia (Soviet Union). These changes were spurred by the split between Tito and Stalin, reforms made in Yugoslavia and a growing nationalist discourses, religious differences and perceived everlasting "clashes of civilizations" in the Balkans.

The volume ends with Maria Kuglerowa's "Jurodivy i jego odmiany w prozie Jordana Radichkova" (The image of the sanctified fool (yurodivyj) and its variations in Yordan Radichkov's prose). Kuglerowa analyzes the significance of the image of *yurodivyj* in Bulgarian and Balkan cultures, through the writings of the Bulgarian prose writer Yordan Radichkov. She acknowledges that "sanctified fool" is a typical phenomenon of Russian culture, but with strong Byzantine origins, so it is possible to trace it in other Byzantine-related cultures. The image of *yurodivyj* in Radichkov's texts — *The hot Noon* (Торещо пладне, 1965), *The Savage Mood* (Свирено настроение, 1965), *We, Sparrows* (Ние, врабчетата, 1968) — is analyzed from the author-narrator's point of view, who has the nature of *yurodivyj* and surrounded by an anti-world. The author exemplifies some typical features of *yurodivyj* (sanctified aggression, provocation in the name of Christ, etc) and how they were transformed and transgressed in Radichkov's prose, with an emphasis on influences from Balkan cultures or particular national traditions.

The volume is furnished with a very useful index of names, compiled by Krzysztof Usakiewicz. Overall, the reader can find a structured and concentrated collection of works, important for better understanding not just of the semantics of

Russia in the Balkans, as an encompassing topic of the volume, but many other contemporary research problems dealing with the studies of Balkans, culture, philology, literature, memory, history, to name just a few of them.