

The Role of Exiled Poles in the Art Process in Siberia, 19th Century

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Abstract—The article singles out and analyses the main influences of the Polish artists sent to Siberian exile in the 19th century. Some artists' names are introduced for the first time; they have been discovered in archives. Their work is studied and correlated with the development of art processes in regional centers of that time. The attitude of the local people towards the Poles is under research, both in the migration period and after it. The article emphasizes the influence of Polish culture reflected in the works of the 19th century exiled artists and their descendants.

Keywords—artists; exile; Pole; Siberia; art schools; drawing schools; artistic life; 19th century

I. INTRODUCTION

Siberian culture memory is a topic of special current interest of researchers in the 21st century. The regional scholars are aware of cultural identity of the vast land spread from the Urals to the eastern borders of Russia; the home thinkers refill the gaps of humanitarian knowledge that used to be connected with metropolitan culture only; the world scientific community study the outer and inner laws of art development.

Studying Siberian art life reflects the fact that the creative forces of the region accumulated, revised, and reconstructed anew the culture of numerous nations that had been sent to that severe land. The most common road to Siberia was that for people in chains. The tsarist regime punished them for different crimes including those challenging the state power. Among the exiles, there were creative people who then formed the art atmosphere of the region and introduced their own traditions into its culture.

After the national liberation revolts of the 19th century, Poles were coming to the region as political exiles. They played an important role in the development of Siberian art process. This historical subject is one of the most dramatic ones in Siberian studies; works by the following Russian and Polish researchers consider it thoroughly: Karolchak, Mulina, Skorobogatova, Skubnevsky, Slivovskaya, Tokarev, Fatianov, Shostakovich and many others. Nevertheless, this subject is still current. Conceptualization of the memoirs left by the rioters and their descendants, little known archive documents, the materials of retrospective periodicals touching upon the lives of Polish exiles in Siberia - they all

need including this essential information into scientific practice of the broad range problems.

It is important to mention that the influence of the Poles on the art life of Siberia in the 19th century, as well as the region's art education, has not been studied enough. At the same time the Polish "outlaws" greatly influenced the spiritual life of the country beyond the Urals, for most of them came from middle and upper classes, they had brilliant education, and spoke several European languages fluently, they carried musical culture (even at the level of home musicians), they could draw, paint, and dance. The Poles impressed the Siberians with the level of their inner culture, their manners, attitude towards the opposite sex, as well as with their ability to overcome all the difficulties of the exile and hard labor.

Let us consider how the Polish culture entered the art life of the region in the 19th century and promoted its art education; there are three types of that influence: teaching art to the local people; introducing European cultural traditions; participation of the Polish exiles' descendants in the development of the Russian art.

II. TEACHING ART TO LOCAL PEOPLE

Siberia used to be more than just a geographic concept for the Polish political convicts who were coming to the region after the national liberation revolts of 1830 and 1863-1864. It was a test of the national firmness peculiar for 18 thousand people who flowed to the Siberian land in the 19th century. Many of them were exiled to settle there, so they were enrolled in the places of their assignment. Therefore, they had the right to be employed. An additional job helped most "outlaws" survive both physically and psychologically, which was especially important for those who did not get any support from their relatives and only had small official food allowances given by the authorities.

In the Polish state, Siberia was called "a prison without bars", where Poles were known as educated, responsible and honest workers, and their labor was cheaper than that of free citizens. Siberians turned to them to solve different problems, from healing the blind to fixing guns. "In their opinion, a Pole was a person with 'golden fingers' that knew everything

and could do everything” [4. P.142]. In the cities, the outlaws “used to produce and sell fashionable goods of high quality. It was the reason why everything ‘Polish’ was considered to be fashionable in Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Tobolsk, and Tomsk” [6. P.6]. The Poles were engaged in soap making, baking bread, ploughing, gold mining, and organizing trade. For example, the exile Karol Matushinsky opened his “Varshavsky” (Warsaw) shop in Yeniseisk in 1877. Nartsiz Voitsekhovskiy, who was serving his sentence in the Munusinsk district, administered the biggest manufacturing business in the Yenisei region and was very much respected by the people of the district.

As a rule, “the political outlaws” used to have socially required knowledge (of trades and crafts, engineering, medicine, commerce, etc.). But there were administrative obstacles for the people representing creative jobs: it was forbidden for them to teach children science and arts. Nevertheless, while the settlers could be fined or even arrested for breaking the rule, the local authorities did not always follow their own regulations [9. P.117]. In the province, there were few educated employees, any inspectors did not come very often, and the local high society members were interested in good education for their children, so that they could go further, to high schools and universities. The Polish exiles of Minusinsk emphasized that “there is a demand for teachers’ work in the town, which outweighs even the fear of any relations with the supervised convicts” [11. P.157]. In all the rich homes of Krasnoyarsk, even those of the government representatives, the Poles were busy as educators, which soon became known to the metropolitan bosses. As a result, in 1865 both teaching and living in Krasnoyarsk were forbidden for the political exiles [1. P.136-137]. The Pole Vincenty Migurskiy noted that the citizens of Uralsk striving for education could find it only among the exiled Poles, so they were glad to receive them at their homes, studying French, European habits and ways, and etiquette [2. P.167]. The scholar Alexander Kytmanov noted that “thanks to the Poles’ coming, there were music and dancing classes in Yeniseisk” [7. P.107]. So, in all Siberian cities and towns, “educated Polish convicts and exiles knowing foreign languages were eagerly received in the homes of the local officials and rich merchants as teachers of languages, drawing, music, or dancing: they used to conduct orchestras, give concerts, etc.” [13. P.15].

Thanks to the arts, the Poles could visit the homes of high Siberian officials and had the right to communicate with the town elites. For instance, the exiled artist Leopold Nemirovskiy taught drawing to the children of Mevius, the head of the Usolsk salt factory. The governor general V. Ya. Rupert learned about it, and, in 1841, the political convict was moved to Irkutsk, where he taught the official’s daughters. Nemirovskiy was an educated lawyer, but in exile his artistic skills were in more demand. He “was always busy with his classes and drawing” [2. P.398]. It is known that the talented Pole also taught the Decembrist S. G. Volkonskiy’s children. The fate of Karol Novakovskiy, a student of Warsaw Academy of Arts, was similar to that: he taught the children of Krasnoyarsk high officials, and thanks to that he could enter the city’s aristocratic circles [13. P.280].

In the 1870’s, the Polish exiles in Irkutsk, Yuzef Berkman and Stanislav Vronskiy, founded an art workshop, which was a great success with the citizens. The workshop was closed because of unknown reasons, but it is known that Vronskiy was later employed as an art teacher at Irkutsk Technical School, where he worked from 1880 to 1885. The artist did not present his education certificate, claiming having lost it. Then, the school administration made an inquiry about the copy of his certificate at Warsaw Painting School which he claimed to have graduated from. An answer from Poland came saying that Stanislav had completed only three years, and he did not have the right to the certificate. Instead of the Polish convict, the artist S. T. Vlasenko was employed, a graduate from St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.

Little is known about the exiles Vorchinskiy and Glukhovskiy (their first names are unknown) and what they used to do in the art studio of the Yeniseisk local citizen, Grigori Baryshevtsev. Unfortunately, the studio did not live long, and the information about it has been lost.

The lives of the Polish exiles including those with artistic talents were different. Some of them adjusted to the environment by and by and managed to enter the elite of the local communities, while others just found an opportunity to make a satisfactory living. There were also those who could not naturalize at all. There were cases of flight, insanity, suicide, acts of provocation, and even changing names to commute the sentences. Many Poles isolated themselves in the national communities to find some peace of mind. Dostoyevskiy wrote in his novel, “The House of the Dead”, that the Poles in exile used to make up a closed community isolated from other convicts, “They were exhausted and unhealthy; there were about six of them. Some of them were educated. An educated person sentenced by law equally with common people often loses incomparably more than the latter ones. He has to suppress all his personal needs, all the habits; he has to move to the environment insufficient for him, he has to learn to breathe another air... He is a fish out of water into the sand” [5. P.265]. It is possible that the exiled artist Aleksandr Vladimirovich Stankevich perceived his life in the foreign land just like that.

III. INTRODUCING THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

The name of the Polish artist Aleksandr Stankevich has never been introduced into scientific works. Little can be found about him in the Krasnoyarsk Territory State Archive as well as in the manuscript by Dmitry Innokentievich Karatanov, a famous Krasnoyarsk artist of the first half of the 20th century.

In the late 19th century, Karatanov’s father, Innokentiy Ivanovich, worked as a manager for the wealthy gold mine owner, Pyotr Ivanovich Kuznetsov. The hospitable businessman often welcomed guests in his residence in the village of Askiz, Minusinsk district (now in Khakassia). Among the guests, there were Polish political convicts. It is necessary to note that Siberians were not hostile to the outlaws, unlike the people from Central Russia. For instance, the exile Mingurskiy recalled that the Irkutsk people

“accepted me with sincere sympathy...there was almost no home where our outcasts could be unwanted” [2. P.274]. That is why Kuznetsov was not the only one to welcome the exiled Poles. The artist Aleksandr Vladimirovich Stankevich used to be among his guests.

The Warsaw court deprived Stankevich of his nobleman’s status for being a participant of the 1863-1864 revolt; he was also sentenced to ten years of hard labor. Since 1865, he had been serving his sentence in Irkutsk. In 1866, he was sent to the Circum-Baikal railway. According to the archive materials, in 1871, he was 25 years old, 2 *arshins 6 vershoks* tall (about 170 cm, or 5 ft 4 in). The brown-eyed fair-haired man did not have anything special in his appearance¹. In 1871, Stankevich was sent to the Minusinsk district of Yeniseisk province, and in 1873, he asked the Yeniseisk governor to allow him to go home for six months to “organize provision for my ailing mother and brother living in the town of Litin”². The Polish convicts used to apply to the authorities for similar things that were often permitted, but Aleksandr’s request was rejected.

In 1876, his sister, Sofia Stankevich, a citizen of the town of Litin in the Podolsk province, asked the Yeniseisk governor to move her brother from the village of Pokrovskoye, Minusinsk district, “to another place where he could easier make a living by means of painting which he is engaged in”³. After the necessary testing of his political loyalty, Stankevich was permitted to live in Krasnoyarsk for a year and practice painting under the proper police supervision⁴. In 1892, Stankevich was seeking an opportunity “to return to his home country with restoration of his lost rights by the court or to stay in East Siberia and serve as a private”⁵, and his request was denied again in spite of his immaculate behavior⁶.

In 1895, after the enthronement, Nikolay II declared, “we order to free all the persons still serving their sentence for participation in the 1863 Polish riot, from the police supervision, with the right to settle anywhere” [8. P.2]. Stankevich was about 50 then, and it meant freedom for him and his fellow countrymen who had not had any opportunity to go back home yet. By that time, many lives had been broken. Their young years had passed, and family ties, property rights, and vitality had been lost together with their youth. Afterwards quite a few Poles warmly remembered their years in the foreign land. They had become successful people with serious professional achievements, they were also respected by the local people, they developed their property and businesses, and, finally, they found their family happiness. Some of them willingly stayed in Siberia or came back there after visiting their homeland.

But let us return to the artist Aleksandr Stankevich. Being a frequent guest of Kuznetsov at Askiz, he met a boy, Mitya Karatanov, who was keen on painting. Later, the Krasnoyarsk artist remembered, “He brought along watercolours of the Altai and Sayans landscapes, as well as genre pieces. The watercolours seemed to be fine, but they did not impress me so much, because I had already seen art reproductions in the books we had. He gave some watercolors to father who copied them later. We also had his oil canvas commissioned by father, ‘The Icon of the Holy Virgin Nativity’”⁷.

The watercolors mentioned by Karatanov are likely to be in the collection of the Krasnoyarsk Territory Local History Museum: “The Beisk Salt Factory” (1878), “The Top of the Birch Spring” (1879), “The Wealthy Quarter of the Village of Us” (1879), “The Yenisei” (1882), “The Channel of the Usa River” (1882), “Manufacturers in the Taiga” (1885), “A Peasant. A Reaper from the Novoselov Region” (s.a.), “Along the Sizaya” (1890). The watercolors were donated to the museum by E. P. Passek (not identified) in 1916; they look like a diligent student’s works: static, thoroughly drawn, and conventional. Most probably, Aleksandr had learned the necessary basics but did not get (or missed the chance to get) professional art education: at the beginning of his exile he was just about 16 or 17. Having natural artistic talents he vainly tried to adjust them to the demands of the people of the Minusinsk district where he was living at that time. Hoping to succeed as an artist in Krasnoyarsk, Stankevich had been living in the city for some time thanks to his sister’s effort, but his works were unnoticed.

Like Stankevich, other Polish convicts of the Yeniseisk province aimed at Krasnoyarsk after they had mentioned their belonging to the artists’ community. They had come to Siberia at their very young age (just as practically all the Polish exiles): the artists Karl Matushetsky (at 23⁸) and Frants Zaikovsky (25), the architects Valery Borkovsky (20) and Victor Leshchinsky (33), as well as the photographer Rafaim Charnitsky (24). Charnitsky wrote in his personal form that he had graduated from St Petersburg Art Academy. In the exile, all of them made attempts in art, but the results of their activity have not survived. Nevertheless, those people played a special role in the development of the regional art processes. They introduced European cultural traditions into the Siberians’ everyday life. The artistic people in the common day environment impressed the local people, broadened their concept of immaterial culture, and established the emotions in the people’s memories. Karatanov remembered that he was a child when he met Stankevich; it was the first time when he saw “a man who was painting watercolors himself, it was new for me and inspired respect. His very appearance was exactly like that shown in magazine pictures: a goatee and long hair; even his suit seemed to be somehow exceptional”⁹. Karatanov’s

¹ The Krasnoyarsk Territory State Archive (further KTSA). Fond 595, inventory 63, file 1012, paper 75.

² KTSA. F. 595, inv. 1, f. 5509, p. 1.

³ KTSA. F. 595, inv. 63, f. 1012, p. 1.

⁴ KTSA. F. 595, inv. 63, f. 1012, p. 10.

⁵ KTSA. F. 595, inv. 1, f. 3967, p. 4.

⁶ KTSA. F. 595, inv. 63, f. 873, p. 115.

⁷ The Krasnoyarsk Territory Local History Museum Archive (further KTLHMA). O/f 12020/f 9709.

⁸ Here and further on the ages are mentioned as they were at the moment of their coming to the place of exile, in accordance with the Poles’ personal data.

⁹ KTLHMA. O/f 12020/f 9709.

parents supported their son's communication with the "outlaw" Aleksandr Stankevich: the father was keen on art, while the mother belonged to a Polish exiles' family.

IV. POLISH EXILES' DESCENDANTS DEVELOPING ART CULTURE

The rioters were sent to Siberia both to be punished and to settle in its vast territories. That is why the Sabesskys representing an ancient Polish royal family found way to the severe land from Vilno (now Vilnius); they were Ekaterina Martynovna, her two grown-up brothers and the eight-year-old daughter Pavla¹⁰. The men took part in the 1863 revolt, while their sister and niece could be victims of the persistent policy of Muraviev the Hanger who used to clean up country estates in the Vilno, Grodno and Kovel lands, subject to him, expelling women, children, farmers, and even the cattle and fowl [13. P.19].

It is not known what had happened to Sabessky brothers while in exile. According to the memoirs of Karatanov, the son of Pavla Nikolaevna, Sabesskaya and her mother "stayed in Krasnoyarsk. I do not know how they made their living and where they dwelt. Evidently, there was someone who helped them with money or Ekaterina Martynovna could have some assets. Later, I do not know why, my mother found accommodation with the local citizen, a Yelena Tropina (I forgot her patronymic). She was a widow and had two daughters of about the same age as my mother was at that time. My mother would tell very much interesting about that period of her life, and she had always been thankful to Yelena Tropina, that simple, uneducated, and amazingly kind woman who used to treat her as her own daughter without any differences between my mother and her own children"¹¹.

The girl had lived with Tropina for about 3-4 years and, when a teenager, she found shelter in Vladimirsky children's charity home, existing there in 1848-1920's. The home was supported by the gold mine owner P. I. Kuznetsov, and Pavla Sabesskaya met him again some years later being the wife of Innokenty Ivanovich Karatanov.

The Poles' children exiled in Siberia with their parents later married the locals without any ethnic problems, because they considered Russia to be their homeland. But the rioters themselves saw those relationships differently. Within the Polish circles "some anxiety was expressed that the most outstanding representatives of the young generation deprived of any hopes for coming back home would gradually lose their national identity" [6. P.4]. To prevent rapid depolarization, the code of conduct for the outcasts "would put marriages to Russians on par with the gravest crime which could be committed by an exile" [12. P.186]. As a result, the rioters had minimal opportunities to get a family in the foreign land: a fiancée coming from home or getting married an exiled compatriot. Only few women followed their sweethearts voluntarily. A Polish woman had to sign the abandonment of all the property rights and could return

to the home country only after the husband's death. It is necessary to note that married Poles would answer the question "Would you like to have your family brought to you in case they stayed at home?" in the negative not to overburden the families' difficult situations.

There were very few convict women in Siberia, and some compatriots used to practice civil or mixed marriages, which was strongly opposed by the fellow citizens. Most people remained single. Ekaterina Martynovna Sabesskaya did not put up with her daughter's marriage either, though she lived in the daughter's family. "Grandmother treated my father very badly, because she regarded her daughter as a representative of such a noble family as the Chartoriysky princes (Petrashevsky was also their relative) that she deserved to be married a highborn man rather than my father, who was a common Krasnoyarsk citizen of a peasant origin. The daughter did not share her views; she supported my father, so it was natural that he was cold and unfriendly towards his mother-in-law, which caused conflicts"¹².

It is not clear what difficulties Ekaterina Martynovna had to overcome; she had been a convict herself. Many exiles remembered that the way beyond the Urals was the most horrible phase of the whole punishment. It was a cold off-road path, where hungry people in shabby clothes were robbed by the way; "the Polish convicted rioters were sentenced to exile as state political prisoners and sent there in chains. Parties of the convicts would walk or go by horse carts under Cossacks' supervision. The Poles, especially some of them, were under exceptional control." [14. P.55]. It took the outlaws' caravans about a year to get to their destinations.

The life of Ekaterina Martynovna in the foreign land was full of sufferings: she had lost her brothers and had to part with her daughter for some time. "By a twist of fate she came to Siberia, far from familiar environment; everything seemed hopeless, gloomy and foreign to her. Proudly and silently would she overcome her loneliness created by herself. Tall, slender, and one-eyed, she looked like a nun with her strict face, wearing a black dress and a big black shawl"¹³.

Her grandson became one of the most outstanding Krasnoyarsk artists of the early 20th century and praised the beauty of the Siberian nature in his landscapes. He also raised a galaxy of talented painters who followed the traditions of Russian realistic painting school. In 1910, Dmitry Karatanov organized the first Siberian drawing school in Krasnoyarsk; he worked out its four-class curriculum like that used in the art school in Vilno, his mother's hometown. An expressive example of such kind is that of the great Soviet composer Dmitry Dmitrievich Shostakovich, the grandson of the Polish exile Boleslav Petrovich Shostakovich who had served his sentence in Mariinsk. One of his sons, the musician's uncle, died very young; he "had a great talent in painting, and according to the experts of that time, he could have become an outstanding artist but for his untimely death" [3. P.192]. The

¹⁰ KTLHMA. O/f 12020/f 9709.

¹¹ KTLHMA. O/f 12020/f 9709.

¹² KTLHMA. O/f 12020/f 9709.

¹³ KTLHMA. O/f 12020/f 9709.

regional art development was influenced by the sculptor Stepan Romanovich Nadolsky¹⁴, a child of the mixed marriage of a Polish convict and a Siberian; the architect Vikenty Orzheshko born in the large family of the Polish, exiled doctor Florentin Orzheshko and Lutsia Potsoluyevskaya, the daughter of a Tomsk city doctor. Therefore, the next generations of Polish culture were affecting the art processes of the region. In the late 19th century, Siberians started to appreciate that contribution rightfully.

V. CONCLUSION

The role of Polish convicts in Siberian art processes of the 19th century still needs thorough academic considering. The theme has not been researched by art historians yet, due to different reasons. Firstly, the history of Russian art had been long connected with the capitals, while Siberian cities and towns were the main places of exile. Secondly, insufficient number of facts hinder the research limited with fragmented phrases from memoirs, watered wording of archive documents, or poor sentences of the old press.

At the same time, Siberians valued the Polish cultural influence in the period when the exiles were still serving their sentences in the region. In 1878, practically in the middle of the Polish deportation beyond the Urals, the local observers used to emphasize the fact that the landscapists Leopold Nemirovsky and Stanislav Vronsky, "being loyal to the truth of nature, also brought their service to real art in Siberia, and the artists will always be remembered with good words" [15. P.5]. In 1883, twelve years before the liberating manifesto, the reporters emphasized the "outlaws" contribution into the region's future. "Without a doubt, they have raised the development level. Siberia recognizes and values their contribution" [10. P.2]. In 1898, after the exiles' mass return home, to the west, the journalists called the former migrants "the Polish population of Siberia" [16. P.2-3]. The people treated the Poles as their countrymen; lots of them had artistic talents: Napoleon Dembitsky, Yuzef Berkman, Valery Borkovsky, Vortsinsky (the first name is unknown), Stanislav Vronsky, Glukhovsky (the first name is unknown), Karl Zaikovsky, Felix Zenkovich, Stanislav Katerlya, Voitsekh Kopersky, Pyotr Kshizhanovsky, Stanislav Leshnevich, Victor Leshchinsky, Karl Matushetsky, Pyotr Milevsky, Zygmunt Mineiko, Leopold Nemirovsky, Karol Novakovsky, Maximilian Oborsky, Aleksandr Sokhachevsky, Aleksandr Stankevich, Genrikh Filippovich, Yuli Flek, Rafaim Charnitsky, Leopold Cheletsky, Ignatsi Tseizik, Vladislav Eliash, and Apollon Yakubovsky.

Each of them was either a professional artist or a self-taught person; they were exiled to Siberia while students of Academy of Arts or just had some artistic talents. Perhaps against their will, they brought European culture to the east of Russia. In that severe land, they manifested themselves in different ways taking part in the development of art processes: they were enlighteners, took part in ethnographic expeditions, worked as teachers, realized their creative ideas and just surprised people with their hobbies. In their own

way, the artists comprehended the uniqueness of "the Russian north", admired the beauty of its vast landscapes and the pure souls of common Siberians. Having promoted the territory's creative development, many of them were changing the Europeans' concept of the region telling their countrymen not only about the exile but also about the colossal resources of Siberia, which had become an important page of their lives.

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¹⁴ KTSA. F. 2120, inv. 1, f. 240, p. 1.