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The Peace of Riga and the Recovery of Polish Literary Heritage

Introduction

In 1918, the recovering Polish State faced the problem of equalizing the differences existing between individual territories incorporated into the three partitioning powers (Russia, Austria, and the Kingdom of Prussia), the re-Polonisation of public institutions, and, above all, the creation of favourable conditions for the reconstruction and development of economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural structures in the Second Polish Republic. The priority in terms of rebuilding the integrity of cultural heritage was the recovery of Polish national souvenirs, art collections, book collections, and archives that were plundered and taken outside the borders of the former lands of the First Polish Republic in the period from the first partition (1772)¹ and to the

1 The archival and library collections of the Radziwiłł family of Nieśwież are worth noting here, as these are often discussed during meetings concerning the recovery process. Russian experts insisted on proving that the collections reclaimed by the Polish delegation were part of the Radziwiłł possessions until December 31, 1771. The Polish delegation insisted that the date of their seizure and import to Petersburg, as settled by the European research tradition, was August 1772.

In 2001, the National Archives of Poland, the State Committee for Archives and Office of the Republic of Belarus, and the Dialogue Foundation established cooperation aimed at the release of archival sets from the former Archive of the Radziwiłł Family stored in Polish and Belarusian archives, together with their registers and other accompanying archival inventories. For more on this, see: R. Jankowski, "Burzliwe losy Archiwum Radziwiłłów z Nieświeża od XV w. do 1838 r.", *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 11 (2000), pp. 35–68; idem, "Archiwum Radziwiłłów z Nieświeża od 1838 r. do XX w.", *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 13 (2001), pp. 131–168; idem, "Rękopisy biblioteczne w Archiwum Warszawskim Radziwiłłów", *Miscellanea Historico-Archivistica*, 25 (2018), pp. 191–220.

On the library collection, see: *Badania księgozbiorów Radziwiłłów. Materiały międzynarodowej sesji. Olsztyn 6–7 października 1994 r.*, ed. Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresałwcew, Warszawa 1995; P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, "Biblioteka Nieświejska Radziwiłłów: fakty, wątpliwości, pytania", *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, 41 (2011), pp. 7–30; R. Witkowski, "Katalog biblioteki księcia Aleksandra Ludwika Radziwiłła w Nieświeżu (1651)", *Bibliotheca Litwana*, 2 (2012), pp. 329–427; D. Narbutienė, "Nesvyžiaus ordinacijos Radvilų bibliotekos katalogas", *Knygotyra*,

events of World War I. The most important achievement in this respect, not only of the Polish Government and diplomacy but also of the scientific community, was the recovery of cultural goods from Russia, and, as of December 30, 1922, from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Its legal basis was the peace treaty concluded between Poland, Russia, and Ukraine on March 18, 1921, in Riga (known as the Peace of Riga or Treaty of Riga). A group of Polish experts and proxies, recruited from among historians, archivists, librarians, and art historians, was responsible for the restitution. They worked and negotiated devotedly with the Soviets under the Joint Polish-Soviet Re-evacuation and Special Committees.

Historians consider the Peace of Riga to be one of the most important documents of the interwar period for Eastern Europe. It established the central belt of the western border of Russia, forced Marshal Józef Piłsudski to abandon plans to establish an Eastern European federation, which had an impact on the character of the reviving Republic, and sanctioned the borders and political systems of Belarus and Ukraine. This issue has been raised by researchers, as is reflected in the literature on the subject,² but very few papers discuss issues related to the restitution of book collections and archival documents.³

61 (20), pp. 345–351; O. Guseva, “Polska kolekcja w Oddziale Słowiańskim Biblioteki Rosyjskiej Akademii Nauk. Historia i badania”, *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*, special issue *Polonika w zbiorach obcych*, 2017, pp. 277–286.

The 41st volume of *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej* [“National Library Annually”] cited here consists of 14 articles concerning the history of the collection of the Radziwiłł of Nieśwież Fee Tail Library. These are proceedings of the international conference on “The collection of the Radziwiłł Family in Nieśwież. State of research on its reconstruction”, organised by the National Library of Poland in Warsaw. See also: *Dokumental’noe nasledie Radzivillov (reestry bibliotečnyh i muzejnyh sobranij Nesvižskoj ordinacii)*, Warszawa 2009; A. V. Stëfanovič et al., *Biblioteka Radzivillov Nesvižskoj Ordinacii: Katalog Izdannij Iz Fonda Central’noj Naučnoj Biblioteki Imeni Ākuba Kolasa Nacional’noj Akademii Nauk Belarusi: XVII Vek*, Minsk 2012; M. M. Lis et al., *Biblioteka Radzivillov Nesvižskoj ordinacii: katalog izdanij iz fonda Central’noj naučnoj biblioteki imeni Ākuba Kolasa Nacional’noj akademii nauk Belarusi: XVIII vek: v 4 knigah*, vol. 1–4, Minsk 2013–2016.

² E.g., *Zapomniani pokój. Traktat ryski interpretacje i kontrowersje 90 lat później*, ed. S. Dębski, Warszawa 2013; J. Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe*, New Haven 2008; *Traktat ryski 1921 roku po 75 latach. Studia*, ed. M. Wojciechowski, Toruń 1998; J. Kumaniecki, *Pokój polsko-radziecki 1921. Geneza, rokowania, traktat, komisje mieszane*, Warszawa 1986; S. Dąbrowski, “The Peace Treaty of Rida”, *The Polish Review*, 5/1 (1960), pp. 3–34; J. Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, London–New York–Toronto 1951–1953. Hereafter, I refer to these by the titles only. Each of them includes references to previous literature.

³ E.g., E. Chwalewik, *Losy zbiorów polskich w Rosyjskiej Bibliotece Publicznej w Leningradzie*, Warszawa 1926; P. Bańkowski, *Powrót do kraju po stu latach. Rewindykacja rękopisów z b. Biblioteki Sztabu Głównego w Petersburgu, wywiezionych z Polski po upadku Powstania Listopadowego*, Warszawa 1930; P. Bańkowski, S. Ptaszycki, “Powrót do kraju po stu latach. Rewindykacja z b. Biblioteki Sztabu Głównego w Petersburgu, wywiezionych z Polski po upadku powstania listopadowego”, *Archeion*, 8 (1930), pp. 1–44; J. Szczepański, *Rewindykacja polskich archiwaliów w świetle traktatu ryskiego*, [in:] *Traktat ryski 1921 roku...*, pp. 201–208;

Many years before the commencement of diplomatic efforts and negotiations related to establishing the content of the Peace of Riga and later, the implementation of its provisions, representatives of the Polish scientific community made efforts to preserve, protect, and describe the cultural and scientific goods removed from the country. Nineteenth and twentieth-century researchers conducted queries in Russian libraries, archives, and museums to identify, record, and describe objects of Polish provenance. The results of their work were often used by Polish members of the Joint Polish-Soviet Re-evacuation and Special Committees in dealing with representatives of the Russian-Ukrainian side in the fight to regain literary heritage.⁴ In this context, an important role was played by the activities of the Society for the Protection of Historical Monuments, which had branches in various cities of Russia. The most important areas of its impact include St. Petersburg and Moscow. The society's activity focused primarily on collecting information about Polish collections and monuments in Russia.⁵

The recovery of Polish literary heritage

Many months of negotiations and diplomatic efforts preceded the conclusion of the Peace of Riga, ending the Polish-Bolshevik war. Recovery cases were included in point 5 of Article X of the peace preliminaries as part of the economic settlement between Poland and Russia. The committee was chaired by Henryk Strasburger (doctor of law, economist, minister of industry and trade) and Leonid Obolenski (lawyer, party activist, *chargé d'affaires* of the USSR in Poland in 1922–1923). At the end of December 1920, the Historic and Archive Subcommittee was selected to prepare the material that would constitute the basis for further negotiations. Its members on the Polish side were Marian Lalewicz (chairman of the Recovery Department of the Congress Works

D. Matelski, *Grabież i restytucja polskich dóbr kultury od czasów nowożytnych do współczesnych*, vol. 1–2, Kraków 2006; idem, *Problemy restytucji polskich dóbr kultury: od czasów nowożytnych do współczesnych. Archiwa, księgozbiory, dzieła sztuki, pomniki*, Poznań 2003; I. Mamczak-Gadkowska, *Archiwa państwowe w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Poznań 2006; P. Sierzęga, *Kazimierz Tyszkowski (1984–1940). Z dziejów nauki polskiej w międzywojennym Lwowie*, Rzeszów 2011, pp. 79–116; K. J. Tomkowiak, "Udział Zygmunta Mocarskiego w pracach rewindykacyjnych polskich zbiorów bibliotecznych z Rosji (1922–1923)", *Folia Toruniensia*, 18 (2018), pp. 57–87; D. Pietrzekiewicz, *Spory o zbiory. Piotr Bańkowski – rewindykacja i ochrona dziedzictwa piśmienniczego*, Warszawa–Pułtusk 2019.

4 D. Pietrzekiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*, pp. 11–13. In 2019, the author found the following materials from the participants in recovery works – documents not referred to previously – belonging to Stefan Rygiel, Marian Morelowski, Antoni Rybarski, Kazimierz Tyszkowski, Zygmunt Mocarski, Stanisław Lisowski, and Józef Paczkowski. These are stored in the Central Archives of Historical Records, the Archives of Modern Records, the State Archives in Poznań, the National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław, and the NCU University Library in Toruń. These inquiries are still in progress.

5 *Polskie dziedzictwo kulturowe u progu niepodległości wokół Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zabytkami Przeszłości*, eds. E. Manikowska, P. Jamski, Warszawa 2010.

Office), Stanisław Królikowski (a member of the Finance and Economic Committee), Bishop Adolf Szelażek, Stanisław Ptaszycki, and Józef Korzeniowski, who was later replaced by Władysław Semkowicz. On the Russian-Ukrainian side, they were Emmanuil Kwiring, Julian Leński-Leszczyński, Waclaw Miller, and Wartan Ter-Organzew. Since Ter-Organzew did not know the library, archival, or historical issues (he was an astronomer by profession), he was replaced by Igor Grabar (art historian) and Sergei Oldenburg (orientalist, member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, member of the Provisional Government of Russia). With these members, from March 5 to 15, 1921, in Riga – under the authority of Jan Dąbski and Adolf Joffe (simultaneous heads of government delegations and the editorial board) – they worked on a draft of articles concerning the return of cultural property.⁶

This work was particularly difficult, even though the preliminaries contained a special clause stipulating that the official treaty would contain an obligation to return archives, libraries, works of art, historical war trophies, monuments, and other cultural goods exported from Poland to Russia since the partitions. At the end of December 1920, Joffe was informed that Anatoly Łunaczarski (People's Commissar of Education) was forbidding the handing over of libraries and maps to Poland and that the Central Committee had already made an appropriate decision in this matter that did not allow these issues to be resolved without his prior consent. Joffe received an answer to the protest reported to Moscow from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs himself, Georgy Cziczzerin, saying that he underestimated how great a blow to culture the havoc of the St. Petersburg libraries and museums would be. He received strict guidelines for handing over only what was created on Polish soil. Cziczzerin also added that this matter was so important that it raised not only the anxiety of the People's Commissariat of Education (in the years 1920–1930, this office controlled virtually all intellectual and cultural organisations) but all those who were concerned with of Soviet culture.⁷

Seven meetings of the historical and archival subcommittee were devoted to the recovery of library and archival collections. The work on formulating the content of the document consisted of the head of the delegation reading out point by point, sentence after sentence, a fragment of the future treaty, each according to their editorial office and in their native language. If disputes requiring resolution arose, a discussion developed, after which the final, agreed-upon version of the text was established.⁸

Trouble began with determining the content of the first point of Article XI of the Treaty, specifying the obligation to return collections, archival materials, and art monuments exported from the territory of the Republic from 1772. The Soviet side proposed the introduction of a clause that these objects must be “a product of the spiritual creation of the Polish nation”.⁹ The Russians' demand was also controversial

6 See: J. Dąbski, *Pokój ryski. Wspomnienia, pertraktacje, tajne układy z Joffem, listy*, Wrocław 1990; J. Kumaniecki, *Pokój polsko-radziecki 1921...*; J. Borzęcki, op. cit.

7 J. Borzęcki, op. cit.

8 W. Semkowicz, *Sprawa rewindykacji archiwów i zabytków. Zza kulis rokowań pokojowych w Rydze*, Kraków 1921.

9 Ibid., pp. 9–10.

in that it demanded the exclusion of items, especially manuscripts and printed matter, stored in institutions that had so-called universal cultural significance so as not to destroy their integrity. The following institutions were recognised as falling into this category: the Imperial Public Library, the State Hermitage Museum, the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Fine Arts, the Museum of the Romanian, and the History Museum. In short, those institutions that had come into possession of the largest number of the most valuable monuments exported from Poland. After the final rejection of this postulate, Joffe proposed that in cases of threats to the continuity and integrity of these institutions, the arbitration of one of the world's scientific institutions should be settled. This concept was also refused by the Polish delegation. After lengthy and heated discussions, both sides agreed that in such cases, the resolution of the controversy would be handed over to the discretion of committee chairs. The formula that was finally adopted contained a concession only in that it recognised the need for the inviolability of closed, scientifically structured Russian collections that were the basis of collections of international cultural significance. Therefore, the issue was not the collections themselves but certain groups of objects included in them. Ultimately, leaving the item in a given collection was dependent on the joint consent of the Polish and Russian-Ukrainian delegations.

The case of archival materials was similar. Based on the agenda item on the return of archives, Poland had the right to demand not only its former diplomatic archive, included in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow but also the Lithuanian Metrics deposited in the Archives of the Ministry of Justice in Moscow. In addition to this, they could request documentation from ministries, offices (central and local), social and local government institutions, maps, and plans. As regards the Crown Register and Lithuanian Register, the Soviet side submitted an amendment limiting the obligation to return only those files which concerned the territory of the reborn Republic of Poland. It did not agree to the return of documents historically related to Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus. It declared that it would hand them over to those countries in due time. The Polish contingent explained that although these documents currently referred to various countries, they were historically connected with Polish lands. Books could not be divided or torn apart, but since they were taken from Warsaw, they should return to Poland.¹⁰ However, these arguments proved to be useless.

In implementing the provisions of the Peace of Riga, the Polish delegation had to deal with an opponent who often did not take his arguments seriously; who openly admitted that he was changing his position even in established cases; who often referred the next day to what he had said the day before; and, above all, who had a completely different morality and mentality.

10 S. Ptaszycki, *Cesarska Biblioteka Publiczna i Metryka Litewska w Petersburgu*, Kraków 1884; S. L. Ptašickij, *Opisanie knjig i aktov litovskoj metriki*, Sanktpeterburg 1887; J. Siemieński, "Rewindykacja archiwów koronnych. Przygotowanie naukowe i wyniki", *Archeion*, 1 (1927), pp. 33–60; P. Grimsted Kennedy, "Układ i zawartość Metryki Litewskiej", *Archeion*, 80 (1986), pp. 121–182.

The provisions of the Peace of Riga were to become binding immediately after the exchange of ratification documents on April 30, 1921. In fact, no action was taken at that time, and this situation continued for several months, as both parties accused each other of violating the terms of the agreement. The articles on the recovery of literary heritage, despite their importance and detailed discussion in the editorial committee, were only implemented after a considerable delay. For the implementation of Article XI, as stated in the Treaty itself, a Joint Polish-Soviet Special Committee should have been set up within six weeks of ratification on equal principles, and it was to comprise three representatives from each side and the necessary experts. For Article XV (concerning matters related to the re-evacuation of cultural goods, among other things; at the beginning of World War I, the Russians evacuated library collections, museums, and archival documents from Polish lands), on the same principles, there should have been a Joint Polish-Soviet Re-evacuation Committee, consisting of five representatives and experts. Moscow was the seat of both committees.

On May 17, 1921, by a resolution of the Council of Ministers, a Polish delegation was appointed to the Joint Polish-Soviet Re-evacuation and Special Committees. However, it did not begin to operate until October of that year, although the Polish government announced its readiness to work in Moscow in June. This delay was the result of various perturbations on the Warsaw-Moscow line, which were only averted by the agreement between Lew Karachan and Dąbski, signed on October 7, 1921. Due to the diversity and importance of the work of both of these bodies, specialised sub-committees were established in them. Three sub-committees worked within the framework of the Special Committee: 1) museum – for collecting monuments; 2) library and archives (historical archives) – also responsible for teaching aids and university property; 3) administrative archives – i.e., state and municipal. The Re-evacuation Committee had six sub-committees: 1) taxation; 2) railway; 3) road-water; 4) industrial; 5) agricultural; 6) household goods.

Works related to the recovery and restitution of literary and museum heritage (under Article XI) were planned for approximately three years. They ended up lasting much longer because, in 1938, some of their aspects were transferred to the diplomatic sphere. Although the Joint Polish-Soviet Special Committee was officially dissolved in April 1934, its work was continued by liquidation proxies – on the Polish side, this was Piotr Bańkowski, and on the Russian side, Nikołaĵ Kołczanowski.¹¹

The first chairman of both committees on the Polish team was Antoni Olszewski, an engineer, graduate of the St. Petersburg Institute of Technology, and, in 1921–1922, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. In 1923, he was replaced by Edward Kuntze, a librarian and historian who was then director of the Poznań University Library. The recovery tasks were supervised by Aleksander Czołowski (museums), Kuntze (libraries and historical archives, teaching aids), and Witold Suchodolski (administrative archives). At first, the Soviet team was headed by Otto Szmidt, an astronomer, geophysicist, and mathematician, who was quickly replaced by Piotr

11 D. Pietrkiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*, pp. 261–269.

Łazariewicz Wojkó, a professional diplomat. After his sudden death in 1927¹², this function was taken over by the director of the Hermitage Museum, German Łazaris. Kołczanowski managed the works in the final phase. These politicians were assisted by numerous experts and specialists recruited from cultural institutions, which included the collections of Polish provenance.¹³

For more than a decade, many librarians, archivists, historians, museologists, and art historians participated in the work of the Polish recovery group. The results of their work in searching for, recovering, developing, and popularizing knowledge about recovered documents and books provide important information about the Polish literary heritage that was largely damaged and lost during World War II.¹⁴

Recovery actions were not easy or conflict-free. From day one, the Soviet delegation sought to deny even the clearest and most uncontested Polish claims or tried to execute a minimal part of them, often forcing the waiver of certain claims in their entirety in return. Already at the first meeting of the Joint Polish-Soviet Special Committee on October 7, 1921, Poland vigorously vetoed the violation of point 3 of the executive instructions to Article XI of the Treaty, stating that until the items subject to recovery were in fact transferred, they would be preserved in their entirety at the place of their current storage and, unless there was pressing need, they would not be moved anywhere, and the Polish side was to be notified immediately about every single case of transfer. At the end of 1921, in an official letter, Olszewski wrote to Wojkó that he ignored facts such as the delay in starting work or weeks of political hold-ups to put pressure on the Polish government in completely different matters. However, he considered it unacceptable to cancel the previously agreed arrangements and unacceptable that the chairman of the Soviet side had avoided signing the approved minutes of joint meetings. From the commencement of the recovery works, problems arose in matters of transporting the recovered objects to Poland. For example, a wagon sent from St. Petersburg on April 6, 1923, with 46 boxes of valuable manuscripts was "lost" on its way to Poland for several weeks (it was actually hidden to force concessions on the Polish delegation). It was not until May that it reached the border checkpoint.¹⁵

12 On June 7, 1927, he was shot at a railway station in Warsaw.

13 J. Kumaniecki, *Tajny raport Wojkówa czyli Radziecka taktyka zwrotu polskiego mienia gospodarczego i kulturalnego po pokoju ryskim*, Warszawa 1991.

14 D. Matelski, *Problemy restytucji polskich dóbr kultury...*; I. Zima, *Aleksander Czołowski 1865–1944. Luminarz lwowskiej kultury*, Gdynia 2011; P. Sierżęga, op. cit.; D. Pietrzakiewicz, *Catenaty Rosyjskiej Biblioteki Publicznej w Petersburgu w świetle ekspertyzy Piotra Bańkowskiego*, [in:] *Historia, memoria, scriptum. Księga jubileuszowa z okazji osiemdziesięciolecia urodzin Profesora Edwarda Potkowskiego*, ed. J. Krochmal, Warszawa 2015, pp. 166–175.

15 *Rewindykacja zbiorów polskich z Rosyjskiej Biblioteki Publicznej w Petersburgu i innych bibliotek Rosji i Ukrainy. Cz. 1–2, 23 XI 1921–1 V 1923*, Dokumenty Dotyczące Akcji Delegacji Polskich w Komisjach Mieszanych Reewakuacyjnej i Specjalnej w Moskwie, no. 8, Warszawa 1923; P. Bańkowski, *Rękopisy rewindykowane przez Polskę z ZSRR na podstawie traktatu ryskiego i ich dotychczasowe opracowanie*, Kraków 1937; D. Matelski, *Problemy restytucji polskich dóbr kultury...*; D. Pietrzakiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*

There were many similar incidents during the implementation of the Riga provisions, which are shown, on the one hand, by official materials published by the Polish government in 1921–1924 and, on the other, by correspondence and the memoirs of people involved in these tasks. It should be emphasised here that the official documents from the recovery proceedings kept in the Treasury Archive in Warsaw were destroyed during World War II (during the Warsaw Uprising). Only a few fragments survived in the documents of persons or institutions involved in the recovery and protection of literary heritage. Today, they are scattered around various libraries, archives, and museums in Poland and abroad.¹⁶

From the first to the last day of the restitution work, there was not a single matter in which the Soviets accepted the Polish claims without causing problems. The Russian government wanted to liquidate the Polish claims under Annex X, i.e., the repayment of 27 million roubles in gold, by transferring valuables whose real value was 5–10% of the market price. Instead of 156 looted royal tapestries (made to the order of King Sigismund II Augustus in the years 1550–1560, according to the designs of Dutch masters), it offered the return of only a dozen or so pieces,¹⁷ and only a small part, one-fifth, from the collection of Stanisław August Poniatowski's Gallery of Engravings.¹⁸

This situation did not change much in the following years. Bańkowski, who had worked in St. Petersburg since 1927 on the receipt of manuscripts, incunabula, and prints, met with a very twisted interpretation of provenance characters almost

¹⁶ For more on this see: D. Pietrkiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*

¹⁷ According to the Treaty of Riga, approximately 140 tapestries returned to Poland in the years 1921–1928. Their history and craftsmanship were described during recovery works by, e.g., M. Morelowski, an expert on the arts in the Polish team. See: M. Morelowski, *156 arrasów flamandzkich Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 1922; idem, *Arrasy Jagiellońskie odzyskane w Rosji. Przewodnik po wystawie*, Warszawa 1923; idem, "Arasy wawelskie Zygmunta Augusta, ich wartość i znaczenie w dziejach sztuki XVI wieku", *Sztuki Piękne*, 1 (1924–1925), pp. 293–338; idem, "Muzealne rewindykacje delegacji polskiej w Moskwie. O znaczeniu rewindykacyjnych prac muzealnych Delegacji Polskiej w Moskwie dla historii kultury polskiej", *Przegląd Współczesny*, 48 (1926), pp. 131–143.

Currently, these issues are dealt with, among other things, by M. Piwock and M. Henkel-Bernasikowa. See: *Katalog arrasów króla Zygmunta Augusta*, Kraków 2017 – reference, pp. 601–619 and when describing specific objects. See also: M. Henkel-Bernasikowa, *Dzieje arrasów króla Zygmunta Augusta*, Kraków 2011.

The year 2021 is an important date for the tapestries collection. Two anniversaries fall in this year in connection to the turbulent history of the royal tapestries. These are the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Riga – a symbolic date related to the recovery of museum properties taken to tsarist Russia, and the 60th anniversary of the ceremonial public presentation of the royal tapestries in the Wawel Royal Castle, to celebrate their return from Canada, where they were safely stored after years of exile from Europe during World War II. This extensive collection of tapestries was presented for the first time this year. The exhibition is available from March 18 until October 31.

¹⁸ Z. Batowski, *Zbiór graficzny w Uniwersytecie Warszawskim*, Warszawa 1928; T. Kossecka, *Gabinet Rycin króla Stanisława Augusta*, Warszawa 1999.

every day – of course, to the detriment of the Polish side (e.g., the generally recognisable provenance characters of Józef Andrzej Załuski).¹⁹ There were also other more mundane problems, such as the lack of string for wrapping the packages, boards for transport crates, or appropriate nail sizes. Earlier, in October 1921, Czołowski had similar problems. He was the only Polish expert to receive a pass to the Kremlin, from which he collected the silver of King Jan Kazimierz, historical paintings and portraits of Polish kings (including Bacciarelli's work), and the sceptre and crown of King Stanisław August Poniatowski. Czołowski wrote: "Thank God, everything has been luckily preserved, seems intact. Currently, our main concern is transporting these items away from here. The task is not easy, in the face of transport difficulties and lack of packaging materials".²⁰

The recovery of the Polish literary heritage from the former Imperial Library in St. Petersburg was further specified in an agreement concluded on October 30, 1922. This agreement and the resolution signed the next day opened a discourse on the "universal" nature of the St. Petersburg library, disputed volumes, and those that were not subject to recovery at all and for which Poland was to receive an equivalent. For example, Soviet experts demanded proof that the archive and library of the Radziwiłł family, for which the Polish delegation submitted claims, was located in Nieśwież until December 31, 1771. They rejected the request to return a significant portion of manuscripts and prints from the Załuski Library (e.g., manuscripts on theology and canon law in Latin, which were not returned in full) and questioned the issue of incunabula and old prints (e.g., from the Manutius or Elzewir publishing house). Disputes concerned not only entire groups of objects but even individual copies or documents.

In the summary of the acceptance works carried out in 1925 in the Russian Public Library, it was noted that the hosts' methods of work were characterised by sluggishness and general resentment. As in previous years, issues that were not agreed upon at expert meetings were carried over to the diplomatic sphere, which was often associated with their failure to be resolved. In 1925, 27 meetings were devoted to manuscript recovery issues. Based on the established provenance, some books and documents removed from the Załuski Library, the University Library in Warsaw, the Library of the Society of Friends of Sciences in Warsaw, the Czartoryski Library in Puławy, the Radziwiłł Archive in Nieśwież, the Sapieh Archive in Dereczyn, and the Crown Archive, as well as other collections, were recovered.

19 H. Juszczakowska, "Z badań nad załuscianami w Bibliotece Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego", *Z badań nad Polskimi Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*, 2 (1976), pp. 35–76; M. D. Moricheva, *Biblioteka Załuskikh i Rossiyskaya natsional'naya biblioteka*, Sankt-Peterburg 2001; *Catalogue of Extant Manuscripts from the Former Załuski Library: The First Polish National Library = Katalog Zachowanych Rękopisów Z Dawnej Biblioteki Załuskich – Pierwszej Polskiej Biblioteki Narodowej = Katalog Sochranivšichsja Rukopisej Iz Byvšej Biblioteki Załuskich – Pervoj Pol'skoj Nacional'noj Biblioteki*, eds. K Kossarzecki et al., transl. P. Wojtas, I. Afanasjew, B. Dzierżanowska, Warszawa 2019.

20 I. Zima, op. cit., p. 191.

The resources in St. Petersburg were not the only ones that proved difficult to recover. In February 1925, Zygmunt Batowski (art historian, museologist, director of the University Library in Warsaw in 1919–1929) appealed to the Polish mission in Moscow to return the manuscripts taken from the University Library in Warsaw, which were located in Rostov-on-Don. At that time, a manuscript department was set up in the library, mainly for the previously recovered collections of the Załuski brothers, and Batowski wanted to include in it the library's own manuscripts. The return of these objects had been approved in 1922 and but had been constantly postponed by the Russians. These manuscripts arrived in Warsaw in December 1925 in 24 boxes.²¹

In November 1927, both delegations signed another agreement to regulate recovery operations, the so-called general agreement on the return of archival and cultural monuments taken by the Tsardom from Polish lands in the post-partition period. It contained, among other things, a clause stating that from the moment the document was signed, the parties would not be able to submit any new claims or claims based on Article XI of the Peace of Riga and its Annex No. 3.²² Based on this arrangement, Poland was to release archival materials of the Grodno and Vilnius Governorates regarding the territory of the Republic. The documents of the Minsk and Volhynia governorates were to be distributed among the signatories. The issue of the manuscripts, prints, and other materials that were taken away after 1772 and deposited in the Russian Public Library and the former Department of Foreign Denominations, the General Staff, and the Main Astronomical Observatory in Pułków, was subject to further implementation. The system also contained regulations relating to the collection of numismatics removed from the University of Warsaw,²³ private property (which was in the register of state or social institutions), and equivalents. However, the agreement did not regulate the issue of archives and the struggle of former imperial authorities with revolutionary movements in Poland after 1876. It assumed that the implementation of these provisions would take place no later than July 1, 1928, excluding, for example, acceptance works in the General Staff Library.

In the spring of 1928, the issue of recovering central archives and confiscated libraries came to the forefront of the Polish experts' work. In the field of library recovery, Polish efforts focused, on the one hand, on the receipt of incunabula and old prints (e.g., from the Manutius and Elzewir publishing house) and, on the other hand, on compromise and equivalent negotiations. It was at this time that a delegation from Poland won access to the chain incunabula (the so-called *libri catenati*) gathered at

21 D. Pietrkiewicz, "Z grabieży Katarzyny ocalone szczątki... czyli udział Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie w rewindykacji księgozbiorów na mocy traktatu ryskiego", *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznymi*, 5 (2011), pp. 245–272.

22 *Polsko-radzieckie stosunki kulturalne 1918–1939. Dokumenty i materiały*, ed. W. Balcerak, Warszawa 1977.

23 E.g. Z. Strzyżewska, *Konfiskaty warszawskich zbiorów publicznych po Powstaniu Listopadowym. Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego i Warszawskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk. Materiały i dokumenty z archiwów rosyjskich*, Warszawa 2000; E. V. Lepechina, "O wydače v Pol'shu po Rižskomu dogovoru 1921 goda ěkvivalentnoj numizmatičeskoj kollekcii Varšavskogo universiteta", *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ęrmitaža*, 2017 (87), pp. 78–104.

the Public Library in St. Petersburg. Of the several thousand incunabula, the chain ones were the most valuable. In his private diary, Bańkowski noted how much effort it took to recover several of these rare books.²⁴

In the memoirs of Polish librarians and archivists, not all Russians showed intransigent hostility to the Polish demands and experts. Kuntze noted that their bureaucratic treatment of returns was due to fear of responsibility. At the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, many of them were repressed, sent to gulags, or lost their lives, events which were documented by Russian researchers. In the absence of political overseers, however, some St. Petersburg librarians facilitated the work of the Poles: they published collections for evaluation and qualified them for recovery. They often protected them from being transferred to antique sales abroad by Soviet companies specializing in this procedure, which sold rare books, works of art, and valuables *en masse* in the 1930s.

As the years went by, Polish experts were increasingly worried about the lack of quick access to the necessary sources and even publications about previously recovered claims. They felt they had insufficient support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the weakening interest of Polish society in the recovery campaign. President Kuntze sent requests to all former and current participants of the campaign to write and publish information about other recovered objects. In May 1929, an exhibition of recovered objects was organised in Warsaw to revive public interest and remind them of the ongoing work aimed at the restitution of the largest possible number of memorabilia of the Polish historical past. Although the event did not last long, the state authorities, publicists, journalists, and residents of the capital focused on the most valuable recovered art objects, militaria, regalia, and souvenirs of subsequent Polish rulers.²⁵

In the following years, the recovery of archives and library collections continued. The implementation of the resolution of 1922 and the general agreement of 1927 still encountered several difficulties in practice, primarily at the Public Library in St. Petersburg, and had no prospects for the successful completion of the work. Consequently, it was necessary to conclude a new agreement, which, in principle, liquidated all the contentious cases accumulated in the course of recovery proceedings. It was signed on June 13, 1932. Its conclusion was not insignificant for the already hostile attitude of the St. Petersburg library authorities to the recovery obligations, although, to some extent, it contributed to the intensification of work. A clear stagnation in the performance of restitution activities occurred in 1930 as a result of tension in the political arena, and they remained in the orbit of matters related to the signing of a possible non-aggression pact on the Warsaw-Moscow line. The document was signed in July 1932, which had a positive influence on further acceptance works. For

24 D. Pietrzkiwicz, *Catenaty Rosyjskiej Biblioteki Publicznej...*, pp. 166–175.

25 S. Czerwiński, *Wystawa rewindykacyjna zbiorów państwowych. Wybór dzieł sztuki i pamiątek narodowych odzyskanych z Rosji na podstawie traktatu pokojowego w Rydze, Warszawa 1929.*

example, in 1933, manuscripts and prints confiscated from the Warsaw Scientific Society and the University of Warsaw were returned.²⁶

In mid-March 1932, the Act on goods confiscated by former partitioning governments in the struggle for independence entered into force in Poland, creating the opportunity to return many valuable documents and monuments to their rightful owners. That year, the pace of commissioning works in St. Petersburg gained a slight acceleration. The recovery of the archives of former central offices continued, 17 groups of which were returned to the country. The collection of archives was completed within the next two years. The recovered papers were sent to Warsaw. Also, at this time, the collection of manuscripts and prints from the St. Petersburg Public Library was completed. At the end of 1934, the agendas of the Polish delegation went into liquidation. Bańkowski became the liquidation attorney and, at the same time, oversaw the collection of nearly 12,000 volumes of *rossica*, equivalent to the part of the collection of Polish provenance held on the Neva River.²⁷

The issue of equivalents for Polish literary heritage left in Russia was not fully completed by the end of 1936. Even the specially appointed Equivalent Committee, which was to prepare the resources for the conclusion of two systems and cooperate in their implementation, did not bring about the desired result. These documents concerned the Polish diaspora left in the Russian Public Library. The first of them covered the equivalents for prints from the 16th–19th centuries, the second for manuscripts and incunabula. The first agreement, signed on January 25, 1934, was partially implemented. The second was concluded on April 17, 1934, and made fairly quickly.²⁸

The period of recovery works (1933–1936) focused on the restitution of archival and library resources. The collection of files of former Russian ministries and central offices was completed, and a relative agreement was reached on the equivalents for manuscripts and prints of Polish provenance left in the USSR. The case of the equivalents – at various stages – was very difficult, not only due to the complex nature of the issue but also due to obstacles deliberately and intentionally put forward by the Soviet delegation, which initially attempted to question the undisputed right of the Polish side to the equivalents for over 3,000 incunabula removed from Polish libraries. Alongside Kuntze, Suchodolski, and Bańkowski, the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Juliusz Łukasiewicz, participated in the negotiations on the equivalents and intervened on numerous occasions in the Foreign Affairs Commissariat and with the Education Commissioner. On his initiative, a meeting was held on December 13, 1933, at which the Soviet tendency to liquidate the Joint Polish-Soviet Special Committee before deciding on the equivalents was revealed. The equivalent resource finally established in 1934 boiled down to publishing 1,764 Latin, French, and Italian manuscripts, 1,308 incunabula, and 250 historical documents from the resources of the St. Petersburg

26 D. Pietrkiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*, pp. 129–146.

27 I. Troyak, "Rossicum – ewolucja pojęcia w nauce rosyjskiej od XIX do XXI wieku", *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*, 9 (2015), pp. 31–39; D. Pietrkiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*, pp. 147–269.

28 D. Pietrkiewicz, *Spory o zbiory...*

Public Library, along with three paintings from the Hermitage (Phillips Wolfermann, Jan Wijnants, Pietro della Vecchia) and 19 Polish military banners from the Artillery Museum in St. Petersburg and the Historical Museum in Moscow. Manuscripts and incunabula were originally part of the objects to be left in the USSR. Thus, the correct equivalents were only 250 documents, 19 banners, and three paintings.²⁹

Conclusion

The purpose of the present article was to consider the recovery works of Polish literary heritage carried out under the Peace of Riga, highlighting the involvement of the Polish scientific community in receiving manuscripts, prints (including incunabula), engravings, and archives of Polish provenance from Russian institutions.³⁰ In 1937, President Kuntze summarised the Polish restitution efforts by saying that although not everything that had ever been taken to Russia was recovered, it should be clearly stated that a lot has returned to the library and archive collections. Very valuable and unique items were among the reclaimed objects.³¹

Manuscripts and prints recovered based on the Peace of Riga constituted the core of the National Library established in 1928 in Warsaw. The recovered items consisted of almost 14,000 manuscripts (over 11,000 from the Załuski collection, about 1,000 from the University of Warsaw Library). The recovered objects accounted for 60% of the almost 75,500 old prints (as of December 31, 1939). An undoubted rarity was the recovered incunabula, including the chain ones. Unfortunately, none of the catenates

29 Ibid.

30 The issue of the dispersion of Polish library collections has been discussed by book historians for years. I will reference the works of, e.g., B. Bieńkowska, "Księgozbiory rozproszone, przemieszczone i przejęte. Problemy zabezpieczenia, dokumentacji i informacji", *Z badań nad Polskim Księgozbiorem Historycznym. Zbiory rozproszone* 15 (1993), pp. 5–12; U. Paszkiewicz, *Catalogus catalogorum. Inwentarze i katalogi bibliotek z ziem wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej od XVI wieku do 1939 roku. Spis scalony, poprawiony i uzupełniony*, vol. 1–2, Warszawa 2015; eadem, "Wybrane problemy dokumentacji zbiorów bibliotecznych na wschodnich ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej do 1939 roku – biblioteki rodowe. Stan, wybrane problemy dokumentacji i perspektywy poszukiwań", *Z badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznym*, special issue *Polonika w zbiorach obcych*, 2017, pp. 47–60; L. Kowkiel, "Polskie księgozbiory i polonika w zbiorach białoruskich", *Z badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznym*, special issue *Polonika w zbiorach obcych*, 2017, pp. 171–184; O. Guseva, op. cit., pp. 277–286; Z. Jaroszewicz-Pieresaławcew, *Księgozbiory z ziem wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej. Stan badań i postulaty badawcze*, [in:] *Stan badań nad wielokulturowym dziedzictwem dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, vol. 2, eds. W. Walczak, K. Łopatecki, Białystok 2010, pp. 75–84; H. Łaskarzewska, "Pracownia Dokumentacji Księgozbiorów Historycznych w Dziale Zbiorów Specjalnych Biblioteki Narodowej", *Z badań nad Polskim Księgozbiorem Historycznym*, 15 (1993), pp. 13–15; eadem, "Starania o zwroty polskich zbiorów bibliotecznych z Kijowa i Petersburga w świetle niepublikowanych dokumentów dotyczących realizacji ustaleń traktatu ryskiego – ze spuścizny Stanisława Lisowskiego", *Rocznik Biblioteki Narodowej*, 35 (2003), pp. 39–66.

31 E. Kuntze, *Zwrot polskich zbiorów bibliotecznych z Rosji*, Kraków 1937.

withstood the conflagration of World War II, and out of 14,000 manuscripts, less than 2,000 survived.³²

Today, the confiscated Polish manuscripts and prints that could not be recovered under the Peace of Riga are a source of international cooperation of librarians from Warsaw and St. Petersburg. In 2013, an inventory of manuscripts of the Załuski brothers was issued, prepared from professional scrutiny in 1806–1807 at the Imperial Public Library. This project was an attempt to reconstruct the manuscript part of the Załuski brothers' collection based on the only inventory preserved to this day.³³ In 2015, Maria Brynda and Maria Tkaczenko published a catalogue of books of King Zygmunt August in the collections of the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg, heir to the Imperial Public Library. Zygmunt August's library was one of the greatest and richest private collections of Renaissance Europe. Alodia Kawecka-Gryczowa researched and searched for volumes originating from it, which she completed in 1988 with the monograph *The Library of the Last Jagiellon. A monument of Renaissance culture*. Today, volumes belonging to Zygmunt August are scattered in 50 libraries around the world. One of the unprecedented events was finding and identifying as many as 74 volumes in St. Petersburg in 2004.³⁴

In 2019, the result of the long-term project of the National Library in Warsaw and the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg was announced. This is the *Catalogue of Extant Manuscripts from the Former Załuski Library: The First Polish National Library*. To date, the two largest resources of manuscript collections of the Załuski brothers in Warsaw and St. Petersburg have survived, as well as small parts in the Central Archives of Historical Records, the University Library in Warsaw, XX Czartoryski Library in Kraków, the Jagiellonian Library, the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the State Archives in Łódź, and also the Russian State Library in Moscow. The catalogue contains descriptions of 2,300 manuscripts (including 1,894 from the collections of the National Library in Warsaw), indexes and concordances of reference numbers, and introductory articles.³⁵ The works mentioned here as an example prove that the years of struggle endured by the pre-war generation of historians, archivists, and Polish librarians and the resistance in the USSR were not entirely wasted. This is evidenced by studies on the reclaimed objects that were lost again and the memory of people who were committed to restoring them to national culture.

32 D. Pietrzekiewicz, *Catenaty Rosyjskiej Biblioteki Publicznej...*; eadem, *Spory o zbiory...*, pp. 147–169; *Catalogue of Extant Manuscripts from the Former Załuski Library...*

33 O. N. Bleskina, N. A. Elagina (eds. with the coop. of K. Kossarzecki, S. Szyller), *The Inventory of Manuscripts from the Załuski Library in the Imperial Public Library*, transl. J. Cornell et al., Warszawa 2013.

34 *Catalogue of Books from the Library of Sigismund II Augustus, King of Poland, in the Collection of the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg*, eds. M. I. Tkachenko, M. Brynda, Warsaw 2015.

35 *Catalogue of Extant Manuscripts from the Former Załuski Library...*

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Abstract

The Peace of Riga is considered by historians as one of the most important documents of the interwar period in Eastern Europe. It established the central belt of the western border of Russia, forced Marshal Józef Piłsudski to abandon plans to establish an Eastern European federation, which had an impact on the character of the recovering Republic, and sanctioned the borders and political system of Belarus and Ukraine. These issues have been considered by researchers, as reflected in the literature on the subject, but only a few papers discuss issues related to the restitution of book collections and archival documents. The purpose of the present article is to highlight the recovery of works of Polish literary heritage carried out under the Peace of Riga. It shows the involvement of the Polish scientific community in receiving manuscripts, prints (including incunabula), engravings, and archives of Polish provenance from Russian institutions. Today, the confiscated Polish manuscripts and prints that could not be recovered under the Peace of Riga are subject to the international cooperation of librarians from Warsaw and St. Petersburg.

Keywords: The Peace of Riga or the Treaty of Riga; Polish literary heritage; international cultural policy; recovery of library and archival collections.