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BLACK MIRROR: A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF POLISH AND AMERICAN FAILURES

Abstract

Even though they occurred around the same time, the Polish January Uprising of 1863/64 and the American Civil War (1861–5) have seldom been considered in the same context by historians, while comparative historical studies of the events are scarce. The present article explores the historiography relating to both countries to, firstly, outline the most interesting attempts in existing Polish and US-American research to find shared aspects in the two events. Secondly, my study establishes and analyses phenomena and themes in these parallel histories that could prove most fruitful for comparative investigation. In conclusion, I assess the potential that comparative approaches could generate for the historiography of the American Civil War and the January Uprising.

Keywords: January Uprising, Poland, American Civil War, memory, gender stereotypes, nationalism, guerrilla warfare

I

One of the most renowned historians of the American Civil War, James M. McPherson, sought to illustrate the significance of this conflict for the history of the USA by referring to an experience from the 1970s. He met a delegation of Soviet historians who had come to mark the bicentenary of the War of Independence. McPherson was stunned that they had no interest in visiting places connected to the American Revolution. Instead, they wanted to visit the site of the Battle of Gettysburg. Why was this so? Because, as they told their hosts, Gettysburg was the US-American Stalingrad and the Civil War the equivalent of the Great Patriotic War.¹

¹ James M. McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword* (New York–Oxford, 1996), VII.

This anecdote helped McPherson stress the exceptional significance of the American Civil War for both historiography and the social and political life of the contemporary United States.² At the time of writing, the USA is experiencing a wave of iconoclasm, with statues and other memorials to the generals of the Confederate Army being torn down. However, it would be a mistake to believe that this is the final chapter of a history that has lasted some 160 years.

There is another aspect to the anecdote with the Soviet delegation that McPherson seems to have overlooked. However, this less conspicuous aspect contains great potential for exploring the American Civil War in the context of comparative and entangled history (*histoire croisée*). This potential has gone largely untapped, not only in the works of the renowned historian McPherson but also more generally in historical research. Existing attempts to adopt such approaches beyond the narrow framework of military history have concentrated on two particular spheres of interest. The first has involved investigating the emancipation of Black Americans in the context of the emancipation of peasants and serfs in various regions of Europe, most commonly through a Marxist-inspired lens.³ The second, which has yielded a much

² See *id.*, 'A War That Never Goes Away', *American Heritage*, 41 (1990), 41–9; Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, MA–London, 1997), 28–30, and many others.

³ The most dedicated adherent of this approach is Enrico Dal Lago, author of over a dozen studies exploring social problems in the nineteenth-century USA and southern Italy. Works include Enrico Dal Lago, "'States of Rebellion": Civil War, Rural Unrest, and the Agrarian Question in the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno, 1861–1865', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xlvii, 2 (2005), 403–32; *id.*, *Agrarian Elites: American Slaveholders and Southern Italian Landowners, 1815–1861* (Baton Rouge LA, 2005). Dal Lago also contributed to the edited volume, Jörg Nagler, Don H. Doyle, and Marcus Gräser (eds), *The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War* (Basingstoke, 2016). See also Shearer Davis Bowman, *Masters and Lords: Mid-19th-Century U.S. Planters and Prussian Junkers* (New York–Oxford, 1993); *id.*, 'Honor and Martialism in the U.S. South and Prussian East Elbia during the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in Kees Gispens (ed.), *What Made the South Different?* (Jackson, MS–London, 1989), 19–40; Richard Graham, 'Economics or Culture? The Development of the U.S. South and Brazil in the Days of Slavery', in *ibid.*, 97–124; Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge MA, 1987). A comparative approach to slavery, including the USA, was developed in Polish historiography by Iza Biezuńska-Małowist and Marian Małowist, *Niewolnictwo* (Warszawa, 1987). Their work resulted from a research fellowship that enabled them to visit the United States.

more modest number of works, has focused on the commemoration of the war, particularly the psychological impact of the South's defeat.⁴

My article outlines areas of interest that could prove fruitful for developing a comparative history of the American Civil War. To avoid falling into the temptation of more or less arbitrary comparisons, I locate my investigations in a particular time and place, namely: the period of the January Uprising in Congress Poland (the Russian-controlled Kingdom of Poland). I am aware that by focusing on the particular aspects of the two histories – of the Uprising and the American Civil War – outlined below, I omit a great number of others that do not contain the significant potential for comparative approaches (or I have not been capable of perceiving their potential in this respect).

II PARALLEL HISTORIES

In February 1861, Warsaw witnessed demonstrations by Polish patriots. During one such event, Russian forces opened fire, killing five people. Anger at the brutality of the military gave rise to a long-term protest movement that involved a significant portion of elites – Catholic, Jewish and Protestant alike – in Russian-controlled Poland. There was a notable escalation of the conflict in April 1861, when Russian bullets killed perhaps even several hundred people (the exact number is unknown). The repressive measures did not calm the situation; in fact, they had the opposite effect. Society opposed further restrictions, such as curfews, bans on wearing mourning-dress in commemoration of victims and any other ostensibly Polish clothing, and forbidding the singing of patriotic hymns in churches.

The pressure exerted on people who did not close shops despite flyers stating that they should be closed, who refused to make donations 'for the national cause' or who instead eagerly illuminated their displays during official celebrations of the Russian ruling court, amounted to low-level terrorisation that primarily involved smashing windows and caterwauling (Warsaw even had its own 'caterwaul bandmaster' and a price list: 10 roubles

⁴ A standard work that nevertheless has faced criticism from academic historians for its mistakes and tendency towards over-simplification is the popular study by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Kultur der Niederlage. Der amerikanische Süden 1865, Frankreich 1871, Deutschland 1918* (Berlin, 2001).

for services rendered without smashing windows, 15 roubles including the smashing of windows). People adjudged to have collaborated with the [Russian] police were often beaten up, to the extent that they lost some teeth, and some were threatened with having an ear cut off.⁵

Even as the Russian authorities made large-scale arrests in the following months, the Polish protest movement transformed into an organised conspiracy. Legal channels of communication with the outside world were closed down, while from autumn 1862, the private press was forbidden from writing on political themes or publishing foreign correspondence.⁶ The situation became explosive in January of the following year. Military conscription, organised in such a way as to include ‘suspicious elements’, including urban youths, led to the outbreak of an uprising that lasted nearly two years and bore all the hallmarks of a civil war.⁷

Around the same time across the Atlantic, Abraham Lincoln’s victory in the US presidential election of 1860 provoked a political crisis that resembled the situation that was developing around the same time in Warsaw. In early 1861, in response to Lincoln’s election (or rather, in response to its potential repercussions), South Carolina became the first of several southern US states to secede from the Union. The first shots in what developed into the American Civil War were fired four days after the bloody demonstration of 8 April 1861 in Warsaw. On 1 January 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which granted freedom to Black slaves in the rebel states. Several weeks later, the insurgent Central National Committee [Komitet Centralny Narodowy] presented its manifesto in Warsaw. It granted all citizens of a free Poland equal status, regardless of their origins, while peasants who had already been emancipated were promised land, thus closing a loophole in Russian legislation. The emancipation of serfs in Russia was proclaimed in 1861, though it did not cover the Kingdom of Poland.

⁵ Barbara Petrozolin, *Przed tą nocą* (Warszawa, 1997), 250–1. Cf. Małgorzata Sikorska, ‘Represje władz carskich wobec warszawiaków w latach 1861–1862 (czyli o modzie i biżuterii w okresie “żałoby narodowej”)', in Małgorzata Sikorska (ed.), *Zgniotał nas tyrany – powstaniem na nowo! Wokół powstania styczniowego 1861–1863* (Warszawa, 2013), 25–41.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 414.

⁷ Stefan Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe* (Warszawa, 1983), 555.

The parallel histories of the American Civil War and the January Uprising in the Russian partition of Poland diverged for several months in early 1864. Although the balance tipped in favour of the North during this period, the conflict still lasted for another year. The Russian army, meanwhile, managed to suppress Polish insurgents much sooner. In August 1864, members of the Polish National Government were hanged on the slopes of the Warsaw Citadel. Exceptionally harsh repressive measures followed, including the execution or deportation to Siberia of over 10,000 participants of the Uprising. The victorious authorities forced people into giving servile declarations of obedience to the Tsar. The Kingdom of Poland was stripped of any remaining traces of autonomy, with the Russian rulers adopting a hard line that involved abolishing Polish institutions, or at least forcing them to adopt the Russian language. It was not until the revolution of 1905–7 that the Polish lands under Russian control saw any real liberalisation.

The fate of the Confederate States took a different path. The capitulation of the Confederacy's most powerful military force, the Army of Northern Virginia that was led by Robert E. Lee, brought an end to the conflict in April 1865. But before the former enemies could reach an agreement regarding their post-war cooperation and work towards Reconstruction (a term that was already being used during the war), Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by a supporter of the South. Lincoln's vice president and successor Andrew Johnson favoured a moderate approach towards the vanquished, thus his Presidential Reconstruction entailed what was effectively a general amnesty towards former Confederates who had sworn loyalty to the Union. Essentially, then, he left them in power in the Southern States. One of the consequences of his policy was that fresh regulations were imposed to limit the newly-acquired rights of former slaves.

The Presidential Reconstruction and demonstrations of allegiance to the Confederacy by Southern elites provoked counteraction by the radical wing of the Republican Party. Within two years there had been a U-turn in policy. The subsequent decade, known as the period of Radical Reconstruction, saw the delayed imposition of aspects of military occupation in the South alongside limitations of the political rights of 'compromised' individuals, while Federal support was offered to former slaves. These measures were met with stubborn and sometimes armed resistance in the occupied states, with the historiography and journalism produced over the following century describing them

solely in terms of a series of political pathologies. It was only in the 1960s that a notable reinterpretation of the Radical Reconstruction emerged, with the period being framed in terms of efforts to secure and protect the human rights of Black Americans.

III COMMON ENDEAVOURS

Although many things took place simultaneously, events in the USA and in the Polish lands were rarely connected. As Jerzy W. Borejsza showed in the 1960s, compared to those in France or the United Kingdom, Polish émigrés in the USA offered relatively little organised support for the Uprising. No evidence has emerged since that would counter his arguments.⁸ The limited efforts were centred on the Polish Central Committee in the United States. What is particularly notable is that the only significant successes in fundraising came from women's auxiliary organisations.⁹ For many decades, historiography was dominated by a focus on Poles' involvement in the American Civil War. Mieczysław Haiman conducted some pioneering research on this subject in the interwar period.¹⁰ His estimates of the number of Poles serving on both sides of the conflict, as well as his figures regarding the number of Poles in the USA overall at the time, were, until recently, cited unquestioningly, or corrected according to particular authors' own reckonings and requirements.¹¹ Although Haiman might have exaggerated the figures, even then they were still not very high. There were no more than 30,000 Polish immigrants in the USA, meaning that their involvement in the Civil War was accordingly limited.

⁸ Jerzy W. Borejsza, *Emigracja polska po powstaniu styczniowym* (Warszawa, 1966), 293–5.

⁹ Joseph W. Wiczerzak, *A Polish Chapter in Civil War America: The Effects of the January Insurrection on American Opinion and Diplomacy* (New York, 1967), 125–30.

¹⁰ Mieczysław Haiman, *Historia udziału Polaków w amerykańskiej wojnie domowej* (Chicago, 1928).

¹¹ An illustration of the first of these approaches is evident in Florian Stasik, *Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1831–1864* (Warszawa, 1973), 256; the second approach, in Bogdan Grzeloński, *Polacy w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1776–1865* (Warszawa, 1976), 141–2. Stasik's work appeared in a revised English translation as *Polish Political Émigrés in the United States of America, 1831–1864*, transl. Eugene Podraza, ed. by James S. Pula (Boulder, 2002).

Both Haiman and those following in his wake attached enormous significance to identifying all of their countrymen who had achieved the status of officer and/or distinguished themselves in battle. Such most notable figures were Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski, who started out as an infantryman before climbing the ranks to brigadier general in the voluntary army of the North, and Ludwik Żychliński, who fought in both the American Civil War and the January Uprising.¹² There were other notable figures, albeit more colourful than distinguished, such as Kacper Tochman, Józef Smoliński and Walery Sulakowski (whom I will mention below). A rather fascinating non-mainstream figure (regardless of events in Poland at the time) is Adam Gurowski, whose scandalous memoirs presented a vicious attack on the Lincoln administration, landing him in court.¹³

Typical of Polish émigré historiography (and, until recently, of historical studies produced in Poland) on the American Civil War were its tendency to overemphasise the Polish contribution to the history of the USA, as if outdoing other nations were a badge of honour.¹⁴ The patriotic imperative was, of course, not particular to Poland and it met with criticism from professional researchers' side, with two notable examples coming from the early 1960s and mid-1970s. Eugene Kusielewicz was a student of the renowned historian Oskar Halecki. He presented his analysis at a meeting of the Polish American Historical Association towards the end of 1961. In his view, the greatest problem afflicting studies by Polish émigrés was amateurism, a trait that manifested itself in the tendency to exaggerate Polish contributions to anything that was deemed important and/or beautiful. Among the numerous, fairly humorous examples of how excessive patriotism could lead Polish-American authors astray, it is worth citing the case

¹² Piotr Derengowski, 'Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski i Legion Polski (58 pułk piechoty z Nowego Jorku)', *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy*, ccxviii, 3 (2007), 5–26; Alicja Kulecka, *Ku społeczeństwu obywatelskiemu. Czas walk i polemik 1863* (Warszawa, 2016), 230–1.

¹³ LeRoy Henry Fischer, 'Adam Gurowski and the American Civil War: A Radical's Record', *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America*, i, 3 (1943), 474–88.

¹⁴ See Valentino J. Belfiglio, 'Italians and the American Civil War', *Italian Americana*, iv, 2 (1978), 163–75; Andre M. Flecke, *Revolution of 1861: The American Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict* (Chapel Hill, 2012); Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana–Chicago, 1992).

of the ballooning pioneer and inventor Thaddeus Sobieski Lowe. He was celebrated in the press and in quasi-historical studies as a great American Pole.¹⁵ In fact, Lowe had no connection to Poland beyond his parents' evident enchantment with Jane Porter's novel *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, an early-nineteenth century bestseller.¹⁶ Another example is that of Albin F. Schoepf, a Pole who achieved the rank of brigadier general (before being stripped of it at the end of the Civil War). Schoepf was in active combat until April 1863, when he was appointed commander of the prison facility in Fort Delaware. Polish émigré historiography has drawn on his service there as inspiration for a portrait of one of the most humane officers running institutions for Confederate prisoners. Indeed, Fort Delaware is not usually mentioned among the most horrific 'death rooms' of the Civil War. Nevertheless, as Kusielewicz noted, memoirs by Confederate prisoners often mention the brutality and merciless of the commander of Fort Delaware.¹⁷ Kusielewicz's philippic made a plea for a minimum standard: "this is a plea for the future, that when historic events are commemorated by publications of any sort, professional historians, not amateurs or journalists be consulted".¹⁸

Some fourteen years after Kusielewicz, Maria J.E. Copson-Niećko wrote in similar terms in the prestigious history journal *Przegląd Historyczny*. Her exceptionally critical review of Florian Stasik's 1973 book *Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1831–1864* (published in an English translation by Eugene Podraza in 2002 as *Polish Political Émigrés in the United States of America, 1831–1864*) might have been somewhat milder were it not for her disappointment that the historian had uncritically repeated some of the mistakes that had plagued amateur émigré historiography for decades.¹⁹

¹⁵ Cf. Joseph Wyrwal, *America's Polish Heritage* (Detroit, 1961), 75.

¹⁶ Eugene Kusielewicz, 'Polonia and the American Civil War Centennial', *Polish American Studies*, xix, 1 (1962), 17–26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18. For a more recent study of prison camps, see Łukasz Niewiński, *Obozy jenieckie w wojnie secesyjnej 1861–1865* (Warszawa, 2012). A much more modest estimate of the extent of Polish involvement is provided by Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill, 1940); *ead.*, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge, 1951).

¹⁹ Maria J.E. Copson-Niećko, 'Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych w XIX wieku (na marginesie pracy Floriana Stasika, *Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1831–1864*, Warszawa 1973)', *Przegląd*

Indeed, it was Copson-Niećko who filled some of the gaps in the historiography on this subject in her works from the 1970s.²⁰ More recently, Piotr Derengowski has offered a solid and comprehensive study of Poles' role in the American Civil War.²¹ It seems that the call for the professionalisation of research on the subject has thus been answered.

IV

THE STRUGGLE FOR GREAT POWERS' ATTENTION

The second theme prevalent in research on the entangled histories of the USA and Poland during the American Civil War period is diplomatic efforts. Through the émigré political camp focused on Hotel Lambert in Paris, the National Government sought to force the European powers into decisions that would aid the Uprising's chances of succeeding. The maximalist objective was to ensure military intervention against Russia. As Stefan Kieniewicz argued, "the hope that the French would march in acted like a drug on all of [Polish] society".²² Ultimately the French did not arrive, although European governments, including the British parliament, did express support for Poles and criticise Russia's actions on several occasions. Indeed, Napoleon III initiated an offer to act as a mediator. Each such move was perceived by Russia as a blow to its international standing, although in the end, it did not make any concessions to the insurgent province.²³ A more

Historyczny, lxvi, 1 (1975), 93–103; Florian Stasik, 'Jeszcze o polskiej emigracji politycznej w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki (1831–1864) (w związku z recenzją M.J.E. Copson-Niećko pracy F. Stasika, *Polska emigracja polityczna w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1831–1864* (Warszawa, 1973) ogłoszoną w *Przeglądzie Historycznym*, lxvi, 1 (1975)', 93–103), *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxvi, 2 (1975), 332–7; Maria J.E. Copson-Niećko, 'W odpowiedzi doc. Florianowi Stasikowi', *Przegląd Historyczny*, lxvi, 2 (1975), 337–44.

²⁰ Maria J.E. Copson-Niećko, 'The Poles in America from the 1830s to 1870s. Some Reflections on the Possibilities of Research', in Frank Mocha (ed.), *Poles in America: Bicentennial Essays* (Stevens Point, 1978), 45–301.

²¹ Piotr Derengowski, *Polacy w wojnie secesyjnej 1861–1865* (Oświęcim, 2015). There is also a rather brief volume: Łukasz Niewiński (ed.), *Relacje polskich uczestników wojny secesyjnej* (Oświęcim, 2017).

²² Kieniewicz, *Powstanie*, 577.

²³ Jerzy Zdrada, 'Sprawa polska w okresie Powstania Styczniowego', in Sławomir Kalembka (ed.), *Powstanie Styczniowe 1863–1864. Wrzenie, bój, Europa, wizje* (Warszawa, 1990), 446–505.

realistic goal for émigré diplomats was to secure recognition of the National Government as a party to the war, as was the case with the Confederate States.²⁴ Such a move would have given the insurgents an opportunity to receive international loans to fund their military efforts. However, they were also far from successful on this front.²⁵

The United States was involved in these diplomatic debates only indirectly. In May 1863, Secretary of State William H. Seward politely declined the opportunity to sign a note sent by the European powers to Russia.²⁶ The USA officially adopted a neutral position which, in practice, was pro-Russian.²⁷ The most precise illustration of the alliance between the two states was the visit of the Russian fleet to the ports of New York and San Francisco. Although there was never an official acknowledgement of this, the reason for the visits were fears that should the international conflict related to the Polish Uprising have escalated, Russian ships would have been threatened by attack or being impounded in European ports. Washington, however, used the presence of an allied empire's navy to demonstrate the superiority of its foreign policy over that of the Confederacy. This remains one of the most positive moments in the history of Russian-American relations.²⁸ It was no secret that the January Uprising and the Confederacy were the reason for these cordial relations. As *Harper's Weekly* noted:

At the present time, Russia and the United States occupy remarkably similar positions. A portion of the subjects of the Russian empire, residing in Poland, have attempted to secede and set up an independent national existence, just as our Southern slave-owners have tried to secede from the Union and set

²⁴ “C[zartoryski] demande qu'on donne aux Polonais les moyens de durer, ce serait réalisable en les reconnaissant belligérants, il cite l'Amérique comme exemple et parle du Sud et du Nord” – ‘1863, 18 maja, Londyn. A. Wodzicki do Agencji Dyplomatycznej w Paryżu’, in Henryk Wereszycki, Adam Lewak, and Stefan Kieniewicz (eds), *Polska działalność dyplomatyczna 1863–1864. Zbiór dokumentów* (Warszawa, 1963), 330.

²⁵ A relatively recent analysis of Polish propaganda aimed at foreign audiences can be found in the outstanding study by Marcin Wolniewicz, *Moskwa ante portas. Rosja w polskiej propagandzie powstańczej (1863–1864)* (Poznań, 2014).

²⁶ Evgeny A. Adamov, ‘Russia and the United States at the time of the Civil War’, *Journal of Modern History*, ii, 4 (1930), 586–602, here 588–9.

²⁷ Detailed analysis of US-American policy towards Poland can be found in Wierzchzak, *A Polish Chapter*, 81–118.

²⁸ Janusz Szygowski, *Powstanie polskie w r. 1863 i Stany Zjednoczone* (Paris, 1961), 12–18; Adamov, ‘Russia’.

up a slave Confederacy; and the Czar, like the government of the Union, has undertaken to put down the insurrection by force of arms. In that undertaking, which every government is bound to make under penalty of national suicide, Russia, like the United States, has been thwarted and annoyed by the interference of France and England. The Czar, like Mr Lincoln, nevertheless, perseveres in his purpose; and, being perfectly in earnest and determined, has sent a fleet into our waters in order that, if war should occur, British and French commerce should not escape as cheaply as they did in the Crimean contest.²⁹

A shameful consequence of the alliance with Russia was the US helping to pursue Polish deserters from the Imperial military.³⁰ The legal basis for these actions was questionable, while Russia's behaviour did not win any friends. Shortly before the conclusion of the visit of the Russian fleet to the USA, the army of the North handed over to the guests a Polish deserter who had managed to join one of the artillery units fighting in Virginia. Aleksander Milewski had fled the Russian navy and was subsequently hanged on the yard of a mast of a Russian ship docked in the port of New York. This episode offers a vividly accurate summary of this chapter in Washington's relations with Petersburg, which concluded with the departure of the Russian fleet in early 1864.³¹

Historians of the international influence of the American Civil War have stressed how European governments came to focus on the January Uprising in Russian-controlled Poland, pushing events across the Atlantic into the margins. This state of affairs favoured the North, as it had feared foreign intervention. French and British interests were served by supporting the separatism of the South, even if this remained limited to diplomatic efforts rather than military intervention. The latter did remain on the cards, though, as the French were engaged in conflict in Mexico at the time. Napoleon III was also happy to serve as a mediator in the US conflict.³² The European powers did recognise the Confederacy as a party to the war while also doing business with it unofficially. However, it did not receive official diplomatic recognition. Furthermore, the Confederacy received

²⁹ *Harper's Weekly* (17 Oct. 1863), cited in *ibid.*, 157.

³⁰ Copson-Niećko, *The Poles*, 95–6.

³¹ Wiczerzak, *A Polish Chapter*, 188.

³² John Kutolowski, 'The Effect of the Polish Insurrection of 1863 on American Civil War Diplomacy', *The Historian*, xxvii, 4 (1965), 560–77, here 563.

less public attention and sympathy than the Polish cause. The matter of slavery was particularly crucial to this, with the liberal press in France and the UK offering convincing arguments that differentiated Poland's just cause from the unfair demands of the South.³³

There was a significant imbalance in the level of interest shown by the press in each other's affairs – that is, of the US-American press in the Polish question and of Polish newspapers in the American Civil War. This resulted not only from the restrictions imposed by Russian censors on the legal press in the Kingdom of Poland, where Polish newspapers scarcely mentioned the events across the Atlantic and when they did, they avoided adopting a clear stance towards the conflicted parties. The underground press never at all mentioned the Civil War, it seems.³⁴ Among the few attempts to juxtapose both conflicts was a contribution to *Czas*, published in Austrian-controlled Cracow in August 1863.

The behavior of Russia in regard to Poland is exactly like that of the Washington government in relations to the South. Their identical violent means are contrary to civilisation and humanity. Their politics are the same. They hope to deny the rights of freedom and independence to other peoples. Russia does not want to encourage the end of the war in America, and the northern states do not want to intervene in Europe on Poland's behalf. Moscow liberates the peasants and oppresses the Poles. America gives freedom to the Negroes and oppresses the Southerners.³⁵

³³ See George M. Blackburn, 'Paris Newspapers and the American Civil War', *Illinois Historical Journal*, lxxxiv, 3 (1991), 177–93, here 184; John F. Kutolowski, 'Mid-Victorian Public Opinion, Polish Propaganda and the Uprising of 1863', *Journal of British Studies*, viii, 2 (1969), 86–110.

³⁴ *Prasa tajna z lat 1861–1864*, ed. by Stefan Kieniewicz and Ilia Miller, Part I, ed. by Dawid Fajnhauz, Stefan Kieniewicz, and Wiktoria Śliwowska (Wrocław, 1966) [= Powstanie styczniowe – materiały i dokumenty, 12]; Part II, ed. by Dawid Fajnhauz, Stefan Kieniewicz, and Wiktoria Śliwowska (Wrocław, 1969) [= Powstanie styczniowe – materiały i dokumenty, 15]; Part III, ed. by Stefan Kieniewicz, Wiktoria Śliwowska, Otton Beiersdorf, Dawid Fajnhauz, and Grzegorz Marachow (Wrocław, 1970) [= Powstanie styczniowe – materiały i dokumenty, 16].

³⁵ 'Wojna amerykańska, *Czas* z 19 sierpnia 1863', 3, cited in Eugene Podraza, 'The Polish Emigré and Domestic Press and the American Civil War', *Polish Review*, xvii, 3–4 (1982), 112–21, here 118–19; cf. Adrian Uljasz, 'Krakowski *Czas* wobec wybuchu i pierwszych tygodni powstania styczniowego. Studium historyczno-prasoznawcze', in Mariola Hoszowska, Agnieszka Kawalec, and Leonid Zaskilniak (eds), *Galicja a powstanie styczniowe* (Warszawa–Rzeszów, 2013), 43–57.

The US press, by contrast, dedicated significantly more attention to Polish affairs, although this did not amount to a great number of reports. Journalists' sympathies were relatively evenly divided between the brave Poles (this was a typical description) and the progressive Tsar (usually accompanied by a reference to the emancipation of the serfs in Russia). The press in both the North and the South generally tended to adopt a fairly cynical position, expressing satisfaction (or disappointment) that 'Polish trouble' was distracting international attention from the Civil War.³⁶

V

TOTAL WAR OR A TOTAL UPRISING?

Although European governments of the time treated the Polish and US-American issues on equal terms, according to historians, the Uprising and Civil War belong to entirely different orders of importance. The conflict in the US is often described as the first total war, as both sides mobilised all available resources and rail transport played a crucial role, while the South, which found itself in more difficult circumstances, centralised production and rationalised resources on a scale similar to what occurred in the First World War.³⁷ Compared to this 'total war', the Polish Uprising seems to belong to a different age. Warfare was of a guerrilla or partisan nature, with units lacking discipline and weapons, while tactics and strategy were of limited significance.

This sharply contrasting image emerges owing to a tendency to focus on just one theatre of the American Civil War. Indeed, the battles fought on the East Coast between the largest units of each side in the conflict, the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia, involved hundreds of thousands of soldiers, massive losses of life and battles of such intensity that even the fiercest struggles of the January Uprising came nowhere near matching. However, this was not the only arena of conflict in the Civil War. In the west, much smaller units were involved in fighting across the sweeping territories of Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky and several other states where guerrilla warfare prevailed. The pro-Confederacy Bushwhackers and the

³⁶ Wiczerzak, *A Polish Chapter*, 62–80.

³⁷ See, for example, Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization and Field Command* (Bloomington, 1988).

Pro-Union Jayhawkers were the dominant partisan groups. The civilian population was dragged into guerrilla warfare and suffered significant losses, not only material. Both sides routinely hunted down and hanged 'traitors' suspected of supporting the enemy.³⁸ Heroes who found a place in the collective imagination were usually outstanding cavalymen, such as J.E.B. Stuart, who was immortalised in the memoirs of the Prussian officer Heros von Borcke³⁹ or the renowned general and scout (and post-war leader of the Ku Klux Klan) Nathan Bedford Forrest. The military deeds of such saboteurs, operating behind enemy lines, cutting off supply routes, destroying railway lines and attacking smaller garrisons fascinated newspaper readers and became the stuff of legend.⁴⁰

There are more similarities than differences between this less renowned theatre of the American Civil War and the battles of insurgents in the Uprising. The biographies of the most effective partisan leaders, such as the outstanding colonel Kazimierz Mielecki (who, like Stuart had a German volunteer accomplice, Theodor von Seydewitz), resemble those of their US-American counterparts.⁴¹ Both sides, meanwhile, also terrorised civilian populations – the Russian military and Polish insurgents hanged peasants and Jews suspected of collaborating with the enemy.⁴² During the first months of the Uprising, the National Government attacked Russian railway infrastructure

³⁸ David C. Williard, 'Executions, Justice, and Reconciliation in North Carolina's Western Piedmont, 1865–67', *Journal of the Civil War Era*, ii, 1 (2012), 31–57; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York–Oxford, 1988), 500–4; Maksymilian Stanulewicz, *Sądy i prawo w powstaniu styczniowym* (Poznań, 2005), 200–5.

³⁹ Paul D. Escott, 'The Uses of Gallantry: Virginians and the Origins of J.E.B. Stuart's Historical Image', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, ciii, 1 (1995), 47–72; about von Borcke see Jay Luvaas, 'A Prussian Observer with Lee', *Military Affairs*, xxi, 3 (1957), 105–17.

⁴⁰ Robert Glaze, 'Saint and Sinner: Robert E. Lee, Nathan Bedford Forrest, and the Ambiguity of Southern Identity', *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, lxix, 2 (2010), 164–85.

⁴¹ Janusz Karwat, 'Kampania zbrojna pułkownika Kazimierza Mieleckiego', in Wiesław Caban and Wiktoria Śliwowska (eds), *Powstanie styczniowe 1863–1864. Walka i uczestnicy. Represje i wygnanie. Historiografia i tradycja* (Kielce, 2005), 21–30.

⁴² Waław Nowak, 'Terror wobec ludności cywilnej Królestwa Polskiego i Ziem Zabrzanych stosowany przez oddziały i żandarmerię powstańczą w latach 1863–1864', in *ibid.*, 41–54.

until French shareholders in the company exerted pressure to bring a stop to these actions.⁴³ Nevertheless, attacks on trains and railway lines continued, even though insurgents themselves often used the railways to support their own efforts by sending railroad telegraphs, transporting weapons, and moving volunteers to field units.⁴⁴

The abovementioned similarities come as less of a surprise to those familiar with military history, a field that has always been sceptical of claims that describe the American Civil War in terms of 'total war'. Scholars including Arnold D. Harvey have questioned the majority of arguments employed in support of such claims. Modern means of warfare, including battleships, torpedoes, rockets and grenades, had already been in action elsewhere, or their impact on the US conflict was relatively insignificant. The railways, meanwhile, had already proved crucial in previous European conflicts, as had the telegraph. The largest battles in the American Civil War still involved fewer people than many Napoleonic battles. The losses were also smaller.

So what made the American war different? Firstly, as Harvey argued, the high level of education of the officer class. Secondly, and paradoxically, their incompetence and the indiscipline of the armies that were largely made up of untrained volunteers.⁴⁵

VI CONSPIRACY

The similarities of the American Civil War and the January Uprising are not limited to the guerrilla-style warfare that involved civilians to the same extent as the military. Both conflicts entailed a whole conglomeration of real and imagined factors that were at the limits of what was legally and culturally acceptable. With hopes of victory fading, both the Confederacy and Polish insurgents increasingly turned to conspiratorial acts. In the Kingdom of Poland, the Armed Bodyguards of the National Police [Straż zbrojna przyboczna Policji Narodowej] attacked important Russian officials and lower-ranking spies, with

⁴³ Kieniewicz, *Powstanie*, 596.

⁴⁴ Stanisław Łaniec, *Partyzanci żelaznych dróg roku 1863. Kolejarze i drogi żelazne w powstaniu styczniowym* (Warszawa, 1974), 134–48.

⁴⁵ Arnold D. Harvey, 'Was the American Civil War the First Modern War?', *History*, xlvii, 2 (2012), 272–80.

successful assassinations enjoying as much public approval as news of Lincoln's death did among many Southerners.⁴⁶ The head of the Russian gendarmes in Warsaw complained that

there is little mercy shown to stabbed officials, there is hardly anyone ready to read them the last rites, while many passers-by show their disdain with their gestures and smiles at funeral processions conducted under police guard. Yet, when the murderers are executed, there is a general sense of compassion, there is audible sighing, and women can be heard crying. There are even open complaints aimed at the government. Through their actions, the inhabitants of Warsaw demonstrate their solidarity with the committee that carries out these crimes.⁴⁷

The gendarmes allowed their imaginations to run particularly wild in the case of women who were actively involved in conspiratorial organisations or those who simply violated the rules imposed by the authorities. Scenes familiar from pre-Uprising Warsaw, where uniformed Russians pursued women who had ostentatiously worn mourning dress, also played out in areas of the South under Northern occupation. This approach was first tested out in New Orleans, the first large city captured by the North. General Benjamin Butler acquired the nickname 'Beast' after issuing an order that would see women who offended Union soldiers treated as prostitutes.⁴⁸ In many other occupied places, military reports were full of complaints regarding zealous confederate women's provocative and hostile behaviour. One Northern soldier's remarks might just as easily have come from a Russian serving in uniform in the Kingdom of Poland: "The men are just as mean as the women, but a little more discreet".⁴⁹

⁴⁶ A typical response is evident in a diary by a woman from South Carolina, Pauline Decaradeuc Heyward, *A Confederate Lady Comes of Age: The Journal of Pauline DeCaradeuc Heyward, 1863–1888*, ed. by Mary D. Robertson (Columbia, 1992), 74.

⁴⁷ Cited in Zofia Strzyżewska, 'Straż zbrojna przyboczna Policji Narodowej w Warszawie (1862–1864)', in Caban and Śliwowska (eds), *Powstanie styczniowe*, 55–65, here 56.

⁴⁸ Alena P. Long, 'Butler, Benjamin', in *Women in the American Civil War*, i, ed. by Lisa Tendrich Frank (Santa Barbara, CA–Denver, CO, 2008), 150–2.

⁴⁹ Stephen V. Ash, 'White Virginians under Federal Occupation, 1861–1865', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, xcvi, 2 (1990), 169–92, here 173; see Stephen V. Ash, 'Sharks in an Angry Sea: Civilian Resistance and Guerrilla Warfare in Occupied Middle Tennessee, 1862–1865', *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, xlv, 3 (1986), 217–29; Michael Wade, "'I Would Rather Be Among the Comanches":

Furthermore, the suspicions that some Polish and US-American women were spies were not entirely unfounded, even if they were generally exaggerated. Women did indeed play a significant role in both Polish and Confederate intelligence services.⁵⁰ Some paid with their lives for their involvement, such as Mary E. Surratt, who was sentenced to death and executed for her role in the plot leading to Lincoln's assassination. In the unfair trial, the gender of the accused clearly worked to her disadvantage.⁵¹

The growing role of women in the Polish Uprising and in the Confederacy's military efforts transcended the symbolic realm. It is, therefore, necessary to consider the standard cultural codes and stereotypes that participants in both conflicts employed. The femininity of national character was not something that was exclusively ascribed to Poles.⁵² Nina Silber has shown convincingly that such traits were also perceived in Confederates.⁵³ She argued that this was a reason for the popularity and vitality of gossip and rumours surrounding the capture of the president of the Confederate States, Jefferson Davis, who apparently hid in women's clothes.⁵⁴

The femininity of national culture was emphasised all the more strongly where Romantic cultural elements gained greater prominence.

The Military Occupation of Southwest Louisiana, 1865', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, xxxix, 1 (1998), 45–64; Christopher Phillips, *The Civil War in the Border South* (Santa Barbara, 2013).

⁵⁰ Nancy L. Adgent, 'Female Spies', in *Women in the American Civil War*, 29–35.

⁵¹ James C. Bonner, 'War Crimes Trials, 1865-1867', *Social Science*, xxii, 2 (1947), 128–34; Elizabeth D. Leonard and Mary Walker, 'Mary Surratt, and Some Thoughts on Gender in the Civil War', in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (eds), *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War* (New York–Oxford, 2006), 104–18.

⁵² Maciej Górny, "Polacy uwielbiają swoje kobiety". Płeć narodu w refleksji charakterologicznej okresu I wojny światowej i jej polskie refleksy', *Klio Polska. Studia i materiały z dziejów historiografii polskiej XIX–XX wieku*, v, ed. by Andrzej Wierzbicki (Warszawa, 2011), 27–60; Maciej Górny, 'Próby profesjonalizacji refleksji nad charakterem narodowym w XIX w.', *Klio Polska. Studia i materiały z dziejów historiografii polskiej XIX–XX wieku*, vi, ed. by Andrzej Wierzbicki (Warszawa, 2012), 11–36.

⁵³ Nina Silber, 'Intemperate Men, Spiteful Women, and Jefferson Davis: Northern Views of the Defeated South', *American Quarterly*, xli, 4 (1989), 614–35; see *ead.*, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill, 2008).

⁵⁴ Silber, 'Intemperate Men', 625–7. The visual dimension of this gossip has been analysed by William Gladstone, 'Jefferson Davis: Transvestite?', *Military Images*, i, 3 (1979), 8–9.

Both the South and Poland developed powerful and attractive models of behaviour. Many historians, literary scholars and cultural studies experts have described the quasi-chivalrous culture of the Old South that was obsessed with others' history. Bertram Wyatt-Brown convincingly demonstrated how the majority of these observations could be traced back to the key category of honour, which leads to perceptions of Southerners as being primarily concerned with their image as they engaged in battle. "In its most fundamental form", he writes, "honor was a state of grace linking mind, body, blood, voice, head, eyes, and even genitalia".⁵⁵ Irrationality, including belief in the civilisational superiority of the 'peculiar institution' of slavery,⁵⁶ was inscribed into the culture of honour like that described by Maria Janion in the context of Polish 'Wallenrods' actions.⁵⁷ After all, in the period explored here, both cultures came into direct contact on several occasions. Poles actively involved in the American Civil War, such as Kacper Tochman, Józef Smoliński, and Walerian Sulakowski, bridged both worlds. Each offered their services to both sides of the US-American conflict, all of them promising (some several times) to create a Polish Legion (more often in support of the South than the Union, which is hardly surprising given the nature of the US foreign policy). Crucially, though, material rewards offer an insufficient explanation of their risky behaviour.⁵⁸ While their zeal was certainly in part motivated by vanity, it was also a symptom of Romantic culture, just like the 'gallantry' of the officers of the South.

VII NATION-BUILDING

Comparison of the two historical events cannot escape the fundamental (and thus forever open) question of whether the Confederacy was a nation. Sources offer numerous testimonies to the general conviction that the civilisational chasm separating the Yankees from

⁵⁵ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York–Oxford, 1982), 33. An interesting case study by the same author is Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York–Oxford, 1994).

⁵⁶ *Id.*, *Yankee Saints and Southern Sinners* (Baton Rouge–London, 1985), 155–61.

⁵⁷ Maria Janion, *Życie pośmiertne Konrada Wallenroda* (Warszawa, 1990).

⁵⁸ Copson-Niećko, *The Poles in America*, 63–8.

the Southerners was unbridgeable.⁵⁹ US-American historians have, however, drawn a whole host of conclusions from these sources. The Marxist Eugene Genovese used the cautious term ‘distinctiveness’, while several others, including Kenneth S. Greenberg, preferred to speak of “something akin to national identity”.⁶⁰ Those countering this thesis argued that the differences between the North and South were of a civilisational nature (James M. McPherson describes the North in terms of *Gesellschaft* and the South in terms of *Gemeinschaft*). Perhaps, as McPherson intriguingly suggests, the South’s difference stemmed from its similarities to Europe, particularly those parts of the continent where serfdom was still in place. If this holds true, historians would have to approach the North as an anomaly requiring explanation.⁶¹ Returning to the comparison with the Polish January Uprising, it becomes clear that the oft-mentioned thesis that there was no nationalism in the South because it lost the war is patently absurd.⁶² Other explanations for the supposed absence of nationalism argue that the existence of slavery caused the South to view itself differently. Even before the Civil War, many USA inhabitants believed slavery was a mistake or even a sin, meaning that the foundations for building a sense of national belonging were too weak.⁶³ More convincing, however, are the arguments of historians who have noted that the germ of nation-building processes had developed. That the Confederacy was ultimately defeated is thus irrelevant. Drew Gilpin Faust presented the interesting argument that it was, in fact, the development of identity that led to the intensification of social conflicts, with these ultimately sinking the South’s cause.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Examples include Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders’ Worldview* (Cambridge–New York, 2005), 111–12.

⁶⁰ Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore–London, 1985), 107–21.

⁶¹ James S. McPherson, ‘Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question’, *Civil War History*, xxix, 3 (1983), 230–44.

⁶² See, for example, Richard E. Beringer, Herman Hattaway, Archer Jones, and William N. Still, Jr., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens–London, 1986), 30–1, 67–82.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁶⁴ John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830–1860* (New York, 1979); Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge–London, 1988), 84.

A typical way out of this bind of contradictory opinions has been to attempt to identify social groups that were effectively carriers of a mature or nascent nationalism. National feeling was not commonplace in either the Southern States or in the Kingdom of Poland. Gary W. Gallagher investigated the young, male participants in the war (in the Confederacy, the system of slavery made it possible to mobilise 80 per cent of white men capable of bearing arms; the group was thus rather large). The generation that grew up in the 1850s, just like the activities involved in the radical faction of the Polish Uprising, set the tone for nationalist discourses. “Their letters and diaries referred to ‘my country’, ‘our nation’, ‘the South’, ‘our independence’, the ‘southern people’ and otherwise reflected national identification and purpose”.⁶⁵

VIII MEMORY

There is already a significant body of historiography on the landscape of memory relating to the January Uprising. Lidia Michalska-Bracha has published two comprehensive monographs on the subject. She draws attention to the political restrictions that affected attempts to commemorate the armed insurgency officially. As we know, history is written by the victors, and the insurgency was put down. Michalska-Bracha cites a telling remark published in 1909 in the periodical *Nasza Ziemia*:

Polish society cannot yet afford a bronze memorial to the January Uprising ... But there would be monuments on the squares of Cracow and Lviv, collectively paying tribute in the present to the collective efforts of the past. The squares of Cracow and Lviv, mind you – because in Warsaw, such things remain inconceivable.⁶⁶

Despite such restrictions, the January Uprising remained the most vigorous Polish site of memory until the final years of the interwar Second Republic. And this was a result of efforts of the insurgents

⁶⁵ Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 63.

⁶⁶ ‘Pomnik roku 1863’, *Nasza Ziemia* (1909), cited in Lidia Michalska-Bracha, *Powstanie styczniowe w pamięci zbiorowej społeczeństwa polskiego w okresie zaborów* (Kielce, 2003), 62; cf. *ead.*, *Między pamięcią a historiografią. Lwowskie debaty o powstaniu styczniowym (1864–1939)* (Kielce, 2011).

themselves, who were actively involved in debates and discussions, as well as of patriotic organisations, works of art and the historiography on the Uprising, which was discussed in the press. Later, the Uprising's status as a site of memory was further strengthened by the efforts of supporters of Józef Piłsudski, who considered themselves the heirs to that 'deed'.⁶⁷ Particular phases are evident in this process which, in the broadest terms, led from direct and often violent reactions to the defeat through the documentation of battles, disagreements over particular decisions taken during the conflict and then of debates over appropriate forms of commemoration, to saving from oblivion particular distinguished individuals and groups who had been overlooked until that point. These forgotten individuals and groups included the women involved in the Uprising and then in offering support to those exiled to Siberia, with Maria Bruchnalska having been instrumental in promoting their cause.⁶⁸

The commemoration of the military efforts of the Confederates took a similar path, with each phase of remembrance outlined above in the Polish case proving analogous. The slogan 'Gloria Victis' was shared by both defeated endeavours. The veterans of the Confederacy engaged in endless disagreements in their periodicals over who made which errors during each of the military defeats or stalemates. Hierarchies formed where leading roles were played by informal custodians of memory, who had no qualms about censoring the memoirs of other fighters. Such figures included Agaton Giller and Jubal Early.⁶⁹ The public sphere provided an arena for a struggle over the dignity of those who gave their lives for the defeated cause, including efforts to secure dignified burials, identifying victims and exhuming remains for transportation to their families' home regions.⁷⁰ Commemorative

⁶⁷ Jolanta Załęczny, 'Strażnicy pamięci – weterani powstania styczniowego w II Rzeczypospolitej', in *Dziedzictwo powstania styczniowego. Pamięć, historiografia, myśl polityczna. Zbiór studiów*, ed. by Alicja Kulecka (Warszawa, 2013), 125–36.

⁶⁸ Marja Bruchnalska, *Ciche bohaterki. Udział kobiet w Powstaniu Styczniowym (materjały)* (Miejsce Piastowe, 1934); see Michalska-Bracha, *Między pamięcią a historiografią*, 228–94.

⁶⁹ Gary W. Gallagher, *Lee & His Army in Confederate History* (Chapel Hill–London, 2001), 255–80; Thomas L. Connelly, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society* (New York, 1977).

⁷⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, 2008).

rituals also soon emerged.⁷¹ The most irreconcilable veterans refused to accept the reality of their fate, with many becoming involved in the USA in the terrorist activities of the Ku Klux Klan. Some also emigrated in the hope of creating a new state, as did the Pole Piotr Wereszczyński, who called for the recreation of an independent Poland somewhere in Oceania.⁷² Confederate memories did not, thus, operate in a vacuum but entered into symbolic contestation with the modest efforts to commemorate emancipation and with the much more significant actions of the victorious North, which sought to honour the memory of its heroes in a manner resembling that of the Russian authorities in the Vistula Land (the official name for Russian-controlled Poland after the January Uprising).⁷³ Women have, in recent decades, increasingly become the focus of historical research on the Civil War and Reconstruction era.⁷⁴ More recent publications have stressed their active role in shaping the Southern mnemonic landscape, with women's organisations, principally the United Daughters of the Confederacy, funding the majority of Confederate monuments.⁷⁵

Indeed it is in the memory of the defeat that the biggest resemblances can be found between the Polish January Uprising and the American Civil War. Commemoration is also a subject that reveals the limits of comparison. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of both national and international factors (including winning the war against Spain), the symbolic reconciliation of former foes took hold in the USA. As President William McKinley gave a speech in late 1898 at the Georgia House of Representatives, promising federal

⁷¹ David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge MA, 2001), 75–86.

⁷² Olga Morozowa, *Bronisław Szwarce*, transl. Wiktoria Śliwowska and René Śliwowski (Wrocław, 1982), 137–46; Jerzy Wyrozumski, 'Projekt Polski niepodległej na wyspach Oceanu Spokojnego (1870–1879) w zbiorach Biblioteki PAN w Krakowie', *Rocznik Biblioteki Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie*, xvii (1971), 97–113; Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South 1865 to 1913* (New York–Oxford, 1987), 15–20.

⁷³ Kirk Savage has explored the mania for monuments in the South from this perspective in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, 2018²).

⁷⁴ David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 2002), 137–86.

⁷⁵ Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville FL, 2003).

government support for Confederate graves (something that only the graves of the soldiers of the North enjoyed until that point), he was met with shouts of joy and tears of emotion. McKinley said:

The Union is once more the common altar of our love and loyalty, our devotion and sacrifice ... The national cemeteries for those who fell in battle are proof that the dead, as well as the living, have our love. ... Every soldier's grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor.⁷⁶

Even the most adamant supporters of Polish rapprochement with Russia could not imagine any representative of the Tsar uttering such reconciliatory words towards the victims of the January Uprising.

IX

CONCLUSION: COMPARING APPLES AND PEARS?

Not every comparison makes sense. As Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka wrote, it is the questions that historians ask of their material that are crucial in this respect.⁷⁷ Comparing the American Civil War and the Polish January Uprising opens up a number of research questions, which is understandable, given that they took place in the same period and that there were some actors common to both events. However, the most interesting questions are those that do not explore the direct connections between the two phenomena (mainly because such direct connections are necessarily relatively marginal). Surprisingly, perhaps, the first of these questions relate to combat, specifically – the forms it took and, more importantly, its impact on the civilian population. The massive scale of violence against civilians both during and shortly after the American Civil War has been covered extensively in historiography, whose equivalent for the Polish case is much less exhaustive and has been focused mainly on the specifics of guerrilla

⁷⁶ Cited in Michelle A. Krowl, “‘In the Spirit of Fraternity’: The United States Government and the Burial of Confederate Dead at Arlington National Cemetery, 1864–1914’, *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, cxi, 2 (2003), 151–86, here 152.

⁷⁷ Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, ‘Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung’, in *ibid.* (eds), *Geschichte und Vergleich. Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt–New York, 1996), 25.

warfare. It has also been very reluctant to revise the image of national solidarity that has typically accompanied depictions of the January Uprising. Another critical question for comparisons of the two events is related to cultural models. Both the psychology of the Confederate ‘cavaliers’ and the issue of Polish Romanticism offer fascinating sites for further enquiry. At critical junctures in history, both factors left their mark not only on culture but also on the way warfare was conducted as well as on ways of getting through occupations by the victors. Were these models as close as Russia and the USA were in their relations in 1863/64? This is something worth considering.

Finally, the broadest area of interest that might prove fruitful for comparison seems to be the history of memory and commemoration. The Confederate States and post-uprising Poland had to work through defeats that were a source of both humiliation and pride. In the US case, the Civil War remained a raw and hot site of memory primarily because it was directly connected to the question of equal rights. In the Polish case, the commemoration of the Uprising reached a peak during the interwar period, when it served a crucial role in the memory politics of the newly independent state. Whether it offers a narrative that would enable it to again serve an active role in society remains open.

transl. Paul Vickers

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