

“*I Love and Respect the Entire Czech People*”. Traces of Eliza Orzeszkowa’s Czechophile Activity Based on Letters to Edvard Jelínek

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Summary. The article, based on Eliza Orzeszkowa’s letters to Edvard Jelínek from 1881–1896, presents the relationship between the two writers. They were guided by the common idea of *vzajemnosti*, i.e. promoting cultural activities among the Slavs, aimed at bringing nations together. In this regard, Orzeszkowa undertook many initiatives in cooperation with the Czech writer. The first was an attempt to publish in Polish the work *The Fall and Rebirth of the Czech Nation*, presenting the history of the Czechs. On the pages of the letters, the project of publishing an anthology works by famous Czech poets and prose writers translated by Czesław Jankowski, Bronisław Teodor Grabowski, Władysław Bełza and Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska was discussed. The income from the sale of the publication was planned to be used to rebuild the National Theater in Prague (Národní divadlo), which burned down in 1881. The writer also organized a fundraising for this purpose at the “Orzeszkowa i S-ka” bookstore in Vilnius. The last undertaking was the intention to publish Orzeszkowa’s memories from her stay in Prague – it was to familiarize the reader with Czech culture. Even though some of the discussed plans were already advanced, they were not implemented, mainly due to tsarist decrees. This correspondence is therefore a valuable trace of the Polish–Czech cooperation between writers. The quoted fragments of Orzeszkowa’s letters to Jelínek are in the National Literature Museum in Prague (Památník Národního písemnictví). They have not been released yet.

Keywords: Eliza Orzeszkowa, Edvard Jelínek, correspondence, idea *vzajemnosti* (Slavic reciprocity), Polish–Czech relations.

„*Kocham i szanuję cały naród czeski*”. Ślady czechofilskiej działalności Elizy Orzeszkowej na podstawie listów do Edvarda Jelínka

Streszczenie. W artykule na podstawie listów Elizy Orzeszkowej do Edvarda Jelínka z lat 1881–1896 przedstawiono relacje łączące dwoje literatów. Przyświecała im wspólna idea *vzajemnosti*, w więc propagowanie wśród Słowian działań w sferze kultury, mających na celu zbliżenie narodów.

The quote “*I love and respect the entire Czech people*” comes from: Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, 6 January 1893, 2.

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Orzeszkowa w tym zakresie podejmowała wiele inicjatyw we współpracy z czeskim pisarzem, które odzwierciedlały sens zjednoczenia polsko-czeskiego. Wśród podjętych inicjatyw były przede wszystkim próba opublikowania w języku polskim utworu *Upadek i odrodzenie czeskiego narodu*, przedstawiającego historię Czechów, oraz projekt wydania antologii polsko-czeskiej. Dochód ze sprzedaży publikacji planowano przeznaczyć na odbudowę Teatru Narodowego w Pradze (Národní divadlo), spalającego w 1881 roku prawdopodobnie w wyniku podpalenia na zlecenie władz austriackich. Pisarka organizowała również na ten cel zbiórkę pieniężną w Księgarni „Orzeszkowa i S-ka” w Wilnie. Ostatnim przedsięwzięciem był zamiar wydania wspomnień Orzeszkowej z pobytu w Pradze czeskiej. Mimo że część z omówionych planów była już zaawansowana, głównie wskutek ukazów carskich nie zostały one zrealizowane. Korespondencja stanowi cenny ślad polsko-czeskiej współpracy między literatami.

Słowa klucze: Eliza Orzeszkowa, Edvard Jelinek, korespondencja, idea *vzajemnosti* (wzajemność słowiańska), stosunki polsko-czeskie.

„Aš myliu ir gerbiu visą Čekijos tautą“. Elzės Ožeškienės čekofilinės veiklos pėdsakai, pagrįsti laiškais Edvardui Jelinekui

Santrauka. Straipsnyje pristatomi lenkų rašytojos Elzės Ožeškienės (Eliza Orzeszkowa) ir čekų rašytojo Edvardo Jelineko santykiai remiantis jų 1881–1896 m. parašytais laiškais. Literatus vienijo bendra slaviškojo abipusiškumo idėja: skatinti slavų kultūrinę veiklą, kuria siekiama suburti tautas. Bendradarbiaudama su čekų rašytoju E. Ožeškienė ėmėsi daug iniciatyvų, siekdama lenkų ir čekų kultūrų susivienijimo. Minėtuose laiškuose aptariamasi bandymas išleisti lenkų kalba veikalą „Čekų tautos kritimas ir atgimimas“, pristatantį Čekijos istoriją, taip pat čekų ir lenkų antologijos leidybos projektas (žymių čekų poetų ir prozininkų kūrinių vertimai, atlikti Czesławo Jankowskio, Bronisławo Teodoro Grabowskio, Władysława Bełzos ir Wilhelminos Zyndram-Kościałkowskos). Leidinio pavidavimo pajamas planuota panaudoti sudėgusiam 1881 m. Prahos nacionaliniam teatrui (Národní divadlo) atstatyti. Dar vienas projektas – ketinimas publikuoti E. Ožeškienės prisiminimus iš viešnagės Prahėje, kuriuose atsispindėtų čekų kultūra. Šie planai nebuvo įgyvendinti dėl valdžios dekretų. Pristatomas susirašinėjimas yra vertingas lenkų ir čekų kultūrinių ryšių pėdsakas. Cituojami Ožeškienės laišakai Jelinekui saugomi Prahos nacionaliniame literatūros muziejuje (Památník Národního Písemnictví) ir dar nebuvo publikuoti.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Elzė Ožeškienė (Eliza Orzeszkowa), Edvardas Jelinekas, susirašinėjimas, slaviškojo abipusiškumo idėja, lenkų ir čekų kultūriniai ryšiai.

Introduction

Eliza Orzeszkowa's cultural and literary activity, which aimed at Polish–Czech rapprochement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, was addressed in part by Jerzy Śliziński (1953). However, it included a general discussion of the author's selected initiatives serving the idea of *vzajemnost*. The research grant "*Collected Works*" (*Part I and "Collected Letters" of Eliza Orzeszkowa. Critical Edition*) made it possible to prepare for publication her previously unpublished correspondence with Edvard Jelinek, and thus to reconstruct in detail all the cultural and literary activities undertaken together with the Czech translator. This article also discusses the reasons for their failure (often using the writer's correspondence with other people, among others Leopold Méyet, Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska or Bronisław Teodor Grabowski).

The idea of Slavic reciprocity and the activity of Eliza Orzeszkowa together with Edvard Jelinek

“Eliza Orzeszkowa was and still is one of the most favorite Polish authors in the Czech Republic”, Jerzy Śliziński said in the 1950s [Śliziński 1955, 64]. According to existing bibliographies, by the middle of the 20th century 31 Orzeszkowa’s books were published [Oliwa 1952; Gacova 1999]. This means that her works were received with interest by the Czech public. Polish literature had a significant impact on the awakening of the national spirit among the Czechs in the 19th century. In addition, Orzeszkowa’s works also played a major role in the Czech women’s movement fighting for equal rights, and the feminist magazines *Ženské Listy* and *Zenský Svět* regularly published translations of her works or presented her person. She epitomized an emancipated woman: guided by patriotic thought, she loved her own culture, literature, and art [Fournier Kiss 2014, 109].

Orzeszkowa reciprocated her sympathy for the brotherly nation: she was familiar with Czech literature and was fluent in this language. Traces showing that this community was particularly close to her heart can be found in the preserved, unpublished correspondence with Edvard Jelinek (1855–1897), a Czech publicist, prose writer, translator and a Polonophile. He was also a promoter of the Polish–Czech cooperation and mutual relations. In 1881, he founded and edited the monthly *Slovanský sborník*, which was guided by the idea of bringing all Slavic nations closer together, the slogan of “reciprocity”. That is why it discussed inter-Slavic relations, problems from various spheres of national and cultural life of the kindred nations. Jelinek was already known in Poland at that time – he published correspondence from the Czech Republic in the Polish press, among others in *Kłosy*, *Czas* or *Przegląd Tygodniowy*. His work attracted particular attention from Orzeszkowa.

She wanted to establish contacts with the translator. When she visited Prague for the first time in July 1881, she asked him to meet, in the following words:

I introduce myself to you as a Polish writer; I came to Prague with a lively sympathy for the Czech people and a sincere desire to learn about its affairs and matters. I come across your name so often in Polish texts that it gives me the courage to address you [Orzeszkowa to Jelinek, 10 July 1881, 1].

This visit initiated a correspondence exchange that lasted until Jelinek’s death (1897). The writers were guided by the common idea of *vzajemnosti*. Henryk Batowski described it as “a sense of tribal community and actions resulting from this sense” [Batowski 1946, 22], and thus it means the cooperation of Slavs in the sphere of culture, politics or economy with a view to bringing the nations closer together. The periodization of the concept of Slavic

reciprocity and its terminology is inconsistent (synonymous terms used: Slavic philosophy, Panslavism)¹. It seems important in this respect that Jelínek interpreted the ideas of the Slavic brotherhood in a different way than the movements that identified the community of the nations with the dominant tsarist Russia. One possible manifestation of this phenomenon could be a series of works by the Czech editor on Slavic reciprocity, especially polemical ones with the concept of Karl Kramar,² who from 1891 was the leader of extremely pro-Russian Panslavism.³ The Polonophiles believed that the Russification of the Polish nation causes enormous damage to the Slavic ideals, breaks the bond between the brotherly nations, therefore, for the sake of Slavdom, Russia should make many concessions to the Poles (including full cultural freedoms). Orzeszkowa fully supported these views and highly valued the editor of *Slovanski sbornik*. Their correspondence is a testimony to the mutual cultural activities that had a significant national background. Often, in her words that the Czechs are "an extremely friendly nation" [Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, 8 March 1882, 1], one should therefore look for their historical sense.

1. Commissioning *The Fall and the revival of the Czech Nation*

During her stay abroad, in 1881, the owner of the "Orzeszkowa and Co." bookstore tried to cooperate with Jelínek; she encouraged him to write a paper for the Polish reader, presenting the history of the Czech nation from the disaster in the Battle of White Mountain to the National Revival, as well as describing individual activists. It was to be "a very influential book, useful for the cause of mutual knowledge and rapprochement" [Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, 8 March 1882, 3] – this was the aim of this Polish–Czech project.

The Fall and Revival of the Czech Nation (the writer used the title *The Decline and Rebirth of Czechia*) was originally commissioned by the owner of the publishing house Bronisław Teodor Grabowski.⁴ However, as a result

¹ This problem was explained by Józef Ciągwa in the article *Słowackie koncepcje wzajemności słowiańskiej w XIX w.* [Ciągwa 1970].

² Karel Kramář (1860–1937) was the first Prime Minister of the First Czechoslovak Republic. An ideologue of neo-Slavism, supported Russophile aspirations.

³ Jelínek explained his views on the mutual Polish–Czech rapprochement, among others, in his works: *Idea słowiańska w Czechach (mianowicie ze względu na panslawizm i „rosyjskie sympatie”)* (Kraków 1881), *Pro shodu česko-polskou, několik úvah věcných i historických* (Prague 1887), *Věci polské slovanské tužby* (Prague 1893) and *Ke sporu rusko-polskému* (Čas 1891, no. 9–10).

⁴ Bronisław Teodor Grabowski (1841–1900) – writer, translator, Slavist and ethnographer; editor of *Częstochowa Calendar* and the *Czas* magazine. He wrote studies in Slavic literatures, as well as he translated Karolina Světa and Jaroslav Vrchlický from Czech. He maintained contacts with the Czech intelligentsia of the time, including: Julius Zeyer, Adolf Černý and Eliška Krásnohorská [Osiński 2020, 96–97].

Jelínek met him during his second trip to Poland in 1880. Grabowski was one of his closest friends. For 17 years, they corresponded (1878–1895). The Slavisa was full of appreciation for the *Slovanský sbornik* journal, founded and edited by Jelínek. From 1872, Grabowski lived in Częstochowa.

of the lack of agreement about the too distant publication deadline, this task was entrusted to Jelínek. “Mrs. Orzeszkowa commissioned a work with you [...] because I supposedly refused to write it,” Grabowski wrote to a Czech friend. – “Although it is true that I only did not want to accept the deadline set by her, but I was going to undertake this work” [Grabowski to Jelínek, 21 August 1881. Quoted after: Wiśniewska 2014, 442]. In the situation, the Polish Slavist – in Orzeszkowa’s plan – was to take care of the editing *The Decline and Rebirth...* but apparently this form of cooperation did not suit him, as – apparently – he had other ambitions, since for the next few months he did not reply Orzeszkowa’s letters, and even took offense at the “despotic lady” [Idem, 5 October 1881. Quoted after: Wiśniewska, 2014, 443]. Finally, *The Decline and Rebirth...* was thus fully entrusted to the Czech author.

In the Orzeszkowa’s correspondence with Jelínek, we can trace the fate of the aforementioned item. Her first letter on this subject is dated 14 August 1881 [Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, 14 August 1881]:

I was going to Częstochowa, where I stopped deliberately to see Mr Grabowski. I was sorry to hear that he had already gone to Cracow, and I could neither thank him for daring me to make your acquaintance, nor speak of your promise concerning the book on Bohemia that he had received. I wrote about the latter, right after I arrived here, to Mr Grabowski, asking him to take up the language editing of your work which he would most likely do. On my part, I cherish the memory of your book or brochure, and therefore, so that you know what company I am putting you in touch with my urgent request.

Jelínek undertook to write the history of the Czech people in Polish. (He even asked for “a certain number of the publication” [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 17 December 1881, 2v].) Within a few months, he sent it to Orzeszkowa. However, the writer had completely different expectations, expecting a “completely different form”. The work required a thorough editorial reworking, and in addition, some substantive suggestions were also made, such as extension, a more thorough explanation of selected historical issues or the addition of some fragments to the biographies of prominent Czech figures. Orzeszkowa found herself in a rather difficult situation: the manuscript did not qualify for further publishing stages, but it was also difficult to give up cooperation with a Czech author whose participation was supposed to serve the idea of Slavic reciprocity. Therefore, she decided to additionally involve her colleague and translator Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska in the project,⁵ who was a competent

wa. His frequent guest was E. Jelínek, when he visited the city. In 1892, for two days, he gave a guided tour of Cracow to a group of Czechs – Jelínek’s friends.

⁵ Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska (1844–1926) – writer and translator; Orzeszkowa’s friend from childhood and youth. Together with Orzeszkowa, she wrote around 1877 the novel *Złota hrabinka* (The Golden Countess) [*Ateneum* 1877, vol. 3, books 2 and 3]. She stated a close collaboration with Jelínek. In *Slovanský sborník* that she edited, she published a historical and moral sketch of

person – she had editorial experience, and she was fluent in the Czech language. She was enthusiastic about preparing a joint work with Jelínek: "For a socio-historical work about Czechia, but one for Poles, such a cooperation is perhaps the most appropriate form of work" [Zyndram-Kościalkowska to Jelínek, 21 March 1882. After: Wiśniewska 2014, 489] – she wrote in response to the proposal. Orzeszkowa's letter of 8 March 1882 reproduces an overview of the exact concept of this work:

Dear Sir,

I have recently read your work. It is beautiful. A warm and noble feeling that permeates it, rich in historical and social material, interesting as a portrait of a kind of extremely sympathetic nation. But – you will not resent my honesty, which is my duty and necessity – in order to be able to print this work, it is necessary not to edit it, but to transfer it completely into another language form, as if it were written in Czech. Reading your work, it is impossible not to feel gratitude to a foreigner who, with such love and perseverance, tries to overcome the difficulties of our language. But it is also very natural that these difficulties have not been overcome. I ask for forgiveness once again, but your beautiful works must be translated from the beginning to the end. I personally, because of my work, cannot do this. So I would like to make the following proposal to you.

*An old and good friendship unites me with the Madam Kościalkowska, whose name is somewhat familiar to you from our publications. She is a highly educated person, with a beautiful writing talent, speaks Czech and dealing with Czech issues with considerable energy. She knows your history and literature well, carefully reads Czech newspapers like: *Osveta*, *Female Letters*, etc.⁶. She even has a large collection of materials on Czech history, some of which she intends to elaborate, as well as materials from Rieger⁷ and Palecki⁸, including foreigners writing about Bohemia. I think that it*

Ślechta na Litvě in 1884. Její rozvoj historický, význam a život, and in 1885 an article about Aleksander Świętochowski, the first in a series informing the Czech reader about outstanding Polish writers. The fire of her native Grodno disrupted Orzeszkowa's literary work. When the publicist resumed work on her articles in early 1887, it was too late, because *Sborník* had already shut down.

In the bookshop "Orzeszkowa and Co." she published, among others, the study *Władysław Syrokomla. Studium literackie* (1881).

⁶ *Osvěta* – (in Orzeszkowa's spelling: *Osveta*) – a Czech cultural and political monthly published in the years 1871–1908, 1915–1921. Its founder was Václav Vlček. Among the authors of the journal were: Svatopluk Čech, Adolf Heyduk, Eliška Krásnohorská, or Edvard Jelínek.

Ženské listy (misspelled by Orzeszkowa: *Ženskije*) was a Czech educational and entertainment magazine (also referred to as feminist) published between 1873 and 1926. One of the editors of the journal was Eliška Krásnohorská (1892–1895). *Ženské listy* supported the emancipation movements. It encouraged women to gain education and earn their own living. For this purpose, an extensive information and publishing department was run.

⁷ František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903) was a politician, one of the founders of the Czech national revival and an advocate of Austroslavism. At the Slavic congress in Moscow (1867) he defended Poland, which was attacked for the January Uprising. He was the editor of the first Czech encyclopedia (1859–1874).

⁸ František Palacký (1798–1876) was a Czech historian and politician. Co-founder and main pro-

would be most appropriate to entrust her with the rewriting of your work and, if you would agree to it, the completion, extension of some of its paragraphs, applied to the needs and requirements of the public as well as of Polish literature. For example, in the history of the fall of Czechia, Kościalkowska has – I do not know from what sources – a lot of very interesting details, which, if included in the truncated chapters, would contribute greatly to the dramatization of the picture and would make it more understandable and edifying for us. On the other hand, a linguistic alteration would greatly reduce the size of the book, so that an increased amount of detail and description would not overburden it. Thus, for example, in the second part, one could give more space to biographies of such great figures as Anna Naprztek⁹, Swietla¹⁰ and a few others, as well as to present more broadly and for our society a more comprehensible aspect of the moral and philosophical basis of the Czech nation. All these details, naturally, should be very carefully placed at your disposal and subjected to your will, and therefore, if I am lucky enough that you will accept my proposal, Mr. Kościalkowska will enter into a direct correspondence relationship with you, and every chapter will be rewritten and with some modification or addition provided, she will send you for approval and acceptance. – As for me, it seems to me that since the book is written for the Polish public, the cooperation of such a person who knows the tastes, needs of this audience and who is in love with all things Czech would make the book very influential and useful for the cause of mutual knowledge and rapprochement. This is what we want most truly.

Jelínek considered the reservations regarding his work to be justified [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 15 March 1882]. His only doubt was to do with the fact that the book was given to be “rewritten” by Kościalkowska and signed with his name. Accordingly, he proposed that Wilhelmina accept the manuscript of *The Czech Renaissance*... and, having made thorough amendments, acknowledge her own authorship of the text. Jelínek had only a modest wish for the translator to mention in the introduction that he had provided some of the material for the preparation of the text [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 25 March 1882, 1–2]. Orzeszkowa, in turn, did not agree to such a marginal treatment of the Czech author, which ultimately meant that the work was to bear two signatures: Jelínek and Zyndram-Kościalkowska. The translator thanked Orzeszkowa “warmly for her worthy care” [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 28 March 1882, 1].

moter of Austroslavism was one of the organizers of the Slavic Congress in Prague (1848), and from the 1860s – leader of the Old Czech Party. Author of *Geschichte von Böhmen*..., as well as historical sources (among others, *Starí letopisové čeští 1378–1527*, Archiv Český).

⁹ Anna Náprstková (1788–1873) – (in Orzeszkowa’s spelling: Naprztek), Czech businesswoman and philanthropist. Together with her second husband, Antonín Fingerhut (Náprstek), she ran a wine shop and a distillery. In 1862, together with her son Vojtěch, she founded the Czech Museum of Industry (later the Náprstek Museum).

¹⁰ Karolina Světlá, actually Johanna Rottová (1830–1899) – Czech writer and feminist associated with the “Máj” group. Her first novel *Vesnický román* (*Village Novel*) was published in 1867. She was a mentor to Eliška Krásnohorská and introduced her to the world of literature.

Finally, the finished work met another obstacle which blocked its publication: by order of the Russian authorities Orzeszkowa's bookshop was closed in 1882. Kościalkowska intended to use it in the future in her historical sketch *The Unextinguished Tribe*,¹¹ while Jelínek, in turn, using his acquaintance with Adam Wiślicki, finally published the text in the monthly appendix *Przełłqd Tygodniowy* [Jelínek 1883, 47–75, 372–400, 555–570].

2. A publishing initiative combined with a collection for the *Národní divadlo*

In 1881, the writer lamented the loss to the Czech nation: The National Theatre in Prague (*Národní divadlo*), financed by popular collection and donations of the public, burned down on 12 August 1881, one month before the official opening (probably because of an act of arson ordered by the Austrian authorities). Social action had to be repeated. Jelínek, shocked by this event, wrote to Orzeszkowa: "I received your letter at a moment when unspeakable pain pervaded all the layers of our society. We stand over the rubble of our long-standing dreams and wishes – there is no great national theater, no magnificent monument to the Czech Renaissance. The most terrible sight that the Czech eyes saw, we were flooded with tears. But what I attach to this letter is not despair, but a silent sigh, firmly convinced that your heart will share our deep sorrow. «There is no theater, but there will be theater.»" [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 20 August 1881, 1].

At this difficult time, the writer was also going to help her countryman and organize a fundraiser for the reconstruction of the theater. Contributions were to be made in the "Orzeszkowa and Co." bookstore. However, even here the tsarist authorities stood in the way, refusing to approve it. Orzeszkowa sent words full of bitterness and at the same time of encouragement to Jelínek in the correspondence of 4 September 1881.

It is worth mentioning that in the same letter Orzeszkowa "began" an "argument" with Jelínek. Her attention was drawn to the inscription on the drawing of the burned down building: "Let women cry – we will work," which became an opportunity to present her views on emancipation. The exploitation of the potential of women has a significant impact on the country: Their strength and work could be useful to the nations "recovering from misery." Thus, the writer tried to successfully transplant feminist slogans also on the Vltava River.¹²

¹¹ *Bibliografia słowianoznawstwa polskiego* [Kołodziejczyk 1911] does not record this work.

¹² The Czechs had respect for the outstanding writer. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of her writer's debut, she received numerous wishes published in the periodical *Ženské Listy* – one of the examples of reception of Orzeszkowa's feminist works (no author's name given). 1892, 33, after: [Fournier Kiss 2012, 355–370]. See also [Fournier Kiss, Jensterle-Dolezal, Tarajto-Lipowska 2006, 279–294].

4 September 81
Grodno

Dear Sir,

It would take me a long time if I were to describe the feelings I had when I heard of your misfortune. The grief is great and at the same time something like anger at the implacable and blind chance that allows the thoughtless element to destroy in the blink of an eye the long-standing dreams and loves of millions of thinking and sentient beings. However, knowing your energy and iron perseverance, we all believe that you are able to re-erect the beautiful temple of your national art. If I were pious, I would say: God help [us]! That I do not believe that the Creator of all things personally deals with the counting of the hair on the heads of men, as a grumbling host counts groats in the pantry, so I will put it better: May love for the justice that you defend by defending yourself, and strong faith in the happy future of your brave people help you! "Please intercede for me with the person in charge so that my little sacrifice enclosed here may be accepted. It will be one brick transferred by Poland to build the national Czech theater. We are going to ask the authorities for permission to collect contributions in our Vilnius bookshop for the Prague theater – but – will we get this permission???"

Now, I am starting an argument with you, Sir. The reason is the inscription on the drawing of the burned building: "Let the women cry, we will work".¹³ Veto! A thousand times veto! Why are women only supposed to cry? It is true that in the face of such a misfortune, many men have probably cried, and women may cry; because of their weaker nerves they may even weep a little longer than men, but their tears do not last so long as to take away their strength to work, let them work too! The world of women is so full of various infirmities that it has always been left to cry in the field of social functions. Above all, the nations that fight and rise from misery must develop in women their courage, energy and deeds, not only action but also love of domestic affairs, otherwise half of their strength, which they need so much, will be lost.

The unsuccessful attempt to help did not discourage her from further action, on the contrary – Orzeszkowa made another publishing proposal to the editor of *Sborník*, from which the income was to be used for the Národní Divadlo Reconstruction Fund. The originator of the project was Wincenty Chełmiński.¹⁴ In a letter dated 10 September 1881, he outlined the concept of the work: It was to be an anthology containing works by well-known Czech

¹³ The Czech author published an article in *Kłósy*, "The National Theatre in Czech Prague," in which he put the following idea: "And so it happened! The National Theatre is no more, but grumbling and crying will achieve nothing! "Let our women cry; we will work." This was the slogan when flames and a pillar of black smoke from the temple of Czech hope were still floating in the clouds" (1881, no. 884, vol. 33).

¹⁴ Wincenty Chełmiński (1850–1887) – initiator and partner in the "Orzeszkowa and Co." bookstore. He started medical studies in Warsaw, but his financial situation forced him to drop it; he became a bookkeeper. He wrote poetry: *Listki opadłe* (Warszawa 1873, Vilnius 1887) and *Z życia* (Warszawa 1887). He collaborated with many editors (most often he signed his works with the pseudonym Korwin). He met Orzeszkowa at the end of the 1870s, and on his initiative a publishing house was established in Vilnius.

poets and prose writers translated by Czesław Jankowski, Bronisław Teodor Grabowski, Władysław Bełza and Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska. It was suggested that Jelínek "be used as a finger indicating what to translate" [Chelmiński to Orzeszkowa, 29 August (10 September)¹⁵ 1881, 2], and moreover, he was to write biographies of writers and collect their photographs. Orzeszkowa's job was to write the introduction.

Jelínek made a commitment to prepare an anthology to be published by the Vilnius bookstore. "The intention of the aforementioned publishing house is really great" – he wrote to Orzeszkowa – "and please be convinced that I am ready to help in every way. I am ready to provide you with everything you need, but please be so kind as to describe to me the character of this publishing house" [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 24 September 1881, 1v–2]. However, the project was never implemented. In this case, plans were thwarted by the tsarist decree, under which Orzeszkowa's bookshop was closed in 1882. This initiative is discussed in the letter dated 17 September 1881:

We intend to publish this book with Polish translations of some of the finest Czech poets and perhaps translations, for the benefit of the theater. With my preface adopted to the circumstances and with portraits of Czech writers signed as initials that open their works, this book would probably circulate wide and bring widow's mite for the cause of brotherhood. But – in no way can we do without your help. We need suggestions as to which Czech writers we should take entire works or excerpts from them or photographs of these writers to turn them into suitable woodcuts. Would you like to do us this important service? I know that there are excellent artists in Czech literature. It would be good to intertwine the poems with small prose works. We ask for names, titles and photographs. We are already trying to find translators.

Despite constant adversity, the writer did not stop in her efforts to bring Czech–Polish closer together in the cultural sphere. In this situation, she decided to submit an individual financial aid for the reconstruction of the National Theatre in Prague in the amount of 25 rubles. Her name was published on the list of donors in the journal *Světozor* [Administrace „Světozora” 1881, 472].

As a token of gratitude, Orzeszkowa received a commemorative medal of Národní divadlo. The words addressed to Jelínek after receiving the parcel fully express the attitude of the inhabitants of Prague:

It will be one of my most precious memorabilia, just as among the most precious achievements of life I include this little sympathy that I gained for myself with the honorable and kind brethren – Czechs in general, and in particular their representative here – the most famous and beloved [Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, (14 July 1884), 1v–2].

¹⁵ The date in square brackets, added by the editor, means the date according to the Gregorian calendar (new style).

3. The idea of immortalizing Czech Prague in Orzeszkowa's works

In order to familiarize the reader with Czech culture, “for the edification of Polish society” [Orzeszkowa to Jelinek, 2 June 1893, 2v.], Orzeszkowa wanted to immortalize Czech Prague in her work. Jelínek intended to publish her memoirs in *Kraj* and the Cracow periodical *Świat*.¹⁶ Unfortunately, she did not feel well, and the text was never published. In her letter to Zygmunt Sarnecki, she lamented her indisposition: “I haven’t written anything for eight months. I hoped that a trip abroad – undertaken for another purpose – would refresh me and somehow revive me. But I came back as dead as when I was leaving” [Orzeszkowa 1978, 169].

The concept of such a work for Jelínek, a promoter of the idea of “reciprocity,” was so attractive that he sought mentions for the Czech magazine *Umělecka beseda*, which listed him among its honorary members. On its 30th anniversary, the periodical published a book which was to contain a brief recollection of the members [Jelínek to Orzeszkowa, 29 May 1893, 1]. It was therefore an excellent opportunity to ask Orzeszkowa to “write a few lines about her stay in Bohemia” [Ibid.].

In a letter dated 6 January 1893, the writer assures that she will describe her impressions of Prague. Six months later, she cited health to explain the failure to meet the deadline for completion of the work. Eventually, Orzeszkowa sent her text to *Beseda* with some delay, on 15 October. Unfortunately, the association refused to accept it because the book was already in print. Today it is difficult to say what kind of a piece it is and where it finally appeared. In her correspondence with Jelínek there was a reference to a “memorial essay” from Prague or a picture. Orzeszkowa included more detailed information about this work in a letter dated 16 October to his friend Leopold Méyet: “I wrote a quite large article for the Czech *Umělecka Beseda*, for an anthology written only by its members. They will not be printing it now Polish, but I will also keep it for some collective magazine in case of demand” [Orzeszkowa to Méyet, 16 October 1893 (Bruno Świdorski’s copy), 188].

Conclusions

These initiatives demonstrate that Orzeszkowa had a deep respect for the Jelínek’s compatriots. Let us bear in mind that her personal attitude contributes to a better understanding of the cultural ties of two nations: the Polish and the Czechs, and also sheds light on their literary rapprochement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Under the Hapsburgs Vienna fought for influence among the Czech bourgeoisie and often acted to the detriment

¹⁶ The writer sent this assurance to Zygmunt Sarnecki on 14 February [18]92 [1893!] [Orzeszkowa 1978, 169].

of the Polish side. Both Orzeszkowa and Jelínek understood the common danger of Germanization and Russification policies. Similar views on national issues created conditions for Polish–Czech understanding in the cultural and literary spheres [Magnuszewski 1951, 21]. Their mutual activity primarily took the form of spreading knowledge about both nations or becoming acquainted with literature (translations). Orzeszkowa promoted Czech culture on Polish lands and sought to popularize Polish literature in Czechia, offering translators valuable national material for publication and providing translation guidance. The words of appreciation for Orzeszkowa ("published in all Czech periodicals" [Jelínek 1891, 72]), addressed to *Umělecká beseda*, allow us to understand the historical significance of her efforts to strengthen Polish–Czech relations:

I visited your country, and it seemed to me that over the picturesque Czech mountains, over the brave people inhabiting them, there hovered a mighty and pure spirit of John Hus carried on the golden and scarlet wings of freedom and martyrdom. And then he came down to my house, and my compatriots followed him, who, in defense of the idea by your great martyr, mixed their blood in the Czech fields with the blood of the armies of Žižka and Prokop [quoted after: E. Jelínek 1891, 72].

Her words are characteristic and worth mentioning, as they are a commentary on the first congress of neo-Slavists organized in Prague in 1908, where Roman Dmowski applied for participation. She regretted that the editor of *Slovanski Sborník* did not live to see those hopeful times, as he died prematurely in 1897. In a letter to Václav Kredba¹⁷ she wrote:

Nevertheless, I would like to see the dawn of a new day, not only over my homeland, but over the entire Slavic region, this East, which, if it happens, will be mostly and above all the work of the Czech people. Oh! Why is it that all that begins and seems to see, hear, cannot be felt by Edw[ar]d Jelínek! [Orzeszkowa to Jelínek, 7 January 1893, 1v.].

Translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski

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¹⁷ Václav Kredba (1870–1939) – translator, employee of city administration. He translated Polish fiction into Czech: Henryk Sienkiewicz, Bolesław Prus, and Zofia Urbanowska. A Polonophile, activist of the Společensky Klub Česko-polský v Praze.

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