

Elizaveta de Vitte's "Čechia": beyond travel notes

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Abstract

Elizaveta de Vitte was a Russian pedagogue, writer and publicist. In the first decade of the 20th century, thanks to the collaboration with the Slavic Benefit Committees of Kiev and Saint Petersburg, she travelled a lot through Southern, Central-Eastern Europe in order to study regional Slavic ethnic groups and enlighten the Russian audience on their social and political conditions.

In *Czechia*, while travelling over the country, Elizaveta de Vitte describes its nature, main towns, museums and monuments. Her travel notes are not simply personal impressions and objective descriptions but the result of a deep historical analysis on the country. Although many Russian tourists went on holiday to Karlsbad every year, nobody tried to know more about Czechia and its inhabitants. Unfortunately, each single Slav – Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian and Bulgarian – ignored the troubling history of this “miserable” people. On the contrary, in Elizaveta de Vitte’s opinion, each single Slavic tourist should have learned more about places and people who were directly connected with his own identity and past. Czechia was in fact an interesting example of a high-educated people who, despite the long foreign domain, was fighting to defend its own cultural identity. Moreover, in Czechia and Moravia the signs of Cyrillo-Methodian mission were tangible. Elizaveta de Vitte’s aim is to give an exhaustive idea of the country in order to spur her readers on to visit the towns and places she writes about. According to the author-traveller, Luhačovice should have become a shared Slavic health resort, a place in which to be taken care of, to relax and above all to get closer to their own “blood brothers” – the Czechs – while rediscovering the common Slavic roots.

Elizaveta de Vitte's *Čechia*: beyond travel notes

*What gives a woman's travel account a disruptive radical edge
is not so much the gendered nature of her writing
as the actual politics that motivate it,
a politics based on specific views about social class,
nationalism and comparative anthropology¹*

1. Travel writing and female emancipation?

Travelling abroad was not a common experience for Russian women living at the turn of the 20th century². But Elizaveta Ivanovna de Vitte

¹ Schweizer, Bernard. *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s*. UP of Virginia, 2001, p. 81.

² We exclude women belonging to the aristocracy who could afford to travel or visited foreign countries thanks to their husbands' military and diplomatic charges. As regards other women and travelling, the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 represented a chance for a lot of Russian women to go abroad as correspondents and doctors; for example, E. O. Lichačeva (1836-1904), who published some articles on the *Otečestvennye zapiski* (Patriotic Notes) about the Serbian-Montenegrin-Ottoman war; V. S. Nekrasova (1850-1877), who was one of the first Russian women doctors to take part in the Third Russo-Turkish war. For further information see: Igorevna, Julija. *Istoriko-sociologičeskij analiz ženskogo dviženija Rossii serediny 19.-načala 20. vekov*. RAN, 2000; Kovaleva, Irina. *Ženskij vopros v Rossii 50-60-ch godov XIX veka. Problemy istorii ruskogo osvoboditel'nogo dviženija i istoričeskoj nauki*. Nauka, 1981; Lejkina-Svirskaja, Vera. *Intelligencija v Rossii vo vtoroj polovine XIX veka*. Mysl', 1971; ---. *Russkaja intelligencija v 1900-1917 godach*. Mysl', 1981; Ljublinskij, Sergej. *Podvižniki knigi: E. N. Vodovozova, L. F. Pantelev, A.A. Kalmykova, O. N. Popova, I.M. Vodovozova*. Kniga, 1988; Paključenko, Eleonora. *Ženščiny v ruskom osvoboditel'nom dviženii: ot Marii Volkonskoj do Very Figner*. Mysl', 1988; Pietrov-Enker, Bianka. *«Novye ljudi» Rossii. Razvitie ženskogo dviženija ot istokov do Oktjabr'skoj revoljucii*. RGGU, 2005; Ponomareva, Varvara-Chorošilova, Ljubov'. *Mir ruskaj ženščiny: sem'ja, professija, domašnij układ, 18. – načalo 20. veka*. Novyj Chronograf, 2009; ---. *Ženščina v sem'e i obščestvo. Očerki ruskaj kul'tury. Konec XIX-načalo XX vv*. MGU, 2011; Puškareva, Natalija. *Častnaja žizn' ruskaj ženščiny: nevesta, žena, ljubovnica (10. – načalo 19. veka)*. Naučno-izdatel'skij centr «Ladomir», 1997; ---. *Russkaja ženščina: istorija i sovremennost'*. Naučno-izdatel'skij centr «Ladomir», 2002; ---. *Gendernaja teorija i istoričeskoe znanie*. Aletejja, 2007; Stites, Richard. *The women's liberation movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism in 1860-1930*. Princeton UP, 1978; Chasbulatova, Ol'ga. *Opyt i tradicii ženskogo dviženija v Rossii (1860-1917)*. IvGU, 1994; --- Gafizova, Natalija. *Ženskoe*

(1833/1834 – maybe 1915)³, a Russian pedagogue, writer and publicist, represents an exception. Despite being in her seventies, she travelled through Southern and Central-Eastern Europe in the first decade of the 20th century thanks to the collaboration with the Slavic Benefit Committees of Kiev and Saint Petersburg⁴. Her purpose was study regional Slavic ethnic groups and enlighten the Russian audience on their social and political conditions⁵. For

dviženie v Rossii (vtoraja polovina XIX – načalo XX veka). IvGU, 2003; Černobaeva, Anna. *Osnovnyje problemy razvitiija ženskogo dviženija v Rossii vo vtoroj polovine 19. – načale 20. Vekov*. GUU, 2013; Ščepkina, Ekaterina. *Iz istorii ženskoj ličnosti v Rossii*. Feminist-Press, 2004; Jukina, Irina. *Istorija ženščin Rossii: ženskoe dviženie i feminizm (1850–1920 gody)*. Aletejja, 2003; ---. *Russkij feminizm kak vyvoz sovremennosti*. Aletejja, 2007; Žigaľcova, Larisa. *Istorija ženskogo dviženija v Rossii: idei, ljudi, fakty (konec XVII – načalo XX vv.)*. *Istorija i tradicii ženskogo dviženija v Rossii*. *Osnovnyje problemy ženskogo dviženija v Rossii*. GIM, 2006.

³ Elizaveta Ivanovna de Vitte was born in Kursk. Thanks to Nikolaj Čulkov's essay *De Vitte*, which was published in the *Moscow Genealogical Journal* (№ 11, 1915), we know that her parents were Ivan de Vitte and Barbara Svečina. Elizaveta de Vitte studied at the Smol'nyj Institute in Saint Petersburg. In 1856 she married the colonel of the Russian Army Michail Pavlovič de Vitte (1828–1867). After his early death, Elizaveta de Vitte decided to work as pedagogue managing female gymnasiums in Tiflis (1875–1878), Kovno (1885–1897) and Kiev (1897–1904). When she was living and working in Kovno, de Vitte became a member of the Orthodox Brotherhood of Saints Nicholas, Peter and Paul (until 1896), which supported Russian Orthodoxy and patriotism in the region. From 1897, Elizaveta de Vitte collaborated with the Historical Society of Nestor the Chronicler in Kiev; in 1900 she published an essay for them titled *Ob archeologičeskoj nachodke v sele Laskove Vladimiro-Volynskogo uezda v 1610*. Moreover, from 1899 to 1905 she was a member of the female council of the Kiev Slavic Benefit Committee; later, she joined the Historic-Genealogical Society in Moscow. After resigning from the Kiev female gymnasium, Elizaveta de Vitte decided to travel through the Austro-Hungarian Empire to discover the Slavic groups who lived there. She published a rich series of travel notes with historical essays. It is interesting to focus on the last years of Elizaveta de Vitte's literary activity and on her connection with the Počaev *lavra*, which was the centre of the Union of the Russian People's. The Union of the Russian People was a monarchist organization which was particularly active from 1905 to 1917. Its program was based on monarchical, anti-semitic, anti-liberal ideas and supported the Orthodox doctrine. In the very last years of her life, Elizaveta de Vitte lived at the Kazanskij female monastery of Šamordino, where she continued studying the Slavic question.

⁴ For an exhaustive analysis of the role of the Slavic Benefit Committees see Boro-Petrovich, Michael. *The Emergence of Russian Pan Slavism*. Columbia UP, 1956.

⁵ We may assume that E.I. de Vitte's travel notes were read by some members of the Slavic Benefit Committees of Kiev and Saint Petersburg. However, no review of *Čechia* has been found.

de Vitte, travel writing represented a tool for sketching the Slavic identity in those lands which were under Austro-Hungarian political rule:

What is Austria? Generally, Austria is identified with Vienna but Vienna is not Austria. Austria is a complex organism where Slavic people are embodied and represent the majority, on the contrary the Germans are the minority (de Vitte 1912: 3)⁶.

If a binary system (self vs other) traditionally predominates in travel writing, we could say that two binaries are parallel in Elizaveta de Vitte's travel notes: the 'Great' Russian self, rigid Russian nationalism and attention to other Slavic identities beyond the Tsarist Empire borders, in other words, a strong feeling of inter-Slav brotherhood.

As a result, travel serves as an "ideal paradigm to study the intersection of different axes that construct identity"⁷. Making reference again to Indira Ghose's studies on women travellers and colonialism, we borrow the concept of the "trope' of women travellers," which operates as the "epistemic appropriation of the other" (Ghose 9); in this regard, Elizaveta de Vitte's gaze must be considered as a metaphor for the Tsarist Imperialistic plans in Western Europe⁸. As a result, her travel notes not only give the reader a chance to scrutinize the places and people she visited, but they also depict the political-ideological position of the author-traveller and help us better understand the general mood of the time. De Vitte's travel literature must be read in the light of discourses circulating during that period: it crosses late Slavophilism⁹

⁶ 'Что такое Австрия? Австрию обыкновенно отождествляют в Веной, но Вена не Австрия. Австрия – это сложный организм, в составе которого входят славянские народы, составляющие его большинство, и немцы – меньшинство'. Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Russian are mine. Moreover, although de Vitte's travel notes were written in pre-revolutionary orthography, modern Russian orthography is used here..

⁷ Ghose, Indira. *The Power of the Female Gaze. Women Travellers in Colonial India*. Oxford UP, 1998, p. 5.

⁸ See Dolbilov, Michail – Miller, Aleksej. *Zapadnye okrainy Rossijskoj Imperii*. Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2007; Leerssen, Joep. *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History*. Amsterdam UP, 2006; Miller, Aleksej. *Imperija Romanovyč i Nacionalizm. Esse po metodologii istoričeskogo issledovanija*. Novoe Literaturnoe Obrozrenie, 2008; Rogger, Hans. *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution 1881-1917*. Longman Group UK Limited, 1983; Tolz, Vera. *Russia. Inventing the Nation*. Hodder Education, 2001; Weeks, Theodore. *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*. Northern Illinois UP, 2008.

⁹ Cimbaev, Nikolaj. *Slavjanofil'stvo: iz istorii ruskoj obščestvenno-političeskoj mysli 19-go veka*. MGU, 1986; Walicki, Andrzej. *Una utopia conservatrice. Storia degli Slavo-*

as concerns the idea of the distinctive role of Russia with respect to Western Europe and Panslavism as regards the project of an inter-Slavic union.

In addition, we must distance ourselves from reading Elizaveta de Vitte's travel notes from a purely feminist or colonial point of view because the almost patriarchal¹⁰ context from which the Russian traveller emerges and the destination of her explorations did not represent mere colonies; hence, only a transversal use of these concepts is possible. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that travel has had an emancipatory function for women: travelling and writing were a way for them to express their (female) identity in the public sphere in a double way: by producing a public self in print and by locating themselves in public debates. Thus, it represented a chance to take part concretely in the socio-political and cultural processes. In this sense, women-travellers became "agents of their own history" (Ghose 14).

2. *Čechia*: a piece of de Vitte's Panslavic mosaic

The book *Čechia* was the first in a number of a rich series of travel notes with historical essays (*Putevye vpečatlenija i istoričeskie očerki*), which represent an important part of Elizaveta de Vitte's bibliography¹¹. *Čechia* might be considered to be a piece of her mental map, a sort of Panslavic mosaic. Thanks to de Vitte's travels and notes we are able to sketch out a Panslavic realm comprising people who shared the same cultural, linguistic and, often, religious background.

A few decades before Elizaveta de Vitte, in the summer of 1859, Georgina Muir Mackenzie (1833–1874) and Adeline Paulina Irby (1831–1911),



Fig. 1 *Čechia's* cover

fli. Einaudi, 1973; Rabow-Edling, Susanna. *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism*. State University of New York Press, 2006.

¹⁰ See Crisp, Olga – Edmondson, Linda (edited by). *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*. Clarendon Press, 1989; Pushkareva, Natalia. Levin, Eve (translated and edited by). *Women in Russian History: from the tenth to the twentieth century*. M.E. Sharpe, 1997.

¹¹ The complete series consist of: *Putevye vpečatlenija. Dalmacija, Gercegovina i Serbija. Leto 1902 goda*. Kiev, 1903; *Putevye vpečatlenija s istoričeskimi očerkami. Leto 1903: Bukovina i Galičina*. Kiev, 1905; *Putevye vpečatlenija i istoričeskije očerki. Čechia. Leto 1903*. Kremenec, 1905; *Putevye vpečatlenija s istoričeskimi očerkami. Slovačina i ugrorussy. Leto 1903, 1906 i 1907*. Počaeu, 1909; *Putevyja vpečatlenija s istoričeskimi očerkami. Leto 1907 i 1910 godov. Al'pijskie zemli i Primor'e s Triestom*. Počaeu, 1911; *Triest, Primor'e, Dalmacija i Tirol'*. Šamordino, 1915.

two brave travellers, educationalists and political agitators, just two of the many English Victorian ladies who travelled independently and wrote about it, were arrested travelling across the Carpathian Mountains as spies and accused of Panslavism. At the time of their arrest, they honestly did not know what the term Panslavism meant. The “incident” prompted them to take more further trips (five exactly) in the next years in the regions of the Austrian and Ottoman Empires in order to learn about Slavic people¹². The two English travellers wrote many books, contributed papers on their travels¹³ and were very active in providing education for Christian Slavic girls and women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Irby Panslavism was unwittingly the motivation for visiting and researching the Slavs living under Austro-Hungarian and Turkish control in the Balkans¹⁴.

Similarly, just a few decades later, Panslavism led Elizaveta de Vitte to Austro-Hungary and to the Balkans. De Vitte’s experience partially transformed Russian Panslavic projects¹⁵ into a reality by mapping the Slavic

¹² Miss Muir Mackenzie and Miss Adeline Paulina Irby learnt Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian in order to investigate seriously facts and people focusing specifically on Christian Slavonic communities under the Turkish rule.

¹³ Muir Mackenzie, Georgina – Irby, Adeline Pauline. *Across the Carpathians*, in Galton, Francis (edited by). *Vacation tourists and notes of travel in 1861*. Macmillan, 1862; Sandwith, Humphry (edited by). *Notes on the South Slavonic countries in Austria and Turkey in Europe, containing historical and political information added to the substance of a paper read at the British Association at Bath, 1864*. Blackwood, 1865; Muir Mackenzie, Georgina – Irby, Adeline Paulina. *Travels in the Slavonic provinces of Turkey-in-Europe: the Turks, the Greeks, and the Slavons*. Bell & Daldy, 1867; Irby, Adeline Paulina, ‘English orphanage and training school on Bosnia, 1869-1892’, *Proceedings of the International Congress of Education*. Chicago, 1893. National Educational Association, 1895.

¹⁴ Searight, Sarah (edited by). *Women Travellers in the Near East*. Astene and Oxbow Books, 2005; Anderson, Dorothy. *Miss Irby and Her Friends*. Hutchinson, 1966; Evans, Arthur John. ‘The late Miss Irby: a tribute.’ *The Contemporary Review*. December 1911, pp. 844-846.

¹⁵ We refer to N.Ja. Danilevskij’s project for a Panslavic federation expressed in *Russia and Europe* (1869), which is his main work. According to Danilevskij, politics should be as rational as the sciences (Danilevskij was a naturalist). Thus, he considered the Slavs to be a group of peoples that by nature belonged together, but were politically divided and subject to non-Slavic rule by the Ottoman and Austrian Hapsburg Empires. The Slavs should be liberated from Austrian and Ottoman rule and Russia must act, as Prussia did within the German states, to create a unified Slavdom on the basis of common Slavic identity. The Slavs had more in common among themselves – language, history, and, in most cases, religion – than with Western Europe, which had developed from Roman and German cultural foundations. So long as the Slavs remained divided, they would be subject to predations from the West or, in

presence in Austro-Hungary. But in *Čechia*, de Vitte overcomes traditional Pan Slavism and moves towards a new stage that re-emerged on the Czech front in the very last years of the 19th century leading to the birth of the Neo-Slav movement and culminating in the 1908 Prague Neo-Slav Congress¹⁶. The “Czech question”, the opposition between the Germans and the Czechs¹⁷, took a turn for the worse in the last years of the 19th century because of the introduction of the “Badeni ordinances” in 1897 (and immediately subsequent withdrawal due to German nationalist pressure); these measures aimed at reforming the administration of Bohemia and Moravia on a bilingual basis to give an equal status to the Czech and German languages. After the failed attempt, Czech political leaders decided to find allies outside the boundaries of the Habsburg Empire to obtain reforms for themselves and other Slavs from Vienna within the Empire. As the Russian Empire bordered on the Habsburg Monarchy in the North and East, the small Slavic nationalities who lived under Vienna’s government tried to gravitate towards Russia. In 1898, at the celebrations of the centenary of the birth of Palacký in Prague, new fences between the Czechs and the Russians were mended – after a long break following the Moscow Slavic Congress of 1867. In one of his speeches Kramář, the leader of the Young Czech Party, focused on the great common future of the Slavs¹⁸. These two events can be considered to be the starting point for the development of the Neo-Slav movement. In the meantime, in Prague,

the Ottoman case, the Islamic East. When, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Russia secured autonomy for Greater Bulgaria and independence for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania, among other provisions, Danilevskij saw a real chance for the realization of his own theories. Even though Russia had won the war, the Western powers at the 1878 Congress of Berlin did not welcome a large, autonomous Bulgaria friendly to Russia, or the further expansion of Russian influence in the East, and managed to reduce the territories it had obtained with Treaty of San Stefano (1878). See also Giusti, Wolfango. *Il Pan Slavismo*. Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, 1941; Kohn, Hans. *Pan-Slavism. Its History and Ideology*. U of Notre Dame P, 1953; Pypin, Aleksandr. *Pan Slavizm v prošlom i nastojaščem (1878, 1913, 2002)*. Granica, 2002; Lamanskij, Vladimir. *Geopolitika Pan Slavizma*. Institut ruskoj civilizacii, 2010.

- ¹⁶ Vyšný, Paul. *Neo-Slavism and the Czechs 1898-1914*. Cambridge UP, 1977, especially chapters 2-3-4. Cigliano, Giovanna. ‘La ‘Grande Russia’ tra nazionalismo e neoslavismo: l’Imperialismo liberale come risposta alla crisi patriottica (1907-1909)’. *Studi Storici*, 3, 2012, pp. 511-557.
- ¹⁷ The conflict between the Czechs and the Germans was one of the most complicated inside the Dual Monarchy and this is not the appropriate context to analyse it. See Kann, Robert, Adolf. *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918*. Columbia UP, 1960.
- ¹⁸ See *Národní Listy*, June 19th, 1898. <http://www.digitalniknihovna.cz/mzk/view/uuid:fba35dfe-435d-11dd-b505-00145e5790ea>. Accessed 3 May 2017.

the Association of Slav Journalists was founded to discuss problems among the Slav nationalities of Austria-Hungary; moreover, in 1900, the *Slovanský klub* (Slavonic Society) was established. Hence, starting from the centenary celebrations of Palacký's birth, social, cultural, and political public contacts between Czechs and Russians began to gradually develop. In 1899, for example, a Czech delegation had took part in celebrations for the centenary of the birth of A.S. Puškin in Saint Petersburg; in the same year another group of Czechs was present at the Russian archaeological congress in Kiev. We may thus assume that Elizaveta de Vitte was a member of the Russian delegation in the summer of 1903 that took part in the laying of the foundation stone of the Jan Hus memorial in Prague. But the Czechs, as well as the other Slavic nationalities who lived geographically in the centre of Europe, had become familiar with European culture and ideas, from the autocratic Russian point of view that made them "suspicious"¹⁹.

Here we must contextualize and understand de Vitte's 'intervention': her travels and essays demonstrate the Slavic Benefit Committees'²⁰ attempt to inform their readers of the other Slavic nationalities and, in this specific case, to support the Czechs' process of self-determination and autonomy from the Germans. Travel across Bohemia clearly demonstrates the author's attempt to map and introduce her readers to the Czech nationality, their history, culture and language in order to legitimate the existence of a future Czech nation.

3. Focus on *Čechia*

3.1 The journey

The study of *Čechia* requires three level of analysis: first, there is the geographical level and the description of de Vitte's travels through Bohemia;

¹⁹ Milan Kundera claims that, despite the fact that a common linguistic background exists among the Slavic nations, it is not possible to speak about a Slavic world: 'the history of the Czechs, like that of the Poles, the Slovaks, the Croats, or the Slovenes (and of course, of the Hungarians, who are not at all Slavic) is entirely Western: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque; close contact with the Germanic world; struggle of Catholicism against the Reformation. Never anything to do with Russia, which was far off, another world. Only the Poles lived in direct relation with Russia – a relation much like a death struggle', Kundera, Milan. 'Die Weltliteratur', *World Literature. A reader* (edited by D'haen, Theo-Domínguez, César-Thomsen, Mads Rosenthal). Routledge, 2013, p. 295.

²⁰ The travel notes *Putevye vpečatlenija i istoričeskie očerki. Čechia* (Kremenec, 1905) were published for the Slavic Benevolent Committee of Saint Petersburg as we can see from the address written on the first page: *Peterburg, Zvenigorodskaja, 24. Slavjanskoe občestvo*. From 1900 to 1917 Saint Petersburg was its seat.

secondly, there is the political-ideological aim of de Vitte's journey, which is slowly emerges; finally, there is the style of these travel notes and the inner stratification of the text.

The Russian traveller left Przemyśl on a train towards Cracow 12 June 1903. The first Czech stop was in Mladá Boleslav. There, a Czech lady whom de Vitte had met the previous year (1902) in Serbia, was her guide to the city, focusing on private circles and clubs, often managed by women, where it was possible to study and speak Russian. Elizaveta Ivanovna spent ten days in Mladá Boleslav with some members of the Russian circle, visiting female schools and gymnasiums and one of the Sokol²¹ schools. The author explains why a Russian should visit the town writing:

The Czech town Mladá Boleslav with its 12.000 inhabitants is absolutely unknown to our Russian tourists; it is interesting for its antiquity, its historical monuments, its position and surroundings and its excellent handicraft school and other institutes; finally, for its nice and cordial community with a widespread knowledge of Russian and sympathy for Russia (de Vitte 1905: 20)²².

When Elizaveta de Vitte arrived in Prague, her next stop, on 6 July 1903, she had the chance to take part in Jan Hus' celebrations and see a pièce at the Czech National Theatre called "Jan Žižka"²³.

Meanwhile, 6 July was coming, the celebration day for the laying of the stone for Jan Hus in Prague. We absolutely wanted to be at the celebration, so, one week before, when we read in the newspaper the invitation of the Organizing Committee for the celebration to ask to them for the tickets to participate in the ceremony, we wrote of our desire to the chairman of the

²¹ The Sokol movement was born as a gymnastics organization in 1862 in Prague to train minds and bodies for the development of the Czech nation. It led to the creation of the Federation of Slavic Sokols according to the Neo-Slavic idea. See Vyšný, Paul. *Neo-Slavism and the Czechs 1898-1914*. Cambridge UP, 1977, pp. 24-25.

²² 'Совершенно неизвестный нашим туристам чешский городок, Млада-Болеслав с 12 т. ж., оказывается интересным и своей древностью, и историческими памятниками, и своим местоположением, и своими окрестностями, и своей превосходной ремесленной школой и другими учреждениями, и, наконец, своим милым, радушным обществом, с распространенными среди него русским языком и симпатиями к России.'

²³ It is certain that Elizaveta de Vitte saw Alois Jirásek' drama entitled 'Jan Žižka' (1903). See *Národní Listy*, July 6th, 1903, p. 5. <http://www.digitalniknihovna.cz/mzk/view/uid:a997dad0-70e7-11dc-8677-000d606f5dc6?page=uid:d2318f40-70bf-11dc-bb36-000d606f5dc6> (Accessed 28 April 2017).

Organizing Committee, dr. Podlipný. What did an anti-Catholic ceremony mean in the centre of Catholic Bohemia? (20)²⁴.

Prague²⁵, according to de Vitte, told the history of the Czech people: some of the main events she emphasizes were results of the conversion to Christianity as a result of Methodius' visit in the 9th century, the foundation of the university in 1348 and the long process of Germanization. Prague is compared with, as Goethe wrote, 'a precious stone' in the heart of Europe. The author tells the history of the city, describes its main streets, squares, churches and monuments: the Powder Tower, Church of Our Lady before Týn, the Old Town Hall, the Old Market square, St. Clement's Cathedral, the Church of St. Saviour, the monument to Charles IV, Charles' Bridge, St. Nicholas Church, St. Vitus Cathedral. The Russian woman-traveller seems to be particularly affected by Baroque monuments and churches and by their connection with the Counter-Reformation which meant the collapse of the anti-Catholic Czech national movement. In Elizaveta de Vitte's opinion, every Russian visitor to Prague could easily find some 'familiar' places, where everybody spoke Russian: the Slavic club at the English Hof in Poříčí and Ryžkov' and Goleček's houses; the latter was the editor of the *Národní listy*.

According to the Russian traveller, one of the most interesting places around Prague was Bílá Hora²⁶, a holy place for the Czechs, whose history she felt should have been an educative example for all the Slavs. Another fascinating place, not far from Prague, was Karlštejn with its beautiful castle. Leaving Prague, de Vitte stopped in Kutná Hora to travel south to Budějovice, the largest city in southern Bohemia. In Budějovice, an important commercial city, 16,000 of the 27,642 inhabitants were Czech. The Russian traveller describes the city's museums, monasteries, and old salt deposit as well as some organizations, such as "Beseda" and "Sokol", where, writes de Vitte,

²⁴ 'Между тем, приближалось 6 июля, день торжества закладки памятника I. Гусу в Праге. Мы непременно хотели быть на этом торжестве и за неделю до него, прочитав в газете приглашение распорядительного комитета по устройству торжества обращаться в комитете за билетами для присутствования на торжестве, мы написали о нашем желании к председателю распорядительного комитета д.р. Подлипному. Но что это за торжество антикатолическое в центре католической Чехии?'

²⁵ According to what Elizaveta de Vitte writes in her travel notes 478,540 inhabitants lived in Prague at the time (91.2% Czechs, 8.8% Germans).

²⁶ For a further analysis of the White Mountain battle see *The battle of White Mountain (November 8, 1620)* in Helfferich, Tryntje. *The Thirty Years War. A Documentary History*. Hackett Publishing, 2009, pp. 49-55 and *The Bohemian Revolt and its aftermath* in Wilson, Peter, Hamish. *The Thirty Years War: A sourcebook*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 33-75.

“every Slav is welcomed”. Moreover, there was a zoological museum at Count Schwarzenberg’s house.

Then, Elizaveta de Vitte came back through Prague to reach Turnov in the north and the famous “Czech paradise” (*Český ráj*):

While it is known to us and to our compatriots, this wonderful corner is absolutely unknown to tourists. Every year it attracts a lot of tourists from every part of Europe, with the exception of Russians, who love going through the well-known paths in Switzerland and Italy. There, in the Czech paradise, a poet, an artist, a historian and an academic archaeologist or just a tourist can find pleasure, even if he is spoiled by Swiss natural beauties (161-162)²⁷.

Going toward the South from Turnov and Valdštejn, the Russian traveller comes across a beautiful area made of enormous rocks of many different shapes:

Here you will find an enchanting valley and along a country of enormous rocks of curious forms, an entire world of mountainous fragments with beautiful pictures of a nature which are eternally young; a delightful world of different natural miracles, which paralyses [you] in the same way as [standing] in front of historical monuments describing Czechia’s most ancient destinies (162)²⁸.

In Turnov, where the main activity was garnet manufacture, Elizaveta de Vitte met the famous painter Jan Prousek²⁹. She then later returned to Býčí skála going across Hruboskalsko.

Actually, the beauty, the true beauty of nature, which embraces us with its strength, its magnificence, its highness, opens up so widely in front of us that its effect on our mind and mood are difficult express [...]. What we saw here, no famous artist is able to represent on the canvas [...]. All these images are

²⁷ ‘Сколько нам известно, нашим соотечественникам – туристам совершенно незнаком и этот чудный край, привлекающий из года в год массу туристов со всех концов Европы, кроме русских, которые любят ездить по проторенной дорожке в Швейцарию и Италию. Здесь в «Чешском раю» может найти удовлетворение и поэт, и художник, и историк, и учёный археолог, и просто турист, даже избалованный красотами природы Швейцарии.’

²⁸ ‘Здесь вы встретите прелестную долину и вместе страну громадных скал самых причудливых форм, целый мир обломков гор, с чудными картинами вечно-юной природы, – страну, одинаково приковывающую к себе, как прелестную разнообразных чудес природы, так и историческими памятниками, которые говорят о древнейших судьбах Чехии.’

²⁹ Jan Prousek (1857-1914) was a Czech painter who particularly loved landscapes and ethnographical pictures representing the Bohemian paradise.

still in front of our mental eyes, although we left these places a long time ago (178-179)³⁰.

She spent three days in North Bohemia, in Turnov and its surroundings, walking in the mountains. On reaching the Trosky castle with a Czech lady and a Slovak tourist, she affirmed: 'Here a Russian feels as if he were at home, among his people' (189)³¹.

The last stop in Bohemia was Liberec, a big industrial city, a sort of Czech Manchester, which was famous for its wool production. Tanvald was another town not far for Liberec. According to de Vitte's description, it had an emergent textile industry, modern buildings and electrical illumination: 'Here a Czech feels himself on the threshold of his house, because he listens to sounds of his own mother tongue everywhere. Tanvald is set exactly on the border of the linguistic region and works as a bridge between German and Czech areas' (194)³². The Russian traveller noted that 3590 Czechs and 1800 Germans lived in the town. In Tanvald it was possible to find Czech newspapers such as *Národní listy*; however, the only Czech organization was a school association. De Vitte underlines the difficult process of spreading Czech schools: 'Here it is especially necessary to be on the watch in order to prevent a German wave from sweeping away Czech villages' (195)³³.

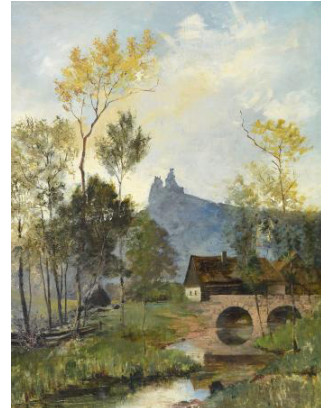


Fig. 2 Jan Proušek, 'Trosky od Ktové', 1886. Museum of the Bohemian Paradise, Turnov.

3.2 The political-ideological background

As far as the political-ideological level is concerned, Elizaveta de Vitte leads her readers through a parallel journey: describing places, monuments,

³⁰ 'Действительно, красота, истинная красота природы, которая охватывает нас своей силой, своим великолепием, своей возвышенностью, так широко раскрывается перед нами, что её влияние на нашу фантазию и настроение передать трудно [...]. То, что мы видим здесь, ни один великий художник не в состоянии передать на полотне [...]. Эти образы все еще стоят пред нашими мысленными очами, когда мы уже давно покинули эти места.'

³¹ 'Здесь русский человек чувствует себя дома, среди своих.'

³² 'Здесь чех чувствует себя на пороге своего дома, ибо всюду слышит звуки своего родного языка. Таннвальд лежит на самой границе языковой области и служит мостом между онемеченным и чисто чешским краем.'

³³ 'Здесь особенно требуется стоять на страже, чтобы немецкая волна не затопила чешских сел.'

towns, museums, and so on. She narrates the process that led the Czechs from the Cyrillo-Methodian conversion in the 9th century to Jan Hus. The author makes references to the Chronicle of Dalimil³⁴ to demonstrate that between the 13th and 14th centuries the Czechs considered the Russian faith and language to be the true and right. Jan Hus, whose mission was based on the Czech lands' Orthodox conversion and on the fight against Rome and the Pope's power, is described in parallel with the birth and development of the Czech language and the national movement from the second half of the 14th century, focusing also on the important role played by Prague university.

Moreover, the author stresses the role that the main Czech patriots played in the process of national self-definition and *renaissance*: Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829), Josef Jungmann (1773–1847), Pavel Josef Šafařík (1795–1861) and František Palacký (1798–1876). However, de Vitte affirms that:

It was not enough to restore the past of the Czech people, it was necessary to make clear their relationship with the great Slavic world, as, without this connection, what meaning did a handful of Czechs in the centre of Western Europe even have? (89)³⁵

In the 1820s and 1840s, Ján Kóllar's poem *The Daughter of Slavia* (*Slávy Dcera*) and his work *About Literary Reciprocity Among Nationalities and Languages of the Slavic World* (*O literárni vzájemnosti rozličnými kmeny a nářečmi slovanského národu*) unveiled the great Czech rebirth.

The Slavic people in Czechia, despite their small number, at least once throughout their history could be compared to the Dutch and the Swedes in terms of universal relevance [...]. In the Czech renaissance, one of the most relevant factors to be considered was the direct convergence and, for that, lasting, close relationships of the most important representatives of this great epoch in the life of the Czech people with the Russian world (90–91)³⁶.

³⁴ The online version of *The Chronicle of Dalimil* (*Dalimilova Kronika*) is available [at: <http://kramerius4.nkp.cz/search/r.jsp?author=%22Dalimil%22&forProfile=facet&offset=0&fq=dostupnost:%22public%22> (Accessed 3 May 2017)].

³⁵ 'Недостаточно было восстановить прошлое чешского народа, нужно было уяснить ему связь с великим славянским миром, ибо без этой связи, что значила бы горсть Чехов в центре Западной Европы?'

³⁶ 'Славянский народ в Чехии, не смотря на свою малочисленность, по кр. м. один раз в продолжение своей истории получил подобно олландцам и шведам значение всемирное [...]. В чешском возрождении идним из выдающихся по значению факторов следует признать непосредственное сближение и за тем продолжительные тесные связи главнейших представителей этой великой в жизни чешского народа эпохи с русским миром.'

Dobrovský, who had travelled across Russia, believed that the Slavic East would play an important role in the process of rebirth of the Western Slavic world. From the 1820s many Russian scholars travelled across Western Europe to learn more about Slavic nationalities living in Central Europe and then opened the first Slavonic chairs at Russian universities. Moreover, a lot of Czech organizations tried to support the national rebirth. For example, the Czech Academy of Sciences, opened the Museum of the Czech Kingdom³⁷, which represented the pride of the Czechs and the Czech *Matica* worked for the scientific development of the Czech language, literature and history.

To sum up Elizaveta de Vitte's point of view, although many Russian tourists went on holiday every year to Karlovy Vary, no one at the time had to learn more about Bohemia and its inhabitants. Unfortunately, contemporary Slavs – Russians, Slovaks, Slovenians, Croatians, Serbians and Bulgarians – ignored the troubling history of the Czech people. Bohemia, a place where signs of Cyrillo-Methodian mission were tangible, was an interesting example of a highly-educated people who, despite the long, foreign, German rule, were fighting to defend their own culture and identity.

3.3 Heterogeneity of the text

As a third and final step of the present study, we will briefly look at these travel notes from a stylistic point of view. We may suppose that Elizaveta de Vitte had a diary where, while travelling, she would take some notes. Details about railways, dates, hotel names, addresses and passages in which the author describes nature and landscapes are so spontaneous and vivid that it is clear that they are directly connected with her private travel diary. As for the journey, the description of each single town (geographical position, a little information about number of inhabitants, religion, ethnic groups, historical introduction, famous places and monuments to visit and see), reminds one of a modern guidebook. But the published volume contains few spontaneous comments and descriptions: the author-traveller worked on the texts after her travels in order to publish a book which would contain long and detailed paragraphs about history, politics, famous patriots and intellectuals, in order to base her research on historical sources³⁸. In this way, the author seems to

³⁷ The Museum of the Czech Kingdom was established as the Patriotic Museum of Bohemia in 1818. Then, in 1891, it was moved to a new building in Václavské náměstí, 68.

³⁸ Some of the sources used by the author as indicated in the footnotes: Hilferding, Alexander. *Gus'. Ego otnošenje k pravoslavnoj cerkvi*, 1871; *Illustrierter Führer durch die königle Landeshaupt Prag und Umgebung*. Woerl, 1902; Lavrovskij, Petr. *Padenie Čechii v XVII v.*, 1868; Hilferding, Alexander. *Českaja literatura*, 1871; Francev, Vlad-

legitimate the scientific nature of the travel notes, which are only marginally autobiographical, by trying to offer a critical analysis of her contemporaneity, according to the above-mentioned themes. We may affirm that the inner stratification of the text fulfils a double purpose: on the one hand Elizaveta de Vitte aims at giving an exhaustive idea of the country in order to encourage her readers to visit the towns and places she writes about; on the other hand, she informs her readers of their 'blood brothers' – the Czechs – while rediscovering their common Slavic roots and supporting them in reaching national independence.

The thematic, compositional and stylistic heterogeneity³⁹ of Elizaveta de Vitte's travel notes generates a "polyfunctional" genre and text: since her travel reports have been actively used for didactical and moral aims, they were seen as a mere tool of propaganda. As Marija Leskinen has noticed: "The travelogue as a genre has many different boundaries and it is easily embedded in many levels of non-literary text"⁴⁰. In addition, Olga Skibina in her analysis of syncretism in travelogues, outlines the connection between literary genre and the development of political ideas that are embodied by the author-traveller:

In literary travelogues, contrary to scientific or other kinds [of writing], informational material is based on the artistic and ideological concepts of the author. Apart from that, the genre of literary travel flourishes in close connections with the development of the social idea, political situation and literary process (Skibina 2014: 90)⁴¹.

As a whole, reading Elizaveta de Vitte's travel notes, which mix elements of different text types and genres (travel notes, historical essays, travel guides, documentary prose), the reader will be able to "see" what the author describes

imir. *Očerki po istorii češkogo vrozozdenija*, 1902; Bogusławski, Wilhelm-Hórnik, Michał. *Historija serbskeho naroda*, 1884; Pryl, Josef Zdenko. *Führer durch das böhmische Paradies*, 1885; *Průvodce po Liberci a okolí*, 1901; *Führer durch die sammlungen des Museums des Königreiches Böhmen in Prag*, 1897, and other museum guidebooks.

³⁹ Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference. An analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. Routledge, 1993.

⁴⁰ Leskinen, Marija. 'Zapiski poljakov sarmatskoj epochi v kontekste sovremennykh issledovanij putešestvija/traveloga v narrativnom aspekte', *Slavjanskij almanach*, 1-2. In Slav RAN, 2014, p. 235.

⁴¹ 'В литературных путешествиях, в отличие от научных и иных видов, информационный материал освещается на основе художественной и идеологической концепций автора. Кроме того, жанр литературного путешествия развивается в тесной связи с развитием общественной мысли, политической ситуацией и литературным процессом.'

as if he/she were watching a modern TV documentary⁴². This is thanks to the traveller's gaze that makes the "other" closer to the "self". Seeing and describing other Slavic people, knowing them, meant, in a sense, conquering them.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, we must again borrow Indira Ghose's words and agree with her when she affirms that 'the very fact of travel constituted a form of gender power for women [...]. By entering the public world of travel, women transgressed gender norms that relegated them to the home' (Ghose 12). For Elizaveta de Vitte, travelling and writing was a concrete attempt to find her own place in contemporary political and cultural discourse and express her own personal view, which can be classified as a Panslavic, or Neo-Slavic, conception of the epoch:

We do not belong to those Russians who see a dark future for the Czechs. The time is coming when all the Slavs will understand that only in their unification is their salvation... and then, the German will also cease to be fearful for a Slav. This is the hour and we strongly believe in it! (de Vitte 1905: 35)⁴³.

In 1913 Elizaveta de Vitte published an article in the newspaper *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow News), in which she explained what the concept "Slavic idea" meant. It had previously been defined by Ján Kollár and Ľudovít Štúr and had remained underground for a long time. A few Russian Slavophiles and Panslavic Western patriots had supported the idea of Slavic reciprocity and the need for political and cultural unification; however, the limitations imposed on Russia by the Congress of Berlin led to the collapse of these projects. The author affirms that the "Slavic idea", which represented a *smutnyj* (obscure) concept, needed to be restored, re-defined, taught, and spread.

First of all, for its survival, the Slavic idea needs consciousness among the Slavs. It is necessary to start from that and for that we need all the Slavs to come closer to each other, meeting personally, visiting the Slavic lands, knowing the culture of each single Slavic people and its history [...]. It is necessary

⁴² For the definition of de Vitte's travel prose as an example of "artistic documentary prose" see Čepelevskaja, Tat'jana. "Ženski vzgljad na Balkany (očerki i korrespondency v pervoj poloviny XIX-načala XX vv.)", *V inter'ere Balkan*. PROBEL, 2010, pp. 353-368.

⁴³ 'Мы не принадлежим к тем русским, которые видят в будущем для чехов одно только мрачное [...]. Пробьет же час, когда все славяне поймут, что только в их единении их спасение... а тогда и немец перестанет быть страшным для славян. Этот час пробьет, мы твердо веруем в это!'

to continue to pursue the 'Slavic idea' and, in the meantime, to teach it to the masses (de Vitte 1913: 1)⁴⁴.



Fig. 4 Alfons Mucha, 'Apotheosis of the Slavs' (1926), from *The Slav Epic*, Prague, Veletržní Palác.

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⁴⁴ 'Во-первых, славянская идея для своего существования требует прежде всего славянского самосознания. С этого нужно и начать, а для этого нужно сближение славян между собой, лично знакомство, посещение славянских земель, знакомство с культурой каждого славянского народа и с его историей [...]. Следует усиленно продолжать это, и тогда современем воспитаются в массах'. De Vitte, Elizaveta Ivanovna. 'Slavjanskaja ideja'. *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 159, 1913, p. 1.