

“Dear Father”

B. Piłsudski's Letters from the Petro-Pavlovsky Fortress ¹

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In 1985, at the first symposium on Bronisław Piłsudski in Sapporo I raised two questions: “Why was he arrested?” and “What was his real function in the conspiracy?”² The same questions were also dealt with in my paper of 1987, entitled “Bronisław Piłsudski's Unwilling Journey.”³ As for the first question, an answer was already given in my paper of 1985 that, based on the charge against him, it was because Piłsudski had offered his flat for printing the “Programme of the Terrorist Fraction” and also because he gave assistance to those who prepared the attempt.⁴ As far as the second question is concerned, however, the problem has remained unresolved, chiefly due to the lack of reliable sources. Explication was divided into two opinions: 1) he was merely a victim of chance entangled in the conspiracy; and 2) he sympathized with the attempt despite suffering serious internal conflict and worries with regard to his participation. My position in 1987 sided with the latter opinion.⁵

I will pursue the second question in the this presentation.

The sources

I had the fortunate opportunity to be able to read Piłsudski's letters to his family, written after he was arrested on March 14 1887 in St. Petersburg, which are preserved in the Archives of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library in Vilnius. The letters (which number 165 sheets ⁶), cover a period from 1887 to 1913, and were written in

¹ This paper was published in: A. F. Majewicz & T. Wicherkiewicz, eds., *Bronisław Piłsudski and Futabatei Shimei – An Excellent Charter in the History of Polish-Japanese Relations* (Materials of the Third International Conference on Bronisław Piłsudski and His Scholarly Heritage: Kraków - Zakopane 29/8 – 7 /9 1999; Linguistic and Oriental Studies from Poznań, Monograph Supplement 7), pp. 21-34, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2001.

² K. Inoue, “A Brief Sketch of Br. Piłsudski's Life,” *Proceedings of the International Symposium on B. Piłsudski's Phonographic Records and the Ainu Culture*, pp. 6-7, Sapporo, 1985. See also *Piłsudskiana de Sapporo* (hereafter *PdS*) no. 1, pp. 5-6.

³ K. Inoue, “Bronisław Piłsudski's Unwilling Journey” (in Japanese), *Bronisław Piłsudski's Materials on Northern Peoples and Cultures*, pp. 61-63, National Museum of Ethnology: Osaka, 1987

⁴ K. Inoue, 1985, p. 4. See also *PdS* no. 1, p. 5.

⁵ K. Inoue, 1987, p. 63.

⁶ *Piłsudskiu seimos rankascai*, III. Bronislovas Piłsudskis, fond 161-49. The number of letter sheets is

Russian or Polish. The earliest twelve letters are printed in *Pilsudskiana de Sapporo* no.1.⁷ The first two letters written in St. Petersburg whilst in confinement are particularly relevant to the above question, and have therefore been translated into English.⁸

Meanwhile, Prof. Antoni Kuczyński of Wrocław University kindly gave me a copy of an extract from the Russian Ministry of Justice trial records, labelled “The Case of Andreyushkin and Generalov,” which is now preserved in the Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA) in St. Petersburg.⁹ Although the extract is incomplete and contains frequent typing errors, it has still helped shed new light on Piłsudski’s role in the conspiracy.

Both are newly available sources which will hopefully enable us to engage in a further analysis of this issue from a new perspective. However, we ought to be cautious about the authenticity and sincerity of what Piłsudski wrote in his letters from prison¹⁰ as well as in the statement on his trial.

The background

His “First Letter” was written on April 11 1887, almost a month after his arrest, whilst awaiting trial, which took place from April 27 to May 1.¹¹ We can imagine that this period must have been something of a nightmare for him, as he could expect the death penalty. This letter was inspired after an unexpected ‘half-hour’¹² visit from his father which took place around April 4.¹³

His “Second Letter” was written on May 30,¹⁴ almost a month after the pronouncement of the final verdicts: Piłsudski’s being ‘penal servitude for fifteen years and exile in Sakhalin.’¹⁵ Therefore, he escaped the death sentence which had initially

based on the librarian’s counting.

⁷ A new serial publication, hereafter abbreviated as *PdS*. The first issue, entitled “*Dear Father!*”: *A Collection of B. Piłsudski’s Letters, et alii*, was just printed out towards the 3rd International Conference on Bronisław Piłsudski.

⁸ See below and also “Dear Father”: B. Piłsudski’s Two Letters Written at the Petro- Pavlovsky Fortress, included in *PdS* no. 1, pp. 11-22.

⁹ RGIA, Delo Departamenta Ministerstva Yusticii Vtorogo Ugolovnogo Otdeleniya, fond 1405, op. 88, d. 9961.

¹⁰ Letters underwent censorship. This was why he was forced to write them in Russian.

¹¹ See below, in particular footnotes 38 & 43. See also *PdS* no. 1, pp. 13-17.

¹² ‘na parę kwadransów’ in: Wł. Pobóg-Malinowski. *Józef Piłsudski. 1867-1901 (w podziemiach konspiracji)*, Warszawa, 1935, str. 107.

¹³ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 13, footnote 6.

¹⁴ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, pp. 18-22.

¹⁵ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p.13, footnote 7.

been indiscriminately passed on all the fifteen accused, and his verdict was mitigated due to an appeal for the Russian Emperor's mercy.¹⁶

It seems to me that at the time of writing he was about to be deported from St. Petersburg to Odessa, as this letter was written in a house of "preliminary confinement (?)." ¹⁷ However, it is not known when he left St. Petersburg. What is known is that his father exchanged parting glances with him when he was conveyed by coach to the railway station,¹⁸ and that he was then deported by train from St. Petersburg to Odessa via Moscow, arriving at the destination in mid-June.¹⁹

The court statement

According to the trial records preserved in the Russian State Historical Archives (RGIA), Pilsudski made a statement to the court that "his participation in the criminal plot was explained by youthfulness and light-mindedness, and also by the influence of senior comrades who had turned to him with various requests. Besides, being so far away from his parent's home, he got carried away by criminal ravings, not suspecting that such actions might lead him to prosecution for a serious crime. And he sincerely repented the consequences."²⁰

In view of the following extenuating circumstances: "being a minor," "the confession of his own crime," "his sincere repentance," and "pointing-out the other participants of the crime," the special court of the Senate pronounced a verdict of "fifteen years' penal servitude."²¹

Confession

The first two letters are simply the product of his confession which were motivated, in my opinion, by an unexpected interview with his father. In his "First Letter" we read that he was so unprepared for his father's visit that he could not tell

¹⁶ According to the trial records, the twelve out of the fifteen accused who appealed for the Czar's mercy were: Mariya A. Anan'ina, Pyotr S. Gorkun, Mikhail N. Kancher, Iosif Lukashevich, Mikhail V. Novoruskiy, Tytus Pashkovskiy, Bronislav Pilsudskiy, Anna A. Serdyukova, Pyotr Ya. Shevryov, Rebekka A. Shmidova, Aleksandr I. Ul'yanov, and Stepan A. Volokhov. That is to say that Pakhomiy I. Andreyushkin, Vasiliy D. Generalov, and Vasiliy S. Osipanov did not make such appeals. As for Pilsudski, See below and also *PdS* no. 1, pp. 19 & 20, in particular footnote 7. It is not known whether the appeal was made either by himself, by his father, or by both of them.

¹⁷ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 18, footnote 2.

¹⁸ Wł. Pobóg-Malinowski, str. 107.

¹⁹ *PdS* no. 1 p. 39, footnote 2.

²⁰ RGIA, "The Case of Andreyushkin and Generalov," fond 1405, op. 88, d. 9961.

²¹ loc. cit.

him anything of what lay in his heart.²² Admittedly the presence of two unknown witnesses is likely to have prevented him from doing so. Nevertheless, during the half hour interview he even managed to discuss religious and philosophical topics with his father.²³ Thus, he could find in his father the sole and most appropriate person to whom he might be able to make a sincere confession.

For convenience's sake, I wish to divide into four sections his views on the following: 1) state and society; 2) youth, i.e., his generation; 3) his family and those who loved him; and 4) himself.

As far as the state and society were concerned, he never manifested any sense of guilt towards them. On the contrary, in his "Second Letter" he said that the punishment might be unnecessary for him as a corrective measure. This implies that in this regard he felt no need for any correction. He even declared that his ideal of a better life, which the state had accused him of, would someday be realized in the future.²⁴

As for youth, i. e., people of his generation, his concerns concentrated on warning young people that they ought not to step outside the realm of theory whilst becoming "positive persons."²⁵ He writes that he erred because he was not able to define the boundary between theory and practice.²⁶ His instruction to youth was, in my view, a forced confession. Meanwhile, he made the following remark in his "Second Letter": "If somebody was destined to become a bitter example for others, then it was a better case that it fell to my lot."²⁷ This is a clear manifestation of his character trait, i. e., an inclination towards self-sacrifice.

A profound sense of guilt was repeatedly expressed towards his family and those who loved him, throughout both letters as well as his subsequent letters. As a matter of course, this was particularly addressed to his father.

In this regard, his main concern was that he had brought nothing but grief instead of gratitude to his father, sisters and brothers (in particular Ziuk, i. e., Józef

²² See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 13.

²³ Cf. his father's remarks on Christian love and God, and the subsequent presentation of his thoughts on them in "Second Letter" (See below and also *PdS* no. 1, pp. 20-21).

²⁴ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, pp. 18-19.

²⁵ Mentioned at the end of "the First Letter" (see below and also *PdS* no. 1 p. 17). Although often Piłsudski used the expression of "positive person," both its implication and connotation are not very clear.

²⁶ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 14.

²⁷ See below and also *PdS* no 1 p. 19.

Pilsudski), relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc. Furthermore, the recognition of his “most holy obligations” and his inability to fulfill them compelled him to come to his senses.²⁸ In short, his conscience was sorely afflicted with the sense of unfulfilled obligations.

Lastly, it is not too much to say that his confession was focused on himself: his morality, character, and personal mistakes. For instance, the “past half year”²⁹ was regarded by him as an uninterrupted series of mistakes including his enrolment in the faculty of law, a lazy student life, and his involvement in the assassination attempt. With regard to the last mentioned, he explained this involvement simply in the following manner: “I was entangled in an affair and not for honourable motives. I fell into it due to my own indeliberation, stupidity and weak character.”³⁰ This view corresponds well with his court statement, cited above.

A slightly more detailed explanation can be found further on in the same letter (his “First Letter”). “After my first steps of indeliberation, I came to my senses and decided not to help those who would not behave in accordance with my convictions, **but I did not hold to my decision**, and it is here, it seems to me, wherein lies **my chief guilt**.”³¹

It is evident that, according to him, his chief guilt lay in his character defects (however it may be termed). Therefore, his task in Sakhalin was to rectify such defects.³² I wonder if in demonstrating his innocence he unwittingly attributed his guilt to defects in his character which were, in my opinion, absolutely unworthy of punishment.

What I find more persuasive is the short statement which he made a little further in the same letter: “I was fascinated, came to my senses, but it was already too late, and, therefore, I must endure punishment.”³³

Conclusion

As far as St. Petersburg was concerned, 1886 was again a stormy year in and around

²⁸ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 20.

²⁹ He meant it for a period starting from September 1886 when he enrolled in the law faculty of Imperial St. Petersburg University and ending with March 14 1887 when he was arrested.

³⁰ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 14.

³¹ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 15. Bold scripts are quoter’s emphasis.

³² See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 20.

the university. The student organization, which had been crushed in 1881, was regaining its power by organizing student demonstrations, e.g., on the 25th anniversaries of the emancipation of serfs (February 19), and the Russian writer Dobrolyubov's death (November 7).³⁴ Taking advantage of this opportunity, student leaders organized a secret circle, called "The Terrorist Fraction" of the party of "Narodnaya Volya (People's Will)," to assassinate the Russian Czar, Alexander III.³⁵

Thus, Piłsudski found himself in this 'storm' from September 1886 at the latest, when he enrolled in the law faculty. Undoubtedly he took an active part in the student struggle through his own will. On the other hand, his involvement in the assassination plot was obviously passive, having been brought in by Józef Łukaszewicz.³⁶ Nevertheless, his involvement ought to be viewed in the context of a background of the student protests. Being a freshman at the university and only twenty years of age, he was obliged to make a choice, whether or not to take part in a struggle, that in his opinion propagated noble ideals of social justice and the democratization of society. Once he made the decision to participate ("I was fascinated"³⁷), he was then forced to make a series of critical choices which included his involvement in the attempt.

If we suggest that doubts, indecision, and mistakes are indispensable attributes of youth, then it is difficult to regard Piłsudski's repeated assertion that his choices were mistaken (which he described as "stupid," "indeliberate," "light-minded," or "of weak-will," etc.) as being indisputable. First and foremost, without those choices his distinguished achievements in Far Eastern ethnography might never have occurred, let alone any international conferences dedicated to Bronisław Piłsudski and his work.

Therefore, I have yet again arrived at the same conclusion as in 1987, that he was a sympathizer with the assassination attempt, although he suffered a great deal of internal conflicts and turmoil regarding his participation.

³³ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 16.

³⁴ K. Inoue, 1987, pp. 55-56.

³⁵ K. Inoue, 1987, p. 57.

³⁶ Łukaszewicz was accused of that in the trial (cf. RGIA, "The Case of Andreyushkin and Generalov," fond 1405, op. 88, d. 9961). See also K. Inoue, 1987, pp. 56-58.

³⁷ See below and also *PdS* no. 1, p. 16.

First Letter ³⁸

30th of March³⁹ 1887, the Fortress⁴⁰

*Inspected by Sh(?). Ts(?).*⁴¹

Dear Father⁴²! When you were [here] a week ago⁴³, I was so unprepared for your visit that I could not tell [you] anything of what lay in my heart and of what interested you most. Shame did not allow me, in the presence of two witnesses, complete strangers, to confess my heavy guilt, and, besides, as you know well, it is difficult for me to express what I feel. But, on the other hand, I need to share this with someone who would understand and hear me out; and I could never not make a sincere confession, especially since I now find myself in this difficult situation. I have decided to write to you, being sincerely conscious of my guilt, and to stand before your court, since I am about to stand before a court of laws⁴⁴. I have already for a long time condemned myself, already for a long time I ought to have pronounced the verdict of my conscience, since before it I am sorely guilty and also before you all, who were dear to me and whom I could never cease loving.

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³⁸ The original letter in Russian is preserved in the Archives of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library, Vilnius, as <Pilsudskiu seimos rankrasciai, III. Bronislovas Pilsudskis>, fond 161-49: 3-7. The first version in English is included in *PdS* no. 1, Chapter II, pp. 13-17. Cf. the Russian version in *PdS* no. 1, Chapter III, pp. 25-31.

³⁹ This is in the Julian calendar adopted by the Russian Empire, which corresponds to April 11th in the Gregorian calendar. To convert the former to the latter, add 12 days during the 19th century.

⁴⁰ The Petro-Pavlovsky Fortress located on the right bank of the Neva River in St. Petersburg.

⁴¹ As this letter was written in detainment, it underwent censorship before it was sent. An insertion and the repeated deletions of the censor (his initials are undecipherable) are rendered in italic.

⁴² Józef Wincenty Piotr Piłsudski (1833-1902), who came all the way from Wilno/Vilnius, Lithuania, to the Imperial Capital and insistently requested an interview with his arrested sons (Bronisław and Józef), was still staying there when B. Piłsudski wrote this letter, since his father could see Bronisław off when he was going to be deported from St. Petersburg to Odessa, and thence to Sakhalin [Pobóg-Malinowski, *Józef Piłsudski. 1867-1901 (w podziemiach konspiracji)*, Warszawa, 1935, p. 107].

⁴³ Bronisław Piłsudski (1866-1918) was arrested at his flat in St. Petersburg on the following day of the so-called “Second Case of March 1st,” an abortive plot to assassinate the Russian Czar, Alexander III, which took place on March 13th, 1887, i.e., March 1st in the Julian calendar.

Accordingly, it can be inferred that this interview took place around April 4th, despite the conclusion of a Polish historian that it occurred a few days after the pronouncement of the final verdict (on May 1st) [Pobóg-Malinowski, *ibidem*].

⁴⁴ A special court was convened in the Senate to deal with the “Second Case of March 1st” from April 27th up to May 1st, 1887. Among the fifteen accused we find Aleksandr Ul’yanov, Lenin’s elder brother who was condemned to death and then hanged, and B. Piłsudski who was finally sentenced to penal servitude for fifteen years and exile in Sakhalin.

If [only] I were suffering and had been punished for seeing how poorly people live on earth, how unjustly the wealth of nature and the benefits of culture are distributed everywhere, very often regardless of the individual's merits, for seeing how abundant luxury and all finer pleasures and education were appropriated by a minority, whereas the majority was immersed in poverty, darkness and ignorance; and for seeing all of this and being unwilling to agree with it, I have given myself the ideal of a better life, that I wanted to establish through science, an ideal which, in my opinion, will be realized someday in the future. If for this cause I sat here in prison, then all of you would say: woe to the person, who, not having experienced a difficult life, could freely think and build ideals for the future; woe to him because, all the same, he was an honest man and might have brought benefits to his family and society. Furthermore, if I were to propagate my ideal and then was punished for that, you would not at all

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reprove me but say that the person who wished to improve the position of the working class, ought to work but not speak or write about things unrealizable at the present time. But now I cannot expect your indulgence. You know well that I am not accused of any such crime. I was entangled in an affair and not for honourable motives. I fell into it due to my own indeliberation, stupidity and weak character. Yes! But indeliberation must have its limits. An indeliberate child can be forgiven, but not a person of twenty years old. It is possible to forgive anyone who behaved carelessly in regard to a relatively small thing, but not one that concerned the life of people. I was not able to define the boundary where theory finished and practice began. Not grasping in theory things of a similar nature, I nevertheless put my hand to them. Although

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I had always said that, before I finally worked out my convictions and had become a completely positive person, I would not join anything in order not to regret the consequences; however, I deviated from this rule. But this deviation can easily be forgiven for Ziuk⁴⁵, since he had such a flighty, light-minded and excitable character.

⁴⁵ A term of endearment for Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), a younger brother by one year of Bronisław, whose counterpart was "Broniś." Józef Piłsudski came to be famous also by the terms of "Marshal Piłsudski" and the State "Naczelnik."

But I am not permitted this, since I have been respected by you for moderation and deliberateness; I have always given an account for what I said; and, especially with the help of a diary⁴⁶, I worked so hard to develop my character. In any given case, my deliberateness never left me. After my first steps of indeliberation, I came to my senses and decided not to help those who would not behave in accordance with my convictions, but I did not hold to my decision, and it is here, it seems to me, wherein lies my chief guilt. You all have regarded me as very good and obliging. But

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it seems to me that this goodness within me derives more from the softness and weakness of my character. And this manifests a very nasty character trait. For instance, a teacher who cannot make a distinction between goodness and weakness only spoils his pupils. Thus a person of weak character can often do harm not out of ill will. You yourself mentioned an example of such a person when, during our meeting, you told me a story about the unfortunate behaviour of our relative, who had been regarded until then as one of the best and most honest people. Just as he gave in to the influence of his vile wife, I also became stupidly susceptible to xxxx xxxx like any number of youths.

Xxxx

xxxxxx -----	<i>crossed out by the censor</i>	-----	xxxxxx
xxxxxx -----	<i>crossed out by the censor</i>	-----	xxxxxx
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prohibition and attracts all inexperienced and excitable youth. This is forgiveable for many, but I cannot excuse myself; for I perfectly well recognized this mistake with regard to others and I often accused my friends of similar behaviour while I myself

⁴⁶ B. Piłsudski's diary written in his boyhood is preserved in the Archives of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library, Vilnius, in the collection <Piłsudskiu seimos rankraščiai, III. Bronislovas Piłsudskis>. Its typewritten version is possessed by the Institute of Joseph Piłsudski in New York.

remained uncontaminated with this very stupid disease. I was fascinated, came to my senses, but it was already too late, and, therefore, I must endure punishment. And thus my guilt is closely linked, it seems to me, with another guilt: nearly all of my actions of the past half year. I chose the faculty of law. But I chose it exactly when I learned that I could only be a barrister if I wished to remain in my own country. I am not at all capable, as you always said to me, of being a barrister. They say that I don't know how, that I don't possess the swiftness in judgement and boldness that barristers need in their practice; on the contrary, my timidity very often compels me to fall into confusion for no reason at all. I don't know how, as you yourself used to

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say to me, to become any kind of a defense lawyer. Neither did I enter the medical faculty, having dissuaded myself with the excuse that I had no inclination for the natural sciences, and I even felt an aversion to mathematics. Nor did I enter the astronomical academy, as You advised me to do, dissuading myself likewise. But, in the main, if I confess frankly, I did not enroll anywhere that demanded plenty of work as I recollect it now. And I forgot the edict by which I had to be guided in a spontaneous choice, I forgot that I had an obligation since you were already old and needed my help, and that I, being the eldest [son], should take care of younger members of the family. If I, then, did not remain at home, so as to help extricate you from difficult circumstances, then, taking this into consideration, I should have worked hard and, above all, studied. During the half-year I did nothing, or very little. I somewhat even engaged in self-training, about which I constantly dreamed. From the diligent boy, that you

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knew, I turned out to be a lazy, idle person. One evil certainly gives rise to another. And thus a half-year passed, and I erred once more. Whether I shall succeed or not in rectifying my mistakes, and, if yes, I don't know – when. Even though I will not be able to make use of this experience, let it serve to instruct many of my comrades, many youths. You will say to me, Father, that I sit [here] not because of “truth” and “freedom,” as many people might imagine, but because of “untruth”; that I shall be punished not because I trod honourably, even if on a false path, but because I behaved dishonourably. You will say to them, Father, that they should study and develop

themselves, not forgetting their obligations to family and the whole society, and that they should be true to their conscience at every step. And as they are becoming positive persons, let them go as their conscience directs. In their youth let them not step outside the area of theory. Otherwise, they will be obliged to regret, and to be in the miserable situation that I find myself, when one must not recognize the fault, that rested in the gymnasium, lest one should involve others;

XXXXX ----- *crossed out by the censor* ----- XXXXX
XXXXX ----- *crossed out by the censor* ----- XXXXX

I know that I gave grief to you all who⁴⁷

loved me. Forget about me! Please realize that
I was unworthy of you, and it will perhaps be easier.⁴⁸

Your Bronisław⁴⁹

⁴⁷ This line was added on an upper margin of page 6b.

⁴⁸ Two lines were added on an upper margin of page 6a.

⁴⁹ The signature was written on an upper margin of page 5b.

Second Letter ⁵⁰

18th May 1887, S.P.B., a house of [preliminary confinement]⁵¹

Dear Father! I have been permitted once more to write to you, once more to share my sincere thoughts and feelings [with you]⁵². I have never had so much in my heart to express, but I have never been able to achieve it so little as now. Hence, be indulgent if my letter may turn out to be too clumsy or insufficient. I only assure you that I will write, as usual, what I feel sincerely and profoundly.

A pleasant life, which I can only compare to a dream, has passed for me. Perhaps I had sunk into a dream, profound but full of pleasant feelings, when I was flying in my imagination beneath the clouds with my gaze and feelings fixed to a point, having almost forgotten the reality⁵³ that surrounded me. Isn't it a dream when a person is not aware of what he is doing, or when he thinks and says one thing and does another? I was obliged to wake up, but under such horrible circumstances.

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I will not complain about my heavy punishment, although from one standpoint it may be unnecessary for me as a corrective measure. It would be a great pity if only punishment or fear of suffering could have brought me to come to my senses. On the other hand, however, the punishment that was due to me according to law to satisfy the sense of justice was mitigated for me only thanks to Monarchical mercy⁵⁴. As for the third aspect of the punishment, as a means to divert others from committing a similar kind of crime, it provides me with what may be my sole consolation. I shall be glad if my broken life should serve as a sufficient example to force honourable but

⁵⁰ The original letter in Russian is preserved in the Archives of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library, Vilnius, as <Pilsudskiu seimos rankrasciai, III. Bronislovas Pilsudskis>, fond 161-49: 7-11. The first version in English is included in *PdS* no. 1, Chapter II, pp. 18-22. Cf. the Russian version in *PdS* no. 1, Chapter III, pp. 32-38.

⁵¹ This letter was obviously written in St. Petersburg (cf. its initials S.P.B.) whilst in confinement, the most probable location of which indicated here in square parentheses, is inferred from a tentative decipherment of abbreviated forms in Russian. Anyway, B. Piłsudski was detained still in St. Petersburg by this date, i.e., May 30th (May 18th in the Julian calendar), 1887. It is not known yet when and where this letter was dispatched to his father. Unlike his "First Letter," it appears that the second one for some reason went uncensored.

⁵² Cf. his "First Letter," dated March 30th (April 11th in the Julian calendar) 1887.

⁵³ The reality was that Piłsudski was sitting in a small cell, awaiting deportation.

⁵⁴ See the footnote 16.

excitable young people to come to their senses. I console myself that I will endure it not only for my own guilt, but also so that many like me may not suffer, and that many of them might become useful members of society, having been forced by my example to change their direction.

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I regret losing the best years of my life, of course, and also regret my lost fantasies, but it is not difficult for me to part with them. I have not sought only personal happiness in life, and have not expected from it mere enjoyment. If somebody was destined to become a bitter example for others, then it was a better case that it fell to my lot and not my brother's⁵⁵, or that of a good friend of mine. With their abilities and firmer character, they will be capable of bringing more benefit to society than I could have. But why discuss my ruined happiness, when even so I am much happier than many, if not most? For twenty years I lived without anxieties and almost any troubles, able to enjoy all of the higher pleasures, and to satisfy even my minute desires, while so many people spend all their life in ceaseless heavy labour for a crust of bread, often unable to satisfy their indispensable needs. – However, I cannot quiet myself.

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How can I be tranquil when conscience demands a reckoning, but finds no satisfactory answer, and when I can give only one negative answer to its persistent questions: how have I expressed my gratitude to you, Father, for your concerns about me; where are the fruits of my education for which so much money was expended; where are the rewards for those who took pains for me? What did I give back in exchange for the love which surrounded me, and by what did I manifest my love to all the people who were near and dear to me? Terrible is the situation of a person who sees that he has brought grief instead of gratitude, and who knows that more than half, if not the whole, of his life is to be spent uselessly. It is burdensome to recognize one's most holy obligations, and not be able to fulfill them. – Thinking about unfulfilled obligations has obliged me to come to my senses, and the same notion will keep hold of me during the whole period

⁵⁵ Piłsudski's brother Józef a year younger, was also arrested and then exiled to Kirensk, East Siberia, for five years by administrative fiat. See also the footnote 44 in "First Letter."

of my heavy punishment. On the same day

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the granting of His Imperial Majesty's mercy to me was announced,⁵⁶ I pledged my word to myself that I would maintain it with all my might, until I finally return to society, and at least in part shall free myself from the moral debt which I have incurred to You, Father, as well as to so many others, and have washed away my heavy crime by a better life. – I know that there is a very difficult situation ahead of me, and that I shall be obliged at each step to fight against myself. It will be necessary for me to adapt my weak organism to the most severe conditions, to make my character stronger, to get rid of my indecision and permanent doubts, and also to become more self-confident and thus to change my weak will into stronger one. This is indispensable to me, if I really wished to come back to You, not only to extend my miserable existence a little. – Concerning two remarks by you on Christian love and God⁵⁷, be calm, Father!

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The principles of morality included in the Christian doctrine have always been the ideal by which my soul is penetrated, and, despite my temporary deviation from them, I will never more abandon them. – As far as God and various doctrines of materialists are concerned, I must admit in this respect my own incompetence with regard to scientific points of view. Only in the fortress, I must confess, I got acquainted with several views of the so-called natural philosophers. – In my view, the existence of a Being, [i.e.,] God, that is unintelligible and strikes us by its grandeur and omnipotence, is best of all demonstrated by the very materialists who can explain the conditions of emergence for various phenomena, but not their essence or cause. They can reduce all to substance and its properties, but cannot answer who created the substance, who endowed it with the properties which are expressed in the form of accurate and immutable laws,

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⁵⁶ The first verdict indiscriminately passed on all the fifteen accused was 'death by hanging'. However, those who presented an appeal for mercy to the Czar could escape the death penalty. Obviously, Piłsudski was one of them. The final judgement was declared at the special court of the Senate on May 1st 1887.

⁵⁷ Presumably his father made these remarks during his interview with Bronisław, which took place around April 4th, 1887 (cf. footnotes 41 & 42 in "First Letter").

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and who supervises their exact performance. [Here] I don't see separate miracles, by which term uneducated people often call phenomena that are new to them and therefore attract their attention. In my view, the miracle which represents the manifestation of God's will, is the whole that embraces all with no exception, beginning from the simplest usual process occurring before our eyes and ending with that purposefulness which is observable in nature, and that harmony and wondrous order in the motion of an infinite number of worlds in infinite immeasurable space. – I ask all of you and, in particular, You, Father, to forgive me, if I did any injustice to You. I will never forget your love, and, if God grants it, I will requite you someday with nothing less. – Adieu, brothers and sisters! How I wish I could hand over part of my love [to you], so that you would love our dear Father the more, and one another, and all those around us! How I wish I could hand over the whole of my experience to you, so that you might be better than I am and be happier! – I was the eldest boy, but I was not always able to make proper use of my senior position. Now I resign it to you.

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When I come back in 15 years, I'll be the one in need of your instruction. Now, try your best so that you could replace me in consoling Father who was distressed through my fault! Please endeavour both by your love of him and by your actions to console his grief. Never forget your obligations and don't regard as such only those you like, as happens with many young people. Study and develop yourselves, but systematically, and don't undertake the solution of those problems for which you have not yet built up a solid foundation. But, first of all, be concerned with your morality and character, since insufficient intellectual development is not so harmful as defects in character! Be moderate (don't confuse this with the mediocrity which humiliates a person!), listen to the instructions of elders, with which I was obliged to agree in a number of respects, but which I had denied during my excitable period. Love the truth and never be afraid of confessing your mistakes. It is better to rectify errors late than never. And now, if I have earned your love and trust, pledge your word that you will always keep an eye on yourselves even in the smallest actions, and, if you noticed in yourselves, or heard from others of your defects, don't rest content until you have rectified them! Good-bye, now, I am sure that,

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having been penetrated by the truly Christian love for all, [i.e.,] all with no exception, you will successfully enter the life which is to be closed to me for a long time to come. – Farewell to all of my dear people, relatives, friends, and acquaintances! Don't give in to grief, Father, my dear, as it is necessary to submit to what one cannot return or change by human power, isn't it? The consciousness of your brokenheartedness will only torment me the more. I wish you all to know that I loved, love, and will never stop loving You, and I will not give up the hope still to demonstrate this in actuality to You. Excuse me once again and good-bye until the 20th century⁵⁸! – Your Bronisław –

⁵⁸ Cf. the final verdict passed on Piłsudski, i.e., 'penal servitude for fifteen years and exile in Sakhalin,' which was to expire only in 1902.