

NINA ASSORODOBRAJ

Translated by JĘDRZEJ BRZEZIŃSKI

The Beginnings of the Working Class.  
The problem of the working hands  
in Polish industry in the epoch  
of Stanisław August (fragments)

Fragments of the book *Początki klasy robotniczej* published in 1946 (on the base of author's PhD thesis, *Les débuts de la classe ouvrière* published originally in 1936) give insight to history of Polish vagabonds in eighteen century. Text based on archival documents, ordinances and fragments from the press depicts the problem from multiple points of view, showing the complex history of this social group and how it was systematically delegalized and assimilated by consequent legal and administrative decisions. Motley population of vagabonds, entertaining miscellaneous ways of living and working was on one hand viewed as a bunch villains or idlers, but on the other constituted a reservoir of workforce, much in need for the nascent industry.

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## The social origin of vagabonds

The composition of the population of vagabonds varied in terms of their belonging to social strata. The vast majority of them were of peasant origin, landless or smallholding, or runaway serfs who had left their lord and borough, whether in the recent or distant past, in order to engage in domestic service or daily wage labor. Similarly, free townspeople, especially from small and poor towns; frequently Jews, roaming around or trading; as well as degraded nobility, whose way of life had become similar to the one of servants: wandering in search of earnings, erring, and begging.<sup>1</sup> A noblewoman, Franciszka Grygolewska, for example, accused colonel Jarzmowski, whom she served as a domestic servant, of “harm and beating” before the court of Civil-Military Commission (KCW. Książ and Lelów, 174; 5, 13). Within the jurisdiction of Czersk a nobleman who committed theft was detained, without a passport or certificate, as he was passing from one job in domestic service to another: “He spent a night in Wielgolas at an inn, where he haled out and stole a horse, with the horse he ran away, but was apprehended” (KCW. Czersk, 7; 214). Another man, also of noble origin, “took up wage labor in Warsaw” (KCW. Czersk, 7; 215). Jan Osieński, a nobleman whose father served in the National Cavalry, found a job as an assistant to a lacquerer in Warsaw. Having terminated, he took the certificate and returned to Końskie – his hometown, “but behind Góra three gentlemen in a horse-drawn carriage ordered him to give them his certificate to read and having said that it was swinishly written, they ripped it” (KCW. Czersk, 7; 203). Deprived of the certificate, he was arrested and detained in Warka. Katarzyna Rapacka, a maid “of noble birth,” confessed to the Court Commission of Radom, that “during her service she had experienced a lot of ill-treatment and beating and moreover, seeing herself beslaved” she had to resort to flight (KCW. Radomsko 1792, 38).

Nobles could also be found among the vagabonds in the proper sense. For example, the Civil-Military Commission of Lelów appealed to the relatives of a detained nobleman-vagabond to take care of him and to “urge him to work decently, and from disgraceful vainness and drunkenness, for the sake of their own honor, they forbid him by all means” (KCW. Książ and Lelów 166; 63).<sup>2</sup>

1 *Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny* (Historical-Political Diary), states that “many are these noblemen in decline, stoking or digging graves... half-naked, wearing but shoddy togs, they frustrer their lives on idling and drinking” (*Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny* 1790, 1304).

2 We encounter a lot of examples of errant noblemen seeking work. Example

From these examples one can see that the poor nobility pervaded this category of people, which is referred to as “loose, unbound” or “vagabond,” finding earnings in domestic service or craft, interspersed with periods of vagrancy, wage labor, and sometimes also begging and theft.

Mostly, however, it was from villages and small towns that men, women, children, Christians, and Jews alike were cast out to wander in search of work. Rural populations, having fled from serfdom under these or other circumstances, filled the roads, towns, and villages. Let's have a look at the specific cases of this detachment from the group and the ways in which peasants, servants, and free people found themselves among the population of vagrants.

Rutkowski's research on the economic condition of villages and manor farms during the eighteenth century allows us to conclude that in Poland at that time there was only a negligible number of larger peasant households, and the number of households without any land was also relatively small – most prevalent were those on the verge of economic independence (Rutkowski 1921, 50). From the mid-eighteenth century, rural populations underwent a process of glaring proletarianization – hence the increase in the number of low-income and landless peasants (Rutkowski 1923, 141-142).<sup>3</sup> This stratification of the rural population must be taken into account as one condition undoubtedly conducive to internal migrations. For the biggest part of the unbonded people, vagabonds and beggars, it was the need for additional earnings through seasonal wage labor or domestic service that would send them packing.

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from the Commission of Radom: “a noble Andrzej Górski from Łęczycza voivodeship with his wife... was apprehended for walking without a passport. After being interrogated by the Commission, which learned that he had no secured ways to sustain himself, and was spending his time begging, although his age showed ability to take up some work, he received therefore no passport, and indeed was told to set there, in Radomsko, and earn for his food” (KCW. Radomsko no. 22, fol. 42). The same Commission issued a passport for another nobleman, “in search of servants post,” based on certificates from previous places of his domestic service (KCW. Radomsko, no. 22, fol. 257).

3 The census of the city of Poznań from September 15, 1789 provides a telling example, showing the village structure in terms of wealth. The rural proletariat: i.e. renters of both genders, servants, and unbonded hired laborers constitute 48% of the village population; the economically independent villagers accounted for 52%. The numbers indicate, according to Rutkowski, “that even under conditions of the rent based system, which for the gentry was undoubtedly much more favorable than the system based on *corvée*, the percentage of the rural proletariat remained very big” (Rutkowski 1925, 60-61).

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The phenomenon of the mass exodus of people in search of income was bemoaned by the Civil-Military Commission of Wieluń and Wizna. Because of their poverty, people from the Ostrzeszów powiat “in the summer go to earn their living in the Wielkopolskie or Kujawskie voivodships and as gravediggers and ploughers they earn for their rent” (KCW. Wieluń 16; 55). “In this powiat – complains the Commission – many are huts where Silesians settle, only with a wheelbarrow to earn their piece of bread, they pay, for example, little rent of 16 zlotys per year, have neither a farm, nor a garden, only with spinsty they survive winter, and in summer they go with their wheelbarrow to work, earn rent and pay their lord” (KCW. Wieluń 16; 22).

The commission of Wizna complained about the migration for wage work as well. It issued universals<sup>4</sup> aimed at “putting an end to the rogueries of the vagrants of both sexes, seemingly free but indeed avoiding permanent residency and dominion, who without household nor job as servants idle around for various pretexts and earnings,” and who “during the summer flee to wetlands and factories” (KCW. Wizna 5; fol. 18).

The complaints of the Commissions just explored provide a generalization of the phenomena that we find in the questionnaires from investigations of passportless detainees. Seasonal wage labor in agriculture or construction more and more frequently would set a path of a complete exit from the village. We will see that often a man would never come back, even after only having gone to work in a nearby fair, let alone due to employment or labor in areas distant from home.

Here are some examples: a man detained for wandering without a passport, a native of Szczarków village, claims “that there is no place in the village and that is why he goes searching for odd jobs and that is why he spent four weeks chopping wood for the Jewish innkeeper in Szulmierzyce” (KCW. Radomsko, February 3, 1792, 35). Another said that “his father from Sokółów, in the region of Podlasie, is no longer alive and so he has no seat of being there anymore.” So he goes to “Przygań by Vistula, where he wants to live” (KCW. Radomsko, February 3, 1792, fol. 120). He received a passport to the said town; however, whether he arrived and actually settled there and for how long he stayed – remains unknown. A certain Pietrzak, after being stopped, testified that “he is from Chylice. His mother and stepfather are in Jeziorna, behind the river. He says that having nothing to do by his father, he left...” (KCW. Czersk, 7; 149).

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4 Legal proclamations issued in Poland or Ukraine – transl.

Among the detained people we meet many who have wandered for years in search of labor, often having left the village and the family already as children. “Wojciech Rutkowski, handed over (to Radomsko) from the village of Wadlowa, a vagrant without a passport, testified during the exam that he was a native of Mogiła near Kraków, from where as a little boy he left, and served in various places and worked once with carpenters, once with gravediggers...” (KCW. Radomsko, 35; fol. 196). A 20-year-old boy detained in the territory of the Commission of Lelów, who worked in many places as a farmhand and herd boy, testified that he had been walking around the world for nine years. “I began to go from a village to village. Sometimes people gave me something, sometimes I would take things on my own secretly. I was feeding myself with groats, flour, peas which I begged from people” (KCW. Książ and Lelów, May 5, 1790, 176). Another man, wandering together with his wife, without certificates, “says that he came from the village of Gorzyc near Opatów... from where he left twelve years ago and wandered from job to job and now wanted to go pick the work in saw mills” (KCW. Czersk, 7; 102).

The census of the city of Krakow, administered by the city Commission in order to get rid of vagabonds and beggars, registered a lot of people coming from villages for labor or in search of jobs in domestic service (KCW. Kraków i Proszów 165, 10; 159; 80). “Four years I’m in Krakow, I had left my village for there was nothing to do there” (KCW. Kraków and Proszów 159; 81; 16). Next to many of the names we find an annotation of the inspector: “a menial without a post” or “subsisting with odd labor.” Many of the arrested testify to the Commission: “I do menial jobs for people and from that I feed myself” (KCW. Kraków and Proszów 159; 81; 15).<sup>5</sup>

As daily wage workers, these people were in constant motion, travelling from one place to another. The detained Paweł Nagórny “as a young boy had left Głaszów, nearby Sandomierz... spent some time in Tuszyń, little town... he has his wife there and two sons, the eldest works in a farm. He was renting a plot there, his wife was doing the statute labor, and when he told her that they should go and look for some other place, she wouldn’t listen. So a year ago he himself went. He would go from village to village and search for work” (KCW. Kraków and Proszów 159; 81; 22). The commission of Czersk found a man,

5 Testifies a certain Józef Szymanek, arrested for the second time for lack of passport: “I’m over 30 years old, I have a wife in Zagorzyce, she rents there.” Being asked: “how do you work and how you sustain yourself?” – he answers: “people hire me and that’s how I eat.”

“born in the region of Cracow, gone for 15 years: he would always serve, and now also he was searching for work as a servant” (KCW. Kraków and Proszów 159; 7, 11).<sup>6</sup>

Often such departures were only for seasonal work, after which laborers would come back to their countryside with earnings. However, many of the examples we have cited point to the fact of detachment from permanent residence while wandering in search of work. After a few years, such laborers had roamed quite far from their starting point, lost contact with the family village and truly become “unbonded men,” moving from one job to the next, in their way of life reminiscent of vagabonds.

But it was not only villages that provided candidates for labor and domestic service. The supply also came from small towns, similar to villages in terms of demographic structure, whose poverty and deplorable economic conditions were often addressed in journalism during Stanisław August’s epoch.<sup>7</sup> An anonymous author of the *Głos obywatela prywatnego* (Private citizen’s voice) describes smaller towns as “yet more rigid prisons for the ruled, in which, having barely any land at their disposal, they struggle with hunger and misery.” (AGAD, Zbiór Popielów, 205, fol. 186-187)

As an illustration of economic emigration from towns, the example of a memorandum from Kępno can be quoted, sent to the Commission of Wieluń with a request for a greater number of passports, because: “the people of this town are many, but they are not able to feed themselves from its land, and so the town has to urge them to search for bread and earning through trade and industry, so that almost every day they have to leave and travel through the country” (KCW. Wieluń, 18; 206). There is no reason to suppose that Kępno was in a special situation here; it provides rather a typical example. Among the arrested many are costermongers and itinerant laborers coming from small and larger cities. (...)

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6 Another runaway subject from vicinities of Radom, for a year “wandered from a labor to labor, recently he labored in Piaseczno and from there he went farther away” (KCW. Czersk, no. 7, 160). The Commission of Radom had detained two subjects who testified that they had “left two weeks ago to earn their living; they stayed in the village of Przyborów, threshing for the peasants there for seven days, after which they arrived at the village of Wola,” where they were arrested (KCW. Radomsko, January 31, 1792, 35).

7 “Historical and Political Diary” writes: “cities... bringing disgrace to the Polish nation in the eyes of the world, these terrible dumps and seats of laziness, idleness, drunkenness, and the most base misery” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1789, 328). *Dziennik Handlowy* (The Journal of Commerce) also raises the question of the poverty of the cities and of the lack of correlation between the taxes and the wealth of the townsmen (*Dziennik Handlowy* 1787, 426).

## Coercion. Workhouses. Orphanages

The problem of the industrial worker is to be observed most vividly and clearly in Warsaw and Cracow - the latter being in rather a dire state at the time, while still retaining the demographic structure of a big city. We do not need to focus again on the presence in these cities of a large number of poor people, living from daily hire, the frequent changing of place of domestic service, occasional work, peddlery or begging. We devoted the first part of this paper to the formation and characteristics of this pauperized population and pointed out that the cities were particularly attractive in these respects, because they offered easier and higher earnings and alms given generously. Many of the protocols that came from investigations of the loose people, detained by this or that Civil-Military Commission, depict their journey to Warsaw or Cracow as motivated by the search for some income in the city. Ordinances of municipal and central authorities, results of the roundups and so-called "revisions," i.e. inspections, carried out by census officers, to detect hiding people "without secure means of living" – this sparse but telling statistical data allow us to decisively establish the presence of a relatively large population of poor and day laborers in the cities, living off occasional earnings and wage labor.

It is a momentous statement, because the existence of a reservoir of free, unemployed workforce, in simultaneous juxtaposition with the difficulties in finding workers, or even the lack of working hands for urban industrial enterprises, reveals the essence of the issue under investigation.

Again, what turns out to be most interesting in this respect are the textile factories in the cities, constantly in need of larger numbers of unskilled workers who could guarantee stability and the possibility for the entrepreneur to use technical skills, learned only in the factory.

The phenomena accompanying the acquisition and retention of the industrial worker in non-agricultural cities are all the more telling, because the candidates, considered to be a reservoir of labor, consist in large part of unbound, loose people *par excellence*, almost independent of the company owner, which was almost never the case for the poor and wage-earning people in villages and small towns. The example of big cities fully demonstrates that the industrial labor market was dependent on the social character of the wage-earning population, that is, on their traditional ways of working and living. Our work in establishing these relations is made easier, thanks to the testimonies of the inhabitants of these larger cities, for whom these dependencies often implied weighty practical problems.

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Here are some significant facts:

In Cracow, merchant Frysztacki, a professional who “honed his youth in factories abroad,” can only produce cloths on a small scale, because he lacks not only funds, but also, notably, “people for doing yarn” (Korzon 1897, II, 305-306).<sup>8</sup> It is true that Cracow was at that time in a dilapidated condition. Still, it is conspicuous, that candidates for spinners were lacking in exactly this town, where in 1790 a third of the total population consisted of servants, wage-workers, loose people, and beggars, and which, according to the files of the Cracow’s Civil-Military Commission, constituted a center through which waves of migrating people in search of work were flowing. Hence, we can consider it no accident that the same merchant Frysztacki, in 1787, became a partner of the priest Sierakowski, who set up a cloth factory based on the forced labor of prisoners, vagabonds, and beggars captured in Kraków (Dziennik Handlowy 1787, 505). Not neglecting the significance of financial considerations, which could have been an important motivation for Frysztacki in joining Sierakowski’s factory, we must notice also a certain nexus between this fact and the experience of the merchant, prevented from enlarging his enterprise due to a lack of “people for doing yarn.”

Another fact: the same priest Sierakowski, who had been directing cloth manufactures for many years, formulated a demand to the authorities to strictly forbid everyone, especially the youth, from selling rye soups, pastries, and fruits around the city, except street vendors who paid for their stalls in magistrates. Such customs “do harm to the factory, for it cannot keep the spinners at work” (Sierakowski 1797, 32). It shows that occasional earnings, such as itinerant trading around the city, were proving to be more attractive than wage-earning in industrial enterprises. Implementing the basic organizational postulate – that of the permanence of workers’ team in the factories – entailed serious difficulties, if it was even possible to achieve at all. It provides an illustration of the state of affairs in which the poor, favoring casual incomes over permanent work in the factory, did not want to adopt a new system of work and life, until they were forced to do so by hunger, i.e. until they had no other ways to earn and survive. Candidates *in potentia* for spinners in factories used to walk around Cracow and Warsaw with baskets of pears or sweets and would not apply for work in manufacturing, and it was only through coercion by the police that they were taken “to wool.”

Let us pair this with two other symptomatic facts. The Great Marshal

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8 Korzon refers to a report on Cracow factories (AS, XXX, File 34, unfortunately lost in the archives).



of the Crown, Mniszech, issued harsh ordinances against beggars, vagrants, and people without “assured means of living,” justifying it by reference to the difficulty in hiring workers. Although “wanderers” flow into Warsaw from all over the country, and there are plenty of physically-fit beggars and people able to work, the “industrialists of this city are unable to hire workers despite paying them very well” (Biblioteka Ordynacji Kasińskich., MS 751, fol.159. Ann. from June 3, 1786). “Historical and Political Diary” in one of the articles typical of its agenda, justified the need to ban begging with the fact that the ease of subsisting only on alms made it difficult for the factories to attract workers uninterested in applying for work (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1791, 692).

Manufacturing was in need of a permanent, cheap, and obedient work force and found in the cities a pauperized element, subsisting on odd hirings, that could possibly provide this workforce. These people however, remained loyal to their traditional living conditions, which protected them from situations of coercion, despite strikingly low living standards. They rejected the advantage that income from manufacturing offered, because of the cost of losing their freedom.

It suffices to see how unbonded, vagabond people worked and lived traditionally, and to compare it with the proposals offered to workers by manufacturers, to see that the most convenient, if not the only practical solution to the problem of working hands in the cities involved forced labor. We will see that a number of reforms and new social policies, recommended by public opinion and implemented by the authorities, were aimed at transforming the current living conditions of the day-laborer population, so that they would be willing to look for incomes in factories.

However, the first Polish industrialists had to organize their enterprises precisely in conditions unfavorable to the emergence of a market for cheap industrial labor. The transformation processes that had only just begun required time for a real transformation in the arrangement of social relations. Hence interested parties realized that they needed to apply certain measures, which undoubtedly played their part in accelerating these changes, but above all led to provisional and individual resolutions on the issue of working hands, in line with the postulates of the manufacturers.

Among such *ad hoc* measures that the entrepreneurs applied variously in cities were means of making use of forced labor for industrial production.

Thus, in October 1791, Franciszek Rehan, a cloth manufacturer from Warsaw, addressed a memorandum to the Police Commission,

which was at the time only just being organized, with a plea to “provide him with the help of the prisoners for his manufacture” (Komisja Policji, II, 39). Although the memorandum did not survive, it can be inferred from the protocol of the Police Commission meeting that it contained an exact draft aimed at obtaining the workforce with the help of police and administrative authorities, in order to significantly expand the enterprise, of which Rehan was one of the partners, along with a certain Jan Bogucki, and others. The Commission’s answer to his memorandum was very supportive. Announcing the same positive response towards “similar projects of all the others,” it promised “to take the most effective measures as soon as the Police are organized” (Komisja Policji, I, 62–63). Meanwhile, Rehan received the permission to “make use of” fourteen already trained prisoners. On November 2, 1791, the Police Commission arranged a roundup of vagabonds and beggars in Warsaw. It was decided that from the 633 people detained, 410 were “suitable for the country manufacturing” (AGAD, Akta Starej Warszawy, 1208, December 23, 1791). Already on November 4 the Police Commission and Rehan agreed on certain points, “having the power of contract,” which allowed the latter to select among the people detained during raids those that were able to work and to place the selected ones in his manufacturing, feed, and clothe them, and in exchange “demand from them the work necessary for the manufacturing of cloth” (Komisja Policji, 125). However, because of the size of the rooms, he was able to accommodate only a few detainees. Only on December 15 was Rehan able to place 200 of the poor in his factory when large factory premises were rented in the palace of Castellan Jezierski on Dobra Street (Komisja Policji, 2814, 24) due to a contract with the Police Commission (AGAD, 1208). On March 19, 1792, the Commission approved the final form of the contract with Franciszek Rehan, Jan Bogucki and Co., specifying the conditions for the use of forced labor from people delivered as workers by the Police Commission (Komisja Policji, I, 501–502; AGAD, 1208).

This agreement created an institution with a dual character. From the point of view of the Police Commission, which was responsible for combating vagrancy and begging, it constituted a site of forced labor by making those who “entertained idleness” into productive people. As such it did not entail expenses, for which the Commission had no special funds. At the same time, the workhouse was actually a factory, based on the forced labor of workers delivered by the police authorities – a private factory governed by the principles of an industrial enterprise, aimed at profit. That is why the site of forced labor is referred to in the contract

as a “factory” and the people caught and imprisoned there – as “workers.” The Commission had placed there 200 people of both sexes that were arrested on the streets of Warsaw and continued to direct those accused of begging and vagrancy there, in order to improve their customs and make them useful for society. In addition to the one-off expenditure of 150 red zlotys for renting spacious premises from Castellan Jezierski,<sup>9</sup> the only public service allocated for this private reformatory house was the provision of soldiers to guard the prisoners; a prison guard in the service of the Police Commission was an on-site representative of the public authority, empowered to observe if contractual conditions were being met and authorized to punish offenders.

The contract precisely defined the enterprise’s obligations in relation to the people directed to work: thus, food and drink issues are discussed in detail in terms of quantity and quality; it is stipulated that the clothing was to be provided to workers once per year; bedding was specified; and hygiene conditions in general were also listed in the contract. In return for taking over the costs of the residence and subsistence of people caught in the streets of Warsaw, Rehan received workers for a fixed duration of seven years in the factory. This period could be extended, because every day a worker committed any offense it would not count towards the seven years due. When this time ended he would be released as a journeyman; as a liberated person he could remain in the factory or look for a job elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> The first three years of work were treated as a period of training in which the worker received no remuneration, apart from sustenance and clothing. Over the next four years, each man, except for the increased annual ration of underwear and footwear, was to receive 32 zlotys per year, paid quarterly. Women were to be paid in cash only for work performed “above duty,” according to the tariff to be established and approved by the Police Commission. The regulations written in the contract set the length of the working day at 13 hours, determined the mealtimes and days of rest. Without the entrepreneur’s permission they were not allowed to leave work and go out to the city, under pain of punishment. It was forbidden to enter the factory without the permission of Rehan or the guard. In the event of escape, the worker was to be sought by the Commission and brought back to work (AGAD, 1208)

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9 Franciszek Rehan & Co., not the Police Commission, signed the contract with the castellan Jezierski.

10 With the consent of the manufacturer, the release could occur earlier as a reward for good conduct.

The factory of Rehan, Bogucki & Co., organized in the manner of a private workhouse, using the hand of forced laborers provided by the police authorities of the state, is a clear example of a provisional solution to the problem of working hands in a large-scale enterprise. We have seen above that the insistent plea for forced labor came from the entrepreneurs as soon as an authority with the sufficient competences was established. It can be assumed, in view of the facts discussed above, that this urgency came about because of the difficulties in recruiting the desired number of free, yet reliable workers. It is significant that industrialists, having enough people supplied by the Commission, also still accepted those who voluntarily applied for work in their factory. Contracts were drawn up with them for “one year and six Sundays.” We unfortunately do not know under what conditions they worked in these enterprises. However, the proportion of volunteering laborers to forced laborers is interesting. For example, in 1793, when the number of workers varied from two hundred to two hundred and twenty people, only ten of them had applied to work in the factory themselves (Komisja Policji, 34).

As can be seen from the terms of the contract, the forced workhouse made it possible to implement the most important requirements for a factory to function properly: it allowed entrepreneurs to obtain an adequate number of workers and secured their stability, which was difficult to achieve in the case of free workers. It ensured profitability despite the costs put into technical and organizational training; it also provided the basis for determining the worker’s efficiency, established discipline and guaranteed the legal implementation of the detailed regulations which the billeted prisoner-worker had to strictly obey; finally, it enabled industrial production to proceed, based on a relatively cheap workforce,<sup>11</sup> which, as we have seen, the free labor market in Warsaw was unable to supply.

We do not possess any evidence that allows us to describe the internal workings of the Rehan factory. Nevertheless, what we know from the files of the Police Commission and its branch – the Hospital Deputation – is sufficient to emphasize the private and capitalist nature of these enterprises. It also sheds some light on the human element that was subjected to coercive work.

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11 It is impossible to determine the cost of lodging and feeding of a worker in Rehan’s factory. For approximation, Police Commission was paying the workhouse administrator, Herman, 25 groszy per day per each person detained, which were to cover all expenses, i.e. wood, light, clothing, food. (Komisja Policji, 24, file 1)

It is characteristic that the manufacturers strongly insisted on, above all, the point in the contract which specified the duration of the worker's forced labor in the factory, as directed by the police. It seems that many of the poor, locked up in the workhouses, made attempts to regain their freedom and obtained resolutions from the Hospital Deputation, freeing them from staying and working in the textile factory.<sup>12</sup> Entrepreneurs submitted a note related to this, which contained an obstinate protest against such verdicts of the Deputation, asserting that they in effect breached the terms of the contract. Contractors demanded rigorous compliance with the seven-year period of stay in the factory for every poor person directed there. While describing the postulates of the industrial enterprise from that time, we cited above some passages from the note in question. Nevertheless, it is worth quoting it in its entirety, since it constitutes a valuable resource for understanding the functioning of coercion and the benefits for bringing the factory and the workhouse together:

A poor named Górski, having settled down in the factory of the undersigned, obtained from the Splendid Deputation a resolution, through which he had freedom to leave this factory forever. Such orders, adverse to the workings of the factory, yet put into effect recurrently, which have already resulted in the factory's terrible losses, cannot lead anywhere else than to its final demolition. According to the contract concluded in this respect with the Police, a poor person, that is a vagrant, once delivered to the factory of the undersigned, should neither leave nor be freed from there, until passes the intended time, that is of seven years. Within this time, with the knowledge of the Police and of the undersigned, such release cannot occur. Only by this can the existence of this factory be maintained because people that are frequently replaced and newly arriving are fed gratuitously for a very long time before they learn the work to which they are destined, and the enterprise not only does not obtain any benefit from their work, but also incurs losses, with the damage of the wool used in their training, for such wool cannot be then used by weaver for any work. Therefore, only such period of time, during which people can be properly instructed, could at least in part amount to a reward for losses incurred for these reasons and other reasons alike. Otherwise, this company can in no way persist. Therefore, the undersigned pleads to the Splendid Deputy to take his petition into consideration and withdraw its resolution concerning the aforementioned Górski, who as an incurable invalid, after leaving the factory, has no other way

12 This can be deduced also from the table of "coming and leaving" of the factory people. For nearly every period the release of a few people is mentioned.

of life except for turning into a permanent vagabond and beggar, which he already was before, and becoming harmful to himself and the public. Besides, the undersigned pleads to the Splendid Deputation not to resort to similar pronouncements, which do harm to the factories, and to adjure people once appointed to stay as long as it was intended. Additionally, the undersigned asks humbly, as a lesson for others, to punish the said Górski, who albeit recently turned somewhat more able for work in the factory, but as the most insolent of all, and practically the leader of the revolts, stirred several times already, which can be testified by the supervisor Loga himself, should be relegated for some time to the Powder Magazine, while the undersigned will provide for his subsistence. [Jan Bogucki (Komisja Policji, 34, October 31, 1793)]

Two facts can be inferred from this note: the long-term stability of the workers' employment was postulated by the entrepreneurs themselves and seen as a condition for the profitability of the enterprise, which however could only be met by means of coercion. Secondly, what from the Commission's point of view was a workhouse, here resembles rather a private factory, organized according to the principles of a centralized enterprise. According to its owners' intention, the interference of the state and police authorities was limited to ensuring the provision of the cheap workforce, who were bound to the place for years, i.e. the creation of the conditions for fusing the worker with the living organism of the factory. It was also a matter of endowing the disciplinary rules with executive force by providing them with public sanction.

When the manufacturer obtained the sufficient number of workers, the poor that were sent by the Police Commission would no longer be accommodated by the factory owner, hence losing the opportunity to "mend their customs" through forced industrial work. We can read the complaints of the workhouse's administrator: "Honorable Mr. Rehan, cloth manufacturer, did not accept two women and one man capable of working, who were sent to his factory on All Soul's Day, and declared that he would not accept any more." The factory was in need of a certain number of people, and until it found them, it benefitted from the role of the workhouse based on forced labor; but after satisfying this quantitative need, it no longer wanted to fulfill this role because it would be in opposition to the company's organizational principles and calculations. Therefore, the Police Commission again faced the same issue: "Where to send those beggars caught on the streets and able to work" (Komisja Policji, 34, November 5, 1793).<sup>13</sup>

13 The same complaint in April 1794, when the factory owner refused to accept another 14 people sent to him; when under pressure he finally receives

We have seen that the manufacturers diligently complied with the conditions of the contract, which allowed them to solve all the difficulties that were involved in using the labor of a free worker. All the while, in order to make the enterprise even more profitable through reducing labor costs, Rehan did not always respect other aspects of the contract which determined the quantity and quality of the entrepreneur's services to the forced laborer (Komisja Policji, 34).

The case of Michał Szczepanowski, a permanently employed administrator of the Hospital Deputation in the cloth factory, reveals not only the executives' negligence of the contract made with the Police Commission, but also the tendencies to remove public interference in the internal life and functioning of private enterprise. In October 1793, the Hospital Deputy received a request from Jan Bogucki to remove the administrator Szczepanowski, who caused the factory an "undefrayed harm," allegedly by provoking the revolts of factory people "practiced repeatedly and always by dint of that janitor." Bogucki proposes replacing him with a certain Kozłowski, who "will certainly try to perform better the duties conjoint with the function in question" (Komisja Policji, 34, October 25, 1793). It is not difficult to determine the background of the conflict. Szczepanowski, defending his case before the Hospital Deputation, explains that the manufacturers Rehan and Bogucki wanted to dismiss him, because he demanded the fulfillment of the terms of the contract and defended the workers who complain to him, "for neither their aliment, nor clothes, nor shoes, nor bedding, nor the pay for the pieces done in surplus comes to them as it should, and to put it plainly, these factory people have to suffer the highest misery and abuse" (Komisja Policji 34, November 4, 1793). Indeed, in the factories there were frequent altercations, called "rebellions" by the owners, and the administrator was usually seen as their accomplice, as he was the one to point out the violations of contract and to acknowledge the discontent of the rebel workers. (...)

Let us look at one more interesting example of the coupling of a private industrial enterprise with a charity institution and the overlapping of industrial interests regarding laboring hands with educational and penal campaigns aimed at "making the idlers productive."

In 1786, Fr. Wacław Sierakowski, cathedral canon, "entertaining, for noble reasons, the craftsmanship of cloth making," inaugurates the establishment of a cloth manufacture in Cracow. It is a private enterprise.

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them, "he sends them to chop trees in the yard, without any guard, thus granting them way to flee..." (Komisja Policji, 44).

A certain Świerczkowski, who previously ran a cloth factory in Racibórz with his father, becomes a foreman and technical instructor; Jan Frysztacki, who, as mentioned above, could not develop his own factory due to the lack of capital and spinners, is one of the partners (Dembowski 1791, 72-73). The factory of Fr. Sierakowski was organized with a considerable capital outlay “for tools and machines” and for the recruitment of a qualified brigade, chiefly of Germans. Production was started with might and main and soon it became necessary to move to a larger hall. Successful conditions for the enterprise’s prosperity were supposed to be achieved in the rooms of the former reformatory house, now empty and ruined, obtained from the Cracow magistrate and renovated and adapted to the needs of the factory at the expense of the entrepreneurs. “In the presence of the large Audience and with the assistance of the Honorable Magistrate...,” a cloth factory, installed in the reformatory house, was officially opened (Dembowski 1791, 74). But it was not only the building that was obtained by Fr. Sierakowski from the municipality. This transfer of the factory to the reformatory house was connected with the question of procuring a workforce through coercion. We learned that Fr. Sierakowski “having taken over the empty house, commonly called the Zeughaus, repaired everything and, along with the merchant Mr. Jan Frysztacki, installed cloth manufacturing there, where vagabonds, as well as those punished with decrees for imprisonment, were put to work, provided with decent victuals, and were taught spinstry, which at the same time cleaned the city of vagrants and gave them a further way of life” (Dembowski 1791, 74). Also “children wandering in the streets,” were caught and given to entrepreneurs and were eagerly admitted to the factory. The conditions of using their labor were set out in a separate agreement with the magistrate (Dembowski 1791, 74).

The figure of a priest-industrialist, as well as the reactions of the public opinion to his enterprise, depict perfectly the ideological atmosphere of the era, extending a helping hand to the manufacturers and readily providing them with provisional solutions to the problem of the workforce. Sierakowski’s attempts to run his own industrial enterprise and simultaneously advocate for efforts to combat begging and vagrancy by forced industrial labor were very symptomatic. The resonance that his cloth factory found in the public opinion of Cracow society and the level of the interest in both the industrialization of the country and the development of pauperized elements into industrial workers became evident in the further exploits of that enterprise.

Sierakowski had to give up running the factory on his own account, most probably due to financial difficulties, which, on the basis of the



sources available, cannot be determined precisely. But the enterprise was not dissolved. A company of “voivods,” composed of the most prominent members of the local society, was established to take over the factory with the aspiration of combatting begging in Cracow, in accordance with the royal Universals against beggars and vagabonds. According to the intention of their campaign, “these crowds of beggars, who for the most part mump not only out of misery, but out of idleness and debauchery, when reduced in numbers can be turned into laborious inhabitants useful for the country...” (Archiwum Czartoryskich, MS 901). Such effects were to be achieved in a manner characteristic of the era, by restoring the cloth factory taken over from Sierakowski,<sup>14</sup> and gathering the beggars captured on the streets of Cracow and teaching them industrial work. The company created the “Beggars’ Fund,” which was to collect the capital for the enterprise. The initiative to combat begging by establishing an industrial enterprise to employ idlers was explained in the following manner:

In order to bring to this cloth factory all the beggars, overtly making their living of alms only, and to make them useful there, regardless of their ailments and infirmities, for this factory, being in need of manifold virtues, can accommodate even the most infirm ones, according to their capacities and powers, bringing nourishment for the sincere poor, repairing the disgraceful habit of those, who despite their health and ability recourse to begging, and so that everyone, avoiding the harmful idling, could find their sustenance in honest earnings and, proportionally to their powers, add to the manufacturing needed in the country, and to production of raw fabrics, hitherto exported abroad, and to bring food to so many people, and to diminish the amounts of cloth imported. (Archiwum Czartoryskich, MS 901)

(...) In May of the year 1791, after three years had passed from when the factory had been taken over by the company, the latter, unable to cope with the difficulties, turned to the Civil-Military Commission of Cracow, requesting it to “take this beggars’ fund and the cloth factory under its supervision and complete disposal” (Dembowski 1791, 57). Dembowski, delegated by the Commission for a thorough examination of the state of the enterprise, “having reckoned its state, calculations,

<sup>14</sup> Dembowski considers it to be Sierakowski’s great merit that he handed over the manufacture to the newly created company and rejected the tempting offer of a certain Tycjusz, a Moravian merchant, who “wanting to have a company with Rd Count Wacław Sierakowski, offered him 90,000 zlotys (...)” (Dembowski 1791, 74).

expenses, and revenues, decided, that the factory can no longer be maintained" (Archiwum Krakowa, 194, December 29, 1786). After paying off the debts, selling the remaining cloth, wool, and tools that were purchased during the three-year administration by the company, what remained in the coffers of the Commission from the factory capital was a sum of 2592 zlotys and 3 groszy only, which obviously did not offer any prospect for the continuation of the enterprise (Archiwum Krakowa, 194, December 29, 1786). Therefore, the Commission answered favorably to the request of Fr. Sierakowski, who wanted to take back the enterprise that he had given up three years ago and promised that the factory "will bear fruits more beautiful," if he receives it "for his private avail, as it was from the first beginnings" (Archiwum Krakowa, 194, December 21, 1791).

Adopted and managed by Sierakowski, the cloth factory remained active for at least the next few years (Sierakowski 1797).<sup>15</sup> In addition to the permanent workers, it still used the work of detainees. It also did not lose its charitable and educational character. It was popularizing industrial work and fulfilling the functions of a kind of vocational school, serving the needs of the factory. Thus, announces Sierakowski, "children and orphans with mothers are to be admitted to this factory, or those without parents, or having parents such which are unable to provide them with appropriate upbringing." "Converts not finding any place can be admitted there," as well as the poor ashamed to beg. Having learned by experience, the factory avoided paying the costs of workers' training, adopting the principle that "incurring enough losses by dispensing the wool for the training of the workers, the factory will not pay for their sustenance, so the Sir or Madam who sent them should pay for their victuals, as does the magistrate for each of the detainees." The plan for supporting the factory with the cottage industry of spinning in the surrounding villages is also of interest. (...) Disabled people, whom the factory did not want to keep permanently, were also trained for cottage work. They were taught spinning "in various ways," combing and carding, such that they could leave the workshop "with talent" and open the learning opportunity to others. In this way, through its charity and educational activities, the factory formed a reservoir of working hands, bound to the enterprise, and tried, within certain area, to accustom and train the population for industrial work.

Still, despite several years of existence, the factory continued to encounter difficulties in maintaining the workforce. Sierakowski, claiming,

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15 Hence, in 1797 the cloth factory must have been still running.

in line with the spirit of the times, that running a factory “is a work of public service,” asked the national government to provide the company with the best conditions for its functioning, “which no private citizen, even if conjoint together in a company, can achieve without the authority.” Among other things, he wanted the government to ban the itinerant sale of sour rye soups, bread rolls, cakes, and fruits, “for the factory cannot maintain spinners at work,” and to assign a “public guard, that is soldiers’ guard, to maintain order, to maintain all the people in subordination and obedience” (Sierakowski 1797, 32). The complaint of the Hospital of the Holy Spirit about the behavior of the billeted factory workers and about the devastation of the premises, explains this appeal for military guard, as a condition for maintaining discipline among workers. (...)

Among charity and penal institutions, orphanages played a distinct and important role as they were used in various ways by industrial entrepreneurs as a reservoir of labor force. We emphasized above that children and adolescents were considered the most useful element for factories due to both their greater physical fitness, and the ease with which the desired psychological traits could be developed in them. It was also connected with the significance of how inexpensive their workforce was and the difficulty of recruiting apprentices for manufacturing by way of free hiring. Therefore, in all the institutions similar to workhouses, but also in normally functioning factories, we find a larger or smaller percentage of children who were forced into and trained for industrial work. Many of the children and young people in the Rehan factory, the Institute of the Poor, and the factory of Fr. Sierakowski in Krakow were under the age of twenty. The merchant and industrialist Paschalis Jakubowicz employed about 300 orphans in his factory of belts and silk fabrics in Zielonka near Warsaw, as well as in the capital itself, as was mentioned by Jezierski, castellan of Łukow, at a parliamentary session (Korzon 1897, 32). The Wool Manufactory Company, starting production in 1768, took into its possession a “Cuchthauz” and an orphanage and established a wool manufacture there (Volumina Legum, VII, 751, 350). The children from the shelter were kept busy with the industrial work in accordance with the instructions given to the director “to save two hours a day for learning how to read and write, and use the rest of the time diligently for various work at the factory” (Archiwum Skarbowe, XXX, 31). A shelter for the abandoned and poor children at the Infant Jesus Hospital in Warsaw also functioned as a reservoir of children’s labor force. In 1785, priest Jaszewski, head of the hospital, declared that “of the boys who were taught craftsmanship, 20 could be

Hence, shelters for abandoned children and orphanages played the same role in providing the industry with a desirable young labor force, just as reformatory houses, houses for the poor, and workhouses supplied it with the adult workers.

sent to the factory in spring” (Biblioteka Ordynacji Krasieńskich, MS. 750, fol. 262).<sup>16</sup> Hence, shelters for abandoned children and orphanages played the same role in providing the industry with a desirable young labor force, just as reformatory houses, houses for the poor, and workhouses supplied it with the adult workers.

## Social policy

Charity, understood as a process of making people productive, voluntarily or otherwise, constitutes only a part of the practical system of the social policy, as it was intended and partially executed. Its ideological assumptions have been discussed above; its positive side – involving in the employment in regular work in agriculture, industry or service – was supplemented with a set of measures aimed at such a change in the personal and material conditions of the poor men’s life which would make them take up work, stay there and obey the employer’s commands, regardless of their own will and even without a direct, personal coercion. Poor vagabonds were made compliant with the requirements set for them, answerable to the call for their working hands, forced to stop living the way they have lived, which is described in part one.

Alms, access to ecclesiastic funds, occasional earnings, door-to-door sales, personal services, often generously paid, frequent changes of the type and place of work – we know already what role they played in the system of life and labor of the fellows we have met. Their contemporaries denounce, as we have seen, the power of attraction of larger cities, luring with the “hope for easy bread, without any work or with occasional labors only” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1792, 247). They point to the fact that this push of the poor people towards the cities, and mainly Warsaw, found its direct reflection in the growing wages for agricultural hire and in the supply of wage labor for agricultural and industrial production. They state that by these opportunities for easy earnings and survival even without work “great harm is done to the highly more stable work in agriculture and in factories” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1792, 247).

Public opinion therefore attacks alms in general, particularly those given to people able to work, and demands their unconditional prohi-

<sup>16</sup> Annotated with an interesting comment, that “parents may perhaps wish to be assured that they will not lose their right to their children and they will not be sent to far away from Warsaw” (BKr. MS 750, fol. 262).

bition and punishment to both giver and beggar (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1784, 520-521).<sup>17</sup> Both the press and the universals make the general public aware that one should not tolerate beggars if they are capable of working, and should not contribute to their laziness. Besides the elderly and the disabled, “to other people of both sexes, of the noble, urban and peasant state, and all the more to foreigners, who are fit for work and serve, alms should not be given” (Biblioteka Ordynacji Krasieńskich, MS 749, fol. 218) – as it was written in a universal of the Hospital Commission and repeated in later universals of the Police Commission, of Civil-Military Commissions and in the royal universals. Those who nevertheless persisted in begging were threatened to be commissioned to the public works, and following the founding of the Police Commission and the Civil-Military Commission they also risked arrest, placement in a workhouse or forced referral to public works or to private domestic service. Also the clergy, who have “in their hands the hearts of the majority,” are asked to oppose the medieval tradition of almsgiving, to dissuade the devotees from “giving alms to stray idlers” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1784, 520), to teach that charity towards a person able to work is by no means a merit (Biblioteka Ordynacji Krasieńskich, MS 751, fol. 132-135).<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the role of alms as an insurance against unemployment and, in a sense, as a wage regulator and a factor protecting working men from situations of duress, impelled the reformers of social life to remove this glaring obstacle from the way of transformation of the idlers into productive people and the creation of a cheap labor force at entrepreneurial disposal.

The connection between the supply of working hands, in this case for industry, and the prospects of begging is noticed by a journalist, who lists some reasons why almsgiving should be prohibited:

17 The Netherlands is set as a model here, where the penalty of 60 thalers was due for giving alms. And even if it were allowed, despite the tendency to abolish begging entirely, to give alms to the cripples and the elderly, the prohibition of begging was applied with all force for the people who were able to work. “Only the old are allowed to live of alms, or those who are not fit for work” – writes Kołłątaj (Kołłątaj 1790, ch. 10, par. 5).

18 General Brühl, who dealt with the matters of the Institute of the Poor and hence was interested in the question of fighting begging, in the article “On the need, motives and measures for the abolition of begging in Poland” indicates that clergy should enlighten people about the proper purpose of alms and instruct that giving it “*à des fainéants n'est pas s'acquérir un mérite vis-à-vis de l'humanité, mais au contraire c'est autoriser la débauche et la méchanceté*” (“...to lazy people is not to acquire merit towards the humanity, but on the contrary it is to authorize debauchery and wickedness”) (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1791, 692).

in a country where whoever wants can resort to begging, factories and handicrafts shall never flourish, because these, in order to survive, need hands to work to be enough and that these hands come to manufacturers cheaply. By what means will the simple folk undertake the ceaseless work in the factories, if from everyday experience they know, that through begging, a sure, but easy and comfortable living can be achieved. (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1791, 692)

The effort to combat begging is not only a matter for the administrative and police authorities; politicians should be no less interested in it, as they have to “know how to estimate the hands of the hard-working” (Archiwum Czartoryskich, MS 807, 829). Hence also such tendencies as those expressed in the *Monitor* according to which wage workers during their wanderings in search of employment should rather be given a dole of one silver grosz, but forbidden to beg under the penalty of two weeks in prison, seem understandable (*Monitor* 1777, 87). The same applies to odd jobs and “light earnings.” They are considered a form of “idling in disguise,” if they provide subsistence for young people capable of another job, since, according to the postulate of the maximal economic productivity of all individuals relative to their capacities; they should be rather working regularly in industry, agriculture or domestic service.

Thus, the “Historical and Political Diary” points out that it will be easy to remedy the lack of rural servants in the vicinity of Warsaw, had the police decided “to spare some wicked ways of life in the capital and in other cities for the old, disadvantaged, the decrepit, and not let the healthy and hale youth to entertain with these, as they could usefully work in the villages” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1791, 638-640).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, walking around with baskets and the intention to sell fruits, cakes and powders should not be allowed for them, but should remain a privilege of the elderly. For the young – “it must be forbidden, otherwise they should be made into soldiers or given to some public works.” It is also called to limit the number of rural youth “huddling for hewing timber” in Warsaw (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1791, 638-640). The author of the cited article is primarily concerned with the interests of agriculture; very similar however, as we have seen, are demands made on the authorities by the priest Sierakowski in Cracow, driven by the concern for an industrial labor force. In a similar manner,

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19 In the article entitled “Thoughts addressed to Police concerning the organization of domestic service and servants”, important for understanding of the public opinion’s leanings regarding social policy.

Marshal Bieliński, wishing to prevent a shortage of workers for construction works in Warsaw, considers it beneficial to restrict the number of “litter-bearers and errand boys” and to tally them, “and all the others, standing wherever on the streets, waiting for some light earnings, who should be readily usable for daily work” (Biblioteka Ordynacji Krasieńskich, MS 749, fol. 218).

These attempts to increase the reservoir of workforce for industrial and agricultural production, and for regular domestic service by placing a poor man who is able to work in a forced situation by taking away his odd earnings, which played such a significant role in the organization of his life, went hand in glove with projects and regulatory orders that aimed to classify and socially subjugate him, so he ceases to resemble elusive human dust, always escaping control.

Therefore, all ideas and ordinances are considered that were aimed at exerting control over laborers and servants, and which enabled the regulation of working conditions and pay. The intent was to create such conditions which would force a vagabond to be in some specific service, have a specific place of residence, to ensure that he would not wander without the permission of a lord or an administrative authority, that he would not break the terms of contract under pain of punishment and detainment, that he could not give up a worse labor for a better one, or defend himself from harm and exploitation, and even freely combine earnings from domestic service with wage labor and begging, or work with periods of voluntary unemployment.

It seems that we are dealing here with the application of the same legal principles which in earlier times had governed the attitude towards the unbonded, that is, the unowned and unsettled men, which we discussed above. In fact however, this relationship has changed fundamentally. It became determined by the postulate of productive diligence in a new understanding of the term. Public authorities not only capture vagabonds, but also administer them, dictate how and what they earn, regulate their freedom of movement, bind them by force to work or service. What this entails is the most rigorous record and the strictest control of the irregular life and work of the hired population, and the restraint of their mobility by means of regulatory ordinances, carried out by administrative bodies, equipped with appropriate competences and implementing measures.

Therefore, it is necessary, as an entry point to population survey, to list all the servants, wage laborers and people without an “assured means of living.” And so in the Universal of 1787, issued against vagabonds and aimed at combating that “species of men” whose “idling” and

vagrancy was “clearly crippling the country with the lack of hands for farming, maintaining workshops and craftsmanship, to the whole brings the most detrimental of results.” The King ordered: “in our cities and towns settled and non-settled people shall be registered, as will daily-hirelings, servants and laborers, and this list is to be annually renewed and sent to the Police Department of our Council” (Stanisław August 1787).

The principle of not only recording the poor, but also organizing them in a controlled reservoir of labor forces finds the fullest expression in the project of the former Royal Universal<sup>20</sup> regarding beggars and the poor, whose two points are particularly interesting. The King’s orders:

1. In all the cities and the township... lords, starostes, owners of any rights to lands, and the magistrates, shall make a distinction between all the unsettled and non-occupied persons of both sexes, entertaining only with a daily hire or domestic service, and the poor begging for alms. Distinction shall be made by the examination of their means of subsistence, and those, who live by earning, in number and manner proportional to the need of every city and township, shall be regimented into a guild. Elders of the same profession shall be appointed overseers and to those overseers both those in search of people for hire and those in need of earning should go. Those simple laborers should carry a certificate of acceptance to such guild from the local authority in writing, so that none of the disorderly or wandering persons should be entering any simple hire or domestic service, under the punishment of public whipping and banishment from the town. Endowment of such certificate and acceptance should without a grave cause never be refused, moreover, without any extortion should it be always given. Guild’s laborers of both sexes and their children, liable to the mentioned punishments, should never be publicly asking for alms and to prevent guild’s overseers from causing any extortion and harm to others, an apprehensive control of all the authorities is recommended.

2. All the aforementioned poor persons capable of doing any work, lest they be prevented from indulgence, should as first be taken for military recruitment and for public and private works. Henceforth all the aforementioned offices and authorities in every township or place shall make the number, sex, age and capacity of the poor persons capable of work known publicly every three calendar months.

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20 The draft is not annotated, however, on the basis of a paragraph referring to the “Constitution of the last rally of Sejm regarding the appointment of the Commission over Hospitals in the Polish Crown and Grand Duchy of Lithuania” it can be dated for 1775 or 1776 (1775 – adoption of the said Constitution, 1776 – new parliamentary session).



It seems unnecessary to emphasize that any similarities between such an intended organization of laborers and the guilds in proper sense are only external. The association thus designed differed in its character from guilds, that is, from closed and monopolistic production corporations. The purpose of these “laborers’ guilds,” as can be seen clearly from the cited points, was to subject the unbonded laborers to control, to bind them by dint of organization, to put an end to their free changing of the place and character of work, and thus to disable their characteristic mobility. Such “guilds” were expected to effectively prevent the influx of people from the countryside to larger cities, to stop the unregulated internal migration, along with the seasonal increase in wages. In its essence the project aimed at the stabilization of population of laborers and beggars, the separation of the former from the latter, and bestowing the authorities and employers with the means to control the lives and moves of that population. (...)

The aforementioned ordinances to enumerate the laboring and servant populations were creating conditions for the implementation of similar wishes. Censuses – which, as we know, in the era of Stanisław August are commonly exercised by and recommended to local and municipal authorities – undoubtedly display, as one of their reasons, these tendencies to record the number and location of available labor forces. They provide, in a way, an inventorization of these forces in order to properly dispose and control them.

Such control enabling inventory was based on the process of the stabilization of the population within the boundaries of the city, parish, and powiat. By law, unbonded laborers, servants or beggars should not move freely from one place to another; internal migrations should be subjected to specific regulations and control aimed at curbing this independence, which had hitherto been the privilege of vagabonds. From 1789 on, the injunction of passports, whose implementation was entrusted to Civil-Military Commissions,<sup>21</sup> became one of the means of

Internal migrations should be subjected to specific regulations and control aimed at curbing this independence, which had hitherto been the privilege of vagabonds.

21 “To prevent such a soldier’s dissent, as well as villainies of the idle vagabonds, The Commission of Order shall establish the most effective ways of issuing legitimate passports and drafting the stamp to be marked on these passports so that each city, manor, village, inn, mill or hamlet, will detain those without permit for leave or a poviat passport formally issued either by heir or landlord, and will bring them to The Commission of Order, which commissions having interrogated them and proved that they were deserters or vagabonds idling for more than a quarter of a year without occupation in any service, will escort them to police office, and will rightfully demand payment for bringing and holding them. Concerning the vagabonds unfit for soldiering, The Commission will follow separate legal rules. Craftsmen wandering around the country with passport, and

achieving such results.

The main idea, inspiring both the creators and the enforcers of this ordinance, was to combat vagrancy and desertion, along with the crimes accompanying these phenomena. However, we have seen, how liquid was at that time the threshold between the vagabond in today's sense of the term, and a man just wandering freely, often in an honest search of a living – be it by work or domestic service. We have seen that every wandering poor person, having exceeded three months since his last regular employment, was regarded as a vagabond by law, and that in practice every poor stranger, temporarily unemployed, was considered a vagabond and idler as well. Hence the implementation of the passport ordinance against vagabonds, deserters and villains had become a means of containing the population of poor people, be it those who worked or begged, and, above all, those that kept on changing their place of residence and work. Due to the application of this Act, Civil-Military Commissions, in addition to their other functions, became the organs of control and regulation of the movement of the working population, and agencies of organization of the relationships of labor within their jurisdiction.

The passport decree, had it been possible to apply unconditionally and strictly, would not have allowed poor people to move around the territory of the Republic of Poland without a passport or a lordly certificate (often actually replacing a passport), under the sanctions of corporal punishment, detention or designation to the military service. Moreover, the workings of the Commissions in controlling wanderers were to be supported by cooperation of the entire population. Everyone who let pass, hosted or gave work to people without passports, would face severe punishments.

The essential meaning of these passport ordinances was manifested in concrete terms in the files of each of the Commissions.

The wandering man becomes completely subjected to inventORIZATION. When applying for a passport, he must explain the purpose of the journey, provide a certificate proving that he is not a fugitive serf or a runaway servant who has not kept his end of the contract; he needs to find a reliable guarantor and induce general trust. He must tell what he is

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their servants are not to be considered vagabonds. And who would let pass consciously or deliberately lodge those of such kind, without permit or passport, provided a just proof, shall be punished by the courts of The Commission of Order with a fine of 200 zloty for each knowingly held or overlooked evader, to be paid to the treasury of The Commission for sakes of recompense for the harmed. Had it, *per plebeium*, been impossible, he ought to be subjected to personal punishment” (Volumina Legum, IX, 146, CXIII).

going to do, where and why. In each case, the competence of the Civil-Military Commission, town hall or patrimonial authority is to decide whether the purpose of the applicant's journey is true and justified sufficiently to give him or her a passport. Examples of the refusal to grant passports and their justifications convincingly prove that powerful tools for the control and subjection of the poor populations were clothed in the form of the passport decree.

Once a passport had been issued to the applicant, he obtained along with it a strict specification of the journey destination, as well as its date and purpose.<sup>22</sup> It is true that those able to present evidence of a recently completed contract or a warrant from their lord or employer were able to obtain passports for periods as long as three months, but always with a recommendation to look for their next post urgently, to settle, to comply with the time-limit and route specified in the passport. If they made a detour or exceeded the time frame, they were treated as suspicious, as vagabonds in the formal sense of the word, who could be halted at the crossroads, in taverns, in the villages or in the cities, be it by the Commission guards or by anyone, thus obliged by that fact to notify the local Commission. But free movement turned out to be the most difficult for the unbonded laborer, and only because of the difficulties in the efficient application of the passport rule was it at all possible for such man or woman to freely wander, to work here and there, and lead a way of life overtly incompatible with passport restrictions.<sup>23</sup> Men and women living from wages paid daily in areas remote from their hometown did not have a certificate or a warrant. Forced to apply for a passport and adhere to a specified route and date, they ceased to be who they were, ceased to be freely wandering people, with no strings attached. Among the other things, such was the purpose of the passport decree. Multiple are the examples of how these people were detained, punished with arrest and forced public works, sent to the army or pro-

22 All this is mentioned in the passport. Here is an example: "I give the passport to honest Paweł Dunikowski, of tanner's craft, who goes to Radom where he, for the case he has in the courts and to persuade people to employ him, will stay for a week from now. This certificate with my own hand by pressing the seal, I affirm." (...) (AGAD, KCW. Czersk).

23 There were a couple of reasons why the passport regulation was often bypassed or unfeasible and that therefore a vagabond could freely wander without it. Without the cooperation of the local populations with the Commissions, the passport injunction was merely a fiction. Therefore, each of the Commissions, in the frequently issued universals, reminds repeatedly of the penalties for neglecting the obligation to ask every stranger for a passport or certificate, not to let those who don't have them through villages, not to host them and not to give them work (...).

vided with a passport in which their route was defined precisely, day by day, traced along the main routes back to their place of birth or residence, no matter how long ago had they left it. Reading them, we realize the extent to which passport regulation paralyzed freedom of movement, how it restricted the life of the vagabonds, how it submitted him or her to control and forced stabilization. Civil-Military Commissions adhered strictly to the rules of territorial affiliation, that is, of the stabilization of the poor, both workers and beggars, within their family poviats and even parishes. (...)

However, in the hands of a Civil-Military Commission, the application of the passport decree was more than just a means of regulating and controlling the movements of the wage earning population across the country. It was also a tool for regulating labor relations, and above all the relationship between employer and employee.

In what ways? Employers quite rightly considered passports to provide the means to “ensure the loyalty of their once employed idler” (KCW. Czersk, 3; 161). Both the mechanism of issuing the passports (which could not be obtained without a certificate of departure from work to the satisfaction of the employer), as well as the organized capturing of every traveler without a certificate, contributed to the impediment, if not to the prevention, of escape from service or abandoning the work before its scheduled end. Sooner or later, every fugitive had to fall into the hands of the Commission, and our files show that many of them were indeed caught, punished and forced to finish the remaining time or task.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, the Commissions strictly observed

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24 “Michałowski, without completing the begun year, withheld from the service indecently and precipitately... therefore the commission, wanting to prevent such obscenities of servants towards their masters, orders him to return and complete his services”. (KCW. Kalisz, Varia I, 36; 369); “having escaped from service twice, Bartłomiej, punished with 30 whips on the naked body, at the market square in Radomsko, was adjured to finish the year as he was ordered”. (KCW. Radomsko, 22, fol. 224); “They admitted that they had escaped from the aforementioned peasants for whom they labored”... The commission, after punishing them with the whips, “adjourned them to return to the household where they served and finish the labor undertaken there”, (KCW. Radomsko, 22, fol. 192). Notifying employers about the capturing of the fugitive servants is common, documented by multiple examples, especially in the files of the Commissions of Czersk and Kalisz. For example: “Józef Went served a pharmacist in Radom and for his displeasure fled from there” (...) The Commissions are so strict in observing the terms of the contract, that even in cases of the confirmed abuse of a servant by the employer, Commissions would still order that the term should be finished, and only admonish the cruel master; for a telling example see: (KCW. Rawa, 5, fol. 82-83). A worker or servant could find help from the Commission only in

the prohibition on hiring for work or domestic service, on hosting and letting pass those without passports, and within poviats those without certificates. There are many references to financial penalties and flagellation of the peasants and innkeepers for disregarding these bans.<sup>25</sup> In this way, attempts were made to deprive our vagabonds of their ease of movement and the support that they used to find in the prevailing custom – that of accepting these “throughfarers” whenever they were needed, without inquiring about their past, of shelter being provided by innkeepers and peasants, and of donating of alms or food. It was also clear that the circumstances of the freedom of movement and ease of getting work on sight allowed liquidity and neglect of the obligations assumed by the worker, which rendered the certainty and steadiness of working hands, so in demand from the employers, completely illusory. For “how this or that plebe is to refrain from disloyalty, laziness and scandal – wrote the ‘Historical and Political Diary’ – once he knows that they will accept him wherever he turns?” (*Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787*, 570). The activities of the Civil-Military Commissions to guarantee compliance with contracts and against hiring without a certificate from a former employer, and finally severe punishments for refusing to allocate workers and their services among the employers, were undoubtedly aimed at fundamental changes being made to the living conditions of the worker and servant. Held under the sway of regulations, threatened with penalties for not complying with them, subjected to control, the wage worker was meant to play the role that was given to him or her by the ideology of work: the role of a “hard-working” man, fully subordinated to the demands of employers.

But the department of Civil-Military Commissions goes even further. Entitled to combat laziness, which each detained person is blamed of, Commissions readily create work, organize it, force people to work and arrest the obstinate. Arrests become reservoirs of working hands for employers looking for people for labor or domestic service.

However, the fact of detained people being gathered under the

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a case where, despite fulfilling their obligations to the employer, they were refused the certificate. In such cases, if the person concerned could prove it, she would receive a certificate from the Commission, “so she was not confused with a vagrant” and allowed to look for a new job. However, we did not find any mention of penalties for employers, while an employee terminating a contract was always penalized with flagellation. Examples in the files of all Commissions.

25 Examples: Starzewski was fined 200 zlotys for accepting Dziechciński “without a passport”; the mayor of Mieszków was sentenced for employing a fugitive servant to a week of arrest and 50 zlotys fine. (*KCW. Kalisz, Varia I*, 36; 264-265) (...).

custody of the Commission led to questions of what to do with them. On the one hand, both the municipalities and the Commissions lacked the resources to sustain such a large number of idle people,<sup>26</sup> while on the other hand it would stand in contradiction with the principle of industriousness and upbringing focused on work, had the voluntary idling been punished only with a forced otiosity. All three of these considerations – financial, penal and educational – combine in stimulating the Commissions to foster the forced employment of prisoners in public works.<sup>27</sup> The prevailing dictum is to “eradicate these well-off rascals and force them to naturally feed themselves from the work of their hands,” as it is formulated by Tadeusz Kościuszko in his memorandum to the Commission of Radziejów. He indicates ways of “using the caught rascals”: “There is a need – he writes – that the Rd. Commissions in every province of their voivodeship or powiat, employ such people and take use of them, be it for the pavements in the city, where there are such funds, or for the dykes, to make roads, ditches, bridges...” (KCW. Radziejów, 2, fol. 260-261). Indeed, all the Commissions we know often directed detained people to the local authorities for works like cleaning the city, paving works, etc.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the Civil-Mili-

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26 All the commissions encounter problems with feeding the arrested, for which no funds were legally granted. Hence notes with queries about how to steer clear of this trouble with the sudden increase in the number of detained vagabonds. The Civil-Military Commission of Sandomierz and Wiślica poviats writes in the report to Police Commission: “that having those vagabonds brought about, for which no fund is established by any law, asks The Rd Police Commission to resolve this doubt and indicate who shall guard and who shall feed these vagabonds? How should be the prison for them and who shall build it?” (AGAD, Metryka Litewska, IX, 44, fol. 333). See also: KCW. Kalisz, Varia I, 36; 48: The Commission states that there are no funds to keep the prisoners detained because of a lack of passports.

27 Grodzkie Kaliskie, Varia I, 36; 68, June 31, 1790: “When, under the law, people not bestowed with a passport from any higher authority, as vagabonds get apprehended and numerously brought to the placement of their Commission, they are left without any fund for their sustenance, therefore such Commissions should make these vagabonds be useful for the community and devise a sure way for them to maintain their living. The Commission recommends to the magistrate of Kalisz to adjourn that for all the works for which a worker could be hired, rather these vagrants should henceforth be taken, with payment for one man of 15 groszy per day, of which one half should be kept for victuals for the employed, and the other for the sustenance of other prisoners, of ill-health or unfit for work.”

28 E.g. The C-M. Commission of Kalisz often gives prisoners to the magistrate in order for them to “besom the pavements” or “to the factory had by that town” (see: KCW. Kalisz, Varia I, 36; 32, 38, 61, 169; KCW. Czersk, 7, 186, 31; numerous examples of sending the detainees “for pavement” in: KCW. Radomsko, 22.

tary Commission of Sandomierz, we encounter an extremely interesting project to organize and finance big public works, in order to employ arrested “vagabonds,” and, no more no less, rebuild the entire city with their hands: “Szydłów, once a great city,” is now in ruins, its houses destroyed, walls decayed. The Commission has devised measures to “from materials at hand erect on the prior foundations” walls for tenement houses “suit to the lineament proper for the needs of dwelling.” Houses were then meant to be sold to citizens, for the amount “equal to the cost of making them, in order to not only provision houses, but also to give work to the idlers” (AGAD, Metryka Litewska, IX, 44, fol. 332, 1791). There are documents about the commissioning of tools – shovels and wheelbarrows – so that the arrested did not “turn useless” and if a “rascal” would come across, “he had implements for his labor and where to use them” (KCW. Radziejów, 2, fol. 389, October 1790). It is common to punish the caught with two or three weeks of “labor on wheelbarrow” (Kaliskie Grodzkie, Varia I, 36; 36). After having earned for their subsistence (Kaliskie Grodzkie, Varia I, 36; 36, 48)<sup>29</sup> – which was meant as a deterrence from idleness – prisoners were released, but with a clear order to find a job or a regular post in domestic service.

Moreover, Commissions encouraged the citizens in need of a laborer to take them from the Commissions’ arrests. Archives provide numerous examples of detainees being employed by third parties. The Commission of Lublin issued an announcement that townspeople and Jews were encouraged to use prisoners “for Works,” such as: “digging pits for foundations, tidying streets, working in gardens, chopping and cutting trees, and for painting factories alike” (Kermisz). (...)

“Industriousness” as the aim of upbringing. Wishes and hopes

Our good rulers and statisticians complain ceaselessly at the widespread deficiency of the able subjects. Not without a cause this deficiency is observed. Yet what till now has been done to remedy this? Laws have been issued and people have been encouraged to lace the old ways of earning money with new ones; here and there they were promised help, even prize: all this is good and remarkable; and only a pity that idleness more has power over people than all the encouragement to diligence; and only a pity that old habit of life unstable and of lazy doing cannot be expunged except by better habits and effective and long

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in the files of all of the Commissions, especially in Kalisz.

29 The city’s treasury was supposed to pay in advance for the subsistence of the prisoners and subsequently deduce the paid money from their earnings.

exercises. Thus let us not be mocked by vain hopes! This generation of adults and old people, in this respect as in any other, except for rare ones in rare circumstances, cannot be improved. Had someone wanted to nurture the people, educate the nation, form people rational, prudent, aware, diligent and steady, he should leave in peace the old and the adults, and turn their intendance toward that matter, which can still be moulded, for it has not aged yet. The nation can be conformed to industry, and to any other moral virtue, in schools only, and nowhere else. (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 1071-1072)

The public opinion of the time believed that an appropriate upbringing and early introduction of children and young people into the new system and new working conditions, primarily in industry, could pave the way to similar results, which in the case of the older generation were achieved only by coercion, if at all. This evoked a great interest of the press, with elementary education, provided by parish schools, clearly in the spirit of Enlightenment. Such schools, by means of their curriculum and educational principles, were to keep pace with and foster the social changes and economic exigencies of the day (Kot 1934, 31-38). It is exactly along these lines that the Commission of National Education and its operatives understand the functions of the parish schools, attaching great importance to them. The Commission of National Education attempts at their establishment, against all the difficulties, against the resistance of the masses of conservative gentry, and even despite the fact that the Sejm had authorized it to organize schooling exclusively for the youth of noble origin. The Commission ordered the parish schools not only to “instruct people about the religion and about the duties of their estate,” but also “about labors and industry” (Smoleński 1891, 424-425). A project of Popławski regarding the parish school curricula is interesting here, as it puts a special emphasis on the preparation of children to work in industry and production (Kot 1934, 70). Hugo Kołłątaj calls for such education of young people, “which would endow them with an assured craft of such a kind, that provides the means for living in all the life’s plights” (Kołłątaj 1790, 193).

The enlightened public opinion kept up to date with the processes of establishing the popular schools abroad, especially those set up with a view to meeting the needs of industry and following the direction of the industrial schools. “Pamiętnik” discusses in detail the new type of parish school in the Czech Republic, where children were taught spinning and industrial work. It writes, that “this invention of combining education with work and instilling the Industry in the popular schools” is worth attention of all the countries and all their legislators (Pamiętnik



Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 1067). Children, apart from the theoretical studies, are also assigned practical works; they visit industrial enterprises, are instructed about the meaning of “industry,” learn to admire diligence and industriousness. The main purpose of these parish schools is to “uproot the vagrancy, idleness, and poverty that arises from it, along with begging and moral decay and in their place ingrain diligence, industriousness and all the civil virtues, and make them be identical to innate leanings” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 1076). These educational efforts were supposed to create a “generation of people eager to display their diligence, attention, hard work and industry, in a manner alike to how most of the lower-class people parade with their sluggishness, laziness, ineptitude and even some kind of animal indifference and carelessness” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 1076). “Pamiętnik” enthuses over these schools, calls for them to be established in Poland, expecting great economic benefits. “What affluence would it bring to the country, if millions of Children were to be taught in such schools for different industries and profits! And what prosperity for the homeland and the next generations could be awaited, if they had a chance to draw their customs and habits from the schools of such kind” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 1134).

The previously mentioned text – *Project of establishment of the factories* demonstrates clearly the extent to which the interest in parish schools was coupled with the economic needs of the moment, with this “economic” upbringing of the young generations aimed at providing the working hands to the industry. We find here a paragraph obliging teachers to steer children towards factory work, and providing special rewards for fruitful efforts in this direction:

Parish school teachers who within one voivodeship would have encouraged the largest number of children, be it of Christian or Jewish faith, to bring help to the factories, and by so doing fulfilled the wish not only ours, but also of the king and the estates, will be granted award by the treasury comission (PEF, III, 10).

Independently of the parish schools, another issue addressed was the necessity to establish “industrial schools” which would give young people qualifications for industrial work (Dembowski 1791).

If, as we have seen, parish schools were given generally economically oriented tasks, the upbringing of orphans and poor children led by the charity institutions was subordinated both principally and practically to the needs of the industry. The press addressed the need to teach

The press addressed the need to teach children crafts and prepare them for industrial work.

children crafts and prepare them for industrial work. One of the authors calls for directing the children and orphans from hospitals “to various manufacturers for learning” (Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny 1787, 204). Wybicki envisages setting up hospitals for orphans, in which “for various crafts and arts they shall be trained... for the factories most needed in our country, and once they’ve learned they should leave and go in the country, or rather be apprehended by the manufactory companies” (Wybicki 1778, 40-41). The Police Commission, which, as we have seen, in its policing and order activities constantly aimed at satisfying the needs of the factories, had announced in one of the universals that “by an imminent arrangement, a school for orphans will be organized, as it is the most necessary for the state, the factories and the workshops” (AGAD, Akta Ekonomiczne m. st. Warszawy, 857). We have mentioned already the idea of establishing orphanages in factories themselves, for their use and needs.

Work in production from an early age, according to the opinion of the time, was supposed to prevent children from adopting bad habits and from them getting used to generally depreciated “idleness.” This attitude was adopted with regard to children in villages, as well as the poor children in the cities and towns, Christian and Jewish alike. Moszyński, formulating the postulate to *appliquer de bonne heure la jeunesse au travail qui lui est propre* (“early application of youth to work suitable for them”) (Biblioteka Ordynacji Krasieńskich, MS. 748, fol. 207), expresses a generally accepted view. Moreover, the public opinion of the time is clearly focused on industrial productivity and work in factories. The press held up England as an example here, where eight-year-old children worked in industrial enterprises. Parents are urged to “send their children, if they’re unable to work in agriculture, to earn money in factories” (PEF, III, paragraph 10).

This raising of children for industry and involving them in wage labor in factories was considered to be such a momentous measure for the cause of creating a new man, and such a revolution in the management of human energies, that even enlightened “men of feeling” in the late eighteenth century were earnestly moved by the productive work of children. Father Sierakowski, the industrial entrepreneur and enthusiast of making the poor “idlers” productive, so typical of his time, writes with affectation about nine-year-old children employed in spinning at his factory: “to see them working together was the most pleasant sight and anyone looking at them would be touched most deeply” (Sierakowski 1797, 2-3).

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NINA ASSORODOBRAJ (1908-1999) – polish Marxist historian and sociologist. She was professor of the history social thought at Warsaw University. From 1963 to 1968 she was a chairman of Polish Sociological Association. She was an author of several books, including *Początki klasy robotniczej: problem rąk roboczych w przemyśle polskim epoki stanisławowskiej* [The Beginnings of the Working Class. The problem of the working hands in Polish industry in the epoch of Stanisław August] (Warszawa 1946); *Założenie teoretyczne historiografii Lelewela* [Theory of Lelewel's historiography] (Warszawa 1955); *Les conditions sociales de la formation des théories de l'évolution et du progrès*, (Paris 1956).

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**Autor:** Nina Assorodobraj

**Tytuł:** Początki klasy robotniczej. Problem rąk roboczych w przemyśle polskim epoki stanisławowskiej (fragmenty)

**Abstrakt:** Fragmenty książki *Początki klasy robotniczej* (na podstawie pracy doktorskiej *Les débuts de la classe ouvrière* z 1936 r.) opublikowanej po polsku w roku 1946 dają wgląd w historię „ludzi luźnych” w osiemnastowiecznej Polsce. Tekst pisany w oparciu o archiwalne dokumenty, zarządzenia i fragmenty z prasy ujmuje problem z wielu punktów widzenia, pokazując złożoną historię tej grupy społecznej i tego, jak za pomocą kolejnych decyzji prawnych i administracyjnych była ona systematycznie delegalizowana i asymilowana. Niejednorodna populacja ludzi luźnych, podejmujących się najróżniejszych zajęć i prac, z jednej strony widziana jest jako zbiorowisko przestępców i próżniaków, z drugiej strony stanowi zasób siły roboczej, którego rodzaju się przemysł bardzo potrzebuje.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ludzie luźni, klasa robotnicza, industrializacja, historia Polski osiemnastego wieku