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## POVERTY OF POLES WORKING IN FRANCE IN THE LIGHT OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE LADIES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF POLAND (1834–1863)

**Abstract:** Participants in the Great Emigration took up employment in France in about 120 occupations. Mostly in public works, housekeeping, crafts or private entrepreneurs. The material situation of working Poles can, to some extent, be known thanks to the minutes of meetings of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society. Documents of this organization are in the Polish Library in Paris. At the monthly sessions of the Society, requests for material support were considered, and the sources of poverty of individual emigrants were discussed, among other things. Due to low qualifications, the need to learn new professions, and frequent interruptions in employment, some Poles were falling into poverty. Sources of poverty also included the maintenance of large families, unfamiliarity with the French language, and failure to cope in a foreign environment. The chronological framework of the article covers the period from the establishment of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society to the end of the post-November emigration.

**Keywords:** great emigration, Poles in France, employment of emigrants in France, economic situation of emigrants in France

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## INTRODUCTION

According to French censuses, 5784 Polish military refugees were expected to arrive in France between 1831 and 1837. To this number should be added civilians who were not registered when crossing the borders. The size of this first wave is estimated at around 6000–6500 people. The incoming emigrants could certainly count on the sympathy and compassion of



the French, financial assistance from the French government, which, however, could not reach everyone (Pezda, 2018: 197). The vast majority of the émigrés were soldiers, hence the government of Louis-Philippe subordinated the decisions of the Ministry of the Interior and allocated special *dépôts* for them – places of accommodation where they were to stay organized in a military manner under the control of the French administration. These were established in Avignon, Châteauroux (for more see: Kuzicki, 2020: 42–45), Besançon (see: Tarkowska, 2021), Lons-le-Saunier, Salins, Bourges, Lunel, Le Puy and others. In 1832, the French parliament passed a law allowing for the payment of permanent support to Poles from the state budget, which made a modest living possible. In May 1833, the large establishments were dissolved, and Polish emigrants were dispersed in smaller groups throughout France (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2015: 122). The chronological framework of the article is defined by the date of the founding of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society and the first period of its activities until the outbreak of the January Uprising in the Polish lands.

As noted by French researchers Sylvie Aprile and Delphine Diaz, despite the heterogeneity of refugee groups in 19th-century Europe, especially after the Congress of Vienna, exile became socially selective. Forced emigration certainly affected more politicians, officers and students than workers, craftsmen or peasants. The above statement fully applies to the Great Emigration after the defeat of the November Uprising. In the 1820s, forced emigration was a consequence of the revolutions in the Apennine and Iberian peninsulas and was marked by the predominance of the elites. For example, out of approximately 1,000 Italian exiles from 1821, the profession of 737 of them is known. The vast majority of them, 59.4%, were former military personnel. The rest were students (91 people) and representatives of the liberal professions (208 people). The Polish emigration of 1831–1832, numbering around 8,000, consisted mainly of civilian and military elites (Aprile, Diaz, 2021: 139–144; Diaz, 2021).

In France, initially, most expatriates as former officers received permanent monthly support at the rate of the not serving French officers. This amounted to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an active officer's pay. In 1832, after the allowances were reduced, second lieutenants received 53 francs, lieutenants 62, captains 84, majors 103, and so on. In the following period these allowances were changed, henceforth for many years they were to be 100 francs for parliamentarians and brigadier generals, 60 for higher officers and civilian officials, 45 for lower officers, and 22 fr for non-commissioned officers and soldiers. The government allowances received in France by a private em-

igrant corresponded to a half of the average earnings of a qualified laborer, and were only enough for modest food and lodging, without the possibility of purchasing clothing or footwear (Witkowska, 1997: 96–97). When the post-November emigrants found themselves in France, wages and the cost of living in that country were as follows. In the Paris construction industry, the average daily wage was 3.50 francs (2 to 2.15 francs in France), and seasonal wages ranged from 4 to 5 francs. The rates in and around Paris were the maximum rates for France. In cotton spinning mills, wage rates ranged from 2 francs to 2.25 francs for a man, 0.60 to 1.30 fr. for a woman, and 0.30 to 0.75 fr. for children. The estimated cost of a poor working family consisting of a father, mother, two or three children and a grandfather was, according to de Bigot de Morogues in 1831, 860 fr. per year, while the earnings of the parents and one of the children were about 760 fr (Paillat, 1951: 774). The detailed annual expenses of this family are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Cost of living for a family of five French workers according to de Bigot de Morogues

	Food	Quantity/time period	Expenses in francs
1.	Bread	912 kg. per year	296,40
2.	Meat, eggs, cheese, vegetables, spices including salt		182,50
3.	Fermented beverages		91,25
	Housing, clothing and other expenses		
4.	Rental	annually	50
5.	Fuel and lighting	annually	40
6.	Furniture	repair and purchase, annually	30
7.	Direct tax	annually	10
8.	Clothing	for father, mother and childrens	140
9.	Snuff and other stimulants		19,95
10.	Total		860,2

The annual income was counted as follows: Father working 300 days in the year, at a wage of 1.5 fr. per day received 450 fr. The mother, assuming she worked 200 days earning 0.90 fr. annually received 180 fr. A working child at 0.50 fr. a day, working 260 days, earned 130 fr. Source: Paillat, 1951: 774.

In the following period of November emigration, according to French statistics, the average daily earnings of a laborer and artisan were in the period 1834–1843 in Paris – 3.38 fr.; in Lyon – 2.75 fr. and respectively in the following decade – 3.6 fr., and invariably for Lyon 2.75. Lower sums were paid in the flax and wool spinning mills in Lille. As Rémy Lebrun calculated between 1841 and 1843, the average wage at the textile mills in Lille was 1.50 fr. per day; at the wool spinning mill in Roubaix, 2.50 francs. In 1848, the average laborer's wage in Lille was 1.60 fr., while a machine worker in the cotton industry received 2.55 fr., slightly more at 2.65 fr. per day in the wool spinning mill. It should be added that the wages of printers and artisans were among the highest. According to statistics, in 1853 the highest wages were paid to sculptor-artists at 3.42 fr., and more skilled ones up to 4 fr., as did jewelers and goldsmiths. The lowest wages went to weavers, carpenters and stonemasons. In Paris during this period, a kilogram of bread cost 28 centimes, a kilogram of beef 96 centimes, a liter of wine 45 centimes. Bailiffs and the cost of housing in Lyon ranged from 100 to 200 fr. a year. Thus, a laborer with earnings of no more than 1,000 fr. a year had to spend more than 500 fr. (according to other figures, a minimum of 360 fr.) on food and living expenses for one person (Lebrun, 1995; Kalembka, 2003: 241–242; Witkowska, 1997: 96–97). In French industry, most were earned in factories, steel mills slightly less in the textile and paper industries. Of course, those employed there demonstrated the appropriate skills usually acquired on the job (Chanut et al., 1995).

Despite its fairly young age, the exodus was characterized by a high mortality rate. Most emigrants lived in poverty and poor sanitary conditions, were constantly malnourished, lacked medical care and family stability. This was followed by a lowering of mental resilience, which resulted in a higher than usual incidence of mental illness, a lot of suicides, risky duels. Living conditions exposed emigrants to frequent incidence of cardiovascular or lung diseases. Tuberculosis took a particularly heavy toll among them (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2015: 123).

In a situation where emigrants had no sources of financial support of their own, they had to exist at the subsistence level. In this situation, it was necessary to get a proper education and take a better-paid job. A poet Adam Celiński wrote in one of his letters:

Here in Lunel we are alone, no more Pole, and there used to be up to five hundred [...]. Be that as it may, if after three months of pen toil I do not carry good fruit, I will aban-

don the thankless role and take to some paid work, lighter naturally than in Paris, but I will take. The military wants me very much, so between Spain and Egypt I wander with my thoughts (Celiński, 1959: 143).

Practical considerations were no less inclined to take up gainful employment. Not having a trade, it was difficult to make a living from it, and one risked during this period being deprived of one's pay, not easy to recover if one lost one's occupation. However, psychological considerations, the desire to break out of the emigration malaise and the awareness of living at the expense of the French state led to taking up employment. Another equally important motive was practical and patriotic. Emigrants realized that the skills they had acquired in France, which was higher in civilization, might prove useful to their homeland in the future. There was also room for individual ambition – acquiring knowledge and developing one's own abilities was, after all, in line with patriotic goals. On the other hand, the natural desire for stability, material independence, finding a place for oneself in the new reality, and finally making a career or fortune began to play an important role in the environment of the Great Emigration only after the Spring of Nations, when hopes of regaining independence collapsed (Orłowski, 2015: 291–292).

## PROFESSIONS OF POLISH EMIGRANTS

Based on documents from the French Ministry of the Interior, more than 120 occupations carried out by polish emigrants were listed in 1839. According to this census, there were 5,472 Polish emigrants in France at the time. Table 2 lists the professions that Poles performed in France. The French data shows that 2,552 people were working professionally, while 452 emigrants were studying in various schools. The total number of emigrants engaged in work and study was 3004. Statistics said that non-working people were 823, which included old people, the infirm, fathers of numerous families and wanderers who did not speak French. Healthy Poles who were able to work were calculated at 874. The total number of expatriates receiving pay (including working) was 4974, while those deprived of government benefits were 498 ('Statystyka wychodźców...', 1839; Kalebka, 2003: 246–247). See Table 2.

Table no. 2. Statistical list of occupations performed by Polish emigrants in France in 1839

No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number
1.	Applicants to attorneys, notaries,	40	18.	Dyers	10	35.	Stall-holders	2	52.	Knives	11	69.	Saddle makers	59
2.	Architects	6	19.	Furmans, masseurs and grooms	58	36.	Tailors	92	53.	Opticians	1	70.	Servants	5
3.	Bednars	6	20.	Tanners	36	37.	Mass priests	16	54.	Smokers	1	71.	Brushers	7
4.	White-skimmers	4	21.	Potters	7	38.	Cooks	9	55.	Paper makers	19	72.	Shoe-makers	48
5.	Tinsmiths and lamp fabricators.	12	22.	Geometers	8	39.	Merchants	11	56.	Umbrella makers	2	73.	Glaziers	11
6.	Bricklayers	4	23.	Miners	7	40.	Furriers	15	57.	Shepherds	3	74.	Smugglers	4
7.	Chemists	4	24.	Carders	14	41.	Leather varnishers	4	58.	Pâtisserie	3	75.	Metal and wood engravers	25
8.	Carpenters	8	25.	Glass-workers	1	42.	Practising doctors	53	59.	Wig makers	2	76.	Hammers	10
9.	Confec-tioners	13	26.	Bookbinders	37	43.	Writers	39	60.	Wood sawers	2	77.	Lock-smiths	33
10.	Chocolatiers	2	27.	Engineers	8	44.	Painters	12	61.	Brewers	12	78.	Uphol-sterers	6

Table no. 2. (cont.)

No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number	No.	Profession	Number
11.	Apprentice bakers and butchers	8	28	Hatters	44	45.	Room painters	47	62.	Clothiers	4	79.	Weavers	39			
12.	Dentists.	1	29.	Cashiers, sub-s, com-missaires	501	46.	Marbians	6	63.	Glaziers	2	80.	Lathe makers	24			
13.	Pedlars	2	30.	Sausage makers	2	47.	Mechanics	19	64.	Can-vassers	9	81.	Piano tuners	12			
14.	Printers, litho-graphers	156	31.	Wheel-wrights	4	48.	Plaster modelers	1	65.	Workers	300	82.	Praches	1			
15.	Directors and caretakers of workers	15	32.	Basket-maker	1	49.	Brazier	4	66.	Farmers	71	83.	Vets	7			
16.	Ebonists	72	33.	Boiler-makers	15	50.	Brick-layers	8	67.	Drawers	39	84.	Watch-makers	26			
17.	Fabricators (of sugar, cartons, soap, tools, etc.).	110	34.	Smiths	47	51.	Private teachers	137	68.	Sculptors	4	85.	Gold-smiths	12			
Total		463				800			475			485		329			2552
Total																	

Source: 'Statystyka wychodźców...' (1839).

The above data indicate that most Polish emigrants in France took up gainful employment. As can be seen from Table No. 2, almost half of them engaged in the so-called free professions, i.e. they were engineers (Orłowski, 1992), doctors (Konarska, 1980), clergymen (Kuzicki, 2014), writers, scientists (Rederowa, 1972). About half a thousand took up clerical duties at some stage in their lives. In addition, nearly 500 people worked as laborers. Small entrepreneurs, merchants and restaurateurs were close to 1,100 (Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2015: 123). The issue of education of Poles in France, which has lived to see several studies in Polish historiography, is omitted here. It should be noted that in many cases, the education acquired in emigration was a ticket to careers or just improving the material situation (Konarska, 1977; 1978: 693; 1986; Pezda, 1991).

We have partial data on the earnings of Poles in France. Karol Morawski, who worked at the Polish School in Nancy, earned 50 fr. per month. This Lithuanian-born emigrant was among his compatriots here. Due to the wait for an experienced teacher from Paris, these duties were temporarily offered to Morawski. In addition to teaching Polish history and geography, he organized the schedule and performed other administrative duties. In total, Morawski worked at the school for as many as eight years. According to a March 1853 decree, the basic salary for a professor in one of the five Paris high schools was between 2,000 and 3,000 fr. per year, while in departmental education it ranged from 1,600 to 2,000 fr. These rates, however, applied to French education. In Polish schools in France, they were much lower. At the Polish School at Batignolles, *a maître d'étude* living at the institution received 600-800 fr. per year, while his French colleagues received on average twice as much (BPP, 612: 48; Pugacewicz, 2017: 238-239; 2021: 34-35). One of the minutes of the Society for Scientific Aid outlined the financial situation of insurgent Szczepan Gumowski, who lost his parents and his brothers were exiled to Siberia. In 1840, he arrived in Lyon with his underage sister Susanna. There he took a job, but they were plagued by poverty "with only 33 fr. from the government, and himself barely earning 40 fr. per month; his sister's emigrant allowances were denied by the Ministry" (BPP, 671/2: 11). Polish technicians and engineers employed by the Road and Bridge Corps earned more. The initial salary of road and bridge conductors, i.e. technicians who supervised the execution of construction and maintenance work, brought about 1,000 fr. a year allowed for a very modest living. By the end of their careers and the achievement of stability, they could count on 2,800-3,000 fr. a year at most. After retirement, they received up to 1,500 fr. per year, and after their death wid-

ows were granted about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of this benefit. Auxiliary conductors earned less, from 1,200 to 1,800 fr. depending on the work area. To improve their financial situation, conductors earned extra money in private enterprises in modernization work or, for example, designing and building villas for rich Frenchmen (Kłosowicz-Krzywicka, 2023). They also found employment in private railway companies. The number of these road and bridge conductors is difficult to estimate. It should be noted that hundreds of kilometres of railway lines were built in France. The wages of those employed there were higher than in the civil service, but the competition was also stronger. In total, about a thousand Poles were employed in technical professions at that time (Orłowski, 1992: 26).

During the reign of the Orleans monarchy, an “officier de santé” (the equivalent of a feldsher) earned from 600 to 1,500 fr. per year, while a doctor of medicine earned from 3,000 to 6,000 fr. However, the average earnings of Polish doctors were at 3000 fr. (250 fr. per month) (Konarska, 1980; 1986: 90–99). The above data indicate that the average earnings of expatriates were characterized by a considerable range and were from less than 500 to about 3000 fr. per year. It should be noted that this was partly due to the natural distrust of French clients towards Polish doctors. This, in turn, meant that Polish medical graduates had to seek patients in poorer regions of France or in the poorer districts of its cities. In total, 243 Polish doctors practised in France during this period, a dozen or so left the country, and 22 returned to Poland, mostly after the amnesty of 1856. Most Polish doctors worked in Paris and its surroundings (43 in the Seine department, 8 in the Seine et Oise department). The second largest concentration was in the south of France (20 in the Hérault department, 24 in the Gard department). In other southern departments, such as Vaucluse, Bouches du Rhône, and Var, there were 6-7 Polish medical graduates, and in Algeria there were 9. Individual doctors settled in mountainous areas and in north-western France (Konarska, 1980; 1986: 90–99).

## THE LADIES BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF POLAND

After the first few years in France, when Polish exiles adjusted to their new living conditions and the prospect of a longer stay abroad became obvious, while government benefits and the charity of French society were reduced, the idea of organizing self-help and establishing appro-

priate institutions emerged among the exiles. During the period of the Great Emigration, several charitable institutions were created, such as: Polish Emigration Fund Commission, "Worship and Bread" Institution, St. Casimir's Institution and the largest among them, the Charity Society of Polish Ladies (Kalembka, 2003: 265–268).

The latter organization, at its first meeting, issued a proclamation, addressed primarily to the French, with information about the establishment of the society and an appeal for support for its activities. Anna Czartoryska, née Sapieha, became the chairman, Maria Wirtemberska, née Czartoryska, became the vice-chairman, and Klementyna Hoffman, née Tańska, served as secretary. The organizational structure distinguished several categories of members. The first was made up of Polish women in exile who engaged in charitable activities. These included Benigna of Wojszyk Małachowska, Celina of Szymański Mickiewiczowa, Karolina of Potocki Nakwaska, Maria of Brzostowska Platerowa, Tekla Wołowska. The second category – caregivers – included Polish women temporarily residing in France and foreign women, among whom French and English aristocrats predominated. Those collecting contributions constituted the third group – distributors, in which men predominated, such as: Stanisław Barzykowski, Ignacy Domeyko, Ludwik Bystrzonowski, Adolf Cichowski and others. The Charity Society's income came from, among other things, fund-raising in Paris parishes, donations from wealthier compatriots, proceeds from balls and concerts held, as well as from raffles. Later, income was also provided by legacies and grants from the French government. The Benevolent Society supported sick emigrants, their children, widows and orphans. The scale of this assistance is evidenced by the surviving minutes of meetings, receipts of money spent, meticulously listing all expenses from 1834–1922, and account books from 1898–1934. During the monthly sessions of the Society, each request was considered and information on granting or denying support was recorded on the same form. Most often, assistance was granted in the form of money, and dinners at certain restaurants were funded. There were also other types of support in the form of material benefits: in meat, broth, bread, shoes, firewood, medicinal baths and medicines. The requests sent, preserved in the Polish Library in Paris, are painful evidence of the misery and suffering of hundreds of emigrants, a testimony to the problems they faced (Żaliński, 1999; Pezda, 2018: 198–214). This raises the question of how many emigrants benefited from the assistance of the Polish Ladies' Charitable Society. It is

known that in the first year of operation, 3,114 lunches were purchased. In 1837 and 1838, the Society purchased only 1,610 food tickets. Thus, the number of people benefiting from lunches can be estimated at between 1,500 and over 3,000 per year. We realise that these figures are not accurate, but they give an idea of the scale of assistance provided to emigrants. In later years, the amounts spent on lunch tickets were slightly higher. In the first year of operation, 2,885.5 francs were spent on the purchase of clothing, underwear and footwear. This money was used to purchase, among other things, 183 shirts, 38 blouses, 55 pairs of trousers. In subsequent years, the amounts spent on clothing decreased and in 1855–1856 amounted to 1,215 francs, which was only 6% of the total budget. Expenditure on medicines in the 1860s amounted to 2,000 francs per year. In addition, approximately 1,000 francs were spent each year on therapeutic baths. Overall expenditure on food, clothing and medicine between 1834 and 1856 ranged from 7,000 to 16,000 francs. The amounts of money granted to those in need varied greatly. Most often, these were one-off and monthly allowances (20–30 francs per month, one-off 50 francs per person). For example, in 1838, 563 people received assistance from the Charitable Society. Of these, 289 received financial assistance; 106 received clothing or food; 168 sick Poles received medicine. A year later, the scale of assistance was similar, with 594 emigrants receiving assistance, of whom more than 50 were fathers. In 1841, 112 grants were awarded for a total of 1,625 francs. The following year, 70 people were supported in this way with a total of 1,340 francs. In 1843, 3,392 francs were paid out to 168 sick people. Thus, between 1840 and 1844, between 70 and 170 emigrants received financial support each year. The range of cash payments between 1834 and 1855 was very wide, varying from 2,842 to 8,928 francs. On average, each year the Society spent about 20% of its budget on financial assistance for those in need (the poor and the sick) (Ziółek, 2010: 153–159; *Premier compte...*, 1835: 3–15; *Quatrième compte...*, 1838: 7; *Cinquième compte...*, 1839: 7).

The records of the meetings of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society are primarily a testimony to the poverty of emigrants deprived of work, sick, living on or without pay. This does not mean, however, that we will not find information about Poles employed in France. Between the many brief mentions of emigrants deprived of work, we also find there comments on those who took jobs, but for family reasons, low wages sought the support of charitable societies.

## EMIGRANT FAMILIES

Most of the exiles remained single, with only about 200 Polish women in exile. The lack of female candidates for wives was one of the reasons for the emigrants' loneliness. However, some of them did not marry out of a sense of duty to serve the nation, remaining in the belief that they should be ready at any time to take up the interrupted struggle and must not be bound by family ties. Mixed marriages with French women did occur, but they did not always lead to an improvement in wandering fortunes. For sensitive people, marriages of convenience with residents of the country on the Loire and the Seine River were quite a problem. On the other hand, emigrants without a steady income were not the "object of solicitations" of French women and their families. The heroic-past of the Poles was not always an argument in favor of marriage. Poles encountered a structured society in France, with distinct class divisions. Sometimes even a mixed marriage, even when the emigrant was working, did not lead to an improvement in material circumstances. In situations where the chosen one had no dowry, her parents were poor or did not want to get involved in their daughters' marriages, this led to deepening spousal misery (Kalembka, 2003: 247-250; Witkowska, 1997: 109-119; Żurawski vel Grajewski, 2015: 123). Jan Bartkowski noted the situation of one emigrant family.

The [Paris] apartment was filthy, and in two stalls and a kitchen, all the equipment consisted of a table and a few stools. Not a trace of a bed; only a mattress covered with a holey quilt, and in the two stalls a pile of tumbled, half-rotten straw serving as bedding for five small children. The wife and children pale, emaciated and in rags (quoted in Witkowska, 1997: 99).

Monetary and material support was granted not only to children, wives or fathers of families. Children were given allowances for schooling, the purchase of books and school supplies. Migrant families were given allowances for food, subsistence, clothing or footwear. The organization's anniversary brochure informed:

Polish emigrants found in it help in every need: it took care of children, giving them constant support for life, endowing them with books for education and devotions, clothing them when they took their first Holy Communion [...] to widows and old people the Society provided help in money, bread, food, clothing and payment for housing; the sick had a doctor and medicine free of charge; to the dead, finally, the Society gave them a Christian funeral (*Pięćdziesięciolecie Towarzystwa...*, 1884: 11).

In the minutes of the meetings of the first months of 1836 of the organization's activity we read "From P. Casimir Dahlen, a former lieutenant of the 2nd lancer regiment, he had his pay, which was taken away from him because he worked in a shawl factory, now he has lost this place and got married and his wife is ill, so whether for pay or for work he will apply in the greatest deprivation..." (BPP, 3673: 137). Casimir Dahlen since his arrival in July 1833 worked in Paris, where he married Eugenia Prevotel in 1835. After the incidents of the Spring of Nations, he took advantage of a tsarist amnesty in 1850 and returned to the Kingdom of Poland, where he farmed on leased farms. He fought in the January Uprising, including in the Troki district (Bielecki, 1995: 340).

In April 1836, so soon after the mention of Dahlen's location, we find information about another emigrant burdened with a family. There we read, among other things, "Dyst[ributor] [...] intercedes for Siekierzyński, who has come to Paris to apply for the wages lost because he received an allowance from the Government to establish a bookbindery on which he went bankrupt in Limoges leaving his wife weak. The Society grants this family fr. 30" (BPP, 3673: 154). Among the exceptions is a remark from reports in the 1850s, testifying to the successful attempts of some families to cope with the emigration reality. "Woroniecki submits a receipt to P. Legowiczowa for 11 fr. c. 20 for 14 dinners of P. Mola. He reports on the Kaufman family recommended to him, who, already having a store of their own on Boulevard des Italiens, need nothing but patronage and practice" (BPP, 3671: 31).

## POLES WORKING IN PHYSICAL PROFESSIONS

Participants in the November Uprising often made efforts on French soil to acquire practical occupations in factories or with local craftsmen. In emigration documents we find Polish tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths and tanners working in France. They learned professions that offered a chance for long-term employment, such as dyeing, sugar-making, watchmaking or printing. From the information in the archives of the Scientific Aid Society, it is known that as early as May 1832, non-commissioned officer Paweł Głowacki wanted to take up tailoring in the city, as did Jakub Sandecki and Julian Skrzyniecki, who learned tailoring already in the first period of emigration and worked in this profession in Avignon, Bordeaux,

Pau and Paris, among other places. The sewing of clothes was done by Józef Orzechowski, who resided in Bourges and Tulle, and Karol Jasiński of Brive-la-Gaillarde. In 1862, shoemaking and blacksmithing in the Allier department of Moulins were the livelihood of Franciszek Marczuk, Andrzej Kamiński and Michał Minkowski (Kuzicki, 2022: 126, 136). Poles mostly worked as journeymen with French craftsmen. Their emoluments often did not allow them to buy tools, and sometimes there was even a shortage of food. To illustrate this situation, one can trace the records of two wanderers. The first, unknown by name, who,

still working at the tanners, but only earning 20 sous a day, dresses all needs cannot and therefore demands for himself and receipt of 14 tic[ets] of lunch at Guilbert. He asks for the same for Schultz, whose earnings at the pattern factory have been interrupted for the time being because P. Schultz earned 5 fr. a day and will soon start a new job (BPP, 3673: 7).

This was not an isolated case where low wages did not allow for the basic necessities of life. Janowski worked casually in a small percale factory near Grenoble and earned only 8 sous a day, which could not be enough to support himself and his son (BPP, 3673: 18).

Among the issues considered by the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society, many concerned Polish artisans and workers. About the situation of shoemakers was written: "Narkiewicz father from Chatelus shoemaker by profession insurgent from Samogitia already in old age being covered with wounds, often falls in health and cannot work, asks for help, mayor local encourages him" (BPP, 3679: 129). In 1842, Piotr Labanowski of Versailles wanted to start earning money as a shoemaker, but did not have tools, the purchase of which was financed by the Ladies Benevolent Society of Poland. Asking for the purchase of tools for work is a recurring motif of emigrants' requests. In 1835, tools were purchased for the Massa engraver for the sum of 20 fr. and 80 cents (BPP, 3673: 14). A year later, the serious sum of 90 fr. was given to Jan Chocewicz of Toulouse, "who devoted himself to learning leatherworking" (BPP, 3673: 126). The aforementioned Narkiewicz, while left without work, pay or livelihood, was forced to sell his shoemaking tools. After many months, he recovered, began to practice his profession and then asked for the purchase of new tools, for which about 60 fr. (BPP, 3679: 3, 18).

Polish emigrants, including Malinowski, Soltan, Bujwid, Twardzikowski, Moczalski, were employed in fortification work in French cities, especially Paris. These works were carried out only when weather condi-

tions were favorable. The problem in taking up employment was the lack of shovels, chariots and other tools, hence in the 1840s a few dozen francs were allocated. In the spring of 1843, 50 fr. were allocated to "buy them tools and wheelbarrows to work on the fortifications of Paris at Vaugirard in the department of P. Seguin." The aforementioned Bujwid had earlier asked the Polish ladies for help in buying clothes, as he could not work in the winter season (BPP, 3679: 22, 27, 117).

In 1835, Poles began to be employed in the French government's Corps of Roads and Bridges, although isolated incidents had occurred earlier. They mainly occupied positions there as so-called road and bridge conductors, i.e. technicians who supervised the execution of construction and maintenance work. Obtaining a position as a conductor required passing an exam in mathematics and technical drawing. In government service, expatriates were restricted by footnotes; Corps personnel born outside France could not take higher positions, such as engineer, even if they graduated from the best colleges and demonstrated the necessary professional skills. Despite the good reputation that Poles enjoyed in the Road and Bridge Corps, their earnings was lower than that of Frenchmen. For these reasons, the exiles must have felt undervalued ambitiously and financially. Similarly, in private enterprises, as foreigners were less likely to pursue a professional career (Orłowski, 2015: 292–294). Poles also worked in the Road and Bridge Corps in lower positions of so-called pickers and road supervisors (French agents-voyers). Their emoluments were much lower and they were not entitled to a pension. Historiography of this professional group is almost non-existent, although its representatives contributed to the construction of thousands of kilometers of roads in France in the 19th century (Kłosowicz-Krzywicka, 2023: 231–247).

The modest incomes of pickers and conductors of roads and bridges were the reason for efforts to help the Ladies Benevolent Society of Poland. At the end of 1842, 15 fr. each was granted for food and linen to Cezary Koziełło and Pafnucki Daszkowski. Koziełło, despite his efforts, did not receive a position in the Corps, while Daszkowski, having arrived in Paris from Amiens, took a position as a picker after passing the exam (BPP, 3679: 78–79). Daszkowski in 1843 worked on the fortifications of Ivry, but due to the hard work, his old wounds were renewed. His situation then became dire. In correspondence addressed to Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, he "wrote from the pay also weak together with his wife cannot support themselves, [...] because everything I had [...] sold out I had to, today I am left sleeping on straw and in a cold without fire humidified

statehouse" (BCZ, 6659 IV: Daszkowski). Between 1844 and 1847 he traveled with his wife around France, seeking employment and working casually on the railroad. In December 1847 in Paris, his French wife committed suicide, mentally exhausted by prolonged misery. After losing his wife, Daszkowski took part in the events of the Spring of Nations and then left for North America (Bielecki, 1995: 345–346).

Another example is that of an emigrant, Valentin Humnicki, holding the position of conductor. In 1837, he entered the Corps of Roads and Bridges as a 3rd class auxiliary conductor at Bergerac for navigation on the Dordogne. In April 1839, he was sent to the department of Meuse to work on the Marne–Rhine canal, and then transferred to classes on the Paris–Orléans railroad. The following year he was sent to the Department of the Seine to the central bridge workshop, and thus to navigation on the Seine. In October 1840, he was transferred to Montbéliard. Here, health problems befell him, hence support was needed. In the documents of the Charity Society it was written:

he has been seriously ill for three months, so he earns nothing and is exposed to the greatest misery. He does not even dare to ask for support himself, but knowing his plight and good objects, colleague Julius Michałowski staying at the Administration of Roads and Bridges in Paris intercedes for the sick man. Assigned to Mr. Humnicki for treatment fr. 20.

After his recovery, Humnicki continued to climb the career ladder transferred in September 1844 to Orléans, became an auxiliary conductor of the 2nd class in January 1846. Then in 1849 he was assigned to the irrigation service, to sail on the Loire. In May 1854, he became conductor émbrigadé 4th class. Despite his promotion, his material situation did not improve, as he continued to solicit financial assistance, earning a salary of about 1,500 fr. per year. His personnel file contains applications for leave of absence for health reasons (AN, F/14/2558; BPP, 3679: 83–84; Bielecki, 1996: 168).

## POLES WORKING IN INTELLECTUAL PROFESSIONS

The minutes of the meetings are dominated by the cases of emigrants doing manual labor. This does not mean, however, that educated people who worked as doctors or engineers were not also among those expecting help.

In 1836 Ignacy Domejko asked for an allowance for Dr. Korczak, who was ill and needed support for medicine and maintenance (BPP, 3673: 150). According to Barbara Konarska, about 250 Polish doctors practiced in France between 1831 and 1870, but their living situation and income varied. There were those who earned well, but there was no shortage of doctors living on the poverty line (Konarska, 1986: 211–229).

A similar situation applied to engineers largely employed by the Road and Bridge Corps in lower positions. They had a very good reputation and were valued for their expertise and reliability. As Bolesław Orłowski estimated, in the mid-19th century there were more than 500 Polish engineers in France. In addition to the Corps of Roads and Bridges, they found employment with private entrepreneurs at construction sites or factories. One of them was Nikodem Paweł Borucki, who struggled with poverty in France. He was a graduate of the University of Warsaw's Faculty of Construction and Surveying. Initially he worked in the department of Nièvre on the regulation of the Yonne River. From 1840, he was employed in the Allier department. He worked on the theory of physics and made some scientific discoveries, but his ideas were not recognized in France. He was forced to enlist the help of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society and received 20 fr. for food. He wrote pleading letters to the Czartoryski family in which he described his difficult situation. In 1856 he was forced to sell his furniture to pay for his rented apartment, and had no money for clothes and underwear. Describing his inventions, Borucki solicited Prince Czartoryski to establish a paper factory. His situation improved after he went to Spain, where he found a well-paid job building a railroad connecting Madrid with the French border near Bayonne, running through Valladolid, Burgos, Vitoria to the Irún border station (BPP, 3692: 115; BCZ, 6656 IV: Borucki; Orłowski, 1992: 25–27, 110–111, 122).

## CONCLUSION

As Alina Witkowska characterised, poverty was a common feeling among the Great Emigration. The exiles, without their own sources of financial support, and most of them did not have any, lived in misery. Even people without addictions, who did not live beyond their means and took up employment, struggled with financial difficulties. Poverty was not a temporary companion in the lives of emigrants at the very begin-

ning of their exile. For some, it remained with them until the end of their lives, and it was such a common phenomenon that only its above-average manifestations were noted (Witkowska, 1997: 97–100). The minutes of the meetings of the Polish Ladies Benevolent Society mainly show the poverty of emigrants who, for various reasons, did not work. However, the author aimed to highlight the misery of Poles seeking employment in France. Based on sources collected in the archives of the Polish Ladies' Charitable Society, it is difficult to determine whether the assistance was one-off, related to a temporary professional crisis, or permanent. Archival records indicate that cash benefits were granted at a time when emigrants lost their jobs. Their purpose was to provide support in difficult times and to help find new employment. Most of the recipients of cash benefits were of working age, and their break in employment was due to health reasons. In addition, an effort was made to characterize the cost of living and wages during the Orleans monarchy and the Second Empire. Statistics show that the vast majority of exiles took up gainful employment. The French Ministry of the Interior listed 120 occupations in which Polish emigrants worked in the 1830s.

The Polish Ladies Benevolent Society provided monetary, material assistance (food, clothing, shoes, etc.) to working emigrants, and helped organize funerals. Minutes of meetings of this charitable organization show the misery of Poles who took up jobs requiring physical labor. Most of the wanderers, initially with poor knowledge of the French language, were condemned to casual work that did not require any special qualifications: in road and bridge construction, in printing shops, with various private entrepreneurs who employed Poles as cheaper, lower-paid labor force.

It should be noted that real careers of Polish doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers in France, with a few exceptions, have not been pursued. With strong professional competition, foreigners, for various reasons, always had fewer opportunities. The earnings of Polish engineers, doctors and teachers were, of course, below the average of their French professional colleagues. However, as research by Bolesław Orłowski and Stanisław Januszewski has shown, Polish emigrants made a significant contribution to the development of French industry and science (Orłowski, 1992; 2015; Januszewski, 2019).

The article refers to several cases of poverty of working Poles. An attempt was made to characterise the misery of emigrants. The article was based on the minutes of meetings of one of the largest Polish charitable

organizations. Undoubtedly, these archival documents shed new light on the material situation of the Great Emigration. However, far they are from exhausting this issue, they contribute to deepening understanding of the subject. This issue requires further searches in Polish and French archives. Some research proposals that emerged during the writing of this article are worth noting. First of all, it should be noted that there is no monograph describing the professional lives of emigrants after the fall of the November Uprising. This issue requires further research in Polish and French libraries and archives. The French departmental archives contain lists of Polish emigrants, indicating their professions. French statistics should certainly be used more extensively in research on the professions taken up by Poles. The author is aware that this requires many years of research in numerous archives. Issues of employment are present in the correspondence of emigrants addressed to the French authorities. The next issue is to compare the professional situation of Poles in France with that of emigrants of other nationalities, such as Italian, Spanish or English.

The scope and sources of this article did not allow for the use of other criteria that would indicate the origins of emigrants' poverty. For the above reasons, no attempt was made to characterise working Poles in terms of time spent in France, length of career, education, etc.

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