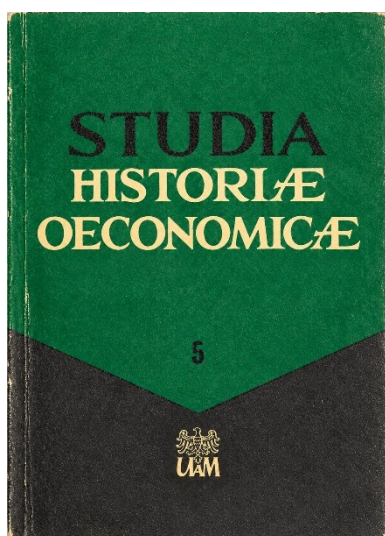




Kołodziejczyk, R. (1970) 'The Bourgeoisie in Poland in the 19th and 20th Century against the European Background', *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 5, pp. 215-230.

<https://doi.org/10.14746/sho.1970.05.1.014>

Text of article:

<https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/sho/article/view/57424>

The text was digitised from an earlier printed edition of *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*. The digitisation process involved scanning, automated optical character recognition (OCR), and subsequent manual verification of the recognised text. The original source material is held by the Collegium Historicum Library at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.
bch.amu.edu.pl

The task was carried out within the framework of the competition "Social Responsibility of Science II – Support for Scientific Libraries". The project entitled "Digitization of archival editions of scientific journals collected by the Library of the Coll. Historicum of Adam Mickiewicz University". The project was co-financed from state budget funds granted by the Minister of Science within the framework of the Programme Social Responsibility of Science II. Support for Scientific Libraries (agreement no. BIBL/SP/0092/2024/02 of 05.12.2024).

Total value of the project: PLN 247,236.00. Amount of co-financing: PLN 220,836.00.



UNIwersytet
IM. ADAMA MICKIEWICZA
W POZNANIU



Ministerstwo Nauki
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego



Spółeczna
Odpowiedzialność
Nauki II

Ryszard Kołodziejczyk (Warszawa)

THE BOURGEOISIE IN POLAND IN THE 19th AND 20th CENTURY AGAINST THE EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

A wide scope of the subject compels one to compactness and a concise formulation of the main research questions. There belong among others the chronology and division into stages of the history of the bourgeoisie, the regularities and a peculiar character of the process of primary accumulation, the sources from which the new class did arise and the internal structure of the bourgeoisie.

After Marx and Engels the term "bourgeoisie" usually denoted "a class of contemporary capitalists, the owners of means of production using hired labour", the class being "the product of a long process of development, of a number of radical changes in the mode of production and exchange..., developing to the same extent to which trade, industry, shipping and railways were developing... the class which increased its capitals eclipsing all the other classes inherited from the Middle Ages"¹.

The transformation of the feudal society into capitalist one has been completed during a long period of time and by way of a highly intricate process. Unlike other countries from Western Europe, which for the most part adopted the way of capitalist modifications without major set-backs in the 14th till 17th centuries, Poland fell far behind in comparison to the general rhythm of those changes. As distinct from contemporary England, Netherlands with their most potent economy, as well as from France, Scandinavia, Germany, Bohemia and other countries from Central Europe, Poland had to be included among the third group of countries being in the state of economical stagnation and regress, similarly to Spain, Portugal, Italy and probably Turkey too². Russia, with its strong feudal structure did not show in the 17th century any signs of economical stagnancy. I do not think, however, the thesis about the beginning of the Russian bourgeoisie that early could be upheld³. In Poland the more conspicuous changes did not come till the 18th century; first of all

¹ Manifest Komunistyczny (*Manifesto of the Communist Party*). In: K. Marks, F. Engels: Dzieła Wybrane. Vol. 1. Warszawa 1949. pp. 26 - 27.

² J. Topolski: Narodziny kapitalizmu w Europie XIV - XVII wieku (*Origin of Capitalism in Europe in 14th - 17th Centuries*). Warszawa 1965, p. 165.

³ J. Kaufmann-Rochard: *Origines d'une bourgeoisie russe (XVI^e et XVII^e siècles)*. In: Marchands de Moscovie, Paris 1969.

the development of manufactures owned by the middle class (and not only by the magnates and the Crown), the growth of trade and the increased urbanization. The started process, however, of transforming the feudal society into capitalist one was not as yet advanced enough to speak of the beginning of the Polish bourgeoisie⁴.

The turn of the 18th and 19th centuries or, more precisely, the period of establishing the Grand Duchy of Warsaw is usually considered to be the starting point of the Polish bourgeoisie. At that time the rate as well as the range of economic changes characteristic of capitalism were greatly increased⁵. That phase came to an end during the January Up-rising 1863 - 64, commonly considered as a border line between feudalism and capitalism. Naturally both of these dates may be altered since even the Age of Enlightenment has introduced already certain modifications in the social structure⁶. Those changes became most prominent among the lesser gentry and also among the middle class in Warsaw, and to some extent in the other city centres. The increase of importance of the Warsaw middle-class may be exemplified by two persons: a contemporary Mayor of the city Jan Dekert and a rich shoe-maker Jan Kiliński — the leader of towns-people during the Insurrection of 1794. Yet so far one could hardly call that part of the rich middle-class the actual bourgeoisie. A general state of economy firmly rooted in feudalism, subjection of peasants to the gentry, serf labour and a lack of some wider basis for the development of home trade marked the contemporary middle class with a feudal stamp. Similarly the period of the Up-rising of 1863 - 64 closing the process of social and economic changes toward capitalism did not appear quite the same in all parts of Poland.

Nevertheless one can speak about the definite establishment of the bourgeoisie as a class at that time⁷. The process of the development of the incipient

⁴ R. Kołodziejczyk: *Kształtowanie się burżuazji polskiej (Formation of the Polish Bourgeoisie)* — a manuscript — in: *Materiały Dyskusyjne Komisji Naukowej Obchodu Roku Mickiewicza Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Sekcja Historii i Historii Filozofii*. Warszawa 1955.; by the same author: *Z zagadnień kształtowania się burżuazji polskiej (Concerning the Formation of the Polish Bourgeoisie)*. In: *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1956 No. 1 pp. 12 - 54; the same author: *Kształtowanie się burżuazji w Królestwie Polskim — 1815 - 1850 (Formation of the Bourgeoisie in the Kingdom of Poland 1815 - 1850)*. Warszawa 1957.

⁵ B. Leśnodorski: *Elementy feudalne i burżuazyjne w ustroju Księstwa Warszawskiego (Feudal and Bourgeois Elements in the Political System of the Duchy of Warsaw)*. In: *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 1951 Vol. 1; also compare: W. Sobociński: *Historia ustroju i prawa Księstwa Warszawskiego (History of Political and Legal System of the Duchy of Warsaw)*. Toruń 1964.

⁶ J. Topolski: *Rozkład feudalizmu i powstanie kapitalizmu w Polsce (The Decay of Feudalism and the Origin of Capitalism in Poland)*. In: *Materiały i Studia INS*. Vol. 1 *Seria historyczna*. Warszawa 1954.

⁷ W. Kula: *Kształtowanie się kapitalizmu w Polsce (Formation of Capitalism in Poland)*. Warszawa 1955; also compare: T. Łepkowski: *Polska — Narodziny nowoczes-*

working class, and first of all, of its internal unification was still *in statu nascendi* yet it was soon quickened by the industrial revolution⁸.

A characteristic feature of the beginning of capitalism in Poland was that the so-called primary accumulation lasted for a relatively short time if compared with the countries of Western Europe. As a matter of fact it only covered the first half of the 19th century. Moreover, unlike many other countries, the primary accumulation in Poland was based upon the local sources, that is, exploitation and proletarianization of great numbers of peasants and small producers in towns. Thus the main method of making money was the mass expropriation of peasants from their lands by means of evictions, regulations, rent-charges and repurchase, all of them with a considerable aid from the government. Like in other countries there were also in use forms of exploiting the people by means of an expanded system of direct, and first of all indirect taxation, e.g. monopolies. Finally, the credit policy, protectionism, etc. were of no small importance. All of those means put forth intensively in the Kingdom of Poland during the term of office of minister K. Drucki-Lubecki provided in a relatively short time favourable conditions for turning the feudal system into capitalist one by way of slow, gradual reforms coming from the government i.e. in a Prussian manner (Lenin)⁹. The trade policy of the government favoured concentration of capital of the bourgeoisie and the State. At the very beginning of the Kingdom of Poland its separation from Prussia by means of a tariff-wall, tightening political relationships with Russia and reduction rates for immigrant industrialists from other sectors of partitioned Poland, mainly from Silesia, Great Poland, Pomerania and Royal Prussia quickened the establishment of capitalism and the origin of its chief classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Before the 1863 Up-rising foreign capital did not play an important role¹⁰. Money-making of a handful of immigrants of the kind of Krusche, Geyer, Rau and others as well as proletarianization of a considerable

nego narodu 1764 - 1870 (*Poland — Birth of a Modern Nation 1764 - 1870*). Warszawa 1967.

⁸ T. Łepkowski: *Początki klasy robotniczej Warszawy (Beginnings of the Working Class of Warsaw)*. Warszawa 1956; J. Łukasiewicz: *Przezwrot techniczny w przemyśle Królestwa Polskiego 1852 - 1886 (Technical Revolution in Industry of the Kingdom of Poland 1852 - 1886)*. Warszawa 1963.

⁹ R. Kołodziejczyk: *Nagromadzenie kapitałów w Królestwie Polskim 1815 - 1850 (Agglomeration of Capitals in the Kingdom of Poland 1815 - 1850)*. In: *Materiały i Studia INS*. Vol. 4 Seria historyczna, Warszawa 1956; J. Jedlicki: *Nieudana próba kapitalistycznej industrializacji (The Failure of a Capitalist Industrialization)*. Warszawa 1964.

¹⁰ I. Ihnatowicz: *Z badań nad kapitałem obcym w przemyśle łódzkim w latach 1860 - 1880 (Investigations of Foreign Capital in Łódź Industry in the Years 1860 - 1880)*. In: *Studia z historii nowożytnej i najnowszej*. Warszawa 1956, pp. 245 - 254; St. Jasieczek: *Uwagi o kapitale górnośląskim w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim (Comments Concerning Capital of Upper Silesia in the Dąbrowa Basin)*. In: *Zaranie Śląskie* 1959, No. 2, pp. 99 - 108; by the same author: *Kapitał niemiecki w przemyśle górnio-hutniczym Zagłębia Dą-*

number of newcomers took place upon the native ground. A certain boom at the beginning of the second half of the century, to be perceived in commercial contacts with foreign countries of L. Kronenberg, H. Epstein and other Warsaw financiers did not as yet signify an influx of foreign capital into home industry¹¹. The role of foreign capital for Galicia and the Prussian Partition in which, with exception of Silesia, trade and industry were closely connected with agriculture, was of still lesser importance. As opposed to the situation in agriculture where, in the first half of the 19th century methods of primary accumulation prevailed, the handicraft and town industry since 1840s have been based more and more on capitalist exploitation of man-power concealed under the veil of semi-feudal forms. Co-operation of the two forms of accumulation of capital, i.e. primary and capitalist, constituted the characteristic feature of the period of transition between feudalism and capitalism. That was the very factor which made the exploitation of man-power the more ruthless, especially in the areas where capitalist industry developed along the forms of small-producers, like handicraft in the Kingdom of Poland and first of all in Galicia.

In Poland the main social basis from which the bourgeoisie sprang up consisted of the late feudal tradesmen and craftsmen. It was also partly composed of those coming directly from the nobility and, to a very small degree, from the rich peasantry. Under existing conditions shaped in the course of the history of Poland feudal trade was very weak, chiefly as result of the decline of towns and supremacy of the nobility. The Age of Enlightenment has brought, as is well known, only a slight consolidation of tradesmen of Warsaw and Great Poland. With the partition of Poland that tendency was temporarily diminished till the years 1807 - 1812 which brought along certain progress. In Warsaw, the wholesale dealers, contractors and bankers like Berek, Szmul, I. Neumark, S. A. Fraenkel, J. Epstein, S. Kronenberg and others¹², through profit-yielding banking and money change transactions

browskiego 1880 - 1914 (*German Capital in Mining Industry and Metallurgy of the Dąbrowa Basin 1880 - 1914*). In: *Zeszyty Naukowe SGPiS* 1960, No. 19, pp. 91 - 118; by the same author. *Kapitał francuski w przemyśle górniczo-hutniczym Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego 1870 - 1914* (*French Capital in Mining Industry and Metallurgy of the Dąbrowa Basin 1870 - 1914*). In: *Zeszyty Naukowe SGPiS* 1959, No. 15 pp. 77 - 93; Fr. Ryszka: *Kapitał monopolistyczny na Górnym Śląsku i formy jego polityki* (*Monopoly Capital and Forms of Its Policy in Upper Silesia*). In: *Studia Śląskie*, Poznań 1952, pp. 203 - 265.

¹¹ Z. Pustuła: *Kapitały obce w przemyśle ciężkim Królestwa Polskiego 1876 - 1900* (*Foreign Capitals in the Heavy Industry of the Kingdom of Poland 1876 - 1900*). In: *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1964, No. 4, pp. 931 - 958.

¹² J. Kosim: *Monografia przedsiębiorstwa handlowego „Ignacy Neumark” w Warszawie* (*Monograph of the Trade Firm “Ignacy Neumark” in Warsaw*). A typescript of the doctoral dissertation at the Warsaw University Library; A. Kraushar: *Kupiectwo warszawskie* (*Warsaw Merchants*). Warszawa 1929.

and through war-contracts, made fortunes and acquired great power. After 1815, the situation was further developed producing favourable conditions particularly for leaseholders of various monopolies, i.e. indirect taxation, laid on consumption of salt, tobacco, vodka, meat and other articles of food. The representatives of trade capital such as L. Newachowicz, M. Koniar, L. Halpert, J. Epstein, P. Steinkeller, K. Wolicki, and T. Toeplitz profited by it immensely¹³.

According to the statistics, in 1827 49,880 persons in the Kingdom of Poland were engaged in trade¹⁴. It meant quite a large number if we take into consideration the stage of the development of the capitalist economy. However, one cannot discuss the entire group indiscriminately. We have to separate a multitude of small shop-keepers, vendors, barkeepers, etc. who could hardly be included among the actual bourgeoisie. It refers also to a part of grocers, wine-merchants, etc. otherwise not engaged in any other business. Together with the development of capitalist relations in production the trade supplied the needs of larger and larger circles of consumers and became linked with the home market which consequently led to transformation of former tradesmen into capitalists.

The real bourgeoisie consisted of tradesmen of great and medium wealth who were most numerous in Warsaw and Łódź in the period after the November Up-rising 1830; to a smaller extent there were included tradesmen from provincial centres. On the same level of wealth were some of the rich bankers and tradesmen from Cracow. Piotr Steinkeller was the type of a tradesman and at the same time a great businessman. Having made a fortune in trade, first in Cracow and then in Warsaw, he became very active in industry. The source of his fortune were first of all profits on the lease of salt-transport¹⁵. In a similar way the other big Warsaw capitalists like M. Koniar, S. Jakubowski, the Epsteins, the Brzezińskis, the Kronenbergs, the Rosens, Cybulski, the Dobrycz etc. made their fortunes.

The bourgeoisie and the lower middle-class also consisted to a high degree of those coming from the former townspeople. The source of wealth for this group of arising bourgeoisie, in general economically inferior and having no access to large Treasury credits was the trade in food and industry commodities and small tenancy. Rooted much more firmly in the feudal rela-

¹³ M. Aizen: *Polityka gospodarcza Lubeckiego 1821 - 1830 (Economic Policy of Lubecki — 1821 - 1830)*. Warszawa 1932.

¹⁴ Fr. Rodecki: *Obraz geograficzno-statystyczny Królestwa Polskiego (Geographical and Statistical Representation of the Kingdom of Poland)*. Warszawa 1830, Tablica 3; also compare: R. Kołodziejczyk: *Z zagadnień kształtowania się burżuazji polskiej (Concerning the Formation of the Polish Bourgeoisie)*. In: *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1956, No. 1, pp. 24 - 26.

¹⁵ R. Kołodziejczyk: *Piotr Steinkeller — kupiec i przemysłowiec — 1799 - 1854 (Piotr Steinkeller — Merchant and Industrialist — 1799 - 1854)*. Warszawa 1963.

tions, especially in Galicia and in the East of the Kingdom of Poland, those tradespeople were to become the real bourgeoisie no sooner than second half of the 19th century.

In general one has to note that feudal tradesmen, including many newcomers to Warsaw and especially Łódź centres, played an important role in supplying directly the ranks of the new class. In Galicia, Pomerania and in Poznań district small Polish tradesmen prevailed who, in conditions of insufficient development of capitalist industry and trade, displayed economically and politically much weaker force in comparison to the Kingdom of Poland.

Speaking about a wide participation of feudal tradesmen in forming the bourgeoisie it is worth-while quoting Marx's interpretation. Referring to that phenomenon he wrote that "the turn towards capitalist mode of production occurs in a twofold way. A producer becomes a merchant and a capitalist, stemming the natural agriculture economy and the medieval town handicraft hampered by the guilds. That is really revolutionary. Or a merchant subordinates directly production. Although the second way played an important role in history as a stage of transition... it does not lead to any radical change in the old mode of production... it only aggravates the situation of immediate producers transforming them into common hired labourers and proletarians working in much worse conditions than those subordinated directly to the capital and the appropriation of the surplus work stays on the ground of the old mode of production"¹⁶.

This very way of the descent of the bourgeoisie from tradespeople may be clearly noticed in Poland. P. Steinkeller, the Epsteins, the Evans, the Kronenbergs, Koniar, Prusak, Lande, Cybulski, Bochenek — these are the names of capitalists who started their careers in trade, banking etc. just to pass over to industry in the course of further development of capitalism.

The disintegration of handicraft came into view at the earliest in wool and linen weaving¹⁷. Growing manufacture of goods destined for the new, distant markets, the necessity of realization of the manufactured products compelled a small producer to search for an agent, i.e. a merchant. He in turn, to follow up his advantage, subordinated the small producer by giving him credits which led consequently to imposing prices on commodities, raising prices of raw material etc. Markets in the East as well as distant home-markets did not allow craftsmen to keep independence. Independence of the handicraft became more and more illusory and the process was advanced through the activities of the owners of large workshops. Geyer, Kopisch and

¹⁶ K. Marks: *Kapitał (The Capital)*. Vol. 3 part 1, Warszawa 1957, pp. 361 - 362.

¹⁷ G. Missalowa: *Studia nad powstaniem łódzkiego okręgu przemysłowego 1815 - 1870*. T. 1. *Przemysł (Studies on the Origin of Łódź Industrial Centre 1815 - 1870) Vol. 1. Industry*. Łódź 1964.

Wendisch in Łódź, Schlösser in Ozorków, Krusche or Kruszewski in Pabianice, Fraenkel, Borman and Geysmer in Warsaw employed, besides labourers working in their own factories hundreds of small, allegedly independent producers implicating them in the sphere of capitalist exploitation. The subordination of small producers was still more manifest in weavers' craft in Silesia. The guilds themselves often contributed to it sanctioning contracts between masters and merchants and backing the latter in exacting the contract terms. Trying hard to contend with large, competitive industry works the guilds applied more and more severe sanctions to their own journeymen and apprentices.

The circumstances accompanying the rise of the bourgeoisie from the craftsmen were very differentiated. Jan Zakrzewski started his industrial career in 1830s as a locksmith and his son Bazyli, already in 1840s was a partner of Lilpop and the owner of a large factory of agricultural tools in Warsaw. Antoni Zieleniewski with his son Ludwik started his career of a blacksmith in a similar way in Cracow. Their blacksmith's workshop was transformed into the factory of agricultural tools no sooner than the middle of the 19th century¹⁸. Similarly, a handicraft workshop was the source for the future fortune to Karol Malcz, a goldsmith's journeyman from Warsaw.

In similarly inostentatious ways many later industrial potentates, among others Gerlach, Lilpop, Fraget and Krusche started their careers in handicraft workshops¹⁹. On the other hand, gaining fortune in trades like tailoring or shoe-making was very rare, though even there the example set up by a shoemaker Stanisław Hiszpański is worth noticing. Yet in general the cases of quick careers in those trades were rather rare and very few masters developed into capitalists on account of the small production not based on any larger capital. Thus craftsmen mainly developed into the lower middle class. Contemporaneously, the poor, declassed craftsmen joined the newly created working class. The above processes, the most conspicuous in the Kingdom of Poland and least discernible in small towns of Galicia, did not follow an even course²⁰. The lower middle class that arose from the handicraft and trade was the basic if not the sole constituent, apart from the rich peasantry, of the Polish bourgeoisie in Silesia and Pomerania. In Galicia and Great Poland the lower middle class constituted an overwhelming majority

¹⁸ W. Saryusz-Zaleski: *Dzieje przemysłu w byłej Galicji 1804 - 1929 (History of Industry in Former Galicia 1804 - 1929)*. Kraków 1930.

¹⁹ R. Kołodziejczyk: *Kształtowanie się burżuazji w Królestwie Polskim*, pp. 153 - 169.

²⁰ J. Demel: *Stosunki gospodarcze i społeczne Krakowa w latach 1843 - 1853 (Economic and Social Relations in Cracow in the years 1843 - 1853)*. Kraków 1951; by the same author: *Stosunki gospodarcze i społeczne Krakowa w latach 1853 - 1866 (Economic and Social Relations in Cracow in the Years 1853 - 1866)*. Wrocław 1966.

of the local bourgeoisie in towns. In both latter Polish provinces the supremacy of the handicraft resulted from the weakness of industry²¹. The production of small workshops supplied the needs of the local market. The greater part of the owners did not employ any wage-earners. Thus for example in Great Poland in 1846 as much as 45,6% of independent craftsmen worked without journeymen or apprentices. In that province as well as in Gdańsk Pomerania handicraft production was predominant as a result of the supremacy of agriculture, the weakness of urbanization and a minimal number of large industry works. It had an essential bearing upon the structure of the local bourgeoisie. Economically weak, with exception of Pomeranian port towns or Toruń, Bydgoszcz, and Poznań, it was chiefly represented by the lower middle class. A similar situation was in Galicia where the most numerous group of the new social class was composed of small craftsmen and provincial merchants — in greater part — the Jews.

Intensification of the process of turning towards capitalist methods of production was not confined in 1820s to Great Poland and Pomerania only. Western and northern provinces of the Kingdom of Poland witnessed an intensive growth of cattle breeding, culture of sugar-beet and potatoes which in consequence led to transformations among landowners' circles. A characteristic feature of the origin of capitalism and the bourgeoisie in Poland was a considerable contribution of the nobility and the gentry to those transformations²².

The pioneers of industrialization of agriculture in the Kingdom of Poland were such landowners as: Ignacy Starzyński, Rafał Bartoszewski, Stefan Złotnicki and Antoni Ostrowski. Industrial development of Ozorków, Aleksandrów, Zduńska Wola or Tomaszów is closely associated with those names. Though at the basis of all modifications lay the weaving which was traditional for that region the activities of the above mentioned landowners have undoubtedly quickened them. The most typical example of activization of the nobility and the aristocracy concerning the sphere of capitalist agriculture, industry and trade was set up by the Łubieński family. Its members owning estates spread all over the country went into business on a large scale in the Kingdom of Poland, Pomerania, Galicia and Poznań Province. The families of Zamoyski, Pruszek, Działyński, Kiciński, Sapieha and Others were similarly active. We can discern in it an expression of the authoritative, "Prussian" mode of developing capitalism in Poland, the mode which helped to retain in new historical condition economical and political superiority of the late feudal class.

²¹ Cz. Łuczak: *Przemysł Wielkopolski w latach 1815 - 1870 (Industry of Great Poland in the Years 1815 - 1870)*. Warszawa 1959.

²² Cf. S. Kieniewicz: *Historia Polski 1795 - 1918 (History of Poland 1795 - 1918)*. Warszawa 1969.

The picture of those changes would be incomplete if we took no account of a multitude of the nobility of small and sometimes also of medium wealth who, in the course of the growth of capitalism, had no chance to retain their possessions. These, and especially the yeomanry, provided the source for various kinds of clerks and administrators of manorial estates. Studying law and agriculture and later, though to a smaller extent, through railway and technical studies they found themselves among the working intelligentsia, found employment in bureaucracy or eventually lost altogether their social status and supplied the handicraft or the working class²³. A relatively high number of persons who lost the status of nobility became teachers though even in this profession participation of the lower middle class and, to a smaller extent, of peasantry was increasing²⁴.

Social degradation of the lesser and of a part of the fairly rich gentry was considerably enhanced as result of enfranchisement in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland. The process was still intensified by political repressions from the partitioning states toward groups of the nobility that took part in patriotic movement. That would also explain an increased influx of the gentry into towns after 1864. Contact with capitalist relations of production altered their social outlook. The intelligentsia, already at that time notably united with capitalism, the small handicraft and the industrial proletariat were the new social groups that took in the lesser gentry flowing into towns. That relatively numerous social group constituted a specific feature of the historical process in Poland. Being not uniform, its upper part was closely associated with the bourgeoisie and the gentry whereas its greater part leant toward playing an important role among the masses in their struggle for social freedom and independence. That group was driven to it by a peculiar susceptibility toward the oppression from the partitioning powers and by its high receptivity to revolutionary ideas spreading after 1870²⁵.

Bearing in mind the problems of the bourgeoisie development there arises

²³ Cf. R. Kołodziejczyk: *Studenci Polacy w Instytucie Inżynierów Komunikacji w Petersburgu w latach 1867 - 1876 (Polish Students at the Institute of Engineers of Transport in St. Petersburg in the Years 1867 - 1876)*. In: *Studia i Materiały z dziejów nauki polskiej*. Zakład Historii Nauki i Techniki PAN, series D, No. 3 Warszawa 1962; J. Leskiewiczowa: *Warszawa i jej inteligencja po powstaniu styczniowym - 1864 - 1870 (Warsaw and Its Intelligentsia after the January Up-rising - 1864 - 1870)*. Warszawa 1961; J. Kulas: *Struktura społeczna inteligencji technicznej na kolejach żelaznych w Królestwie Polskim 1845 - 1914 (Social Structure of Technical Intelligentsia in Railways System in the Kingdom of Poland 1845 - 1914)*. In: *Studia z dziejów kolei w Królestwie Polskim*, ed. by R. Kołodziejczyk, Warszawa 1970.

²⁴ *Spółeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego (Society of the Kingdom of Poland)*, ed. by W. Kula, Vol. 1, 2, 3, Warszawa 1965 - 1968.

²⁵ J. Leskiewiczowa: *Warszawa i jej inteligencja...*

an important question as to what extent the rich peasantry constituted the source for that class? It is difficult to answer it without making an attempt at explicating some broader questions and first of all the problem of peasants' participation in trade. An increasing yield of marketable agricultural produce as well as the growth of demand in the countryside for industrial supplies linked the countryside more and more closely with the local market. Peasants supplied the local town market with agricultural products obtaining in turn indispensable manufactured goods.

The results of investigations obtained hitherto seem to deny the presence of tradesmen among Polish peasants, supplying the local market with agricultural products, falling under a category of peasant-purchasers, mentioned by Lenin in *The Growth of Capitalism in Russia*. One of its main reasons was a specific mode of introducing capitalism into Polish countryside. On the other hand the situation in which trade in agricultural products in Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland was in the hands of small Jewish tradesmen and tenants was of no small consequence. Hence we may infer that despite local disparities in the growth of capitalism in Polish countryside the rich peasantry in both provinces did not play an important role as a source for the town bourgeoisie. The case was probably different in Silesia and Great Poland where the class of rich peasants appeared by the middle of the century.

All of these phenomena were fairly important for the peculiar character of the development of the Polish town bourgeoisie at that time. It is known that in Russia, where the development of capitalism showed many concurrent features with the analogous process in Poland the rich peasants, the so-called "purchasers" played a very important role as a source for the town bourgeoisie in the period preceding the reform. It is enough to mention Morozov, who was also referred to in the above cited work of Lenin.

There were however other, less direct ways which, though seldom, led the peasantry toward the town bourgeoisie. One of them was the permeation of rich landholders' sons among the town intelligentsia. Moreover, in small and sometimes even larger towns a great part of population consisted of the so-called townsfolk-farmers. Their economical position hardly differed from that of peasant-landholders or settlers. Their social status has been altered in the course of the development of handicraft and capitalist industry and part of them entered the class of bourgeoisie. Similar phenomena occurred among the population of villages situated around larger industrial centres.

Thus one can note a very slow increase in participation of the rich peasantry in forming the bourgeoisie and that mostly in the Prussian Partition. On the contrary, the Polish village constituted from the very beginning a wide source of man-power for town industry and handicraft.

The foregoing investigations prove that the main sources of the Polish

bourgeoisie were: merchants, both local and foreign, handicraftsmen, the aristocracy, the nobility and to a minimal degree the rich peasantry. Not all of these elements of the new class represented an equally full-grown product of the developing capitalism and that mainly refers to the middle class of small and medium wealth, the rich peasantry and part of the gentry.

The most powerful and fully shaped group in the middle of the 19th century was composed of the richest town capitalists, merchants, bankers, contractors and bill of exchange men i.e. of the representatives of merchant capital. That part of the bourgeoisie assembled in large city centres like Warsaw, Łódź, Cracow and Poznań met the most favourable conditions for further development in the following decades. Shares in lucrative fiscal profits, brisk contacts with foreign trade and Prussian banks, transit trade between Western Europe and the Russian Empire and finally, direct financial assistance coming from the government (that, being specially effective at the time of minister Lubecki and later during railway-building) determined the definite formation of the bourgeoisie in the Kingdom of Poland. A small absorptive power of home market in all Partitions and the hindering role of feudal relations until 1860s did not favour making quick fortunes directly in capitalist production. Hence arose the supremacy of trade over industry, the supremacy of a capitalist merchant over a factory owner, not only in under-developed Galicia but also in the most, except Silesia, industrialized region — the Kingdom of Poland. It was connected with the above mentioned supremacy of primary accumulation over capitalist one and corresponded with the stage of manufacture in Polish industry. It was only with the industrial revolution of 1850s - 1870s that the consolidation of the bourgeoisie was much quickened.

A separate group in the rising class of capitalist owners of means of production was composed of the landed aristocracy and the gentry who were turning toward the capitalist management of estates based more and more often on exploitation of hired man power. The supremacy of these strata of society was noticable first of all in Poznań Province where the proper town bourgeoisie was economically weaker and less numerous. In Galicia this proportion was decidedly to disadvantage of the trade and the handicraft whose development had been hindered by feudal survivals to a much greater extent than in other provinces. In spite of the reform of 1848 those survivals were retained there the longest.

Although the Kingdom of Poland came to the fore among all Polish provinces due to the advanced development of capitalist trade and industry and though its middle class was the strongest and the most numerous, the role of the gentry in forming the bourgeoisie was very important.

The bourgeoisie of medium wealth, much more numerous than the former one yet economically poorer, arose on the basis of far-reaching home trade

and to a smaller degree of foreign trade, being at the same time strongly rooted in local handicraft production. Very numerous in greater city centres and the only representative of that class in Poznań territory the bourgeoisie of medium wealth did not profit so much by the protective policy of the government and suffered from political repressions exercised by the partitioning powers. Feudal survivals and impediments hindered its development too. The borderline between that group of the bourgeoisie and the lower middle class which got over the feudal remnants latest of all is hard to observe. One can hardly speak of the lower middle class at the beginning of the 19th century. The contemporary small handicraft and trade had more in common with feudalism than with capitalism. Similarly, the small tenancy held by the Jews, so common in the Kingdom of Poland and Galicia, supplied the needs of the manorial estate rather than of the multitude of consumers both in towns and in countryside. The exception of the rule were Silesia and partly Pomerania and Poznań territory where the lower middle class was formed a bit earlier and together with the peasantry and the incipient working class were the only representatives of Polish people. It was only with brisk development of capitalist craft and trade, breaking with the guild system of production and turning toward manufacturing that the formation of the lower middle class was considerably quickened. One can notice however, that the relationship between the lower middle class and the feudal, disintegrating town populace as well as the relationships with the forming working class were to persist, even in large industrial and commercial centres, for a long period of time.

The incipient Polish bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat comprised many German immigrants. They settled in large numbers first in Warsaw, then, after the third partition of Poland, in various towns of Great Poland, and later, at the time of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, in Łódź region. Simultaneously a lot of Polish craftsmen came to the Kingdom of Poland from Poznań territory, Prussian and Austrian Silesia, Pomerania and even Warmia and Masuria. The majority of newcomers became proletarianized in a short time and very seldom they joined the bourgeoisie. That occurred mainly in Warsaw and in several towns in Łódź region²⁶.

Yet jumping into conclusion that at the time of the January Up-rising (1863) the process of consolidation of the Polish bourgeoisie was brought to an end would prove overhasty. The Polish bourgeoisie was too young in those days to attain any kind of unity and as a matter of fact it has never succeeded to do it. The consolidation of the bourgeoisie was most distinct in the Kingdom of Poland that being indicated by the activities of its various circles in the years 1861 - 1862.

²⁶ T. Łepkowski: *Początki klasy robotniczej Warszawy*; G. Missalowa: *Studia nad powstaniem łódzkiego...*

The situation in Galicia which remained on the lowest economical level did not allow an exiguous group of wealthy merchants and industrialists for any kind of independence. The local lower middle class differentiated in nationality and religion did not represent major social power either. Under these circumstances the dominating role in Galicia was played by the aristocracy and the nobility, the class of bureaucrats associated with the government, and the intelligentsia.

In the Prussian Partition Silesia was dominated almost exclusively by Junkers and the German bourgeoisie. Part of the Polish intelligentsia and the lower middle class could not withstand supremacy of the German capital. In Poznań territory the supremacy of the Polish gentry manifested itself in its leading role in relation to the weak local bourgeoisie of Polish origin, the intelligentsia and the rich peasantry.

The ambitions of the Polish bourgeoisie circles were manifested in the period preceding the Up-rising of 1863. That seemed to be the only expression of such endeavours in the whole history of the Polish bourgeoisie after Poland's partition. An evidence for it is provided by the Tsar's superior official J. Bossakowski in his report submitted to the Russian Minister of Finance M. Reutern in 1862. Sharing the opinions of Warsaw financial and industrial circles J. Bossakowski wrote: "A great majority of manufacturers in the Kingdom of Poland regardless of the difference of names, origin or religion would willingly bear restrictions and suffer privations in their present situation if only customs-duties between the Empire and the Kingdom of Poland were re-established. One has to admit that it is certainly an expression of patriotism due to the conviction innate among all Poles about the need of retaining autonomy of their country"²⁷. One can hardly compare, however, that situation with the position and role of the bourgeoisie in Western Europe²⁸.

The prosperity of Polish industry in the middle of the 19th century, closely connected with the transition from the phase of manufacture to that of factories, stood out most markedly in the Kingdom of Poland and Silesia. Above all the textile production (cotton) in Łódź region and so in the Dąbrowa Basin set up at the end of the century became the bases for great capitalist fortunes (Poznański, Scheibler, Krusche, Ginsberg brothers). Great fortunes were acquired by the bourgeoisie in metal and mining industry (in Warsaw: Loewenstein and Rau, in Cracow: Zieleniewski, in Warsaw and Częstochowa: Handtke, in Silesia: the Donnersmareks, Hohenlohes and von

²⁷ Gospodarka i finanse Królestwa Polskiego przed powstaniem styczniowym. Raport Józefa Bossakowskiego z 1862 r. dla ministra finansów M. Ch. Reuterna (*Economy and Finances of the Kingdom of Poland before the January Uprising. Report of Józef Bossakowski from 1862 for the Minister of Finance M. Ch. Reutern*). Ed. by R. Kołodziejczyk, Warszawa 1969.

Kramsts, in Poznań: Cegielski). Influx of foreign capital (German, French and Belgian) and simultaneously that of great local financiers-industrialists (the Kronenbergs, the Epsteins, Bloch) has been increased. Outside the borders of the Kingdom of Poland there developed the bourgeoisie of Białystok industry centre beyond the frontiers of the Kingdom. Mutual relationships between Polish and Russian bankers and industrialists were strengthened. The co-operation of capitalists was deepened within the large banking-houses founded in 1870s as well as in the first monopolies organized at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries²⁹.

After 123 years of partitions, independent Poland of 1918 provided an opportunity for the Polish bourgeoisie associated with the aristocracy and the gentry to form its own government. Independent Poland, being the fulfilment of dreams and struggles of five generations, meant a basically new phase in the development of the Polish bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie however, economically under-developed, differentiated in nationality and religion, in parts cosmopolitan and hence anti-national, lost the chance provided by independence³⁰. Dependence on the foreign capital, still deepened in the period between the wars, had deplorable repercussions on contemporary economical enterprises, among which quite a few aimed at considerable growth of some branches of Polish industry (the founding of Gdynia, Central Industrial Area (COP), railway construction). Yet the most deplorable effect for the nation resulted from the political activity of the bourgeois and landed aristocracy circles, their anti-Soviet attitude which caused isolation on the arena of international policies finally bringing about the defeat of 1939. It was at the same time the termination of the Polish bourgeoisie.

The years of the Nazi occupation brought about the extermination of a considerable part of the Polish bourgeoisie — that of the Jewish origin.

²⁸ Cf. D. Eichholtz: *Junker und Bourgeoisie vor 1848 in der Preußischen Eisenbahngeschichte*. Berlin 1962; M. Lévy-Leboyer: *Les banques européennes et l'industrialisation internationale dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1864; B. Gille: *Histoire de la Maison Rothschild*, Vol. 1, *Des origines à 1848*. Genève 1965.

²⁹ I. Pietrzak-Pawłowska: *Królestwo Polskie w początkach imperializmu 1900 - 1905* (*The Kingdom of Poland at the Beginning of Imperialism 1900 - 1905*). Warszawa 1955; Z. Pustuła: *Początki kapitału monopolistycznego w przemyśle hutniczo-metalowym Królestwa Polskiego — 1882 - 1900* (*Beginnings of Monopoly Capital in Metallurgy and Metal Industry in the Kingdom of Poland 1882 - 1900*). Warszawa 1968; also compare: J. Kuczynski: *Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Imperialismus*, Vol. 1, *Monopole und Unternehmerverbände*, Berlin 1948; В. И. Бовыкин: *Концентрация производства в тяжелой промышленности России в конце XIX века*. In: *Вестник Московского Университета*. Series 9, 1965, No. 1, pp. 67-92.

³⁰ R. Gradowski: *Polska 1918 - 1939. Niektóre zagadnienia kapitalizmu monopolistycznego* (*Poland 1918 - 1939. Some Problems of Monopoly Capitalism*). Warszawa 1959; J. Żarnowski: *Spółeczeństwo Polski międzywojennej* (*Society of Poland Between the Wars*). Warszawa 1969.

The bourgeoisie of German origin mainly in Łódź, Silesia, Great Poland and Pomerania were associated with the Third Reich even before 1939, constituting the core of the well known Fifth Column. The remaining bourgeoisie of Polish origin was economically disabled by the German Government and debarred from direct management of national economy subordinated at that time to the needs of the war machine. The Polish bourgeoisie was subjected to the Nazi policy of total extermination of Poles too. All of these factors contributed to the situation in 1944/45 when the Polish bourgeoisie re-entered the sphere of politics seriously weakened in all regards. That weakness could not be made up by the appearance of the new speculating and parasitical bourgeoisie which arose during the last years of the occupation. Under these circumstances the basic social reforms: agricultural reform and nationalization of industry put an end to the existence of the bourgeoisie as a class after about one hundred years of its development.

A retrospective view at the history of the Polish bourgeoisie reveals considerable differences in its role when compared with the bourgeoisie of main capitalist countries from Western Europe³¹. Interested in economical development it played a progressive role advancing the social and economical changes in Poland. The development of industry, railways, trade and banking and the new forms in agriculture (most widespread in the Prussian Partition) accomplished at the cost of ousting the masses of their property was eagerly propagated and organized by the Polish bourgeoisie. The flourishing of the bourgeois liberal ideology in the age of positivism succeeding the Up-rising 1863, the struggle against feudal survivals in the economical system, politics and ideology (in literature manifested by Aleksander Świętochowski, Bolesław Prus and Eliza Orzeszkowa) undoubtedly point to the progressive aspect of the movement. Yet the economical weakness of the Polish bourgeoisie, deepened by national differentiation and lack of independent country has influenced its political attitude and induced its coming to terms with the partitioning powers. The conditions in which trade and industry had to be organized did not make the bourgeoisie interested in any radical social reforms. The middle class did not feel able nor willing to play the leading role in the struggle against feudalism as it had occurred in Western Europe. Hence its irresolution and hesitancy at the time of great patriotic manifestations preceding the January Up-rising 1863; hence, instead of the open struggle for independence, the appearance of maxims like "the organic work", "the work from foundations" or the primary importance of making money. These were the years, however, of its political growth and not

³¹ On that subject compare among others: R. Pernoud: *Histoire de la bourgeoisie en France*, Vol. 1, 2, Paris 1960 - 1962; J. Lhomme: *La grande bourgeoisie au pouvoir (1840 - 1880). Essai sur L'Histoire sociale de la France*, Paris 1960; E. Beau de Loménie: *Les responsabilités des dynasties bourgeoises*, Vol. 1, 2, 3, 4. Paris 1947.

seldom of sharp struggle against the feudal reactionism and obscurantism. Beginnings of social antagonisms between the middle class and the proletariat caused the limitation of that progressiveness already at the end of the 19th century. The transition from spontaneous to organized strikes of workers connected with the development of the labour movement drove the Polish bourgeoisie to associate much closer with the squirearchy and to collaborate with the partitioning states. That was manifested in its attitude toward the revolution of 1905 - 1906 in Poland, when the tsarist troops were often used in suppressing rebellions of Polish workers (in Warsaw, Łódź or the Dąbrowa—Basin). The political activity of the Polish bourgeoisie was increased during World War I on account of the prospects for regaining independence. In independent Poland of 1918, governed by the bourgeoisie and the squirearchy there was no place for lofty ideas and bourgeois maxims. Stiff social antagonisms foretold the defeat of the privileged classes. The ideology of the Polish bourgeoisie was wholly subservient to the existing order resisting at the same time the spreading tendencies among the groups of intelligentsia associated in their political aspirations with the proletariat. The defeat of 1939 was simultaneously the defeat of the official ideology of the Polish bourgeoisie.

One fact has been still underestimated in Polish historiography namely that almost the entire process of forming the bourgeoisie class and then the development and activities during its short curriculum vitae fell on the period of invaders' oppression and lack of independent Polish state. Naturally it bore fundamental effects on the political outlook of the bourgeoisie and altered its internal structure deforming it in many aspects. An attempt at explaining the secondary consequences of these phenomena, which must have had negative effects upon the whole Polish nation, is worth undertaking. Summing up the essential traits of the bourgeoisie in Poland I would like to draw attention once more to the basic factors which influenced its development. The form of the bourgeoisie was affected by its "immaturity", lack of "longevity" and tradition, and the absence of "Rothschilds" i.e. the phenomenon of accumulation of fortunes of many generations, transferring down from father to son the control over family business matters and attitude toward the squirearchy. If we take into consideration the national and religious disintegration not to be met to such a large scale in any other countries and the domination of the Jews and the Germans among the most powerful circles of the bourgeoisie, it will be much easier to understand the reasons of its weakness. These factors had also bearings upon specific nationalist complexes of the bourgeoisie class, destroying its unity and altering its political outlook.

Translated by:
S. MAKOWIECKI