

SOME CONDITIONS AND REGULARITIES OF DEVELOPMENT
OF THE POLISH WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

The study of the history of the Polish working class movement and of Polish socialism is a field of historiography that was rarely practiced in pre-war Poland and was never, in any case, treated as a professional occupation. It has been research on the present-day social genealogy which has stood at the foundation of the development of this branch of knowledge.

It would seem that one of the most complex problems met with in this field of historiography is the group of questions relating to the reconstruction of the difficult road travelled by the Polish working class and those who represented it in the search for their own political image throughout the almost 100 years during which an organized working class movement has been in existence in Poland.¹

The political character of this movement was formed in quite specific conditions determined by: first — the time-lag in the development of domestic capitalism; second — the fact that Poland did not enjoy national independence for long decades of the existence of the working class movement, which in result dismembered this movement among the partitioning powers of Russia, Prussia and Austria; third — the necessity of taking the real aspirations of the numerically largest social strata in Poland, the peasants, into account in the social and political platforms of the working class. The importance of this problem can be seen clearly from the one fact alone, that in a country where the peasants were by far and away the largest single social group, the working class, or, to be more specific, its vanguard organized in socialist parties could not aspire to a social revolution on its own; finally, the formation of this political image was taking place when the political processes within the Polish working class movement were interdependent on events in the international movement; this stemmed from the fact that the Polish working class movement operated, as it were, at the cross roads between the powerful social-democratic movement in Germany and the dynamic workers' movement inside Russia² and also from the very significant and objective fact that the Polish

¹ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego 1864-1964 [History of the Polish Working Class Movement 1864-1964]*, vol. I-II, Warszawa 1967, edited by N. Gąsiorowska; vol. III edited by S. Kalabiński, Warszawa 1962-1969.

² T. Daniszewski, *Polska a międzynarodowy ruch robotniczy. Prawidłowości i specyfika [The Polish and the International Working Class Movement. Regularities and Attri-*

movement, during the country's partition, could not — by necessity and in its own interests — avoid what was taking place within the social movements within the partitioning countries.¹ The extraordinary significance of this is evident when one bears in mind the direct vicinity to such powerful movements of such clear-cut and divergent political characters as those in Germany and Russia, as we have mentioned previously. This mechanism correlating the processes within the Polish working class movement and the situation in the international movement is much more complicated in the post-1918 period and, what is more, Polish historiography cannot boast here of attainments of similar scope than those concerning the earlier period.

When attempting to define the features specific to the development of the Polish working class movement, one of the fundamental starting points are the social consequences of Poland's road of capitalist development never having been fully swept by either an agrarian revolution or an evolution that could have been its equivalent.

When going further back into the past, the tradition of social confrontations in Poland was not preceded by such wide-flung social upheavals of the peasants and the urban populace as Wat Taylor uprising in 14th-century England, the German peasant wars of the 16th century or the great Russian rebellions led by Riazin and Pugachov in the 17th and 18th centuries. The origins and the outcomes of the delayed capitalist social development inside Poland and the characteristic features of the Polish bourgeoisie, all were the cause, to use a mental short-cut, that the latter never made any attempt at a bourgeois, democratic revolution and that the proletariat aided by the peasants performed this for them and in spite of them;⁴ in other words it is quite impossible to separate the general and specific features of social movements initiated by the proletariat on Polish lands from the historical background of the workers social neighbourhood first of all, from the historically formed social character of the Polish peasantry — a social group in which the great majority of the Polish industrial proletariat had its roots and which had numerically dominated the Polish scene until comparatively recently.

On the other hand it would also be impossible to separate the proletariat's social struggle from the rather specific manner in which the social and political face of Poland's bourgeoisie was formed — a class on the diametrically opposite social pole.

butes], in: *Pamiętnik X Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich [Memoirs from the 10th Congress of Polish Historians]*, vol. II, Lublin 1969; A. Czubiński, *Ruch socjalistyczny w Europie wobec odbudowy państwa polskiego [The Socialist Movement in Europe and the Reconstruction of the Polish State]*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny," 1968, No. 3.

¹ *Kwestia polska a ruch socjalistyczny [The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement]*. Collection of articles by R. Luxemburg, K. Kautsky, F. Mehring, Parvus and others, with the introduction by R. Luxemburg, Kraków 1905.

⁴ S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, *Czwarte powstanie czy pierwsza rewolucja? [The Fourth Insurrection or the First Revolution?]*, Warszawa 1969; S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, *La révolution des années 1905 - 1907 dans le Royaume de Pologne*, "Annali dell'Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli," Anno IV, Milano 1962.

The feudal rulers were not forcibly deprived of authority by the new bourgeois class; it was the feudals themselves who, acting in their own interests, pushed through a transformation of production relations.⁵

The stratification of the feudal classes and the change-over from the old class division into a new one, based on the capitalist social structure — for the lack of the Polish state apparatus — was done on the foundation of the partitioning powers state apparatus, without dethroning of the ruling class of landowners.

This took place despite this class' existence now having its foundation on different capitalist economic principles — those of hired labour and a market economy.

The delayed development of capitalism on Polish territories has been the subject of much historical study over the past 20 years, the detailed appraisals carried out by Witold Kula and his school being worthy of special mention.⁶

Polish bourgeoisie, as a capitalist latecomer, from the very outset found itself in the shade of its elder brother — the landowners class. As has been often shown in Polish historical literature,⁷ the bourgeoisie never met with the landowner class in a general trial of strength nor did it fight against it on any wider front. Naturally, this should not be taken to signify that no attempts at emancipation were undertaken by Poland's middle class. Such attempts did take place, as from the close of the 18th century, with a democratic minority of the nobility actively participating.⁸ This trend can be noted in the reformatory efforts at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries and can also be found, in various forms, in all the national upheavals in 19th-century Poland; this trend can also be seen in the theory and practice of Polish positivism and finally, even in the struggle of Poland's numerically large Jewish middle class for equality of rights for Jews. In

⁵ W. Kula, *Szkice o manufakturach w Polsce XVIII wieku [Essays on Manufactures in 18th-century Poland]*, vol I, Warszawa 1956; J. Jedlicki, *Nieudana próba kapitalistycznej industrializacji [Unsuccessful Attempt at Capitalist Industrialization]*, Warszawa 1964; A. Jeziński, S. M. Zawadzki, *Dwa wieki przemysłu w Polsce. Zarys dziejów [Two Centuries of Industry in Poland. Outline History]*, Warszawa 1966.

⁶ W. Kula, *Kształtowanie się kapitalizmu w Polsce [Formation of Capitalism in Poland]*, Warszawa 1955; *Historia Polski [History of Poland]*, vol. II, part 1-3, edited by S. Kieniewicz and W. Kula, Warszawa 1958-1959; *Spoleczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego. Studia o uwarstwieniu i ruchliwości społecznej [Society of the Kingdom of Poland. Study on the Stratification and Social Mobility]*, edited by W. Kula, vol. I-II, Warszawa 1965-1966.

⁷ *Ibidem*; *Historia Polski [History of Poland]*, vol. III, part 1-2, edited by Ż. Kornałowa, I. Pietrzak-Pawlowska and W. Najdus, Warszawa 1960-1968; S. Kalabiński, *Antynarodowa polityka endecji w rewolucji 1905-1907 [Anti-national Policy of the National Democrats in the 1905-1907 Revolution]*, Warszawa 1955; R. Kołodziejczyk, *Kształtowanie się burżuazji w Królestwie Polskim, 1815-1850 [Formation of the Bourgeoisie in the Kingdom of Poland, 1815-1850]*, Warszawa 1957.

⁸ B. Leśnodorski, *Polscy jacobini [Polish Jacobins]*, Warszawa 1961; the same author, *Rozmowy z przeszłością [Discourse with the past]*, Warszawa 1967; T. Łepkowski, *Polska, narodziny nowoczesnego narodu, 1764-1870 [Poland, Birth of a Modern Nation 1764-1870]*, Warszawa 1968.

this context it should be remembered that Jews accounted for about 40 per cent of the urban population in the Kingdom of Poland in the first years of the 20th century.⁹

The search for an economic and political compromise with the landowners class, an osmosis of these two social groups, was the decisive tendency of Poland's bourgeoisie.

This tendency found its root in what has been already mentioned, that the class rule of Poland's large landowners had never been undermined even when the reigns of political rule had been forcibly taken over by the partitioning powers. Another origin of this fusion of the Polish bourgeoisie with the landowner class can be found in the Polish bourgeoisie gradually finding its political feet, becoming a part of the country's political trend — not to speak of such exceptions as Baron Kronenberg the outstanding Varsovian financier and industrialist — as late as some twenty to thirty years after the 1863 January Insurrection, that is at a time when Marxist workers' parties already existed in Poland, parties which were laying down the proletariat's own aspirations to take over political power.

The social profits which Poland's bourgeoisie could expect to reap from a democratic, bourgeois revolution were out of all proportion to the dangers inherent in this revolution — a confrontation with the people's masses, which could become a threat to bourgeois rule or, to be more precise, of class co-rule.

The Polish bourgeoisie's trend to a certain "Europeanization" of relations had economic and social relations in mind to a much smaller extent than political relations, which would give this class access to participation in governmental political decisions. The introduction of such reforms was expected, however, to come by authoritative order and not by means of pressure exerted through social movements.¹⁰

It has to be noted, in any case, that Poland's bourgeoisie never did attain any great degree of internal cohesion, even to the extent reached in Russia.

Representatives of bourgeoisie fortunes, amassed through the centuries, only very rarely appeared on her behalf, contrary to the practice in Western Europe. She found her exponents in the first-generation bourgeois, the nouveaux riches, together with representatives of the landed gentry who had located their capital in industry and the banks. What is more, Poland's bourgeoisie was a real Polish-Jewish-German mixture. Very often one could meet with well-paid plenipotentiaries of big Belgian or French capitalists who had invested their capital in Poland while being permanently resident abroad. This complex structure of national and religious relations within Poland's bourgeoisie class gave rise to a greater internal

⁹ *Historia Polski [History of Poland...]*, vol. I-III; S. Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795 - 1918 [History of Poland 1795 - 1918]*, Warszawa 1968.

¹⁰ S. Kalabiński, *Antynarodowa polityka endecji [Anti-national Policy of the National Democrats...]*; L. Trzeciakowski, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających w Wielkopolsce w erze Capriviego, 1890 - 1894 [Policy of the Polish Propertied Classes in Wielkopolska in Caprivi's Period, 1890 - 1894]*, Poznań 1960; S. Kozicki, *Historia Ligi Narodowej [History of the National League]*, London 1964.

differentiation than in other countries. There is no doubt that this had a bearing on industrial labour's course of social struggle. One need look no further than the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland, where the absence of an economically powerful Polish bourgeoisie and the fact that the class division often tallied with national division (proletariat and peasantry being Polish in almost its entirety, the bourgeoisie being almost totally German) — gave rise to sharper national antagonisms; this also was not without influence on the working class movement there.

The native bourgeoisie was much stronger in the Russian sector of partitioned Poland than in the remaining two sectors and here this nationalistic and denominational division was so clear-cut that the first serious attempts to attain internal cohesion were undertaken only following on the political and social experiences of the 1905 revolution — a cohesion which never reached any degree of permanency.

In this particular case, this lack of consolidation was of no aid to the tasks of the working class; one reason for this can be found in the fact that the partitioning powers' governments controlled the general policies in regard to the working class, including repressive policies, according to directives laid down by central administrative authorities. The policies of class repression, exercised by the partitioning powers on the Polish workers unfailingly met with the approval of Poland's bourgeoisie and landowners and were directly stimulated by them, more often than not. Satisfactory proof of this has been found during research into the archives of the partitioning powers, carried out over the the past 20 years.¹¹

The rate at which capitalist industry developed on Polish soil — in the Kingdom of Poland and in Silesia — was quite high up to 1914. As Witold Kula put it concisely, however, "the 19th century was a period of great development in conditions of rapidly increasing backwardness."¹² On Polish soil, capitalism was not able to rid itself of its specific original sins, of its economic and ideological ties with the formation that had preceded it.

The tremendous increase in production in Poland, particularly in the second half of the 19th century, rose at a slower rate than the disproportion between Poland and the developed countries of Europe.¹³

Ludwik Krzywicki (1859 - 1941), an outstanding Polish sociologist, in his studies on capitalist economic development in the 1890's, noted that the capitalist system gave birth to economic and social results which differed in the East and in the West of Europe. In West Europe capitalism gave the impetus to the total development of the economy and of social relations; in East Europe capitalism

¹¹ *Carat i klasy posiadające w walce z rewolucją 1905-1907 w Królestwie Polskim [Tsardom and the Propertied Classes in the Struggle against the 1905-1907 Revolution in the Kingdom of Poland]*, Archive material, compiled and edited by S. Kałabiński, Warszawa 1956.

¹² W. Kula, *Czynniki gospodarcze w polskim procesie dziejowym [Economic Factors in the Course of Polish History]*, "Nauka Polska," 1967, No. 6 (72).

¹³ *Ibidem*.

gave rise to a number of specific effects which were to warp this development. A reflection of this can also be seen in the character of the social conflicts.¹⁴

Up to the close of the 19th century, indeed up to the outbreak of the First World War, whole regions of the country, villages and towns, remained beyond the scope of the tempo of development which had assumed quite astounding dimensions in such urban centres as Łódź, popularly termed — the Polish Manchester, in Warsaw where machine manufacturing was concentrated or the Dąbrowa coal and metallurgical basin in Silesia. It was the direct vicinity of regions of total economic stagnation with the dynamism of a number of industrial centres, regions which had hardly been touched by the expansion of the latter and which seemed to be the exception to the rule of “connected vessels,” that was to warp the development of the economy and of social relations, the effects of which were still to be felt in the economy and in the country’s mentality as late as after World War II. The consequences of including Poland within three differing state and economic organisms, the fact that the political status of each varied to some extent and that each of the three parts of Poland had a different economic function to play within the partitioning state, gave rise to unavoidable variations in the characteristic features of the social movements within each of these sectors of partition — a conclusion that is equally valid for the peasant and working class movements. The different economic function of each sector can be seen in the part played by one of Imperial Russia’s most industrially developed regions, the Kingdom of Poland or, to be more precise, two of its ten provinces, that of Warsaw and Piotrków; Wielkopolska and Pomerania degraded to the role of Prussia’s agricultural hinterland, but rationally developed within this framework; the total social degradation of Galicia which was outside the mainstream of the Austrian economic development.¹⁵

The dual stratification regularity of the capitalist society, one effect of which is social polarization and the other, a process of national integration to an incomparably greater degree than in the previous social formation, was to be observed to its fullest extent in Polish conditions. From the moment when the first workshops were founded at the end of the 18th century¹⁶ to the creation of the industrial giants in the 1870’s and 1890’s, the factory became a mill in which an enormously diversified human element of widely varying social provenance, peasants, urban craftsmen and workmen, pauperized gentry, representatives of the intelligentsia, were absorbed and unified.¹⁷ As late as 1918 and even 25 years

¹⁴ L. Krzywicki, *Dziela [Works]*, Warszawa 1960.

¹⁵ W. Kula, *Historia gospodarcza Polski 1864-1918 [Poland’s Economic History 1864-1918]*, Warszawa 1947; H. Diamond, *Położenie gospodarcze Galicji przed wojną [Economic Situation in Galicia prior to the Outbreak of the War]*, Leipzig 1915.

¹⁶ N. Assorodobraj, *Początki klasy robotniczej [The Beginnings of the Working Class]*, Warszawa 1966; T. Lepkowski, *Początki klasy robotniczej Warszawy [The Beginnings of the Warsaw Working Class]*, Warszawa 1956.

¹⁷ *Źródła do dziejów klasy robotniczej... [Source Material for the History of the Working Class...]*, vol. I-III; N. Gąsiorowska, *Z dziejów przemysłu w Królestwie Polskim 1815-1918 [From the History of Industry in the Kingdom of Poland 1815-1918]*, Warszawa

later, the map of social conflicts, however, remained one reminiscent of strong, precapitalist, obsolete forms.

Between the close of the 19th century and 1939, social structures in Poland were integrally composed of the dominant features of the country, in which social tension was not the outcome of the conflict between the capitalists and the workers alone but also stemmed from the manner in which capital ruled the nation, in which the system operated, a system which was cramped by the shackles of its origins in the marriage with the landed aristocracy.

Those leading capitalist countries which are today living through a second industrial revolution, have in the past experienced periods of great social tension between the working class and the capitalists. Even the United States of America has gone through such periods, although no developed socialist movement, in the European sense of the word, ever existed there. This period of social tension between the War of Secession and the outbreak of the First World War has been called "the age of industrial violence" by American historians who have counterposed it with the later, more or less peaceful regulation of conflicts between labour and capital in the USA.¹⁸

Relations between labour and capital in Poland never left the phase of "industrial violence" up to the very end of the capitalist formation's existence in this country.

This was the state of affairs, despite the absence of any intentions on the part of a considerable if not predominant section of Poland's peasantry and working class to uproot the principles on which the capitalist system itself was built, in the first stadium of their struggle; the demands put forward related to the solution of social complaints which, as had been shown by other countries, could be settled even within the framework of a capitalist society.

An answer has to be found to the question of the extent to which the deformation of the process of social and economic development on Polish territories had been the outcome of the partitioning of these territories between the three powers of Prussia, Russia and Austria and of foreign rule. The starting point for any such analysis must be the problem — whether the internal confusion of the 18th century would have allowed the Polish state, ruled by the nobility, to defend itself effectively against an agrarian revolution without the class aid given by the strong partitioning powers.¹⁹

Evidently, it would be impossible to give detailed study, within the limitation of this article, of how the partitions delayed the development of certain fields of capitalist industry in Poland and accelerated the development of others, e.g. the

1965; E. Przybyszewski, *Pisma [Writings]*, Warszawa 1965; A. Woycicki, *La classe ouvrière dans la grande industrie du Royaume de Pologne*, Louvain-Paris 1909; *Spółczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego [Society of the Kingdom of Poland]*, op.cit.

¹⁸ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego... [History of the Polish Working Class Movement...]*.

¹⁹ *Historia Polski [History of Poland]*, vol. I, part 2, Warszawa 1957, vol. II, part 1, Warszawa 1958.

intensively developed textile and metal industries in the Russian sector which had their markets inside Russia,²⁰ and thereby influenced the composition and character of the Polish working class.

Should the not unfounded view be accepted that the partitioning governments defended Polish propertied classes from a democratic revolution — the conclusion to be drawn from this alone is that the partitions of Poland exerted a decisively negative influence on the development of capitalist social relations in Poland. It has also to be kept in mind that the negative influence of the partitions on social development in Poland was not limited to this aspect alone. Even accepting that other aspects of this problem avoid unambiguous description, one example of this being the intensive development of the textile and metal industries in the Russian sector which we mentioned previously, the fact remains that the partitioning of Poland did deform and complicate capitalist social development, the dismemberment of the Polish market being one expression of this.²¹ The outcome has been that the geographical economy of the country with all its disproportions which have been gradually eliminated over the past decades, and the ensuing diverging social structures in various regions of Poland, still display in all clarity, up to this very day, the effects of the deformations brought about by the partitioning of Poland and the varying functions performed by the partitioned sectors within the partitioning powers.

Not all the delays in 19th and 20th century Poland's development can be placed at the door of these powers.

There is no room for doubt that at those moments when the decision to undertake sweeping social reforms lay with the Polish propertied classes, it was evident that these classes were not ready to undertake any reform that would be a blow to their narrow concept of class interest, even at such moments when the fate of Poland as a nation was at stake. The fate of the agrarian reform in the Polish national insurrections of the 18th and 19th centuries are sufficient proof of this.²²

²⁰ E. Rose, *Wielki przemysł Królestwa Polskiego przed wojną. Przyczynki do tzw. "teorii rynków wschodnich"* [Big Industry in the Kingdom of Poland before the War. Some notes on the so-called "theory of the eastern markets"], Poznań 1918; H. Tenenbaum, *Znaczenie przemysłu włóknistego w bilansie handlowym Królestwa Polskiego* [Significance of the Textile Industry for the Trade Balance of the Kingdom of Poland], Warszawa 1913; *Bilans handlowy Królestwa Polskiego* [Trade Balance of the Kingdom of Poland], Warszawa 1916; R. Luxemburg, *Die industrielle Entwicklung Polens*, Leipzig 1898; S. Koszutski, *Rozwój ekonomiczny Królestwa Polskiego w ostatnim trzydziestoleciu (1870 - 1900)* [Economic Growth of the Kingdom of Poland during the last 300 years (1870 - 1900)], Warszawa 1905; M. Lewy, *Życie ekonomiczne Królestwa Polskiego* [Economic Activities in the Kingdom of Poland], Warszawa 1915; H. Diamand, *Położenie gospodarcze Galicji...* [Economic Situation of Galicia...].

²¹ Z. Daszyńska-Golińska, *Rozwój i samodzielność gospodarcza ziem polskich* [Development and Economic Independence of Polish Territories], Warszawa-Kraków 1915.

²² M. Meloch, *Sprawa włościańska w powstaniu listopadowym* [The Peasant Problem in the November Insurrection], Warszawa 1953; S. Kieniewicz, *Sprawa włościańska w powstaniu styczniowym* [The Peasant Problem in the January Insurrection], Wrocław 1953.

The partitions of Poland also exerted enormous influence on the character of social movements on Polish territories. National oppression which these partitions brought in their wake forced every democratic, social movement in Poland from the close of the 18th century up to 1918 to face the problem of national emancipation, although the proposed manners of solving this problem often differed widely. This problem had to be faced not only because the issue of national oppression was one of urgency and that the modern conception of democracy organically comprised this demand for national emancipation, but also because the apparatus of political, class repression which the social movements in Poland confronted was, practically speaking, the partitioning powers' apparatus of repression. This was the objective reason why the social concept of the Polish working class movement had to intersect with the idea of a struggle for national liberation.²³

The absence of independence and the aspiration to regain it, were a most significant source of a singular mobility of the Polish working class before 1918, by no means facilitated its political and class emancipation. The propertied classes and the bourgeoisie were a part of the same oppressed nation and it was much easier for them to bring the ideas of national solidarity to both the peasantry and industrial workers, ideas which hampered and delayed the social emancipation of the proletariat.²⁴

The political and social situation in which the Polish lands found themselves from the end of the 19th century, were not conducive to the bourgeoisie and, even the more so, to the landowners' search to find a solution to the most urgent social complaints; they did not, anyway, even have a distinct programme of social reforms, apart from programmes of a "defensive" nature, as it were, which were the reply to the reforms postulated by the socialist parties.²⁵

The numerically largest stratum of the nation — the peasantry, which was itself in the throes of an intensive stratification process, for objective reasons

²³ F. Tych, *Rola polskiej klasy robotniczej w walce o narodowe i społeczne wyzwolenie* [The Role of the Polish Working Class in the Struggle for National and Social Liberation], Warszawa 1966; S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, *Czwarte powstanie...* [The Fourth Insurrection...]; *Ewolucja myśli marksistowskiej w kwestii narodu i państwa* [Evolution of the Marxist Thought on the Question of Nation and State]. Minutes of a discussion meeting, in: "Z pola Walki," 1966, No. 3; *Rok 1918. Znaczenie powstania niepodległego państwa polskiego dla klasy robotniczej w Polsce* [Year 1918. The Significance of the Creation of the Independent Polish State for the Working Class in Poland]. Minutes of a discussion meeting, in: "Z Pola Walki," 1968, No. 3.

²⁴ S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, *Czwarte powstanie...* [The Fourth Insurrection...].

²⁵ S. Kalabiński, *Antynarodowa polityka endecji* [Anti-national Policy of the National Democrats]; M. Orzechowski, *Narodowa Demokracja na Górnym Śląsku (od 1918 r.)* [The National Democratic Party in Upper Silesia (up to 1918)], Wrocław 1965; J. Marczewski, *Narodowa Demokracja w Poznańskim, 1900-1914* [The National Democratic Party in the Poznań Region, 1900-1914], Warszawa 1967; Z. Łukawski, *Koło Polskie w rosyjskiej Dumie Państwowej w latach 1906-1909* [The Polish Group in the Russian Duma in the years 1906-1909], Wrocław 1967; M. Wierzchowski, *Sprawy Polski w III i IV Dumie Państwowej* [Polish Questions in the 3rd and 4th Duma], Warszawa 1966.

was not in a position to submit a social programme which would comprise all the nation's strata and would simultaneously take the objective laws of growth of a modern industrial society into consideration.²⁵

On the other hand, the platform of social reforms and social renovation proposed by the parties of the Polish proletariat, could only be implemented if it satisfied the immediate social demands of the peasantry. It was so, among other reasons, because of the fact that the workers were still a national minority. Any other programme which could not count on the support of the peasantry, the nation's largest single section, was doomed to failure.²⁷

The supplementary statement must be immediately made, however, that prior to 1918 none of the socialist parties, active within the Polish working class movement, attempted an adequate social and political analysis of Poland's peasantry, the theories on this subject within the Second International obviously being the decisive factor.²⁸ The ideals of the so-called "peasants democracy," which lay at the root of many a Polish and not only Polish aegalitarian programme of the 19th century, were rejected by the Marxist parties. Such ideals were, in any case, quite inapplicable to modern industrial societies or to societies that were entering the road of industrialization. The Utopian attempts made to save Poland from entering upon the road of industrialization, for instance the efforts of a "peasant orientated" group centred around the Warsaw weekly "Głos" which appeared in the 1880's, had already been fundamentally and convincingly criticised by Ludwik Krzywicki by the close of the 19th century and were later exploded by life itself.²⁹

It is characteristic, that in the period following on the enfranchisement of the peasantry,³⁰ the first working class programmes carried the demand to liquidate

²⁵ S. Lato, W. Stankiewicz, *Programy stronnictw ludowych. Zbiór dokumentów [Programmes of the Peasant Parties Collection of Documents]*, Warszawa 1969; S. Kowalczyk, J. Kowal, W. Stankiewicz, M. Stański, *Zarys historii polskiego ruchu ludowego [Outline History of the Polish Peasant Movement]*, vol. I: 1864 - 1918, Warszawa 1963.

²⁷ M. Koszutska (Wera Kostrzewa), *Pisma i przemówienia [Writings and Speeches]*, vol. II, Warszawa 1961; H. Malinowski, *Program i polityka rolna KPRP (1918 - 1923) [Agrarian Programme and Policy of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland, 1918 - 1923]*, Warszawa 1964; H. Słabek, *Polityka agrarna PPR [Agrarian Policy of the Polish Workers' Party]*, Warszawa 1967.

²⁸ F. Tych, *Kwestia rolna w programie SDKPiL w Lenin a kwestia agrarna w kapitalizmie i socjalizmie [Agrarian Question in the Programme of the Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania, in: Lenin and the Agrarian Question in Capitalism and in Socialism]*, Warszawa 1967; A. Łaski, *Poglądy przedrozłamowej PPS w kwestii rolnej [Opinions on the Agrarian Question in the Polish Socialist Party before the Split]*, "Z Pola Walki," 1959, No. 4.

²⁹ T. Kowalik, *O Ludwiku Krzywickim. Studium społeczno-ekonomiczne [On Ludwik Krzywicki. Socio-economic Study]*, Warszawa 1959.

³⁰ K. Groniowski, *Kwestia agrarna w Królestwie Polskim, 1871 - 1914 [Agrarian Question in the Kingdom of Poland 1871 - 1914]*, Warszawa 1966; H. Brodowska, *Ruch chłopski po uwłaszczeniu w Królestwie Polskim [The Peasant Movement in the Kingdom of Poland after the Enfranchisement, 1864 - 1904]*, Warszawa 1967.

the large rural estates, before they had been put forward by the peasant representatives. The programme of the Proletariat Party did, it is true, initially formulate such a demand in the 1880's, on principles similar to those of liquidating capitalist ownership and individual ownership of the means of production,³¹ but some 20 years later during the 1905 revolution, the programme then laid down by the social-democratic party aimed at the expropriation of the large landowners, before the stage of a socialist revolution was attained. True, it was not immediately appreciated that a division of the large rural estates among the peasants³² must ensue on the socialization process. On the contrary, such a division was judged to be a step away from the more concentrated form of production in large estates to less productive small holdings. This was why it was proposed that the expropriated large estates be handed in undivided form to farm labourers' cooperatives. Such slogans were submitted by the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) in their agrarian policies, which were under the preponderant influence of ideas existing in the German social-democratic movement on these matters.³³ The revolutionary wing of the Polish working class movement came to the conclusion, as late as the 1920's, that the demands of the peasants themselves must first be satisfied and that a programme not by them but for them, should not be forced on them.³⁴ The Polish working-class vanguard's evolution of approach to this matter was an expression of the historically often painful experience of realizing that by turning their backs on peasants' programme or by attempting to solve the agrarian question by means not approved by the majority of Poland's peasantry, the working class movement was doomed to failure in its struggle to take over the power in the country in which the industrial proletariat still constituted a minority. It can thus be seen how long and complicated were the roads on which the working class parties in Poland arrived at the drafting of a positive programme of change, at the defining of a social system comprising the entirety of inter-group relations within the nation, applicable both to the development requirements of an industrial society and to the peasant majority in the country. The way to this programme was complicated to an even greater extent by the fact that internal factors alone did not decide on the success

³¹ L. Baumgarten, *Dzieje Wielkiego Proletariatu [History of the Great Proletariat]*, Warszawa 1966; A. Molska, *Model ustroju socjalistycznego w polskiej myśli marksistowskiej lat 1878 - 1886 [The Model of a Socialist System in the Polish Marxist Thought in the years 1878 - 1886]*, Warszawa 1965.

³² *Walki chłopów Królestwa Polskiego w rewolucji 1905 - 1907 [Struggles of the Peasants of the Kingdom of Poland in the 1905 - 1907 Revolution]*. Archive material. Compiled and edited by S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, vol. I - IV, Warszawa 1958 - 1961.

³³ F. Tych, *Kwestia rolna... [Agrarian Question...]*.

³⁴ M. Koszutska, *Pisma i przemówienia [Writings and Speeches]*; H. Malinowski, *Program i polityka rolna... [Agrarian Programme and Policy of...]*; *II Zjazd Komunistycznej Partii Robotniczej Polski (1923). Protokoły obrad i uchwały [Second Congress of the Communist Workers' Party of Poland, 1923. Minutes of Sessions and Resolutions]*, prepared for publication and introduction by G. Iwański, H. Malinowski, F. Świełkowska, Warszawa 1968.

of social programmes, in the conditions existing in Poland between the end of the 19th century and 1918. The adequacy of these programmes in relation to the objective laws of the society's development was not the only plane on which this matter was to be decided; it depended not only on the support granted to these programmes by the nation's majority — but also on the state of affairs within the countries which had partitioned Poland. The enormous significance of political alliances, concluded by the socialist movement and its parties in Poland on the one hand, and the ruling classes on the other, with corresponding groups inside the partitioning powers, stemmed from this fact. The manner of solving the social question within the country depended directly on this. It was the SDKPiL among all others within the Polish working class movement, which most consistently implemented the idea of political alliances with the Russian and German proletariat and draw the most radical political conclusions from the need of such alliances.

It would be a mistake not to draw attention to the consequences of the fact that the organized working class movement in Poland came into being due to the delay in the development of capitalism on Polish soil at a time when Marxism had become relatively widespread in the working class movements of Western Europe. (The first Polish socialist organization, the "Proletariat" Party, was founded in 1882, while modern social-democratic parties came into being between 1892 and 1893).

It can thus be seen, that the Polish socialist movement did not pass through a pre-Marxist stage.³⁵ This movement's illegal status was another factor that radicalized it; legal (but relatively weak) socialist parties existed in the Austrian and Prussian sectors while in the Russian sector, where these parties were the strongest, they had been banned. A fact of extraordinary significance is that Marxism was assimilated here later than in the west, this process had taken place before the bourgeois, democratic revolution; this was of quite outstanding significance both for the course of the revolution itself when it came along in 1905, as well as for the history of the socialist movement. The sharpness of the social conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, made this democratic, bourgeois revolution a rather specific upheaval in which the motive force, the guiding power, was not the bourgeoisie as in the 18th-century revolutions in Western Europe, but the industrial proletariat. Thus the tendency existed objectively for this revolution to be transformed into a socialist revolution — a phenomenon characteristic to all "later" 20th-century democratic, bourgeois revolutions.³⁶

Another specific fact in the history of the Polish working class movement, is that political working class organizations were founded earlier than such economic

³⁵ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego [History of the Polish Working Class Movement]*, vol. I; *Pierwsze pokolenie marksistów polskich. Wybór pism i materiałów źródłowych z lat 1878 - 1886 [The First Generation of Polish Marxists. Selection of writings and source material from the years 1878 - 1886]*. Selection, introduction and annotations by A. Molska, vol. I - II, Warszawa 1962.

³⁶ S. Kalabiński, F. Tych. *Czwarte powstanie... [The Fourth Insurrection...]*.

organizations as the trade unions. As a rule, trade unions, subordinate to political parties, were formed by these parties. Actually, the working class movement in Poland did not meet with any politically independent trade union organizations before 1918.³⁷ There would seem to be a link between this and the delay in the development of capitalism on Polish territories, as well as the formation of the Polish working class movement, at a moment when socialist ideas had been widely disseminated in the West, and with the very special political situation which prevailed on the Polish territories up to 1918 as the result of foreign rule.

Finally, it is characteristic to the Polish working class movement that anarchist elements were almost totally absent in it, despite Poland's social framework being similar to those in Italy, Spain, or Russia where, as is generally known, the anarchist movement was relatively well developed. One of the leading theoreticians of anarchism, a Pole Jan Waclaw Machajski, was almost completely unknown in the Polish working class movement. After all, the first congresses of the Second International, up to the 1896 London Congress were characterized by sharp struggles between Marxists and anarchists, for influence in this body. Faint echoes of anarchist influences can be found only in certain programme statements of the numerically small "Proletariat" Party during the 1880's; in later years this phenomenon was always of an entirely marginal nature or was totally nonexistent.³⁸

The specific political conditions in which Poland existed before 1918 would seem to shed explanatory light on this fact; at a moment when a nation was deprived of independent existence, the dissatisfaction of the people was not aimed at the state as such but at foreign state rule and the manner in which that rule was wielded. This would seem to be a reflection of a wider regularity, i.e. anarchist tendencies in the working-class movement of a country under national oppression cannot find nourishment for their development, even should the country's social structure be conducive to such development.

A study of the Polish working class movement's history brings into sharp focus the generally distinguishable disproportion between the underdevelopment of capitalism on Polish territories as compared with leading European countries which had been the cradle of the modern labour movement, and the relatively well-developed socialist movement, evident here from the opening of the 20th century by the maturity of its political platform and also by the degree of the Polish workers' political activity. These relate mainly to the Polish lands included in the Russian sector of partition. A number of factors would seem to have a bearing on this state of affairs: the high social tension stemming from the specific features of Polish capitalism (Lenin in referring to such countries said that their proletariat suffered from both the development and underdevelopment of

³⁷ I. Orzechowski, A. Kochański, *Zarys dziejów ruchu zawodowego w Królestwie Polskim (1905 - 1918)* [Outline History of the Trade Union Movement in the Kingdom of Poland (1905 - 1918)], Warszawa 1964.

³⁸ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego...* [History of the Polish Working Class Movement...].

capitalism³⁹) the specific blend of social and national oppression which was to brand so clear a mark on the history of Polish political thought and, finally, the rich traditions of national-liberation struggles in Poland. Poland's geopolitical situation and Polish socialism's wide international ties also seem to have played no small part here. The Polish working class movement was situated at the cross-roads of two far from identical socialist cultures, the Western linked with the First and later the Second International, and the Eastern which found its image first in the ideology and activities of Narodnaya Volya and its ramifications and, later, in the ideology and tactics of Bolshevism. The proponents of Polish socialism were in extraordinarily close contacts with both these centres of socialist thought and were, moreover, active in the most advanced positions in both the Russian and German working class movements. These ties and this specific location at their crossroads, exerted no small influence on Polish socialism's image and fate.

The scale of this phenomenon can best be seen in the list of such names as Rosa Luxemburg, Julian Marchlewski-Karski, Feliks Dzierzhynsky, Karol Radek, Leon Jogiches-Tyszka and hundreds of Polish leaders of the October Revolution in Russia,⁴⁰ whose names were established in recent years.

It is worth of note, that the credit for the transfer of the tactical experiences of the 1905 Russian Revolution — those of the general political strike — to the Social Democratic Party of Germany and the wide-flung debate, the famous Massenstreik Debatte, which developed and lasted for a number of years, on the expediency and moment when the proletariat should take this weapon in hand — can be placed at the door of Polish Social Democrats active in the German working-class movement, Rosa Luxemburg in particular.⁴¹

From the middle of the 19th century, the industrial proletariat was the most dynamically expanding, and the most vigorous class in the Polish nation, which can be seen in the 10 per cent population increase between 1880 and 1910 in the Kingdom of Poland with a simultaneous 380 per cent growth of the working class, and in the corresponding figures of 30 and 70 per cent for the population of the Prussian sector,⁴² this fact bore directly on the dynamics of Polish working class movement. It is sufficient here to compare the period at the end of the 1870's — when the first organizational steps of the socialist movement were undertaken on Polish territory — with that of 25 years later, during the 1905 revolution,

³⁹ V. I. Lenin, *Rozwój kapitalizmu w Rosji (zakończenie)* [*The Development of Capitalism in Russia (conclusion)*], in: *Collected Works*, vol. III, Warszawa 1954, p. 610.

⁴⁰ *Księga Polaków uczestników Rewolucji Październikowej 1917-1920. Biografie* [*The Book of Poles, Participants in the Great October Revolution 1917-1920. Biographies*]. Prepared by L. Kalestyńska, A. Kochoński, W. Toporowicz and edited by A. Kochoński, Warszawa 1967.

⁴¹ R. Luxemburg, *Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften*, Hamburg 1906. Discussion on Mass Strikes at the SPD Congress in Jena in 1913 cf: *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten in Jena vom 14 bis 20 September 1913*, Berlin 1913.

⁴² *Rocznik Polski. Tablice statystyczne* [*Polish Yearbook. Statistical Tables*]. Published by E. Romer and I. Weinfeld, Kraków 1917.

to see just how great these dynamics were. At the opening of the 1880's Ludwik Waryński, the leader of the first Polish workers' organization — the "Proletariat" Party — together with a handful of his fellow-workers made the first attempt to arouse a conscious and organized working-class movement to action; within a few years the progress made was enormous, when compared with these modest beginnings, but in all, a bare few hundred persons were directly embraced by the party then, with several thousand indirectly encompassed by it. Twenty five years later, however, not thousands, not tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of workers answered the call of workers' parties during the 1905 revolution.⁴³

The fact also remains that it was the socialist movement which first awoke Polish territories from the political lethargy that had ensued on the collapse of the 1863 uprising. For over 40 years, since the collapse of the uprising no mass-scale anti-Tzarist movement existed in Poland, apart from the working class movement. It was only in 1905, following a 40-year period of calm, that other social groups followed the path of the proletariat to commence anti-Tzarist activities. The rural regions gave wide response in the stimulation of specific forms of the agrarian movement (the stepping up the peasants struggle for the right to use estate-owned fields and grazing lands, but unlike in Russia much more rarely, for the land itself, and the first strike of agricultural labourers in the history of the Kingdom of Poland). As 1905 was to show, the 5 per cent of the population which the industrial proletariat constituted, was able to carry into the struggle, in one form or another, (not all forms of action being of so decided a nature), almost all peasant groups which were numerically much larger than the working class itself.

Society, for the first time in Polish history, was able to see for itself that this 5 per cent could paralyze the normal functioning of the country — or its urban centres at least — by resorting to a form of demonstration unknown in Poland up to that period, the general strike.⁴⁴

It was evident from the essence of the working class movement's political platforms, that they had also to relate to the fate of the whole nation and not the vindication of the proletariat alone. No revolutionary group of Poland's proletariat had ever limited itself from the very beginning of their existence, even in their programmes, to the day-to-day economic struggle for an improvement in the workers' material situation; fundamental political transformations within the country were the primary target, which obviously was of nation-wide concern.⁴⁵ It is symptomatic that the economic vindication of the working class rarely dominated socialist party

⁴³ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego...* [History of the Polish Working Class Movement...], vol. I; A. Żarnowska, *Próba analizy ruchu strajkowego w Królestwie Polskim w dobie rewolucji 1905 - 1907* [A Tentative Analysis of the Strike Movement in the Kingdom of Poland at the Time of the 1905 - 1907 Revolution], "Przegląd Historyczny," 1965, No. 3.

⁴⁴ S. Kalabiński, F. Tych, *Czwarte powstanie...* [The Fourth Insurrection...].

⁴⁵ *Historia polskiego ruchu robotniczego...* [History of the Polish Working Class Movement...]; *Proletariat, pierwsza socjalno-rewolucyjna partia w Polsce (dokumenty)* [The "Prole-

propaganda in Poland before 1918 while, in West Europe of those days the problems of economic struggle in practice dominated the daily activities of social democratic parties. Political slogans were the order of the day in Poland. There was an additional factor which also had a bearing on the nature of this struggle⁴⁶ prior to 1918; even those workers' demonstrations organized on the platform of purely economic demands addressed to factory owners—in practice almost always led to clashes with the partitioning powers' government defending the class interests of the Polish bourgeoisie.⁴⁷

In itself, this state of affairs required a special union between economic demonstrations by Polish workers and political warfare, which often resulted in armed clashes with the administrative apparatus of the occupying power. Thus every workers' demonstration, whether it was organized from economic or political motives, was in essence aimed at the powers occupying Poland and thus contained elements of a national struggle.

The national question, therefore, permeated the whole Polish working class movement. The programmes of working-class political parties had never tried to avoid this question, although prior to 1918, various ways of solving it had been seen.⁴⁸ Universalist and international aims of socialism were sufficiently emphatically stressed in programmes laid out during the early period of the socialist movement's expansion in Poland, i.e. in the 1870's and 1880's, that support for Poland's struggle to regain independence for a national, Polish state was not only withheld by these parties but the necessity of this struggle was consciously denied, more than once in open polemics with the approach represented by Marx and Engels in this matter.⁴⁹ Ludwik Waryński, the leader of the first Polish workers' party "The Proletariat" put it with emphasis that "there is a nation more

tariat," *the First Social-Revolutionary Party in Poland (Documents)*, Prepared by H. Bicz (Bittner), Moskva 1934; *Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy. Materiały i dokumenty, 1893 - 1918* [*Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. Materials and Documents, 1893 - 1918*], prepared by B. Szmidi, vol. I, Moskva 1934, vol. II; 1914 - 1918, Moskva 1936; *PPS-Lewica 1906 - 1918* [*Polish Socialist Party-Left 1906 - 1918*]. Materials and documents, edition supervised by F. Tych vol. I - II, Warszawa 1961 - 1962.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Źródła do dziejów klasy robotniczej...* [*Source Material for the History of the Working Class...*].

⁴⁸ *Kwestia polska a ruch socjalistyczny...* [*The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*]: H. Jabłoński, *Polityka Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w czasie wojny 1914 - 1918* [*Policy of the Polish Socialist Party during the 1914 - 1918 War*], Warszawa 1958; A. Żarnowska, *Geneza rozłamu w Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej 1904 - 1906* [*Genesis of the Split in the Polish Socialist Party 1904 - 1906*], Warszawa 1965; F. Tych, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna-Lewica w latach wojny 1914 - 1918* [*The Polish Socialist Party-Left in the Years of the 1914 - 1918 War*], Warszawa 1960.

⁴⁹ *Marks i Engels o Polsce* [*Marx and Engels on Poland*], vol. I - II, Warszawa 1960; C. Bobińska, *Marks i Engels a sprawy polskie* [*Marx and Engels and the Polish Questions*], Warszawa 1954; *Pierwsze pokolenie marksistów...* [*The First Generation of Polish...*]; L. Baumgarten, *Dzieje Wielkiego Proletariatu...* [*History of the Great Proletariat*].

unfortunate than Poland — the proletariat.”⁵⁰ This by no means meant that the idea of the Polish nation discarding foreign rule, had been set aside. Far from it. The way to attain this was, however, seen not in a struggle to rebuild an independent Polish state but through a social revolution which, it was believed, would lead to the total disappearance of the problem of national inequality, of the oppression of one nation by another and, generally speaking, to the elimination of the state as an institution.

The early 1890's saw new events appearing here. The concept of national independence for Poland as sovereign national state made itself evident in a Polish workers' party programme for the first time — that of the Polish Socialist Party in 1892. Four years later, during the 1896 London Congress of the Second International, the political formula of “the right of nations to self-determination” was accepted, actually under the influence of the discussion on this problem being conducted within the Polish working class movement and transferred to the forum of the Second International.⁵¹ This was to become the point of departure for all later formulations which Lenin developed on this question.⁵²

This general formulation was as far as the Second International went, however. The SDKPiL party raised another aspect of the whole question differing from that of Marx and the First International which acknowledged the exceptional significance for the democratization of Europe of the struggle for Poland's independence, since this struggle split the three principal reactionary powers on the Continent, viz. Russia, Prussia and Austria.⁵³ This was the attitude which the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) constantly referred to. The SDKPiL in its discussion with the PPS indicated that the whole situation had undergone far-reaching change since Marx made his analysis in the 1860's. It made reference to the constant rise in strength of the revolutionary working class movement within the partitioning powers, which was a more real threat to the existence of the reactionary governments in those countries than only national-liberation movements. It was shown that the arrangement of class forces on Polish soil alone had changed, as the outcome of the rapid expansion of capitalism in the period following on the 1863 Insurrection. The working class was now in the vanguard of the liberation movement, but the effectivity of its liberation efforts depended closely on the pressure the proletariat in the partitioning states brought to bear on “their” governments. This is why the Polish question would have to find a solution within a different alignment of class and political forces than previously. The slogan of Poland's independence

⁵⁰ A speech by L. Waryński at a meeting in Geneva in 1880, on the 50th anniversary of the 1830 Polish November Insurrection, in: *Proletariat, pierwsza socjalno-rewolucyjna partia w Polsce [The Proletariat, the First Social-Revolutionary Party in Poland]*, p. 71.

⁵¹ B. A. Jędrzejowski — Antonio Labriola, *Correspondence 1895-1897*, “Annali dell' Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli,” vol. III, 1960.

⁵² *Lenin o Polsce i polskim ruchu robotniczym. Artykuły, przemówienia, dokumenty, listy [Lenin on Poland and on the Polish Working Class Movement. Articles, speeches, documents, letters]*, Warszawa 1954.

⁵³ *Marks i Engels o Polsce [Marx and Engels on Poland]*, op. cit.

thus had to be wielded in conjunction with taking the political consequences of these fundamental changes of Poland's map of political forces into account. To turn one's back on an alliance with the proletariat of the partitioning powers — stated SDKPiL further — must, in effect, lead to alliances with social groups, inimical to socialism. At the moment when the ideological emancipation of the working class had not progressed beyond its initial stages when it still encompassed its numerically small vanguard alone, it was seen that this could constitute a significant threat to the political independence of Poland's proletariat.⁵⁴

Polish Social Democrats and Rosa Luxemburg, their ideological leader, did not limit themselves to this argument alone. They also stated that the expansion of capitalism brings in its wake centripetal forces, welding Polish lands organically with economic organisms of the partitioning states, but of such force that any trend to regain Polish independence must be treated as a utopian struggle standing in opposition to independent processes of economic development bereft of any subjective desires.⁵⁴ It is generally known just how much attention Vladimir Lenin devoted to polemics on the national question with SDKPiL and what fundamental arguments he submitted in opposition to their attitude.⁵⁵

It seems obvious that the SDKPiL approach to the national question stemmed not only from a one-sided political, social and economic analysis which exclusively dealt with objective, centripetal tendencies brought in the wake of capitalist expansion; the roots of this can be found to an even greater extent in the fear that national slogans would eclipse the proletariat's class consciousness, with their emphasis on that which unites and not which divides the various social classes within the Polish nation. At that period, SDKPiL acknowledged the class self-determination, the social and political emancipation of the Polish proletariat to be the most important task.

It was on the screen of this controversy between the SDKPiL and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) that the wide-flung discussion on the attitude of the working class movement to the struggle for Polish independence was born, on the eve of the 1896 London Congress of the Second International. Not only leading SDKPiL and PPS ideologists and publicists were drawn into this discussion; many respected international authorities of the working class movement also participated; Karl Kautsky, Georgii Plekhanov, Antonio Labriola,⁵⁷ among other such theoreticians and leaders, taking part in this discussion in the socialist press, and giving their support, in one form or another, to the struggle for Polish independence. They, however, were the exceptions among the ideological leaders of the Second International. The tendency among the great majority of the Second International's leader-

⁵⁴ R. Luxemburg, *Kwestia narodowościowa i autonomia* [*The National Question and Autonomy*], "Przegląd Socjaldemokratyczny," 1908, No. 6, 1909 No. 14/15; *Kwestia polska a ruch socjalistyczny...* [*The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*].

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*: also R. Luxemburg, *Die Industrielle Entwicklung Polens*, op. cit.

⁵¹ *Lenin o Polsce* [*Lenin on Poland*].

⁵⁷ *Kwestia polska a ruch socjalistyczny...* [*The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*]; B. A. Jędrzejowski — Antonio Labriola, op. cit.

ship was to concur with Rosa Luxemburg's point of view on the question of the national independence of Poland and not with that represented by the PPS.⁵⁸ The reason for this can be found in the fear of nationalism infiltrating the ranks of the working class, of the dimming of that class social consciousness with a nationalist struggle, looked upon by many socialist leaders of those days as a form of bourgeois ideological sabotage; the fact that the Second International did not pay any close attention to the nationalist question is a further reason of some importance.⁵⁹ The roots of this can be found not only in an ideological standpoint that gave priority to social question ahead of the national question.

A significant and, probably decisive role would seem to have been played here by another fact, — that the Second International was dominated by parties from countries in which the national question had no direct bearing on the political life of state.

The national question assumed a totally different aspect in Tzarist Russia, so it was by no accident that national problems played so great a part in the political practice and in the political platform of the Russian Social Democratic Party which was founded a few years after the London Congress. It would be difficult, however, to treat the Russian Social Democratic Party and its Bolshevik wing, in particular, as a standard representative of the Second International, although formally and, surely, not only formally, it did constitute a section of it.

However it was, the fact remains that the main contribution of the Polish working class movement as a whole to the ideological thought of the Second International prior to 1914 was the national question, both as represented in the controversy initiated by the Polish Socialist Party and by Rosa Luxemburg.

In all other matters, the approach of the Polish working class movement, in the 1890's in particular, was a direct reflection of programmatic formulations within the Second International or, to be more precise, within the German Social Democratic Party — the leading party of the Second International.

The question thus arises, as to whether the raising of the national question and drawing it to the attention of the working class movement, as far as was then possible, was one of the major features specific to the political culture of Polish socialism. The answer, in a certain sense, is in the affirmative. These disputes reflected a problem that was both theoretical and very tangible, a problem which, as the future was to show, was not that of Polish socialism alone. The fact remains, that the very considerable space devoted by Lenin in his political writings to the national question was almost entirely developed in direct connection with the pol-

⁵⁸ F. Tych, *Introduction to correspondence between A. Labriola and B. A. Jędrzejowski*, in: A. Labriola, *Korespondencja [Correspondence]*, Warszawa 1966.

⁵⁹ G. Haupt, *La Deuxième Internationale 1889-1914. Étude critique des sources, Essai bibliographique*, Paris-La Haye 1946; *Istorija II Internacionala*, vol. I-II, Moskva 1965-1966; H. U. Wehler, *Sozialdemokratie und Nationalstaat. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Nationalitätenfrage in Deutschland von Karl Marx bis zum Ausbruch des I. Weltkrieges*, Würzburg 1962.

emics on this problem within the Polish working class movement and on the basis of facts of Poland's political reality.

In no other working class movement anywhere in the world have so many disputes taken place of so dramatic a nature, leading in consequence to internal organizational disruption of the socialist movement; these disputes, moreover, were on how the social, class tasks of the socialist movement could be linked with its general liberation, national tasks, in a manner best suited to the interests of the working class.

The internal division of the Polish working class movement into a reformist (Polish Socialist Party) and a revolutionary trend (the SDKPiL led by Rosa Luxemburg) generally coincided with the division into those who supported the struggle to rebuild an independent Polish state and those who wished to ensure the Polish nation access to national liberties, not by creating new, national bourgeois states but by an international social revolution which would entirely do away with the problem of oppression of one nation by another.

Another characteristic moment is worthy of note at this point — that of the peculiar and outstanding role played by the intelligentsia in the Polish socialist movement. A considerably greater number of the intelligentsia, relatively speaking, participated in the Polish socialist movement than in the Social Democratic Parties in Germany or Britain, for example. Naturally, prior to 1918, this fact was closely related to the general liberation mission and political dynamism of Poland's working class. The intelligentsia also felt the lack of independence very severely, on the account of their own interests; in principle, they had no access to state administrative organs in the Russian and Prussian sectors while the partitioning powers' severe restrictions on the development of Polish culture cast a deep shadow over them. Poland's intelligentsia was to prove itself extremely sensitive to the slogans of liberation struggle against the partitioning powers.⁶⁰

The political movement of the Polish working class, through its political vitality, the dynamism of its struggle and its great moral values, became a magnet attracting radical intelligentsia elements, supporting the independence struggle, even in cases when the social aims of the proletariat's struggle were alien to them. These radical and independence inclined elements of the Polish society, had unerringly found in this movement alone that force which could become a real challenge to the powers occupying Poland.⁶¹ This explains the access to the Polish socialist movement of such persons as Józef Piłsudski — a man who played a leading role in the Polish Socialist Party for many years, in the realisation that the socialist movement constituted a decisive anti-Tzarist force in the Kingdom of Poland (the Russian sector). Piłsudski was to leave the party when he had employed the party

⁶⁰ H. Kiepuska, *Inteligencja zawodowa Warszawy [Professional Intelligentsia of Warsaw]*, Warszawa 1967.

⁶¹ F. Tych, *Rola polskiej klasy robotniczej w walce... [The Role of the Polish Working Class in the Struggle...]*.

ranks to create a military organization of a scope reaching further than the party framework, in the period immediately preceding World War I.⁶²

An entirely different framework for working class movement arose on Poland regaining her independence in 1918 after over 120 years of foreign domination. The birth of the Polish Republic took place among tremendous social upheaval aroused by the Russian October Revolution and the German Revolution of November 1918.⁶³ The internal social ferment and these external circumstances were, to an indubitable extent, the cause for the shaping of a comparatively democratic system in the new-born state and, moreover, that the pressure by the working class made it possible to thrash out what was, for those times, a relatively progressive social jurisdiction.

The absence of such fundamental elements in these transformations, which had the implementation of a bourgeois, democratic programme of changes as their aim, as the elimination of large land estates, was also to bear heavily on the structural evolution of the II Polish Republic. Between 1918 and 1939, the Polish countryside remained almost as backward as it had previously been, the exception being the developed agriculture in Poznań Province and in Pomerania, with social conflicts there displaying an increasing tendency. Two-thirds of all farmsteads being of 5 hectares area and below, and 1 per cent of all farms 47.3 per cent of all arable land. This was accompanied by pressure of the rising overpopulation of Poland's rural districts, in which the "redundant," unproductive population which could find no employment in the cities, industry, trade or transport amounted to 3 millions according to one group of economists and even as high as 8 millions in the assessment of others.⁶⁴ The social structure of the Polish Republic is expressively displayed by these millions of redundant workers and the generally rising pressure of supply on the labour market.

The modest implementation of the agrarian reform law announced in 1919 and passed in 1920, did not change this structure to any notable extent; the landowning class remained a co-ruler of the country but alongside it and, indeed, in the shadow of its political culture, the Polish bourgeoisie and middle class underwent its apprenticeship in political government; this bourgeoisie in practice had received no experience in national government in Poland before World War I.

⁶² H. Jabłoński, *Polityka PPS w czasie wojny 1914-1918...* [*Policy of the Polish Socialist Party during the 1914-1918 War*]; *Galiczyjska działalność wojskowa Piłsudskiego 1906-1914. Dokumenty* [*Piłsudski's Military Activities in Galicia 1906-1914. Documents*], compiled and edited by S. Arski and J. Chudek, Warszawa 1967; A. Garlicki, *Geneza Legionów* [*Genesis of Piłsudski's Legions*], Warszawa 1964.

⁶³ H. Jabłoński, *Narodziny II Rzeczypospolitej (1918-1919)*. [*The Birth of the Second Republic — 1918-1919*], Warszawa 1963; A. Ajnenkel, *Od "Rządów ludowych" do przewrotu majowego. Zarys dziejów politycznych Polski 1918-1926* [*From "people's rule" to the May Coup. Outline of Poland Political History 1918-1926*], Warszawa 1964; J. Holzer, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna w latach 1917-1919* [*The Polish Socialist Party in the Years 1917-1919*], Warszawa 1962.

⁶⁴ M. Mieszczankowski, *Struktura agrarna Polski międzywojennej* [*Agrarian Structure in Inter-war Poland*], Warszawa 1960.

Social tensions showed no signs of lessening in urban districts, where the antagonistic class conflict was constantly evident in the strikes and other economic and political demonstrations organized by the proletariat.

Foreign capital was rife throughout many branches of industry, ignoring Polish interests.

The Republic spent over a quarter of the period of its existence under conditions of economic crisis. The contrasts in the income of various social groups which had existed on regaining independence, were no less evident towards the end of the twenty inter-war years.

The drastic restrictions placed on the Communist Party threw a shadow on Poland's system of parliamentary democracy, before the close of the first 7 years of regaining independence; the years which followed were to bring a factual departure from parliamentary democracy.

During the Second Republic, the political vindication of the revolutionary working-class movement was modified to a considerable degree by a change in situation brought about by both internal and external factors; among the latter, the principal were the victory of the October Revolution in Russia.

In the period directly following on 1917, the hope was rife among the revolutionary left for an imminent victory of a proletarian revolution in Europe; this belief which lasted almost to the mid 1920's was the framework within which the revolutionary left tried to discern the social and political future of Poland in the years immediately to follow.⁶⁵ The way in which the European scene was to develop later enforced the necessity of a revision of this standpoint in all too evident a manner.

(Translated by Leon Sz wajcer)

⁶⁵ F. T y c h, *La Gauche socialiste polonaise et la Révolution d'Octobre*, "Acta Poloniae Historica," vol. XVI, 1967.