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STUDY OF WORKERS' POLITICAL ATTITUDES BY QUANTITATIVE METHODS

In contradistinction to the supporters of all kinds of historical indeterminism, among them the advocates of the conception of alternativeness in the historical process, adherents of determinism and, above all, historical materialism could never doubt the purposiveness and justness of using quantitative methods in the description and analysis of non-economic historical processes. "Science achieves perfection," wrote K. Marx to F. Engels, in 1887, "only when it knows how to use mathematics."¹ In his unfinished booklet *Statistics and Sociology*, of January 1917, W. I. Lenin explained the role of statistics as a means to oppose "the carrying of all sorts of contraband under the flag of vague platitudes."² Yet, historiographers who had accepted the principles of class war, for a long time did not, for certain reasons, follow that trail. That is why A. Soboul, writing half a century later, found it necessary to underline that "the historian who writes from a materialistic standpoint is not satisfied with description, he also has to count. The conviction that quantitative analysis is of use only in economic questions is incorrect and noxious."³ He also emphasized the complexity and great difficulties encountered in the statistical analysis and, later, the interpretation of data on social, religious or political ideas and on fluctuations in public opinion.

¹ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Dziela [Works]*, vol. XXXV, p. 86.

² W. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*, vol. XXX, p. 349.

³ A. Sobul [Soboul], *Nekotorye voprosy statističeskogo izučeniija socialnej istorii*, "Novaja i novejšaja istorija," 1967, No. 2, pp. 33.

THE PRESENT STATE

In the 1970's, the first two statistical works of major scope on the personal composition of the earliest organisations of the Polish workers' movement⁴ have appeared in Polish historiography, as well as several smaller ones. But on the whole biographical and statistical studies have not crossed the threshold of the socio-political history in the full meaning of the term, particularly of the modern concept of the history of the worker movement.

For political parties and mass movements, first and foremost workers' movements, continue to be studied with traditional methods. Their history is reduced to the listing of the names of certain groups of leaders and to the description of congresses, party conferences, splits and interparty negotiations, as well as to a voluntaristic exegesis of the texts of resolutions or articles in party organs. This kind of method has a prevailing virtue: it allows for an easy summary of former opinions. That is why it has become the starting point for descriptive historiography. When in this type of writings, the author of the narration at last leaves conference rooms and editorial offices, he most often looks into the archives of state administration or police records — the apparatus of class oppression — in order to use the extant official documents for copying opinions — at best dictated by class interests — concerning the influence of this or that political grouping. Thus, irrespective of the facts and trivia collected, in a history of society treated in such a way, its political life is seen only vaguely and in a faraway background. On the other hand, the demand for quantitative study is often countered by hypercritical reservations as to its truth, utility or even credibility. Instead, the need is emphasized of contributions to the history of ideas and institutions and the biographies of leaders. The last demand is happily accepted by another kind of history, a feudal rather than social science. It rests on biographical and prosopographical

⁴ S. Kalabiński, *Członkowie kółek socjalistycznych, Gmin i Socjalno-Rewolucyjnej Partii "Proletariat" w świetle badań ankietowych* [*Members of Socialist Circles, Communes and Proletariat Social-Revolutionary Party in the Light of Probes*], in: *Polska klasa robotnicza*, vol. VI, 1974, pp. 7—62; F. Ty ch, *Związek Robotników Polskich 1889—1892* [*Union of Polish Workers, 1889—1892*], Warszawa 1974, pp. 308—327.

observations, and leads eventually to panegyricism and elitist conceptions ; in the final count, it lets in biologism, from where there is only a step to the less drastic variants of racialism.⁵

In contrast to both the bureaucratic and the feudal history stands a history which is a social science centred on mass phenomena and using techniques which assure objective information, narrowing to the maximum the field for any sort of manipulation. This can be achieved through maximum quantification of phenomena allowing for their correct comparison in time and space.

POSSIBILITIES

The answer to one of the main questions concerning the political history of the working class, *viz.*, what political attitudes have functioned in it, requires examining how its particular trade, territorial, national and religious groups behaved in certain socio-political systems in the widest meaning of the term, which existed in a given country and at a given historical period. Among other things, it should be established what was the attitude taken by those groups towards the problems which at a particular moment in public life had become the object of struggle. All this will allow the student to get to know the range of the influence in the worker milieu of particular political groupings. The proportions between the indices obtained for them would define the importance in that class of the various socio-political trends, and consequently, the role played by them in the shaping of the consciousness of the proletariat.

In this kind of studies it is possible theoretically, and it is, I think, justified methodologically, to base them on various figures, e.g. the number of members of political parties operating in worker milieus (including non-worker parties) and various associations influenced by them, chiefly trade organisations, or the participation of workers in mass events (meetings, manifestations, strikes, etc.) organised by certain political formations

⁵ The author has presented the whole complex of these problems in his paper *O historię ruchu robotniczego jako naukę społeczną* [*Treatment of the History of the Workers Movement as a Social Science*], read at the 11th General Congress of Polish Historians in Toruń, September 1974 (not printed).

and associations connected with them. Another pointer to the ratio of forces could be sought in the figures showing the popularity of political newspapers of different persuasions. Leaving aside the fundamental possibility of collecting this kind of credible information, it is easy to see that it would concern circles not only narrower than the class under investigation but also not quite representative, i.e. its active group. It would be inadmissible to apply the pattern of political forces existing in it to the entire class.

That is why the answer to our main question should be sought, first and foremost, in the results of elections to two kinds of representative institutions. First, there are the elections in which all the adult inhabitants, with very few exceptions, have votes. Such were the elections to the lower house of parliament (*Sejm*) in 1919, 1922, 1928 and 1930, to the upper house (Senate) in 1922, 1928 and 1930, and to the one-house regional parliament of Upper Silesia, the most industrialised part of Poland, in 1922 and twice in 1930. The elections to municipal councils were also universal. But they never took place at the same time in all the localities, most of them were carried out early in 1919, 1927, 1934 and at the turn of 1938. Quite insignificant for the knowledge of the attitudes of the working class were the elections to the bodies of the peasant territorial self-government.

Secondly, there are the elections to public bodies which represent certain groups of population only. The earliest of such elections were, though limited to just a few areas, the elections to the Councils of Workers' Delegates at the close of 1918 and the first months of 1919. Of nation-wide range were the elections to the self-government bodies of the national health service councils. They took place in various parts of the country in different years and the participation in them—in different electoral groups—was limited by law to people employed as manual or white-collar workers. The results of those elections are less interesting because certain trade groups were deprived of the right to vote, e.g. those employed on the railways, state administration and the self-government of many cities, including Warsaw, that is groups the least influenced by fluctuations on the labour market. Also in this category are elections, provided for by law, to bodies

representing the employees in particular work places : to works' councils in all the medium and large enterprises in Upper Silesia and to the analogous institutions in some branches of employment (mining, metallurgy and tobacco industry) in some other areas. For getting information about the political attitudes of the Jewish population, of limited significance are the results of voting to councils of Jewish religious communities. The electoral statute concerning them limited to a high degree the theoretically universal suffrage of all men of Jewish faith.

Those two types of elections were in pre-war Poland a sort of universal questionnaire on the subject of political attitudes covering all the people entitled to vote in a particular election. The very extent to which they went to the polls (attendance) expressed their attitude towards public life, including their belief in the effectiveness, restricted though it might be, of their ballot papers and thus in the functioning of the mechanism of the bourgeois representative democracy. In this way, elections became automatically also a review of the forces and a confrontation of the rival political groupings. So whenever the electoral statute rejected the principle of free entering of lists of candidates (parliamentary elections in 1935 and 1938), the voting would lose this character.

Among the various elections those prior to 1935 showed the broadest confrontation of political forces operating in society, including the working class. For contrary to what happened in the case of elections to the health service councils or trade union membership, they were attended by the unemployed adult members of the working class, first and foremost, non-working women who mostly did not belong to any political organisations but were fairly numerous. Moreover, because of their very nature, those elections were less dependent on local features and the personality of particular candidates. They were the only elections to take place simultaneously throughout the country and this makes it possible to perceive the nature of the balance of forces in various parts of the country at the same time.

A general methodological directive stems from all this : up to and including 1930 the study should concentrate on the results of voting to both houses of parliament, with a preference for the

lower house. Besides the general reasons also practical considerations prompt such a course. For it is only for those elections that we have a full set of results on a country-wide scale. In the case of other elections, the records are either dispersed or even they do not exist for many localities and areas, or are only fragmentary. The amendments to the electoral statute passed in 1935, compels students of the question to fall back on the results of the other elections when they want to analyse the following years. In conjunction with the fact that no more elections were carried out to the self-government of sickness insurance after the end of 1928, this makes the reliance on less representative figures unavoidable. And this is the reason why the last five years before the outbreak of World War II offer less information about the matters of interest to us.

ELECTORAL STATISTICS AS FUNDAMENTAL SOURCE

The charge that electoral statistics do not adequately reflect the mood of the electorate is the most important argument against their use in studying the political attitudes and behaviour in the period under investigation. These reservations flow, above all, from the popular opinion about the "rigging of statistics" by the rulers of pre-war Poland, particularly the electoral statistics, and about the allegedly common practice of "miracles over the ballot-box" on the part of the authorities. Yet the credibility of electoral statistics has not, so far, been seriously undermined. For no concrete facts have been revealed which would convincingly prove that the official results of voting in a given area have differed from the number of votes obtained by particular lists of candidates. Before the May 1926 *coup d'état*, that is while the multiparty system was fully operational, there was no government political centre which could exercise pressure on the electoral commissions and force them to rig the results in its favour. In the following years such possibilities did emerge gradually and only in some parts of the country, mostly outside large towns but the governments did not take advantage of them. They used more primitive techniques: they simply declared invalid some lists of their political opponents. A student can determine, at least to

some extent, the impact of such an operation on the result of the poll.

The arguments used by the opponents of the study of electoral results also appeal to a deep kind of scepticism and point to the pressures on the voter's attitude, unavoidable in a class society, to a set of factors which operate in favour of some groupings (first and foremost, the bourgeois ones) and against other (chiefly revolutionary). It is quite right to assert that although the voter was formally under no restrictions at the moment of putting his ballot in the box, yet his electoral decision was influenced by the circumstance that the propaganda and agitation in favour of particular lists of candidates and the political groupings backing them reached him with unequal force. This depended mostly on their financial, personnel and organisational positions and their propaganda possibilities. A *sui generis* moral terror, besides other circumstances, paralysed the overt propaganda of certain ideas. This inequality of openings, flowing from the class structure of society, the general social and political situation in that period and the concrete point in history, was one of the factors shaping the public opinion, one of the elements of the socio-political reality of the moment.

The voter, also the proletarian voter, was most often an individual not fully rational in the sense that he did not fully and from various angles perceive the political alternatives facing him, did not see all the consequences of his own electoral behaviour and was not sufficiently informed about the arcana of political life ; yet, he reacted, in his own way, rationally towards the political situation, as he saw it in practical experience filtered through the prism of his historically shaped set of own ideas and notions. That is why the results of voting—after some corrections have been made, in connection, e.g., with the invaliding of lists of some parties or the boycott of elections proclaimed by them—should be regarded as a fairly credible gauge of opinions and yardstick of the magnitude of the influence. exercised by particular political trends. Even ideologues and theoreticians of the revolutionary wing of the labour movement have admitted this. The electoral campaign, wrote W. I. Lenin, “provides *objective* material concerning the ideas and moods and so the interests of various *classes*

of society. In this case, elections to a representative institution can be compared with a population census: the elections provide material for political statistics. Naturally, there are good statistics (when there is universal, etc., suffrage) and there are bad ones (elections to our, excuse the word, parliament); naturally, one must learn to criticise and critically use these statistics like any other. Finally, those statistics must be studied in connection with all the social statistics in general, and then the statistics of strikes, for instance, may often turn out, for people not deterred by parliamentary cretinism, a hundred times more important and deeper-going than the electoral statistics. But despite all these reservations the fact remains that elections provide objective material. The checking of the subjective wishes, moods and ideas on the basis of voting results of *masses* of people belonging to various classes should always be of value to the politician worthy of that name in any serious meaning of the term. In practice, the party struggles in respect of the constituents and the reckoning of the results of those struggles always provide material with which one can *check* whether we understand correctly the balance of forces in the country and the significance of these or those 'slogans'.⁶ Speaking of the results of the 1922 elections in Poland, despite the fact that the canvassing for the communist list met with many difficulties including police harassment, the principal leader of the Communist Party in Poland said that at the time "the voting figures reflected the class and national relations at their back."⁷

RESEARCH PROCEEDINGS

A historian who studies the behaviour of the working class seeks an answer to two fundamental questions: first, who, what trade groups or other elements of that class voted for this or that list of candidates; secondly, why they voted for it. The analysis, region-wise, of the absolute and relative numbers of votes which went to the lists of each of the worker parties in parliamentary

⁶ V. I. Lenin, *Itogi vyborov*, in: *idem*, *Polnoe sobranie sočinenij*, vol. XXII, pp. 331—322. The originals's italics.

⁷ A. Warski, *Ziemia dla chłopów* [*Land for the Peasants*], "Nowy Przegląd," 1923, No. 8 (re-issue), Warszawa 1958, p. 9.

or municipal council elections does not provide an answer to the first question. Above all, it helps determine the scope of influence of the given party in general and this does not always tally with its range inside the working class.

The secrecy of voting, the fundamental principle of all the elections under study, prevent a straight answer to the first question on the basis of statistical material. Because of the organisation of the elections (voting in the district of residence) it is also impossible to answer the more modest question of the numbers of the working class participating in the polls (attendance). But the fact that electoral attitudes and the relations between them and the social and national composition of the electorate as well as its territorial distribution exhibit the features of mass phenomena and processes, entitles us to apply the methods of statistical analysis to the electoral results. To this purpose we divide the area under study into smaller territorial units for which we have both information about their social and national structure and the polling results. With the methods of statistical analysis we can then find out whether and to what extent there exists, on the whole area, a correlation between the constituents' class, trade or national affiliations and their attendance and the results of voting for particular lists. But the establishment of correlations, which would not be commonplace, requires that the group of territorial units covered by the study should have some common features, including the imponderable qualitative ones, while other analysed features should appear in all or nearly all of them but in varying degrees.

That is why the study of the correlations is useful when carried out not on the scale of the whole country but a few large regions (themselves divided into urban and rural districts). In carrying out such a regionalisation we took into account the different traditions of political life prevailing in each of the territories as well as, and to a certain extent, the party political divisions depending on the country which the area was part of prior to 1918, and the considerable differences in relations between various nationalities. The application of such criteria makes it possible to isolate the following regions in pre-war Poland: central Poland (the former Polish Kingdom together with the former Białystok district,

western Galicia with Cieszyn Silesia, eastern Galicia, western Poland (former Prussian occupation), Upper Silesia and the regions east and north-east of the River Bug. In view of the low degree of precision in the indices of the social composition of voters (the figures apply to the whole of the population of a given territorial unit, not just its electorate) and the poor accuracy of the data characterising the nationality composition, the best of the various methods of correlation is the coefficient of the order correlation. In some cases it is necessary to use also other kinds of statistical gauges.

The 1921 and 1931 censuses provide the foundation for determining both the national and social composition of the population on the level of those smaller territorial regions (districts) which are the basis of correlation computations. In many cases other statistical materials supplement and add precision to census figures, as well as monographs which describe particular class structures in some areas at various times and in various aspects. Both these sources, however, require a transposition of the trade divisions of the population used in them into the categories of class divisions. It is only after such statistical operations have been carried out that a correlation of the indices of the population composition with the electoral indices becomes possible.

The index of order correlation between the percentage of workers and voting attendance indicates the relative degree of worker attendance that is higher or lower in comparison with the attendance of non-worker classes. In this form it can be used only for regions uniform or nearly uniform in respect of nationality. In regions with mixed nationalities it may lead to completely erroneous conclusions. There, the joint attendance of workers of two nationalities sometimes corresponds fairly closely to the attendance of the other constituents while within each national groups the situation turns out to be the opposite. Thus, in cases where the social correlations cross the nationality ones it is necessary to calculate the index separately for each nationality group within the working class. In practice this is achieved mostly when it is possible to establish, at least approximately, the attendance of each of the two main nationality groups in a given region, that is where no two-nationality lists have been submitted or

they have polled an insignificant number of votes. Once this is established, it is possible to ascertain the voting as well as, indirectly, the political activeness of entire nationality groups. In turn, the index calculated on the basis of the percentage of workers and the percentage of votes in favour of a certain electoral list determines the degree of its relationship with the worker electorate. Analogous indices calculated in respect of particular worker trade groups may make more precise the electoral support for a given list. Sometimes a fresh light is thrown by the correlation between the worker electorate and the joint number of votes for all the worker lists or some other correlations.

All this kind of data as well as the number of votes in favour of worker lists do not constitute a sufficient basis for determining the balance of the political forces operating in the working class. Neither do they correspond to the easily calculated ratio of votes polled by the lists of particular worker parties for the latter used to canvass also non-worker voters—with varying success—while part of the workers' electorate voted in favour of non-worker lists. Yet, it is possible to reconstruct the general outline of the balance of political forces in the major part of the working class that is the workers in large proletarian agglomerations. Where the worker population constituted a considerable percentage of the entire population, the combination of various data creates the foundations for estimating the workers' attendance. On the basis of such an index and the percentage of workers in the electorate of the given region it is hypothetically easy to determine the number of workers who took part in the elections. Having estimated the percentage of non-worker votes among the total in a given year polled in favour of each of the worker lists, it will be possible to conclude how the workers did vote. The realities of the time allow us to surmise that the working population in towns voted almost exclusively for the Polish worker lists. Their backing by the Polish petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia was, up to the mid-30s anyway, so insignificant that it can be eliminated from our study without risking any great error. But probably only four-fifths of the electorate of the Jewish worker lists was composed of workers. Simple arithmetical calculations made on the basis of the above principles make it possible to

determine the number of workers who supported non-worker lists. The pattern of the balance of forces thus obtained only approximates the true picture. The errors consequent on the application of several kinds of estimates may possibly cancel one another to some extent.

In this kind of estimates the investigator must take into account the situations where the list of a grouping has not been admitted in some areas (e.g. it has been invalidated) or where the political grouping has declared the boycott of the election. The bearing of such circumstances on the result of voting may to some extent be determined. To this purpose the attendance in a given constituency with the invalidated list is compared with a similar index in the same kind of previous elections when the list did take part in them, and with the attendance in constituencies with a similar social composition of the electorate, which in other cases showed approximately the same attendance. Sometimes, part of the supporters of the invalidated list ostentatiously voted in its favour. This would leave a trace in the electoral statistics in the form of a relatively high number of invalidated votes. Their percentage—in respect of the total number of voters—would be then several times higher. In the case where two or more lists have been invalidated, the study becomes much more complicated.

Yet the balance of electoral forces is not identical with the balance of political forces, even at the same time in a given milieu. For the electoral confrontation was not always complete, that is sometimes not all the political groupings operating in a certain region took part independently in the elections. In such a case, not only the supporter but also the member of the political party which did not take part in the elections had to decide about his own electoral behaviour that is whether he was going to vote at all. If he decided to do so, then he had to choose the list for which he was going to vote ; in such a case he would probably support the political grouping ideologically the nearest to his own ideas. Moreover, a number of voters did not identify themselves with the entire political programme of a political party but more often sympathised with one of the broad political trends, e.g. socialist or solidarist. Such a voter, like some of the supporters of a political party, took into account the circumstance that by voting in favour

of a list closest to him but which had no chances for winning a seat, he would only make a political gesture and perhaps facilitate the electoral victory of his most hated opponents. So he would be guided by what might be called small political realism and voted in favour of a grouping less close to him but superior to the one nearest to him in that there was a probability of its winning a seat. So such a supporter of the communist movement would vote in some cases for a socialist list, the follower of Christian-democrats for a nationalistic one, etc. The same voter could vote in parliamentary elections in which the number of seats in the constituency was small, in favour of one list of a political party, and on the following day, and without changing his ideas, vote in municipal or National Health Service council elections for another, closer to his ideas. For in the latter case there were many more seats to be divided between the parties (elections were proportional), so a vote in favour of a weaker list may not have been wasted.

This sort of behaviour should be taken into account when the results of a concrete election are under study. So in every case one must establish which political party's supporters or sympathizers may have voted in favour of another list, what was that list and how has such a switch affected the polls. Here the results of the next nearest election may provide a pointer but it must be applied very carefully. Even the results of the very next elections cannot be transposed fully onto other elections, for instance municipal onto parliamentary, for the voters, as said before, did not always vote for the same motives. Moreover, in municipal elections they were swayed by personal likings while in the parliamentary ones by political considerations.

All these moments, beginning with the "electoral calculation" indicate a broader question of electoral studies: the materials of electoral statistics combined with the figures of the census cannot answer the second of the two fundamental questions posed by electoral investigations: why did people vote for this or that list or did not vote at all. For the quantitative analysis establishes the existence of a correlation between the phenomena but is unable to determine the causality between the quantitative sequ-

ence and the action of the factors determining them. For this one must go to the writings and materials containing the essential information about the period in history when the given electoral campaign was conducted, and to writings describing interparty relations, electoral agreements, the resignation of this or that grouping from its own list of candidates in some constituencies and the directives issued by them to their supporters indicating which list they should vote for. Here, the basic source of information is provided by the materials produced during the electoral campaign, the most important being propaganda materials and the political press, which are of prime significance when recreating the atmosphere of a given political confrontation.

Even the most correct and penetrating analysis of some concrete poll is, in the nature of things, static. For it tells about the attitudes and behaviour of the electorate at the moment of voting and about the circumstances which may have influenced the results immediately prior to the elections. But attitudes undergo changes also in between the elections under the impact of various factors. When the period between the elections is long, the direction in which the moods evolve may change even twice, if not more, and will not be reflected in the polling results. That is why the observation of the changes occurring in the attitudes and behaviour of the working class requires that the results of a particular voting be treated not as a fact in itself but in the context of time and space, as part of a long-term process of the evolution of attitudes. This means that it is necessary to supplement the static analyses with dynamic ones which would cover bigger periods. The various indices obtained in the former would constitute material for the latter kind of analysis.

The perception of the transformations occurring in the inter-election periods is served, in turn, by other figures such as statistics concerning the organisation (members) of the trade union movement, strikes, collective agreements, etc. Of great help is the analysis of the territorial distribution and members of trade organisations connected with certain political trends, carried out on the basis of a cross-section of the particular labour branches. It is only those two groups of quantity materials—electoral

statistics and the statistics of various aspects of mass movements—that will provide a basis for an insight into the complexity of socio-psychological and socio-political processes occurring in the depths of the working-class consciousness and transforming that class's mentality and ideological structure, thus altering its relationship with and disposition towards the fundamental questions of public life including matters concerning the social system.

INITIAL RESULTS

The electoral studies carried out by the author of this article, though not always full, have covered several distinct regions: Warsaw, Upper Silesia and Warsaw voivodship. Various reasons have prompted such a choice.⁸ The relatively most detailed study, covering all types of elections, was that of Warsaw, the headquarters of the four state central authorities, party headquarters and one of the largest in the country worker concentrations including big industry proletariat. Here also a considerable number of papers and periodicals were published. Hence the degree of political awareness was probably higher in that city than elsewhere. Because of its being the capital and the presence there of many foreign diplomats and correspondents, the elections took place in an atmosphere of greater freedom and fairness than elsewhere in the country. The basic indices obtained for that area have been compared with similar ones for Łódź and the Dąbrowa

⁸ L. Hass, *Wybory warszawskie 1918—1926* [Elections in Warsaw, 1918—1926], Warszawa 1972; idem, *Postawy polityczne klasy robotniczej międzywojennej Warszawy w świetle wyników wyborczych* [Political Attitudes of the Working Class in Warsaw between the two World Wars in the Light of Electoral Results], in: *Polska klasa robotnicza*, vol. V, Warszawa 1973, pp. 279—317; idem, *Postawy polityczne górników i robotników wielkoprzemysłowych na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1928—1934* [Political Attitudes of Miners and Big-Industry Workers in Upper Silesia in 1928—1934], "Z pola walki," 1974, No. 1, pp. 145—183; idem, *Wpływy ugrupowań politycznych wśród ludności woj. warszawskiego w latach 1919—1922* [Impact of Political Groupings on the Population of Warsaw Voivodship in 1919—1922], "Rocznik Mazowiecki," vol. IV, 1972, pp. 93—155; idem, *Wpływy ugrupowań politycznych wśród ludności woj. warszawskiego w drugiej połowie lat dwudziestych* [Impact of Political Groupings on the Population of Warsaw Voivodship in the Second Half of the Twenties], *ibidem*, vol. V, 1974, pp. 299—339, vol. VI, 1976, pp. 147—169.

Basin, two other big worker centres with similar political traditions as Warsaw's. For all three had been until 1914/15 within the boundaries of the Russian state. Upper Silesia was different ; it was a centre of big industry, a part of Germany until the Treaty of Versailles came into force. Here, because of the frequent electoral coalitions of workers' with non-workers' parties in parliamentary elections, the study has been based on the results of voting in elections for works councils. Finally, Warsaw voivodship, with its varied economic pattern, has provided information about the behaviour of industrial workers in elections both in areas oriented towards Warsaw and in townships lying in agricultural regions, and also about agricultural labourers, chiefly on big landed estates. Together with the figures about the development of trade unions⁹ and some still unpublished results of electoral investigations, all these data make possible a tentative formulation of certain observations and regularities concerning the political attitudes and behaviour of the working class in pre-war Poland, especially in the first decade after World War I.

The elections to single-house Legislative Sejm (January 29, 1919), the first national general elections, took place at a time when the country did not yet begin the process of healing the war wounds, when the question of the social system to be adopted by the newly created state had not yet—at least the electorate did not think so—been solved, while the territory of the country was still an open question, a matter for trials of military forces and diplomatic bargaining. It was the voters who were to indicate the means of solving all these problems. Polling itself took place only where the authority of the Polish state was truly acknowledged : in central Poland (without Białystok and the adjoining regions) and western Galicia (without Cieszyn Silesia).

The urban population attended the elections in lesser strength than the peasants so that less active was the electorate in which more workers voted. In the Warsaw voivodship, which did not

⁹ L. Hass, *Układ sił i zasięg oddziaływania ruchu zawodowego wśród klasy robotniczej w latach Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [*The Balance of Forces and the Range of Impact of the Trade-Union Movement in the Working Class in the Years of the Second Republic*], in: *Polska klasa robotnicza*, vol. V, pp. 139—222.

include the city of Warsaw, where in 1921 workers accounted for nearly 48 per cent of the urban population and some 32 per cent of the rural population (farm labourers—25 per cent),¹⁰ the difference in attendance between town and country amounted to 7.5 points (attendance : 72.1 per cent and 79.0 per cent), in five similar tracts of central Poland with the highest percentage of workers (excluding Warsaw and Łódź) the difference amounted to 6.9 points (attendance : 72.1 per cent and 79.0 per cent), in five similar districts in western Galicia (without Cracow) as much as 18.8 points (63.5 and 82.3 per cent). In towns and other major worker concentrations the attendance of the proletarian groups was lower than that of other milieux. In Warsaw the former accounted for less than 64 per cent, in the Dąbrowa Basin for some 56 per cent, while the latter for 73 and 84 per cent respectively. As concerns the worker indices, the boycott of elections proclaimed by the Communist Party and by some Jewish socialist parties (only in some regions) must be taken into account. In result, the absence from the ballot box of some of the workers did not express their political indifference which in Warsaw probably affected no more than $\frac{1}{25}$ th of them, in the Dąbrowa Basin—one-fifth. The real electoral activeness of workers (attendance+boycott) would in the first case account for some five points less than that of the rest of the population (mainly the propertied classes), in the other for some 8 points. But in Warsaw the difference was in fact much bigger though less visible for the divergences in the electoral activeness of the Polish and Jewish populations (of which more later).

The lower attendance of the proletariat, characteristic of the entire country, was conditioned by the socio-economic and partly even by the demographic situation. The war had broken down the working class more than other social groups, it unhinged its demographic structure; because of enrolment into the army, evacuation deep into Russia of factories together with their workers and the forced departures for work in Germany, it was dominated by women and old men. Unemployment was rife and

¹⁰ Census of September 1921; in 1919, the percentage of the workers was lower.

caused that some of the workers returned to their villages for some time and did not feel they were objectively important for the society. Any major organisational movement, first and foremost the development of trade organisations was only beginning. That is why a considerable part of the working class became politically indifferent and did not vote.

The level of workers' attendance was lowered still further by the little interest in elections evinced by Jewish workers (in central Poland they accounted for some one-fifth of the urban proletariat). Although less affected by the demographic effects of the war they shared with the rest of the Jewish population a feeling of uncertainty as to their fate in the new balance of political forces. As a small group on the national scale and territorially dispersed they did not and could not see any possibility of electing a number of deputies sufficient for achieving an improvement of their lot through parliament, while the new wave of nationalistic public feelings barred the way to an electoral cooperation between Polish and Jewish proletarians. That is why in Warsaw the attendance of Polish workers amounted to 70 per cent while of the Jewish to 45 per cent. Should the maximum estimate of the number of workers boycotting the elections be applied, the interest in elections would rise to 72 and 56 per cent respectively, while in non-worker classes it amounted to 81 and 62 per cent. In Łódź the difference between the Polish and the Jewish workers' attendance equalled at least nine points.¹¹ In smaller worker concentrations the situation was similar.

The same circumstances which determined the low attendance of the workers were also the cause of the weakness of the worker left in that milieu (both the moderate and radical wings). In Warsaw 38 per cent of the workers voted for it (42 per cent if one takes the boycotters into account), in the Dąbrowa Basin 57 per cent (79 per cent counting the boycotters). The boycott proclaimed by the communists and others turned out, as they themselves soon admitted, a failure. Only in the Basin did it

¹¹ In the Polish districts where workers predominated the attendance amounted to 78.7 per cent, in similar Jewish districts—to 70.0 per cent. In districts with non-worker population predominating the attendance was 81.6 and 75.2 respectively.

secure a wider measure of support—some one-fourth of the worker electorate. A considerable number of sympathisers of the communist movement did not boycott the election and voted in favour of the list of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Despite their votes, the list collected only 501,100 votes country-wise that is 10.4 per cent of valid votes. Only 55,200 persons or 1.2 per cent voted for the Jewish socialists.

The success of the boycott and the particularly high percentage of votes in favour of the worker left in the mining and metallurgy area of the Dąbrowa Basin were an understandable exception on the national scale. For here the workers even during the war had worked in industries indispensable to the occupiers (coal mining and metallurgy) and had at least partly formed political and trade organisations on a scale larger than elsewhere.

Thus the first post-war elections which were also the first in the reborn Polish state revealed that the high activeness of the workers' vanguard at the time which had appointed Councils of Workers' Delegates in at least 100 localities in central Poland (the councils to be the nucleus of proletarian power) did not meet with response from the broad masses of the workers. Then the fact that out of at least several thousand workers voting for non-socialist lists only 67,300 supported the National Union of Workers, the only non-socialist party with a programme for the workers, indicated that the feeling of class separatedness was accompanied by an inclination towards socialist ideals. Those who voted for the lists of non-socialist groupings were prompted rather by their faith in the authority of politicians of the propertied classes (they simply voted for those with a "better standing"), than by the conviction that they are supporting a grouping which would defend their workers' interests.

The years 1919—1922 were a period of far-reaching quantitative, structural and psychological changes within the working class. Its numbers increased both in result of the return of its members from evacuation, forced labour and POW camps, and of the new territories becoming part of the state. The incorporation of Upper Silesia definitely strengthened its core of miners and metallurgical workers. With the lands east and north east of the river Bug and eastern Galicia came groups of mostly low-

skilled Ukrainian and Byelorussian workers. The proletariat of large industrial centres was also strengthened by emigrants from villages and townships, vigorous people freshly released from the army who were attracted to major towns. In result, the number of men, mostly young, increased both in the working class and its electorate.¹² The opening of industrial establishments enlarged the domestic market and increased employment, outside industry as well. Unemployment fell dramatically. The tendency to level down pay to the disadvantage of the higher paid trade groups and antagonism in respect of the petty bourgeois profiteers who got rich from inflational exploitation constituted additional factors integrating the proletariat.

These processes improved the financial situation of the workers and they recovered their sense of social importance. All this contributed to an increase of people organised in trade unions. Since 1919 trade unions of farm labourers began to develop grouping only part of them i.e. those who worked on large landed estates. As the increased activeness of politically conscious proletarian milieu was the source of the rapid development of the class (socialist and communist) part of the trade union movement, its gradual decline since the autumn of 1919 caused first a slight then a swiftly increasing shrinking of that part. This was accompanied by a switch of the sympathies of the trade unionists from the revolutionary to the reformistic trend. But the incentives which stimulated the vanguard and groups close to it reached the politically less committed or even passive masses of workers with a delay. That is why fresh groups joined the rightist trade unions (in central Poland and western Galicia mainly the Christian-social organisations) even when the outflow from the class unions had already begun. By the end of 1919 these unions grouped the absolute majority (53.7 per cent) of the 879,800 members of trade unions operating among workers outside agriculture; two years later, they accounted for only a relative majority (45.6 per cent)

¹² In 1922, persons of the 21—30 age groups accounted in Warsaw for 36.3 per cent, in Łódź—33.6 per cent, in the towns of the six "worker" districts of central Poland—33.0 per cent, in other parts of central Poland only 30.3 per cent.

of the 1,011,500 trade unionists outside agriculture, and in 1923 for barely one-third (33.9 per cent) of the total of 917,400.

It is in this changed situation that the proletariat of the Polish state faced the next parliamentary elections. They took place on November 5 and 12, 1922, throughout the Polish territory whose frontiers had been meantime established by international agreements. There were separate elections for each house of parliament. In the Warsaw voivodship the difference between the attendance in town and in the country was smaller, as compared with January 1919, and dropped from 7.5 to 3.9 points in favour of the rural attendance. In six "worker" districts in central Poland the change was the most striking: the difference of 6.1 points in favour of the villages of 1919 became 6.1 points in favour of the towns, while in the similar five districts in western Galicia the difference dropped from 18.8 to 4.3 points in favour of the countryside.¹⁸ The results obtained in Warsaw reveal the social content of those changes. Here workers' attendance rose by some five points reaching 69 per cent, non-workers' by some two points—up to 75 per cent; the gap thus narrowed from 9 to 6 points. Things were different in each of the two Warsaw national sectors. In the Polish sector the gap between the workers' (72 per cent) and non-workers' (80 per cent) attendance narrowed from 11 to 8 points (non-worker shrank by one point); in the Jewish (56 and 63 per cent respectively) from 17 to 7 points (non-workers' attendance rose by one point). In the Dąbrowa Basin the workers' attendance increased by 22 points (or, taking into account the previous boycott, by one point), and that of non-workers' classes by three points so that the difference in the attendance of these two groups remained practically unchanged. Everywhere the non-workers' classes continued to be more active in the elections although generally less so than in the previous polls.

¹⁸ The proportions were different in Upper Silesia; attendance in its industrial part was higher (69.4 per cent) than in the agricultural and less industrialised (60.5 per cent). In the earlier (by six weeks) election to the Silesian parliament the indices were 75.8 and 69.8 per cent respectively. Thus the part with a less numerous worker population not only was less interested in voting but also became tired with the elections to a larger extent. This difference in behaviour may have had its source in the nationality pattern, and the activeness of German voters more numerous in the industrial part.

These changes in the number of voters were the resultant of two opposing tendencies acting on the electorate. Both the structural and psychological transformations which took place within the working class in the period between the elections and the present dropping of the boycotting tactics by the Communist Party¹⁴ exercised their impact on the absolute and relative increase in the participation of the proletariat, both in town and country, in the voting for the Sejm. Of an opposite impact, both on the proletariat and the non-workers' strata, were the decline of parliamentary illusions, very strong in 1919, of that faith in the power of the ballot paper, and the lesser importance of the election itself. In 1922, fundamental social, national and state questions were no longer the objects of the political confrontation but the practical interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution of March 1921 which had created a parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republic out of a multinational state.

Now that the communists had acceded to the elections with their own list of candidates, the votes of the workers went to, in principle, the right persons. In the capital of Poland, 49 per cent of the Polish worker voters backed the PPS, so that the mass of its supporters had nominally increased by five points, but more in point of fact. This increment was achieved in competition with the Communist Party, while in 1919 part of its supporters had voted for the socialists. Only 12 per cent, four times less, voted for the communists. Thus, altogether, 39 per cent of the Polish workers voted for the other parties (56 per cent in 1919). The dominance and success of the socialists were very clearcut. Of the capital's Jewish workers 51 per cent voted for the socialist parties, 17 per cent for the communists, and 32 per cent for non-workers' groupings. All in all, 62 per cent of worker voters in Warsaw voted for the class lists (38 or 42 per cent in 1919) of which 13 per cent went to the communists. Thus, there were 27 communist voters for 100 socialist ones. In the Dąbrowa Basin, 75 per cent of the worker electorate supported the lists of class

¹⁴ In 1922, the boycott of the elections was proclaimed only in eastern Galicia by all the Ukrainian parties except one conservative conciliatory party.

groupings, of this 40 per cent went to the communists. So here some of those who in 1919 voted for the socialists now supported their rivals on the left side. Consequently the ratio of votes for these two trends amounted to 100:114 in favour of the revolutionary left. Łódź took a middle place: for 100 workers of the camp of socialist reformism there were some 40 close to the forces of the revolution. Nearly three-fourths (72.3 per cent) of the communist electorate in central Poland were concentrated in those three agglomerations, but only one-fourth (23.7 per cent) of the supporters of PPS. The latter had considerably increased its range of influence in central Poland, compared with 1919, among the proletariat in small townships and (excluding the rural areas in the Dąbrowa Basin) workers of all trades living in villages, first and foremost the farm labourers. In the first case, it was backed by one-seventh of all the voters (13.4 per cent), in the second by one-ninth (10.8 per cent). The Polish socialists owed these results to a network of trade union centres which they had created in the period between the two elections. The communists collected 5.9 and 0.5 per cent respectively.

The non-socialist workers' party, mentioned before (now the National Workers' Party) also enlarged its assets in central Poland: from 1.8 per cent of the total number of votes to 2.4 per cent. It was supported probably exclusively by Polish workers. It had suffered many ups and downs for it was ousted from the three largest workers' concentrations partly by class groupings with the result that there the number of votes backing it shrank from 9.4 to 7.4 per cent. On the other hand, it doubled its numbers in the rest of central Poland (1919—0.6 per cent, 1922—1.3 per cent) where 3.5 per cent of the voters in townships supported it, and 0.8 per cent of rural voters. So in this case it had more supporters than the communists.

The numbers of PPS supporters in western Galicia remained practically unchanged (19.8 per cent in towns and 15.8 in the villages), they were less imposing in the strongly proletarian Upper Silesia (16.0 per cent) and insignificant in western Poland (2.0 per cent in towns and 1.2 per cent in villages). The communists managed to collect very few votes there. The National Workers' Party, on the other hand, was backed by 21.0 per cent of

urban voters in western Poland and 30.0 per cent of rural voters, while in Upper Silesia the figure was 16.4 per cent.

In the towns and most industrialised rural regions (in Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin) throughout the country 3.4 per cent of the constituents voted for the communists, 16.7 per cent for the socialists (Polish and Jewish),¹⁵ and 6.9 per cent for the National Workers' Party. Altogether, 747,300 voters supported candidates whose platform represented the working class movement in the broad meaning of the term, which meant one-fourth of all voters (27.0 per cent). Presumably, there were some 719,600 workers among those that gave them their votes. In the other rural regions the workers' lists collected jointly 863,700 votes or 14.5 per cent of voters. Among them, 0.6 per cent supported the communists, 9.2 per cent the socialists, and 4.7 per cent the NWP. In the entire country the candidates of workers' groupings polled nearly one-fifth of all the votes (18.4 per cent) which compared with the 13.0 per cent of January 1919 meant an increase by nearly one-half of the range of influence of the workers' movement. This result was due, apart from the fluctuations in public feeling, to the territorial extension of the area on which the elections took place. Now they covered also the highly industrial Upper Silesia and western Poland with its large numbers of workers as well as the weakly industrialised eastern Galicia and the even less industrialized regions east and north-east of the river Bug.

All these electoral results meant that among the workers the social and structural stabilising processes increased the number of the followers of, above all, the groupings of socialist reformism. Where those groupings had no long historical traditions, the workers were inclined towards national workers' reformism, a Polish variety of British labourists. For the worker who was beginning to take part in public life under the impact of those stabilising processes the goals of the two reformisms were much easier to understand and more realistic than the revolutionary

¹⁵ German, Byelorussian and Ukrainian socialists outside eastern Galicia joined the electoral bloc of national minorities groupings which makes it impossible to determine their electoral clientele.

perspective. Not fully liberated from the belief in the authority of those ranking higher in social hierarchy, he preferred the line of "slow progress" proposed by those groupings to the line of "struggle" represented by the communists.

Józef Piłsudski's *coup d'état* in May 1926, which opened the era of authoritative government, soon made the pattern of forces in the working class much more complicated. The analysis of those new processes would call for a broader study, based also on statistical material. Some data have already been presented in the papers mentioned earlier.¹⁶

(Translated by Krystyna Dunin-Kępicz)

¹⁶ See the papers indicated in the note No. 8.