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“PRIVATE CITIZENS”: A FORGOTTEN EPISODE
FROM THE PREHISTORY OF THE POLISH
INTELLIGENTSIA

Much is already known about the Polish intelligentsia. It has been the subject of an infinite number of statements, learned dissertations and monographs of various sizes. However, we rarely encounter any broader reflection on the question as to why there exists such a specific stratum in some societies (not only in Poland) while in others of the same historic period, i.e. at the same stage of social development, members of other social categories (stratum or class), perform the professional functions or activities that are the *raison d'être* and the material and moral basis for the existence of an intelligentsia.

To explain this difference, we should first direct our attention to certain semantic phenomena. In Polish, as well as several other languages, the word–notion *inteligencja* has two meanings. On the one hand, it signifies a personal quality, on the other, a definite social group. As a personal quality, intelligence is a timeless phenomenon, present since the beginning of mankind. Generally, it is most often understood as intelligent behaviour, i.e. suitable for the given situation and not connected with any specific profession. Intelligence — intelligent behaviour in this case — can be perceived even in some anthropoids. Things look quite different when we speak of intelligentsia (*inteligencja*) as a social stratum. The latter — as any stratum — is not only transitory, but more important, does not exist, nor has it ever existed, in some modern societies. These are the facts of the case, although in all countries there exist, and have existed for ages, professional groups such as physicians, lawyers, technicians, writers, etc., generally speaking,

people with a qualified, intellectual occupation, whose knowledge, when applied in practice, has been the basis of their material existence¹.

Originally, such abilities were generally connected with a broadly understood priestly estate, e.g. in the Egypt of the ancient pharaohs, Assyria and Babylonia. In primitive societies, the functions of physicians were performed by shamans, i.e. also priests. As the social division of labour progressed, the function of the priest was separated from others which — by the standards of the given time — required a highly qualified specialised knowledge. However, the social separation of those possessing such specialist knowledge did not take place at once. In feudal Europe, the majority of urban practitioners of the later learned and related professions were classified into individual guilds. Each of these guilds embraced all the workers of a given branch regardless of the functions they performed and their qualifications. For example, physicians together with barbers, surgeons, hospital attendants, surgeons' assistants, etc. made up one such guild. Building technicians as well as masons, plasterers and even stucco-artists and stone-sculptors belonged to another guild. Ordinary musicians were in one guild with musical artists (if they distinguished themselves at all), including composers who were at the same time musicians and earned their living as instrumentalists. Even such a subtle profession as that of a painter was classified accordingly. Affiliation with any guild required passing a suitable examination and was connected with corresponding rights and privileges. The guilds, however, did not embrace those permanently employed on estates (including ecclesiastical ones) no matter whether they were craftsmen, musicians (members of bands or choirs), composers, physicians or teachers. In contrast to the independent members of the guilds, who were remunerated for their work with money, those who worked in manors or feudal estates were given part of their pay in kind; they were provided food items from the estate or fed in the lord's kitchen. At the same time, they were not burghers, but rather "freemen" (from outside the existing structures), sometimes noblemen or foreigners. Because of the very peculiarity of their living conditions, these highly qualified professionals did not perceive any common interests among themselves. The recognition of such interests usually represents a pivotal moment in the formation of a certain class or social stratum.

¹ Much misunderstanding and confusion is caused by the frequent identification of the timeless and suprasystemic category of intellectuals with the stratum of intelligentsia. For an attempt at setting these phenomena in order — see L. H a s s, *Kiedy intelektualści zostają inteligentami? Błąd myślowy (When Do Intellectuals Become Mere Members of the Intelligentsia? A Conceptual Mistake)*, "Wiadomości Kulturalne" 1997, N° 44, p. 9.

The accelerating pace of the social division of labour in Europe from the 16th century on, together with the continent's general economic and social development, gave rise to greater demand for qualified intellectual skills. With time, such skills were isolated from professions which had until then had combined various types of skills. Next to the architectural craftsman, there appeared the profession of designer; next to the professional musician who played on various festive occasions, there appeared the musical artist who earned his living in other ways. Completely new professions also appeared such as that of the professional man-of-letters or the proxy in a business enterprise (which was no longer a traditional shop or workshop). Teaching ceased to be the domain of clergymen, and a professional class of civil servants was growing. As these people could no longer be fitted within guild structures, conditions arose for the formation of a professional class of people capable of qualified intellectual work, a segment of a broader group known today as the economic middle class.

The emergence of such a professional class started with the beginning of the modern era in Europe. At that time, with the disintegration of old social structures and an axiological crisis, there also emerged a new intellectual structure, that of “enlightened” people who, depending on the language of the given country, were called *éclairés*, *illuminati*, *illustrados*, *Aufklärer*, *prosvetiteli*, etc. They generally emerged from both the ruling feudal stratum and the “lower” estates. To a certain extent, they were the nucleus or only the portent of a group which is aware that its proceeds come from qualified intellectual work and is even proud of it; thus at the same time, they were becoming in some measure the future intelligentsia. Apart from their professional skills, they were marked by something equally or even more important to their social development: certain social and economic aspirations characteristic of a new era as well as a vision of a new world which was just emerging.

A powerful impulse for developing and consolidating this structure came in the last quarter of the 18th century with the formation of the United States of America. The arrival of this new country signified the end of colonial rule in these territories and the beginning of an independent state based on democracy and without feudal roots. This event also had a deep influence on the attitudes of the “enlightened”. For example, the author of literary works was then transformed into a free creator, a writer. The “enlightened” of the 18th century found their allies in the modern businessmen. They were bound by the knowledge that “they were fighting, each in his own way against the remnants of feudal control: the writer seeking to free himself from the highly placed patron, the businessman breaking the

bonds of the chartered enterprise. Both were fighting for a new kind of freedom: the writer for an anonymous public, the businessman for an anonymous and unbounded market². With the successes they achieved in politics and business, they became mutually dependent on one another, to some extent also professionally. The former — and their successive generations — apart from writing of the traditional kind, the eternal preoccupation of intellectuals, became increasingly involved, in general both as a matter of profession and a source of income, with intellectual production of another kind, a new type of activity isolated from material production, but at the same time, serving it directly (through inventions) or indirectly (through technical, legal and other sciences). For example, a highly qualified physician took care of the health of a well-to-do businessman and his family.

The tightened professional bonds gradually — with the progress of democratization in manners and morals — also brought these two communities together socially so as to blend them over time, depending on the material success of the participants in the process, into either the upper class of modern society, i.e. the bourgeoisie, or into a wealthy and enlightened upper part of the middle strata, i.e. of the petty bourgeoisie.

So it was above all in the western part of the European continent. However, further east, the greater part of those thinking in modern terms, i.e. the “enlightened” members of society in those countries, consisted of lords and noblemen and consequently enjoyed lesser social authority. Until the downfall of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and even a little later, non–noble origins and a preoccupation with a profession other than that of a landlord brought disgrace in the eyes of the ruling elite, which still consisted almost exclusively of the nobility. Intellectual work, paid or unpaid, was treated by them as a service rendered by people of an inferior, lower social position. Very often a hardly literate, and sometimes illiterate, petty landowner with a coat–of–arms held in contempt a teacher or a physician whom he hardly distinguished from a barber–surgeon, while he treated an artist most rudely. Even at the end of the 1820s, Count Ankwicz instantly refused the marriage proposal made to his daughter by the poet and teacher — to him a mere “rhymester” — Adam Mickiewicz, even though Mickiewicz could boast of a coat–of–arms. A teacher and participant in the November 1830 Uprising, Kazimierz Deczyński, was baited and driven to the point of suicide in exile by his noble combatants due to his peasant origins. Only the profession of a lawyer was somewhat valued by the

² A. Wright Mills, *White Collar. The American Middle Classes*, New York 1956, p. 143.

nobility — and this only to a certain extent as demonstrated by the term *kauzyperda*³. The same applied to civil servants. A royal secretary was esteemed, but a courtroom scribe much less so. In a word, the nobility accepted a profession which was close to “holding an office”. The rank and file civil servants, however, were treated quite differently, even if they were of noble origin, because the “better professions”, in practice reserved for the nobility, were connected with the functioning of the Commonwealth. Merchants were perceived exclusively, or primarily, as impostors who grew rich at the cost of the credulous nobility. Therefore, a landlord, if he participated in significant commercial transactions at all, did so in secret. Ethnic origin, generally bound up in the denominational separateness of those engaged in a profession, also contributed to this sort of thinking. Bigger merchants were Armenians, for a long time members of a church different from the Roman Catholic one, while many of the German merchants were Protestants. Those in the legal professions were almost exclusively Polish and Catholic, barber–surgeons were generally Jewish and stage professions were mainly practised by Italians and Frenchmen. A part of the craftsmen were also of non–Polish origin⁴.

Such a tangle of realities, attitudes and reflexes to some extent paralysed the “enlightened” within Poland. Some were able to free themselves of the views and prejudices of the nobility from which they sprang, proving it in their behaviour and lives as a whole. However, because there was no materially strong and enlightened Polish burgher class, which could have supported them and opposed the old ruling elite, the “enlightened” members of Polish society could not emulate their western counterparts. The dependence of the “enlightened” on feudal structures was incomparably greater in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth than that of their counterparts in the West. Therefore, in spite of noticeable progress, in comparison with the West, there was much delay in the professionalization of the growing numbers of “enlightened”, and the emergence of a situation where the majority of the “enlightened” could make a living by taking up hitherto un-

³ The term *kauzyperda* (from the Latin *causas perdere*), German equivalent *ein Rechtsverdreher*, M. S. B. Lindé, *Słownik języka polskiego (A Dictionary of Polish Language)*, 3rd ed., Warszawa 1951, vol. 2, p. 337.

⁴ Cf. J. Tazbir, *Kultura szlachecka a współczesność (Polish Nobility Culture and Contemporaneity)*, “Życie Warszawy” Oct. 2, 1974, № 235, p. 9. The memoirist Roch Sikorski wrote: “in the old Commonwealth a civil servant was a nobleman from a well-known family in the neighbourhood. They were marked by old–Polish hospitality and despite their office each was a brother of everybody”. Cit. after H. Mościcki, *Białystok*, Białystok 1933, p. 82.

profitable types of intellectual work⁵. At the same time, this delay impeded the transformation of this group from an intellectual one — which it initially was — into a social one in which social relations among its constituent professional groups were stronger than those between each individual group and the world outside.

This situation lasted until the end of the Commonwealth. Up to this moment, the traditional feudal structures of subordination and rule persisted in principle despite signs of an emerging new system. Nevertheless, economic changes such as the emergence of modern trading enterprises, especially industrial workshops of various types, and politico-administrative organizations, especially the formation of a modern civil service around the Permanent Council (a governmental-administrative organ created in 1775) — no matter how weak and modest — slightly modernized society even in the last two or three decades of this state's existence. These changes modified and transcended functioning estate divisions and, to a greater extent, the structure of hierarchical authority. Naturally, such phenomena were more conspicuous in Warsaw. In the national capital, contacts with the outside world, with the West, were much more numerous, systematic and intense than in other towns. At that time, the Western world had reached the peak of the Enlightenment and was entering a period of profound, revolutionary changes, the first clear symptom of which was the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789.

In Warsaw, changes in attitudes and structures were soon accelerated by a radical turning point in the city's status. On January 9, 1796 — as a result of the third partition of Poland — the Hohenzollern army marched into Warsaw. The capital of what had once been a powerful state was all of a sudden demoted to a Prussian administrative centre, one of many in the new state, and the seat of government for the province of Southern Prussia. Creating a new Prusso-Austrian border barely one mile to the east of Warsaw's toll-gates, the third partition wrenched from the city almost all of the right bank of the Vistula River. At the same time, the population of Warsaw rapidly declined — from 100,700 in 1792 and about 200,000 at the time of Kościuszko Insurrection in 1794 to 60,800 (without Prussian troops)

⁵ The presence of this phenomenon was clearly stated at the end of the 1770s by a man-of-letters, bishop Ignacy Krasicki. "A lot of, and supposedly most of my colleagues—authors make their living of publishing; therefore we produce books like watches, and because their worth depends mostly on their thickness, we are trying possibly to extend, elongate and expand our work". I. K r a s i c k i, *Mikolaja Doświadczynskiego przypadki (Adventures of Nicolaus Doświadczynski)*, Wrocław 1973, p. 5. *Adventures* appeared for the first time in print in 1776.

at the turn of 1798. Then it grew very slowly to 77,700⁶ by 1810, when Warsaw was the capital of the relatively independent Duchy of Warsaw. The Duchy's loss of independence brought to a halt most of the just-initiated modern economic enterprises and ended the Warsaw patriciate's new career. Thus, at the turn of the 18th century, the former capital was experiencing not only a period of demographic stagnation, but stagnation in almost every sphere of public life, including the cultural. But precisely due to this stagnation, Warsaw could become, and was bound to become, the scene of rapid social change. The freedom to maneuver, typical of big agglomerations, had suddenly shrunk.

Such new phenomena were noticed and recorded by Wirydianna Kwilecka, neé Radolińska, General Fiszer's wife and a shrewd observer of social and political life. Kwilecka hailed from the circles of great landowners and also corresponded with Tadeusz Kościuszko, the exiled leader of the recent insurrection. This lady, born in 1761, soon described a certain aspect of changes that were occurring before her very eyes: “Big houses that were kept open... disappeared one by one after the partitions of Poland. Those ladies who remained alive moved their residences to the capitals of neighbour countries, and thus occasions for meeting became very rare”. On the other hand, making an acquaintance became “easier in Warsaw at that time than in times that were more fortunate for the city”. It would appear that Warsaw life underwent a certain degree of democratization under Prussian occupation⁷.

This democratization arose because the degraded city had begun to attract a special, and in many ways new, element which, due to the diminished population, became more conspicuous: the impoverished young members of the nobility, deprived of employment and to some extent a means of subsistence, educated in the modernized schools of the Commission of National Education and at least moderately enlightened. These unemployed and almost pauperized members of the nobility had hitherto held posts in the developing modern state administration represented by the offices of the aforementioned Permanent Council. Former officers of the disbanded army of the Commonwealth as well as a number of soldiers and

⁶ H. Grossman, *Struktura społeczna i gospodarcza Księstwa Warszawskiego na podstawie spisów ludności 1808 i 1810 (The Social and Economic Structure of the Duchy of Warsaw on the Basis of the 1808 and 1810 Censuses)*, “Kwartalnik Statystyczny” 1925, fasc. 1, pp. 54, 89; S. Szymkiewicz, *Warszawa XVIII i XIX w. w świetle pomiarów i spisów (18th and 19th Century Warsaw in the Light of Surveys and Censuses)*, Warszawa 1959, pp. 243, 265. For comparison — in 1800 Vienna had 231.0 thous. inhabitants, in 1801 Paris had 546.9 thous., while London — 958.9 thous.

⁷ W. Fiszeroła, *Dzieje moje własne i osób postronnych (My Own History and That of Others)*, Londyn 1975, pp. 230–231.

civilian survivors of the Kościuszko Insurrection, perhaps the larger part of these young noblemen, found themselves in a similar situation. The new frontier had deprived some of them of their last source of income by cutting them off from their father's or from their own farmland which in any case had been ruined by the recent military activity. The Prussian authorities, still reeling from the revolutionary events in France, immediately perceived these men as a restless element, potentially dangerous to the newly-established order. Hence, as early as April 1, 1796, barely three months after the first Prussian troops entered Warsaw, the Prussian administration in Warsaw announced via the local Polish-language daily that former Polish officers and persons staying in the city without a concrete reason (*przyczyna*) were obliged to leave for their places of residence within a fortnight or immediately explain at Police Headquarters why they could not do so. If they did not comply, they would be treated as vagrants and expelled from the city by force⁸. On the basis of this decree the first 30 former officers were soon expelled. The chief of the administration and police, Heinrich von Buchholz, was determined to clear the city of this unemployed and dangerous "riff-raff". These people were dangerous if only because their whole world had collapsed and they remained without their traditional means of subsistence⁹. Such administrative measures proved ineffective.

Stanisław Poniatowski, a nephew of the last king of Poland, arriving in Warsaw a year after this regulation had been issued, wrote: "I encountered terrible misery. Lots of men who lost their posts, above all from the military; lots of women and children without the means of support.... To the best of my ability I tried to help the needy. However, the Prussian Governor asked me through the Duke of Nassau to curtail my charitable activity as it caused too much commotion"¹⁰. Any disturbance could have had its source in the socio-political radicalism of this *declassé* Polish milieu of former officers and administrators.

However, "after the partition everybody became a man of such description [i.e. a Jacobin — L. H.]. While cursing moderation that let us down, we went to the opposite extreme"¹¹, not only in Warsaw, still restless after the 1794 insurrection, but also in Great Poland. People "started to become

⁸ *Obwieszczenie (Announcement)*, "Gazeta Warszawska" April 5, 1796, № 28, pp. 300–301. The document signed by: Governor of Warsaw Balthasar Ludwig von Wendessen and President of the city and police Samuel Friedrich Schimmelfennig v. d. Oye.

⁹ J. Pachoński, *General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski 1755–1818 (General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski 1755–1818)*, Warszawa 1980, p. 139.

¹⁰ S. Poniatowski, *Pamiętniki synowca Stanisława Augusta (Memoirs of Stanislaus Augustus' Nephew)*, Warszawa 1979, p. 104.

¹¹ W. Fiszerowa, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

enthusiastic about the French Revolution, its publications, its style which we followed to the extent that circumstances allowed. We remained in contact with our unfortunate refugees, with the Polish Legions which had been created under French backing. We sent them relief. People returned from exile and busied themselves with subversive work at home”¹². Probably under the latter’s influence, “Youths in loose attire spent nights at pubs, broke windows and hurled threats against everything redolent of the aristocracy”¹³. And “they used a bloodthirsty language which would have made Robespierre blush. Our history and readings were continually coloured with this ideology”¹⁴.

In the first years of the 19th century, the number of those who thought and behaved in this way, generally people without a means of subsistence, was augmented by another group of castaways: former members of the disbanded Polish Legions, i.e. people who had already seen and experienced at first hand the transformed, post-feudal Western world.

Both those who had never emigrated and the former members of the Polish Legions had in general previously received their income from the state, to which they owed their education. Some of them were landless noblemen, others were owners, or sons of owners, of small estates completely ruined by the recent insurrection and war. Now they were without any means of subsistence. The chances of pursuing a professional career in the army had significantly diminished as had the possibility of living in Warsaw off the generosity of magnate households. The magnates had now changed their style, and the majority of them had moved to their property in the Russian sector. They did not take with them to their new residences the upper crust of their servants, usually noble in origin, who had performed definite intellectual or professional functions such as looking after the health of the magnate. On the other hand, working in the civil service in some capacity and access to the military academy in Prussia required more than literacy in German — even though this skill itself could not be acquired quickly. The linguistic requirement also barred the petty nobility from practising law, something they had done since the ascension of the Saxon dynasty to the Polish throne in 1697¹⁵. More essentially, with the arrival of the Prussian

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 174–175.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 231.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

¹⁵ J. Wąsicki, *Ziemie polskie pod zaborem pruskim. Prusy Nowowschodnie /Neuostpreussen/ 1795–1806 (Polish Lands in the Prussian Sector. Neweastern Prussia /Neuostpreussen/ 1795–1806)*, Poznań 1963, p. 51. On the “proliferation” of the lawyers’ profession — see the statements of Duchess Zofia Lubomirska (cit. after W. Konopeczyński, *Kazimierz Pułaski*, Kraków 1931, p. 3).

administration, the old feudal offices were replaced by the incomparably more efficient professional apparatus of an enlightened absolutist state. The army now had openings exclusively for professional officers and non-commissioned officers, the civil service — for professional bureaucrats and clerks. The skills and experience acquired in the military or civil service of the Commonwealth now seemed useless and out-of-date.

Prussian merchants and entrepreneurs soon followed the Prussian state apparatus into the newly acquired Polish territories of the Hohenzollern kingdom. They were generally more worldly than the ordinary Warsaw burgher, let alone one from the provinces. They had broader horizons, and their enterprises were more dynamic. Clearly cosmopolitan in their mentality, they were far from accepting what was to be later labeled nationalism. The same kind of mentality marked many of the Prussian officers and civil servants sent to the territory of the Polish lands. Many of them were not even Prussian. Both the former and the latter had been exposed to the Enlightenment. Thus the invader himself turned out to be extremely dynamic, capable of quickly transforming existing feudal relations and adapting them to new conditions, to the bourgeois transformations that had occurred in states on Poland's border and further afield. Without giving up their own attitudes and way of life, the new arrivals in Warsaw took on elements of local customs and established personal contacts with the local population, including intermarrying with Poles¹⁶. This behaviour, combined with the model organization of administration and advanced socio-economic relations — which could only be envied by the Poles whose professions, sources of income and social position hung in mid-air — made it easier for the newcomers to adjust to the new conditions of life.

These diverse, new factors of social and to a certain extent also societal life were symptoms of a rather grave phenomenon: the crisis of the nobility-feudal community, above all in the territories of Central Poland under Hohenzollern occupation, especially in Warsaw and its environs. Those directly affected by this crisis felt that it signified a disintegration of previous social relations. The presence of foreign rule strenghtened this impression. Those of the old ruling elite, who were directly and most acutely affected

¹⁶ Examples — Theodor v. Hippel, several years later one of the leaders of the national revival in the territory of Eastern Prussia, and after 1813 President of the Regency in Marienburg, Oppeln and Bromberg, in 1798 married a Polish lady, Joanna (Jeanette) Gruszczyńska. His friend, regency councillor in Poznań in 1800–1806, later in Płock and Warsaw, a well-known writer, composer and drawer, Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann, in 1802 married Maria Tekla Rohrer-Trzczińska. Another Prussian civil servant in the Polish lands, Friedrich Ludwig Zacharias Werner, later a well-known pre-Romantic poet, in 1801 took as his wife a daughter of a Warsaw shoemaker-master, Małgorzata Marchwiatowska. Since she did not know German, he read to her Schiller's poems in the original, at the same time improvising their translation into Polish.

by the loss of their previous source of income, discovered some possibilities of making a living that were, for their milieu, lacking in tradition, possibilities almost unknown in the Commonwealth, especially among the nobility. Therefore, at least in their eyes, such possibilities did not entail social degradation. These were various forms of non-clerical, non-traditional intellectual work. This means that it was not the work of a lawyer, doctor, teacher or stage performer. Thus some derelicts from the nobility found what we would now call clerical work in commercial enterprises, especially in those run by newcomers from beyond the former frontier, generally people of a lower social status than their own. That their employers were foreigners eased the uncommon or outright awkward character of this situation. As foreigners, employers were not always conscious of the recent social superiority of their new employees. The native burghers, however, were not psychologically prepared to employ the sons of the nobility who were not of poor descent. On the other hand, taking a job in a burgher's firm — whether it belonged to a foreigner or a native Pole — required to a certain extent a change of the traditional contemptuous noblemen's attitude to hired intellectual work, especially outside agriculture. Some of these impoverished gentlemen developed a new mentality connected with broader reflection. This was clearly manifested by Cyprian Godebski. This poet and former captain of the Polish Legions whose cultural and literary activity after returning home did not provide him with sufficient income found a job as a family tutor in the provinces where he haggled over his wages on the strength of contracts. Later, in Warsaw, he worked as a kind of tutor, running about the town giving lessons and engaging in business undertakings. He did not perceive anything humiliating in this way of life which was definitely scorned by any contemporary nobleman. During his long stay in the West, he had probably come across similar behaviour and accepted it. He wrote to a friend: “It seems to me that I am rich and **I take pride in the income whose source I find in myself**”¹⁷.

In this way, a new social group was born, a small, almost microscopic one at first. Its material basis consisted of pay provided by specific employers, who were completely private persons. For the members of this new social group, chiefly the sons of noblemen, this was a complete *novum*. Such a source of income clearly distinguished these men from civil servants whose salaries for performing repetitive functions according to official instructions were paid by an impersonal Treasury. In contrast, the people belonging to this new group performed their tasks — functions commis-

¹⁷ E. K. Kossak, *W stronę Misji z Godebskich (About Misia née Godebska)*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 61–63. The graphic distinction by the author of this book.

sioned on a more or less temporary basis by specific employers — something that could be termed as intellectual work “in general”. Because of their generally small income, these people could not be classified as men of property, however, by their education, upbringing, family tradition and social contacts, they belonged precisely to that category — or to its fringes. Thus, theirs was a situation typical of intermediary groups.

At first, this phenomenon manifested itself mainly in Warsaw. Here, at the beginning of the 19th century, an embryonic class began from those people making a living from new kinds of intellectual work, i.e. neither lawyers, nor civil, municipal or court servants, nor physicians¹⁸. This occurred within the framework of the just initiated “destructuring” of Commonwealth society. The new social group, different from the old ones which were still functioning, distinguished itself from other social groups which were regarded as natural or normal. However, because of its small size, this new group still fit within the preexisting macrostructure. Hardly noticeable, it operated without conflict on the margin of larger groups. Nor did there occur any collisions between it and other types of microstructures — such as the family, noble communities centred around magnate families or even domains with large numbers of peasants subordinated to the orders of the landowners — which were so far unaffected by the essential changes.

Whenever a new social group is formed, there appears a need for it to adopt a distinctive name or to be given one by others, even at its early stage. In the given case, the bureaucratic administration of a modern state such as Prussia — whose feudal system was on the decline — required this. Any subject of the King had to be classified as belonging to some kind of social group since this was the only way to define that subject’s duties to the state and to a certain extent his rights. At the same time, such a name provides a sweeping characterization of the new group. The terminology used in such cases is most often taken from the past or is more or less still in circulation and becomes modified or complemented by the addition of a word that defines a partial change in the phenomenon described by the first name. Here, the term was taken from French and was well-known to the administrators of the Hohenzollern state. It was the word *particulier* and in the times of Pascal and Bossuet, it had denoted a private person. In this sense, the word was also used as an adjective to denote somebody who performed concrete functions but was not a civil servant — in contrast to the person

¹⁸ This phenomenon was already perceived by B. Leśnodorski, *Historia i współczesność (History and Contemporaneity)*, Warszawa 1967, pp. 222–223.

who performs them officially, e.g. *secrétaire particulier*, in contrast to the *secrétaire général* of some administrative organ¹⁹.

In Warsaw, next to the French *particulier*, a Polish term came into use which was its translation and at the same time, an adaptation to local conditions and the local concepts: “private citizen” (*obywateł prywatny*)²⁰. That a Polish equivalent appeared for the foreign term could indicate the frequency of its occurrence and the sudden need for the creation of a modern Polish term corresponding to the French meaning. The native term took into consideration, or even manifested, the intermediate social status of such persons. They were noblemen and therefore citizens. However, they could hardly be called propertied citizens (*obywatele ziemscy*), the title now adopted by landowners, since they owned no land. They also differed from townspeople, owners of real estate in towns, as they owned nothing of the kind here either. Thus, a private citizen was somebody who was definitely not a plebeian, but who owned no real estate. He could be compared to a landless nobleman.

Answers to the question who was a *particulier* or “private citizen”, self-styled or classified by others, can be provided mainly by documents from the masonic lodges in Warsaw during Prussian rule and the Duchy of Warsaw. This is no mere coincidence. Lodges at that time were centres which focussed and organized the elites of another, wider group, whose part were also private citizens — namely an enlightened socio-professional class²¹. An analysis of their members allows one also to realise to some extent the proportions between this larger entity and its component part.

There were two active lodges in Warsaw at the beginning of the 19th century. As of April 6, 1805, nine of the 115 members of the mixed German and Polish lodge “Zum Goldenen Leuchter” were *particuliers*, i.e. every thirteenth person or 7.8 percent²². Two of these *particuliers* came from the lodge’s 40 members residing outside of Warsaw. All 115 were men as can

¹⁹ E. Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, vol. 5, Paris 1959, pp. 1459–1462; A. Hatzfeld et A. Darmester, *Dictionnaire général de la langue française du commencement du XVII^e siècle jusqu’à nos jours*, vol. 2, Paris, undated, p. 1685.

²⁰ According to the dictionary closest in time: *Obywateł* (citizen) — among others “a man in the civil and political understanding free in the Commonwealth”, *citoyen*, *der Staatsbürger*; *prywatny* (private) — “non-public, domestic, Russ. *oprìchnyi*, *chastnyi*, *Privat-*, *häuslich*”. M. S. B. L i n d e , *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 429; vol. 4, p. 495. The entry *obywateł prywatny* (private citizen) is missing.

²¹ More extensively — see L. H a s s , *Warstwa oświecona na ziemiach Centralnej Polski (w świetle jej organizacji)* (*The Enlightened Stratum in the Territory of Central Poland (in the Light of Its Organization)*), in: *Spółczeństwo polskie XVIII i XIX wieku*, vol. 7 (1982).

²² *Verzeichniss sämmtlicher Brüder der gesetzmässigen und vollkommenen St. Johannis — Loge genannt “Zum Goldenen Leuchter” zu Warschau, den 6 April 1805* (a print). The Collections of the National Library in Warsaw (ctd. as BN), call number BOZ 1760/2. cat. 269–270.

be judged from their names. All but one of the Polish noblemen (indicated by the *von* before each name) were aged between 33–50 and were, at least potentially, professionally active²³. The remaining 18 Poles wrote under the heading “occupation” that they were landowners or cited a specific official post or profession. The men who had neither rural nor urban real estate and did not practice any traditional profession could have been helped in defining their socio–professional status — and this should be emphasized — by the secretary of the lodge, who would have been well–versed in the German terminological practice. So, among the 27 Polish members of this lodge every third person was a private citizen. It should be noted that at the end of 1806, among the 40 members of Warsaw’s other lodge, the almost exclusively German “*Friedrich Wilhelm zur Säule*”, there was only one *particulier*, Stanisław Albert von Koricki (in fact, Krzyczyki), who lived outside Warsaw²⁴. At the end of September 1805, among the 46 members of the lodge “*Tempel der Weisheit*”, created in 1805 by bringing together the Polish members of “*Zum Goldenen Leuchter*” and a slightly later wave of Polish freemasons, twelve, i.e. almost every fourth one, declared they were private citizens²⁵.

Such a declaration was neither a voluntary move, a matter of fashion nor a political or ideological profession of faith. There was a *iunctim* between it and the actually practised profession or type of occupation (more precisely, source of income). This is corroborated by an entry in the “*Tempel der Weisheit*”’s list of members from September 1805, “Carl v. Möller — ehem[aliger] französischer Offizier, jetzt *Particulier*” and a similar entry barely six years later in a membership list from the “Temple of Isis”, a continuation of the former lodge, “Jan Okoński, former captain of the army, at present private citizen”²⁶. The lodge’s registers also kept up with changes in a person’s socio–professional status. Thus, from among the nine *particuliers* from “*Zum Goldenen Leuchter*”, half a year later, three of them — now in the “*Tempel der Weisheit*” — are denoted as landowners (*Gutsbesitzer*)²⁷.

²³ Among them were the inhabitants of Warsaw: Johann von Niewiescinski; Joseph Graf von Orsetti; Franz von Piaskowski; Joseph von Kosinski; Anton von Cedrowski; Xaver von Bardzki; Anton von Czyzewski; as well as Casimir von Trembecki from Orla (near Gdańsk) and ex–member of the Polish Legions Anton von Paris from Pacanowa (Sandomierz district). First names and surnames are cited in the German transcription as in the register.

²⁴ Verzeichniss sämmtlicher Mitglieder der g.u.v. St. Johanns–Loge zum Samariter zu Warschau im Jahre 1808 (MS). BN, call number BOZ 1760/2, cat. 244, N° 17.

²⁵ Verzeichniss [...] “Tempel der Weisheit” zu Warschau den 30^{ten} September 1805, *ibidem*, cat. 217–218 (second copy — cat. 210).

²⁶ Register of the “Temple of Isis” lodge, N° 329. The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (ctd. as AGAD), Senator Novosiltsov’s Chancery, 841. In both cases the term “ex–military man” did not signify retirement, but a change in the professional status and source of income.

Similarly, a dozen–odd years later, Wincenty Chełmicki, a “private citizen” on the register from 1811, becomes a “voivodeship commissioner”.

Since the end of the first decade of the 19th century, this group of private citizens had been “democratizing” itself and had started to include some persons of non–noble origin. Among the first persons accorded this honor were Antoni Gugenmus, admitted to the freemasons in October 1810, and August Lilpop, in 1811²⁸. A few years later, one of the earliest cases of an assimilated Jew, Fryderyk Ettinger²⁹, entering the freemasons was also recorded, but nothing more is known about him. The aforementioned individuals came from outside the circle of long–standing inhabitants of Polish lands; they were newcomers. In the first five years of Congress Poland, the lodges used the term “private citizen” and the actual occupation interchangeably in their documentation — though not in their lists of members³⁰.

The increase in the number of persons classified as private citizens did not, however, mean an increase in the representation of private citizens among the freemasons, nor, probably, their strength in terms of percentage within Polish society of Congress Poland during the 1810s. Thus, among the 209 members of the “Temple of Isis” at the end of 1811, 30 were private citizens, every seventh member or 14.3 percent, half as many as in the lodge’s predecessor, the “Tempel der Weisheit”, at the end of Prussian rule in Warsaw. Seven years later, when the number of freemasons increased considerably both within Warsaw and this lodge, there were still only 30 private citizens among them, not necessarily the same as before, i.e. somewhat more than one in twenty members (8.1 percent of the 370). In another Warsaw lodge that brought together private citizens, the francophone “Bouclier du Nord”, which had been resuscitated in 1810 after years of enforced

²⁷ Niewiescinski, Paris, Trembicki.

²⁸ Poczec Braci składających spr.: i dosk.: [Świętego Jana, pod nazwiskiem Świątynia Izis na Wschodzie Warszawy [...] na rok pr.: św.: 5811/12 (The list of Brothers includes the Just and Perfect St. John’s Lodge, under the name Temple of Isis in the East of Warsaw [...] for the year of True Light 5811/12), N° 90 and 145 (MS). AGAD, The freemasons’ Archives of the Potockis IV — 4/6. In the register of this lodge both are recorded as “artists”, N° 227, 281. They were famous master–watchmakers of foreign descent. S. Ł o z a, *Rodziny polskie pochodzenia cudzoziemskiego osiadle w Warszawie i okolicach (Polish Families of Foreign Descent Resident in Warsaw and Its Environs)*, Warszawa 1932, fasc. 1, p. 67; *Encyklopedia Warszawy (Warsaw’s Encyclopedia)*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 233, 423.

²⁹ F. E t t i n g e r, in 1818–1819 member of the lodge “Bouclier du Nord”, was at that time in such straitened circumstances that he received a grant–in–aid from the Polish freemasonry. L. H a s s, *Sekta farmazonii warszawskiej (The Sect of Warsaw Freemasons)*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 392, 427.

³⁰ In the minutes of the “Temple of Isis” sessions, e.g. Wiktor Heltman was once recorded as a librarian (June 1, 1818), which job he performed for Aleksander Chodkiewicz, another time as a private citizen (October 5, 1818). AGAD, Senator Novosiltsov’s Chancery, 830, p. 290.

inactivity, there were a few more private citizens, as many as 35 in 1818. They constituted almost one fifth of the total 187 members. In the remaining seven lodges active in Warsaw by 1820, private citizens could be encountered only in one, the German-speaking “Halle der Beständigkeit”, a continuation of “Zum Goldenen Leuchter”. With 268 members in 1820, “Halle der Beständigkeit” inducted merely five private citizens (1.9 percent). Throughout Varsovian freemasonry between 1818 and 1820, merely one in twenty-five members was a private citizen (70 of 1,797 or 3.9 %). At that time, middle- and lower-ranking officers made up more than one half of lodge members (52.8 percent), while those practising learned professions and the artists accounted for more than one seventh of freemasons (15.1 percent)³¹. In the three aforementioned lodges to which private citizens belonged, the percentage of landowners and senior officers and higher civil servants, who as a rule were derived from landowners, fluctuated between 9 and 12 percent, while the Warsaw average was 19.7 percent. In the most elite lodges, which were completely free of private citizens, the percentage of landowners even amounted to 26.4 percent for the “Polish United Brethren” (398 members) and 28.8 percent for “Slavonic Unity” (87 members)³². Among the thousand-odd members of the 11 non-Warsaw lodges within Congress Poland, not a single member defined himself as a private citizen, not even in Cracow³³. Outside of Warsaw, there were probably so few people fitting this description that they did not stand out as a group. Furthermore, the new term for such a group was probably also unknown outside of the capital.

Thus outlined “geography” of the lodges suggests that certain social ties were already forming between the members of the new social group. They felt closer to one another than to those who practised other professions. They did not consider themselves members of the same social circle, or lodge, as the traditional Polish elite. Or rather, the latter did not wish to rub shoulders with commonplace people of lower social status — even in a lodge despite the principle of equality among members. As a result, private citizens joined lodges where a considerable part of the members came from their own social group. Perhaps representatives of the traditional Polish elite even suggested the new professionals join a given group of freemason novices. But all of this was limited to Warsaw where the demand for various types of more or less non-traditional intellectual work typical of the new profes-

³¹ L. H a s s, *Warstwa oświecona*, pp. 40–41 (tab. 1), pp. 52–53 (tab. 2).

³² *Ibidem*, tab. 2 — higher officials — lines 2a, 2b, 3a; high-class military men — lines 4a and 4b; land-owners — line 1.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 60–61 (tab. 3).

sional class was greater than anywhere else in the Polish lands. Warsaw was the biggest and most modern Polish city and from 1807 on, also the seat of the government and central offices of the Duchy of Warsaw and then Congress Poland. In such a large administrative centre, these new intellectual professionals — despite differences in their fields, remuneration, etc. — could see more clearly their common interests, their unique position in society, and the possibility of attaining, as a group, a high position within the modernizing social hierarchy.

The emergence of private citizens at the beginning of the 19th century, as recorded in the lists of the members of the Warsaw lodges, was thus conditioned by a definite political situation and its social consequences. Also, a relative decline in the percentage of this socio-professional group among the freemasons after 1806 reflected a certain wider social development. In Warsaw, during the decade of Prussian rule and the early years of the Duchy of Warsaw, the fate of those performing these relatively new intellectual professions, the question of their employment — i.e. factors determining their status and future — was in flux and very uncertain, something which frustrated them and at the same time, helped to fuse them into one group. But soon, life in the Duchy returned to normal. In the capital and in the provinces, both an indigenous ruling apparatus and state administration — hence a clearly hierarchical professional class of civil servants — were coming into being. In comparison with the still easily recalled state of affairs of the Commonwealth, this professional class was so large that it drew the attention of local observers³⁴. It absorbed a part of those practising learned professions, some members of the artistic world and many of those engaged in science and learning (the latter still being largely unrepresented by any institution)³⁵. Even the impoverished sons of the nobility were no longer forced to work for a plebeian merchant or entrepreneur. The stabilization of professional life gave fewer occasions to compare the conditions of work and pay among the new intellectual occupations. Therefore, the recent awareness of their unique position and common interests among those who earned their living in this way — never very strong at any rate — almost disappeared. The nobility, whose sons were exclusive holders of administrative posts, especially in the provinces, treated their work as the “old way of life” and a restoration of their official careers from the times of Stanislaus

³⁴ This is corroborated by many Polish memoiristic testimonies, e.g. W. Fiszorowa, *op. cit.*, p. 307; K. Koźmian, *Pamiętniki (Memoirs)*, vol. 2, Wrocław 1972, p. 65; A. Magier, *Estetyka miasta stołecznego Warszawy (The Aesthetic Values of the Capital Town of Warsaw)*, Wrocław 1963, p. 53.

³⁵ W. Rostocki, *Korpus w gęsie pióra uzbrojony (A Corps Armed with Quills)*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 13, 60.

Augustus. Such a body of officials was part and parcel of the nobility, something separate from artists or even professional men-of-letters, especially if the latter were of worse social provenance³⁶. Thus, the conditions for the emergence of private citizens disappeared, and in losing its *raison d'être*, the term itself went out of use and was soon forgotten.

At the same time, or even a little earlier, a slightly different group of private citizens was emerging in Galicia, which had fallen to Austria in the first partition of Poland. There, however, next to those (or their sons) who were educated but “unseated” as they had lost their land, it also included civil servants — Poles as well as newcomers from other parts of the Habsburg monarchy — whose number clearly increased because of the introduction of Joseph II’s very bureaucratic administration as well as legal officials and those practising traditional professions, later termed “learned professions”, such as physicians, barristers, pharmacists, etc. Because of the dominant spiritual climate among Josephian government officials, who were clearly informed by the Enlightenment and unconcerned with class origin, genealogy was not considered a prerequisite for inclusion in this new social group. New social status was determined by a diploma and a source of income, that is a performed occupation, some type of intellectual work. Since the way of life of the new social group, and to some extent their way of making a living, did not fit within the Austrian stratification of estates, these people could not be classified as landowners, peasants, or burghers (such as they were in Galicia, perhaps with the exception of Cracow). The Habsburg monarchy’s system of taxation, however, required some definition of this group. Thus, fiscal legislation labeled them as *quartum genus hominum* (the fourth estate of people)³⁷. Initially, they included lawyers, physicians, pharmacists and “all the assessors *facultatis* dependent on the Academy” as well as “capitalists, individuals engaged in the exchange of foreign currency, warehouse owners, wholesalers, jugglers, plenipotentiaries, managers, lease-holders of estates, and lords’ dependants”. Slowly a selection took place based on the criteria of profession and education³⁸.

³⁶ The more talented or outstanding members of the non-nobility world of science and art were in the Polish Kingdom ennobled, or at least socially assimilated by the nobility collectivity. S. Treugutt, *Herbowe i genezyjne szlachectwo wedle Słowackiego (Słowacki on Origins of Nobility)*, in: *Tradycje szlacheckie w kulturze polskiej (Nobility Traditions in Polish Culture)*, Warszawa 1976, pp. 41–42.

³⁷ *Edicta et mandata universalis Regnis Galiciae et Lodomeriae a die 11 septembris 1772 initiatæ possessionis promulgata*, 1788, N° CXXIV, pp. 217–222.

³⁸ S. Grodziski, *Historia ustroju politycznego Galicji 1772–1848 (The History of the Political System of Galicia Within 1772–1848)*, Wrocław 1971, p. 64. Similarly in the 1880s in Congress Poland merchants, factory-owners and priests were classified with the intelligentsia. Examples — L. Hass, *L'intelligentsia en Pologne, “L'Homme et la société”* N° 43–44 (1977).

Those members of the group descended from socially lower classes now started to live differently than their parents; their standard of living was better and more refined. They owed this improvement in their quality of life to their posts or the social status which they achieved not in the traditional way (privileged social origin), but rather due to their education. Their fate was no longer decided by family connections, which in principle shaped an individual's career in the Commonwealth with its social estates, but rather by professional qualifications, i.e. mechanisms of a new type.

In the Polish territory of the Habsburg lands, social transformations slowed down in response to the shock of the French Revolution. The death of the emperor and reformer Joseph II in particular put an end to, and even turned back, the process of isolating those who drew their income from qualified intellectual work. Only several decades later, when social, economic and, to some extent, political relations were undergoing profound transformation — i.e. the abolition of feudal relations and the non-economic dependence of the peasant on the landowner — did there arise a new collectivity analogous to the private citizens. This time it was an enduring phenomenon — the social stratum known as the Polish intelligentsia³⁹.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)

³⁹ See also L. H a s s, *L'intelligentsia en Pologne*, “L'Homme et la société” N° 43–44 (1977), pp. 190–194.