Lecture 9

Russian Poland between 1864 and 1914

1. Introduction

The brutal crushing of the January Rebellion and the oppression which followed it marked a decisive turning point in Polish history. The attempt to regain the independence of Poland by armed insurrection had not only failed, but had created conditions for worse than had existed before. The insurrection had, moreover, strengthened the links between Prussia and Russia and was thus indirectly responsible for the weakening of France’s diplomatic position which was one of the factors which caused the French defeat in 1870. This defeat was indeed the final nail in the coffin of hopes for a diplomatic resolution of the Polish question. These had continued to be expressed by the Czartoryski faction among the émigrés, who still hoped that war might break out between France and Austria on the one side, and Russia on the other, and that as a result Poland might be re-established. Disillusionment with the insurrectionary tradition now became widespread and led to a number of new political alignments.

At the same time, 1863 marked the end of a period in which the peasant question had been the dominant social issue in Poland. Serfdom and labour tribute had by now been abolished everywhere in Poland and in most areas the peasantry had received their land under fairly favourable conditions. The period after 1863 thus saw a fairly rapid growth of industry, both in Prussian Poland and in the Congress Kingdom, and by 1878 we see the emergence of the first specifically working-class and socialist groups in Poland.
Finally, 1863 marked the end of a period in which the émigrés could exercise a
decisive influence on Polish politics. (Though one may indeed question how much
influence they had before 1863). There was an emigration after the January rebellion, but
its numbers were not large and its significance cannot be compared either with the
Exodus of 1795 or the Great Emigration which followed the 1831 rebellion.

II. Russian Poland 1864-1905

1. Political repression and Russification

Though the land reform was never as strongly in favour of the peasantry as it appeared on
paper, its introduction, along with the confiscations which followed 1863 and the
importation of wheat from the fertile lands of the Ukraine, did much to undermine the
economic basis of the middle nobility. Many smaller landowners move to the towns. No
opportunity to get employment in civil service. Thus go into industry and the
professions.

Percentage of Poles in towns increases. Emergence of an intelligentsia. The
characteristics it inherited from gentry included the belief that it embodied the Polish
nation and its hostility to trade and industry. Gentry values deeply permeated the
emerging Polish urban society.

The years after 1864 also saw a further cutting down of the separate status of the
Congress Kingdom. In 1866 the Council of State and the Administrative Council were
abolished and the Kingdom’s budget incorporated into that of empire. In 1867, various
government commissions were abolished, eliminating administrative distinctness from the Empire. At the same time, Commission of Justice abolished. Although Russian courts were introduced the Napoleonic civil code did remain in force. In 1867 the Administration reorganized and ten smaller provinces (still called Gubernie) set up. In 1874, after the death of Berg, the office of Viceroy was abolished. Supreme civil and military authority henceforth exercised by Governor-General. Administration staffed entirely by Russians. At same time new local government counties (Zemstva) not introduced into either Congress Kingdom or the formerly Polish province in the West of the Empire.

These years also saw the beginning of attempts at Russification. These were seen in the educational system. This policy more rigorous in Western Russia, though it was also implemented in Congress Kingdom. In 1869, the Central School in Warsaw was replaced by a Russian University, in next few years secondary schools Russianized and in 1885 Russian introduced as language of instruction in primary schools. Only Polish language and religion to be taught in Polish. The teachers were still Polish. Teachers training colleges set up where peasants’ sons could be educated according to Russian concepts to carry out Russification. This was a policy successful with the first generation after emancipation, but next generation was more nationalist.

The Government also tried to make the Catholic hierarchy dependent on itself and to sever its connections with Rome. The majority of monasteries were closed down, church property confiscated, clergy now paid by State and thus materially dependent on Russian authorities. The Tsarist government breaks Concordat with Rome and Polish bishops placed under authority of spiritual college in St. Petersburg. Attempts were also
made to introduce Russian for sermons, singing and prayer. After 1871, Russian policy relaxed. 1882 Concordat renewed, (Leo XIII), and episcopal sees which had been vacant filled. But strong action was taken against Greek Catholics, particularly in Chełm district.

2. Economic Developments

Period between 1864 and 1880 one of rapid industrialisation and development, far more rapid than earlier. There were a number of reasons for the speeding up of economic growth. The settlement of agrarian question brought large supplies of labour on to the market, given the pressure on the land. Earlier developments had laid the basis for industrialization, while foreign investment increased, since in this way the high tariff barriers established by the Tsarist Empire could be circumvented.

The scale of these developments was quite considerable. By 1885 the value of industrial production reached 200 million rubles, five times the figure in 1863. (This should be compared with rise of two-fold in Russia). The main industries were textiles, mining, founding, metallurgy and engineering and sugar refining. Between 1860 and 1870 industrial production in the area trebled, to increase five-fold in the period between 1870 and 1890.

The growth of industry was accompanied by urbanization. The population of Warsaw increased rapidly in these years, growing from 223,000 in 1864 to 625,000 in 1897 and 885,000 by 1914, by which time it had become the third largest city in the Tsarist Empire. It remained the administrative and military centre of the Kingdom of
Poland and retained a special role in Polish life. Although Polish educational and cultural life was more developed in Galicia and political activity much less constrained, Warsaw retained the role of ‘capital in waiting’. The growth of Łódź was even more precipitous. In 1820, it had been a village with a population of 767. This rose to 4343 in 1831 and 32,427 by 1862. By 1897, the population of the town had grown to 314,000, while the surrounding areas which were not yet incorporated into the town also numbered several hundred thousand inhabitants.

An important feature of the industrial development of these years was the part played in it by railways. The length of railway lines in the Kingdom grew from 635 km in 1862 to 2084 in 1887, though density still relatively low. Importance of Warsaw - Vienna line. In 1870 Warsaw linked with Moscow and in 1873 with Kiev.

One consequence of these developments was the growth of an industrial working class, which increased in size from 50,000 in 1863 to 150,000 in 1883. By 1885, the Warsaw industrial district, the centre of the railway industry, contained 33,000 industrial workers, one quarter of those in the Congress Kingdom. 30 per cent of these were employed in the metallurgical industry, 26 per cent in textile production and 21 per cent in food processing. Warsaw had become the entrepot where the European narrow-gauge railway lines met the Russian broad-gauge. The metal-working industry, the largest in the town, was dominated by three great firms (Rudzki; Borman and Szwede; Lilpop, Rau and Loewenstein), which by 1914 employed 31,000 workers. They produced iron and steel products for the Russian market, especially rails, bridge materials, railway wagons and industrial and farm machinery.
The end of the tariff barrier with the Russian Empire and the abolition of unfree cultivation in the Kingdom of Poland, which created a much larger domestic market, led to the rapid growth of the textile industry, particularly in the town of Łódź. By the beginning of the 1880s, the Łódź industrial district contained 42,000 industrial workers, of whom 36,000 were employed in the textile industry, the majority in cotton textiles and the remainder in wool. By 1886, the area contained 30 per cent of the industrial workers in the Kingdom of Poland, and 65 per cent of the textile workers. The two largest industrialists in the textile industry were the German Scheibler and the Jew Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznanski. Other Jews prominent in the textile industry were Rosenblatt, Silberstein, Kon and Prussak. The development of the Łódź textile industry has often been described in fiction, as in Władysław Reymont’s *Promised Land*, made into a film by Andrzej Wajda, Sholem Asch’s *Three Cities* and Israel Singer’s *The Brothers Ashkenazy*.

3. Positivism and other Political Movements

The catastrophic defeat of the 1863 Upising gave rise to a strong disillusionment with insurrectionary tradition. This took the form of Positivism. Struggle for independence had divided attention from need to improve position of peasants and emancipate Jews and women. Link with earlier ‘organic work.’ Leading spokesmen also rejected romanticism, which they identified with Polish insurrectionary tradition (ed. E. Sawrymowicz, T. Wojeński, *Publicystyka Pozytywizmu*)

The ‘Positivists,’ took their name from a term introduced by the French
philosopher Auguste Comte: Positive Philosophy. Comte’s work was probably the high point in the nineteenth century cult of science. But in their thinking, Polish Positivists were less indebted to Comte than to English utilitarians, above all, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. They were also avid readers of Charles Darwin, whose theory of evolution fascinated them. They believed that if nature evolves progressively, the same laws can be detected in society; and this strong tendency to look for analogies between human societies and biological organisms explains their emphasis on organic growth rather than revolutionary change. Comte’s optimistic philosophy was, in fact, a theory of unlimited bourgeois progress based on a belief in the magical blessings of the Industrial Revolution. Comte divided mankind’s entire history into three successive periods: theological, metaphysical, and scientific. According to him, fortunate mankind had already entered the scientific period. Comte considered himself the founder of a scientific church which would supplant all previous beliefs and religions.

The Polish Positivists may have chosen the English utilitarians as their masters, but their basic optimism was characteristically Comtian. In a tragic country, they were reacting against a national past that had piled misfortune on misfortune. Without the possibility of expressing political aspirations, they had to place all their hopes in science and in economic progress. Because of strict censorship they were forced to display their ideas in literary criticism, through a system of allusions, using the literary works as points of departure for debate on larger issues. The Positivist upsurge occurred in the years 1868-1873, whereas what may be termed the ‘ideological phase’ of Positivism extended to 1881. One has to admire the quantity and quality of periodical publications, polemicizing with each other, and the number of translations of scientific and literary
works. The organs of the most radical wing of the Positivists – *Przegląd tygodniowy* and *Prawda* – voiced the opinion that all revolutionary dreams should be abandoned because the value of a given nation is not a function of its independence but of its contribution to the economy and to culture. A citizen’s basic duty, therefore, was to develop industry and trade and to foster education. The Positivists launched the slogans of ‘organic work’ and ‘work at the foundations.’ Treating society as an organism, analogous to animal organisms, they stressed the harmonious interactivity of all of its constituent parts. Thus, regardless of their intentions, individuals who strove to enrich themselves in the long run strengthened the organism. According to the Positivists, Poland’s obsolete feudal mentality, inherited from the Polish gentry, was an obstacle to her transformation into a modern capitalistic country. A strong moralistic current permeated their publicism; they attacked obscurantism, clericalism, class barriers and advocated equal rights for the downtrodden – not only for peasants, but also for Jews and for women. The followers of the new trend were, to a large extent, inheritors of eighteenth-century Polish rationalism, and like their predecessors, they devised a program to spread literacy and popularize science, convinced that knowledge would automatically lift the moral level of the masses. Theirs was quite a task, if we remember that, owing to the lack of elementary schools, illiteracy in Poland had reached 90 per cent (there could hardly have been any solace in knowing that the figure for Russia was 94 per cent). Toward the Polish past they took a critical attitude, ascribing the fall of the old Respublica to that very anarchy so dear to the Polish nobles.

This stance sharply opposed the Romantic view, in which Poland was presented as an innocent victim of vicious neighbors. The reappraisal of Romanticism in literature
was severe, although the Positivists certainly did not refuse greatness to Mickiewicz, Slowacki, and Krasiński. They turned their anger mostly against the second wave of the Romantics, particularly against the craze for messianic ideas. Poetry was a pet peeve because it disregarded logic. For the Positivists, the first Romantics were great poets in spite of their being sometimes incomprehensible, while their successors seemed to accept incomprehensibility as a principle. Thus, literature was to be a kind of cognition, but inferior to scientific cognition, and the Positivists openly set for literature a utilitarian ideal. Art was to illustrate in a vivid manner the truths attained by a scientific mind. Poetry could be tolerated only if it was clear, understandable, logically analyzable, and of educational value. Some Positivists were even inclined to recognize poetry as a useful corrective: without its exaltation of the sublime, utilitarianism risked degenerating into narrow egoism. But, as the literary genre best suited to the needs of a writer-citizen and most able to convey the greatness of industry and technology, they chose the novel.

They excluded, however, its historical species. One of the leading writers of the time, Eliza Orzeszkowa, explained why: ‘A historical novel imperfectly written is not only useless but harmful, since it gives to unprepared minds a false idea of things that it is much better not to know than to know in a distorted way.’ The novel was to present not the life of the nobility and aristocracy but that of the new middle class and the simple people. It should introduce, to quote Orzeszkowa again, ‘a burgher, a banker, a factory owner, a merchant, tails and top hats, machines, surgeon’s instruments, locomotives.’ By developing in the reader a better grasp of social laws, the novel would serve Science. The fates of characters were not to depend, as they had in Romantic literature, on blind chance or the intervention of extrahuman forces, because any feeling of impotence in the
face of destiny would destroy a reader’s faith in himself. The novel should be realistic and should contain ‘an idea’ [read ‘tendency’] artfully blended, however, with the form. Today, it is easy to see the internal contradiction in such a prerequisite, but for the

Positivists, ‘Truth’ was identical with the unveiling of humanity’s harmonious advance toward Progress; therefore, there could be no collision, theoretically, between a tendency and realistic art. Obviously a literature that turned back with nostalgia toward feudal Poland was not to the Positivists’ liking. Aleksander Fredro’s plays and Józef Korzeniowski’s novels were esteemed for their sober approach to reality. Russian literature, because it had been imposed by the czarist government as a means of Russianizing the young people, received, at that time, a hostile reception. In their looking westward, the Positivists did not differ from the majority of Polish society. Among Western writers they particularly cherished Dickens, Mark Twain, and Alphonse Daudet. Although the novels of Emile Zola were discussed, their brutality was felt to be unacceptable.

The Positivists, believers in a liberal ideology based on the conviction that free enterprise in industry, trade, and agriculture is a guarantee of continuous, harmonious progress, tried to console themselves when they observed the violence of the struggle for money within the growing capitalistic society that this was an inevitable concomitant of progress. Gradually, however, they became more and more skeptical, more and more pessimistic, especially after 1881.

The most eminent fighter in the ranks of the Positivists was a man of a prolificacy approaching that of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. Primarily a publicist, Aleksander Świętochowski (1849-1938) was also the author of novels and dramas. Like nearly all the
representatives of Positivism, he was a graduate of the ‘Main School’ (Szkola Główna). Under that name the University of Warsaw functioned from its reopening in 1862 until it was closed down in 1869 to be supplanted by a Russian-language university. A brilliant man, a sharp, even violent, polemicist against the conservatives, accused by his adversaries of haughtiness and pride, he edited the periodical Prawda, signing his articles ‘Truth’s Deputy.’ Świętochowski placed his hopes in education: ‘All the great problems hidden in the womb of mankind can be solved by education alone, and this education must be compulsory.’ He was not an enthusiast of capitalism: ‘Capitalism…is a beast which is still able to crush people, but time is restraining it with more and more effective bits.’ It was, after all, preferable to socialism, which would lead to universal slavery: ‘Everybody would be forced to comply with prescribed norms of thought and of action, to renounce his own plans, not to choose his own roads. The only originality of the individual would consist in his lesser or greater capacity to accomplish the social will, and the only freedom left would be the possibility of physical labor and the consumption of its fruits.’ Polemicizing with the conservative Russian press, which reproached the Poles for their revolutionary tendencies, he wrote:

If we have supposedly contributed to the rise of Russian nihilism, the question arises: who threw the socialist baby into our yard? Recently – as we learn from the Petersburg daily papers – a group of our youth studying at Russian institutions got entangled in the propagation of the revolutionary gospel and ended their careers in more or less remote localities of Siberia; while Polish institutions, like the late Szkola Główna, have not furnished socialism with a single champion.

In order to show Świętochowski’s political preoccupations, it would be fitting to quote his own words once again. These were written in 1883:

Two phantoms have been chilling the blood in the veins of Europe, paralyzing its work and destroying its hope of a better future: on the one hand, an immense system of political alliances established by Bismarck for enigmatic purposes; on
the other hand, an equally immense and equally mysterious system of socialist associations, engendered by Marx – these are the two mines under the foundations of the world, which threaten to explode and provoke fear.

Though recognized by the most radical Positivists as their leader, Świętochowski remained, in fact, a lonely man, guarding a critical aloofness toward political causes. In the later stages of his long life, he co-operated with National Democrats and espoused ‘moderate’ antisemitism. As he explained in his memoirs:

I admit only to the name of evolutionist in philosophy and national humanist in sociology. Because of my views, I defended the Jews fifty years ago, when they wished to be Poles, and, because of the same views, I do not defend them today, when they wish to be Jews, enemies of the Poles.¹

At the same time, the nationalism and racism of the Endecja were alien to him, and its leaders never really regarded him as one of ‘theirs.’ As a creative writer, he cannot be accorded a very lofty position. He seemed even in his own day excessively cerebral; and his dramas, for instance, are nothing but cold, artificial fires of dialogues. Among his works, one of the most important is a two-volume Historia chłopów polskich (1925-1928).

The worship of learning so typical of the Positivists was not mere lip service. The leading literary critic of their camp, Piotr Chmielowski (1848-1904), a Szkoła Główna alumnus, remains today an imposing example of enormous erudition, of hard work, and of intellectual integrity.

Another important figure was Władimir Spasowicz (1829-1906), a key ally of the Positivists and a man who tried to diminish the mutual hostility between Poles and Russians. A lawyer by education, he settled permanently in Russia, where he acquired fame as a gifted orator and one of the most effective defense attorneys (he was caricatured in Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov). Spasowicz also wrote a great
deal, both in Polish and in Russian, attacking with some success what survived of the messianic mentality. A sober literary critic and politician, as a liberal he deplored the disastrous effects of the 1863 uprising in Russia proper, where it weakened the progressive camp. Although accused in Russia of being an alien and a democrat in his heart, and angering the Poles by his program of cooperation with Russia, he succeeded in maintaining his own line. In his literary criticism, he belabored those writers who represented a certain generalized state of mind; for instance, he took up Wincenty Pol’s poetry and in his analysis decried the entire frame of mind which produced nostalgia for old gentry virtues and vices. Difficult to classify, Spasowicz in some respects was close to the historians of the Krakow School, while his political liberalism linked him to the Warsaw Positivists.

Writers of the time

Bolesław Prus (1845-1912)
Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841-1910)
Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916)

4. Reaction against positivism

This comes in the late 1880s and 1890s, and was the result both of the revival of nationalism with Europe and of the apparent failure of both positivism and tri-loyalism to alleviate the situation of the Poles. Reaction against positivism was to completely realign
Polish politics between 1890 and 1914. It led to the emergence of the various forces which were to dominate Polish politics for the next half-century, integral nationalism, socialism in its national and internationalist manifestations and self-conscious movements emanating from the increasingly politically sophisticated peasantry. The period also saw the increasing development of a national consciousness among the other nations which had lived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, above all the Lithuanians, the Ukrainians and the Jews.

National Democrats

Originally called the National League (Liga Narodowa). This was given a new direction in 1891-2 by its chief ideologist Roman Dmowski, a man who was to exercise an enormous effect on the development of Polish politics in the next decades. He saw his role as finding a ‘third way’ for the Poles, avoiding the extremes of armed uprising and complete passivity. In his words:

Where formerly it was held that the nation had only two alternatives, either armed uprising or complete abdication and acquiescence in the most miserable of conditions of existence…he Polish nation has now found a new way excluding both of these. It has realized the necessity of taking as its point of departure in politics the real political situation, the incorporation into three states, but it has understood that with each of these three states it can and must struggle for its national existence for its separateness, for conditions of general advance, indeed for its civil rights.

Dmowski was above all a Polish exponent of the idea of integral nationalism, which was emerging all over Europe. He was strongly by the success of Prussia in using force to unite German and also looked to the Action Française in France. In addition, he saw the Young Czechs, with their stress on the need to develop a Czech patriotism based
on all classes of Czech society as a model to follow. Dmowski’s views drew extensively on the new nationalist views prevalent in Europe.

Like other integral nationalists, he saw the Nation as an organism – national feeling, in his view was a combination of instincts, ‘independent of the will of the individual’. His aim to make use of these instincts to create among the Poles all the partition a sense of national community strong enough to stand the pressures of assimilation. It was this concept of national community which explains his hostility to Socialism – in his view - class parties divided the nation; do not recognize national antagonisms. He placed great emphasis on developing national sentiments of peasantry – he was much impressed by the activities of Czechs in this area – and stressed the importance of developing rural cooperatives and schools. Yes he was not hostile to large landowners and tried, with some success, to win them over. He was, however, very strongly opposed to what he regarded as the disastrous ‘noble ethos’ which had led to so many Polish catastrophes.

Dmowski was also a strong antisemite. He did not believe that more than a small number of Jews could be assimilated into the emerging modern Polish nation and argued that the growing national consciousness of the Jews made a compromise with them impossible. In his phrase, ‘There cannot be two nations on Vistula’. In addition, he attacked the Jews for ‘collaborating’ with the partitioning powers and for their support of what he regarded as the destructive political force of socialism. Even before the First World War he became increasing prey to conspiracy theories of politics and to a belief in a ‘Jewish-masonic conspiracy’ to destroy Poland.

Dmowski called himself a democrat, but he was hostile to democracy as practiced
in West both because it conflicted with his idea of a coherent national community with a
comma will and because of its subordination to those very ‘Jewish-Masonic influences’
which he saw as bent on the destruction of the Poles as a national community. He
argued that uncritical acceptance of liberal slogans had had harmful effects in Poland
writing in 1904 that ‘even today many people are deeply convinced that true democracy
cannot be concerned with such matters as the national interest, that it had only struggle
for freedom and liberty, opposing broad national and state aspirations.’

He also had a different geo-political orientation from the revolutionaries of the
previous generation. In his view, Germany, not Russia, was the principal enemy of
Poland. Prussia had played the most prominent part with the partition of Poland. It had,
unlike Russia and Austria, gained territories which were believed to be indispensable to
the national existence. ‘To Prussia, the lands she took from Poland were necessary for the
territorial leaders of the possessions….Prussia grew up from the fall of Poland, the
revival of Poland. …would be a break on German eastward expansion and would
undermine the leading role which Prussia played in the German Reich. Thus Prussian
politicians understand they can make no compromise with the Poles.’

Under these circumstances, the Poles had no alternative but to seek an
accommodation with the Tsarist Empire, which was also increasingly threatened by
German expansionism.

The Socialist Movement

The first Polish socialist movement – ‘Proletariat’ – was led by Ludwik Warynski. In
1878 it promulgated its ‘Brussels programme’, which was strongly hostile to nationalism
According to Waryński ‘There is a nation more unfortunate than the Polish nation, it is the nation of proletarians.’

This anti-national stance was challenged in the early 1890s by the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna) which was created in November 1892 by the amalgamation of four smaller Polish socialist groups in Russia. Its leaders took the view that since both landowners and bourgeoisie had decided on collaboration with the Russians, only the industrial working class still interested in national liberalism – a goal as important as social revolution.

The most important of its leaders was Józef Piłsudski. He was almost the exact opposite of Dmowski and was, in many ways, a direct descendant of the romantic Polish revolutionaries of the nineteenth century. He differed strongly from Dmowski in his positive assessment of the 1863 Uprising, writing in 1924:

Historical currents derived from and faithful to the style of our generation wanted to force us to accept the view that a score of hotheads, of madmen, of idiots, symptomatic of Polish lightheadedness of Polish stupidity, prevented Polish.

Polish caution understanding, seriousness from endowing Poland without knowing not what benefits…This was a war, gentlemen, a war which Russia had to wage for a whole year in order to win.

Piłsudski first became active in politics in one of the later manifestations of Narodnaya Volya, the Russian terrorist organization. In 1887 he was sentenced to 5 years in Siberia for complicity in a plot on the life of the Tsar. (This the same plot for which Lenin’s brother executed.) While in Siberia, comes to conclusion that Tsarist Russia ‘that Asiatic monster covered with European veneer’ was Poland’s main enemy.

He now came to the conclusion that he had overestimated the strength of the Russian revolution movement. In his view, only a new insurrection, based on the 1863 pattern,
but this time in alliance with the other oppressed nationalities of Russia could regain Poland’s freedom

The principal exponent of revolutionary internationalist socialism on the Polish lands was the Social Democracy of the Congress Kingdom and Lithuania (S.D.K.P.iL. – Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy), which called for a return to the internationalism of Proletariat. It formed by withdrawal from PPS 1893 of those actions which held that PPS’s demand for national independence harmful to socialism, since it detracted from the goal of Russian revolution. Its principal leaders were Rosa Luxembourg and Julian Marchlewski. Rosa Luxembourg - her career. Die Ekonomishe Entwicklung von Polen. (Nettl’s biography of Rosa Luxembourg)

Name of party significant – stressed it did not claim to speak for whole of Poland. It remained a small and predominantly Jewish group of impressive but relentless intellectuals. As we have seen, emphasis on social rather than national goals not new in Polish socialism and made even more sense at the end of the nineteenth century as a result of the increased economic integration of Russian Poland in the Tsarist Empire, as was shown by economic development of Łódź, Białystok and in the Dąbrowa Basin. These years were also marked by the growing strength of the Russian revolutionary movement

But there was something quite irrational in the extreme way the SDKPiL leaders rejected any compromise with Polish nationalism. According to Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Not even a café politician most fertile fantasy could envisage the reconstitution of Poland.’
Peasant Movement

1. Peasant parties as an E. European phenomenon
2. Peasants after emancipation
3. Peasant Parties
   a. Galicia - Witos
   b. Prussia Poland
   c. Russian Poland

3. The Revolution of 1905

These different orientations crystallized in 1905 revolution, which although it was ultimately unsuccessful shook the Tsarist Empire to its foundations and did lead to the establishment of a semi-constitutional system.

1. Piłsudski and PPS

Piłsudski saw in the revolutionary crisis of Russian state 1904-1907 the opposition he had long sought to launch a new insurrection to regain Poland’s independence. He went to Japan in 1904 to seek support from Japanese high command. During the revolution, he assumed command of almost completely autonomous ‘Military organization’ of the PPS and led a series of attacks on Russian government outposts, which culminated in seizure
of railway station at Bezdany north of Wilno in September 1908.

At the same time discontent began to grow with Piłsudski’s insurrectionary ideas in the PPS. By 1906, it had become obvious that his actions would not spark off a national revolt, while the strength of Russian revolution movement was clear to all. As a consequence, at the Ninth Congress of the party in November 1906 a large group seceded from the PPS and created a new party the ‘PPS left-wing’. This advocated close cooperation between Polish and Russian revolution movements and argued that Polish national demands could be satisfied by Constituent Assembly in Warsaw. This was, however, too much for Rosa Luxemburg and a union with the SDKPiL was thus rendered impossible.

Piłsudski himself also came to the conclusion that terrorism on its own could not succeed. He was now convinced that there would be a war between the partitioning powers (1908 Balkan crisis). If Poland to have any influence on the outcome of this war, an independent Polish military force would have to be created. But Russia remains the principal enemy.

In June 1908 he formed the League of Active Struggle to train and organize military units. He moved to Galicia where political conditions least restrictive and where the Austrians were not unsympathetic to his anti-Russian aims. His military activity reached its high point in November 1912, with formulation of Provisional Committee of Confederated parties demanding Independence (KTSSN) which united in support of a Polish military force all Galician parties except the Conservatives and the National Democrats.

Disputes somewhat weakened the Committee in subsequent years, but by 1914
could put something like 7,000 Polish Legionaries in the field.

2. National Democrats

In 1905, the National Democrats bitterly opposed Piłsudski’s attempts to foster a national revolt. Dmowski even followed Piłsudski to Japan to dissuade Japanese from giving help. In addition, the propertied supporters of the party alarmed by strength of revolution movement in Russia Poland, particularly in Łódź, and Warsaw which pushed them on path of attempted comp with Tsardom

   In the Elections to Duma of March, April 1906 the Endeks win every seat in congress kingdom. Support Kadets – but with reservations. Attempt to win over Russians

   This policy had some successes – Sazanov and others converted. But distrust deep and was exacerbated by the Chełm affair and by the situation in East Galicia, where the Russian nationalists were encouraging pro-Russian movements. Failure of Endecja to reach agreement with the Russian government in the years after 1905.

4. The Aftermath of the Revolution

The revolution saw an unprecedented mobilization of political opinion on the Polish lands and saw the previously largely theoretical ideologies of integral nationalism and Socialism, Polish and revolutionary emerge as parties with a mass following. It also saw the increasing strength within the Jewish community of concepts of Jewish identity which
saw the Jews as a proto-national group, of which the most important was the burgeoning Zionist movement, Socialism also began to find significant numbers of adherents within the Jewish community and Jews were to found in both the national and internationalist wings of the socialist movement in Poland as well as in a specifically Jewish socialist movement, the General Jewish Workers’ Alliance of *Bund*.

The revolution was crushed with corresponding disillusionment, but the rights granted by the Manifesto of October 1905 were not rescinded. Poles thus now enjoyed a whole range of benefits which they had long been denied - education in the national language, voluntary associations, trade unions, increased freedom of the press, voting rights. All these rights were also granted to the Jews, thus immediately widening the area of conflict between the two groups. For Dmowski and his National Democrats, conflict with the Jews now became a central part of their political ideology and strategy.

Certainly, these years saw the strengthening of the exponents of the ‘new Jewish politics’ in the Kingdom of Poland. It was now that a Jewish daily press developed in both Warsaw and Łódź. In 1906, five Yiddish newspapers were published in Warsaw, *Der veg, Di telegraf, Yidishes tageblat, Morgenblat* and *Di naye tsaytung* had a combined daily circulation of 96,000. In the same year, three Hebrew daily newspapers – *Hayom, Hatsefira* and *Hatsofeh* had a combined daily circulation of only 12,000, while the single Polish-Jewish newspaper – *Gazeta Nowa: Ludzkość* had a circulation of around 10,000. Two years later, *Yidishes tageblat* changed its name to *Haynt*, which quickly established itself as the premier Yiddish newspaper in the Kingdom of Poland.

The only one among the new papers to articulate the assimilationist and anti-Zionist stance which was still upheld also by the weekly *Izraelita* was *Gazeta Nowa,*
edited by the Jewish assimilationist, Stanisław Kempner. Its view that in the face of worsening Polish-Jewish relations, the only solution was equality of rights for the Jewish population and complete unity with Poland and Polish culture came to seem increasingly outmoded.

Certainly, within the Polish liberal camp, shocked by the signs of Jewish collective action and the new self-esteem it engendered, it became increasingly fashionable to talk of the ‘bankruptcy’ of assimilation. The Positivists were particularly affronted by the development of the press and literature in Yiddish, which they referred to as ‘jargon’, the emergence of specific Jewish political parties and the demand for cultural autonomy.2

It was largely in vain that the main Jewish autonomist groups, in an attempt to reassure Polish opinion, issued a declaration in April 1910:

Every honest Jewish nationalist interested in the rise and well-being of Poland and Polish culture and will never oppose the interests of the Polish nation. Jewish nationalism is primarily cultural.3

The new mood was best articulated by Prus, who was clearly not appeased by this statement. He set out his views in an article entitled ‘And again the Jewish question’, which appeared in Tygodnik Illustrowany on 12 November 1910. He started by stressing that he was opposed to ‘any restrictions, any exceptional laws directed against the Jews’. He also conceded that in the past, the Jews had made valuable contributions to Polish life. But this was no longer the case:

When it becomes apparent, that the Jews are undertaking a struggle against us in which our livelihood, our existence not only as nation, but also as zoological species, when this becomes apparent, in the name of equality, I will demand that we, Poles, be allowed to defend ourselves, naturally with decent means and methods and - to carry the struggle against the Jews to the same limits that they have carried it against us. We are confined in an ever more constrained manner;
until now we have made the concessions to the Jews. The time will come when they will have to make concessions to us.

He then attacked the Jews for pursuing ‘separatist’ politics vis-a-vis the Poles and for the negative effect their activities had on Polish social and economic life. He concluded, in vocabulary not far from that of the National Democrats:

We stand before two perspectives. Since the Jews are growing and strengthening themselves because of our mistakes, we can either transform ourselves and our internal relations, or - after losing our most vital forces to emigration - become the vassals of the Jews.

If the first of these occurred, he claimed, the bulk of Jews would emigrate from the Polish lands:

Soon, they will realize that where there are hundreds of thousands too many of them, there they will suffer poverty, ignorance, criminal behaviour and they will hate their surroundings, which will also hate them. There, where there are few of them, there they are honest, useful citizens, they become wealthy, occupy important positions and receive general respect. The Jews’ promised land is not Palestine, and even less unhappy Poland, but the whole world, in which they should settle in small communities linked with each other by their common belief, even sympathy and even language. Then they will not complain that they are being persecuted and others will not complain of their fanaticism, ignorance and oppression.

A major Polish-Jewish conflict now developed in Warsaw. By 1912, there was an additional bone of contention between Poles and Jews, the problem of what rights should be conceded to Jews if the Tsarist authorities, as promised, extended municipal self-government to the Kingdom of Poland. The conflict came in Warsaw, over the election of a representative to the Russian Duma in the election of October 1912. The changes in the electoral system introduced by Stolypin meant that the Jews were now the majority of the restricted electorate in the general circle which elected the body to select the candidate. This was a situation likely to lead to ethnic conflict and was welcomed by
Dmowski, who saw it as a means of consolidating Polish opinion around his National Democratic Party. As he wrote to Ignacy Paderewski on 12 October 1912, ‘We do not believe in an agreement with the Jews on terms that are possible for Poles [and] we are preparing for a sharp electoral conflict with the Jews.’

What complicated the situation was the fact that Dmowski and the National Democrats were opposed by a large body of Polish opinion, organized in the ‘National Concentration’, which opposed Endecja policy as too conciliatory to the tsarist authorities. Their candidate was the historian Jan Kucharzewski.

The non-assimilationist Jews, now a majority in the Jewish electorate set out their position in September. Their strategy had three points:

1. One Duma seat from the Kingdom of Poland should be held by a Jew. This should be the seat for Łódź, where the Jews constituted an even larger proportion of the voters than they did in Warsaw.

2. ‘In Warsaw, a Christian Pole who supports the principle of equal rights [for the Jews] should be elected.’

3. If such a candidate did not stand, ‘a Jewish candidate will be put forward in Warsaw’.

* Izraelita rejected this stance as unnecessarily provocative. ‘Warsaw is a Polish city. The Jews must not take advantage of the accidental voting majority...they must vote for a man of tested civic virtues, for a fervent Polish patriot. A manifestation of Jewish separatism must not be allowed to take place.’

Dmowski, well aware that his position in the eyes of Polish society had been weakened because he was regarded as excessively pro-Russian, sought to exploit the
Jewish issue in order to embarrass his Polish opponents and regain popular support. The main Endecja slogan was accordingly ‘the struggle with the Jews’. According to an article in the Conservative newspaper, Słowo, on 10 October, the Endecja organized its campaign ‘under the slogan of militant antisemitism, with the obvious goal of winning victory for Dmowski at any cost and of mobilizing the whole of society for a furious struggle with the Jews, a struggle which would stop at nothing.’

One of the issues which had led Kucharzewski and his National Concentration to clash with Dmowski had been his reluctance to adopt an openly anti-Jewish position and his hope of finding some common ground with the still influential Jewish assimilationists. Yet he too was unable to bridge the growing gulf between the two societies. He sought an interview on 2 October with Nowa Gazeta, the last daily in the Kingdom of Poland still upholding the traditional liberal program of gradual assimilation and equal rights. Yet in it, he too betrayed a paternalism which was bound to be resented by almost all Jews in the new political climate. He started by asserting ‘I am a supporter of the principal of Jewish equal rights.’ There were however, ‘too great a host of Jews’ in the Kingdom of Poland and some restrictions would accordingly have to be placed on them when municipal self-government was introduced. Their economic influence was also too great and, in some instances, harmful. He gave particular offence by describing an imaginary tour around Warsaw by a Pole and a Jew, which he used to demonstrate that Jews had no real link with the Polish past or with Polish values.

The election took place on 15 October. The Jewish list, with 40 per cent of the vote, secured forty-six electors; the National Concentration (30 per cent), twenty-three electors; the Endecja (27 per cent), eleven electors; the Democratic list (3 per cent), no
electors. Kucharzewski, unwilling to appear beholden to the Jewish electors, now created more offense by declaring that he would make ‘no open or secret commitments’ to them. The vote of the electoral college was set for 7 and 8 November. Izraelita again on 25 October counseled caution and advised the Jewish electors to abstain:

> Since we are unable to give support to a candidate who favours restrictions on the Jews in local self-government, let the electors, in the name of reason and justice, resolve not to prevent the election of a candidate whom a significant majority of the people of Warsaw want for their representative.

After some hesitation, the Jewish electors rejected this advice. They voted for the revolutionary socialist candidate, the Pole Eugeniusz Jagiełło. Bernard Singer, one of the leading Polish-language Jewish journalists has described in his memoirs the scene as the Jewish electors emerged from the Town Hall where the voting took place: ‘The Jews, silently, not looking around, with lowered heads, came down the steps. From the expressions on their faces it looked as though it was the Day of Atonement.’

The Jews were right to be apprehensive. The Endecja proceeded immediately to organize a boycott of Jewish shops and this was often accompanied by violence. They were, of course, the real victors, while the losers were the moderates on both sides. The supporters of the National Concentration expressed violent irritation at Jewish behaviour. Kurjer Warszawski, the main liberal paper, which had supported the Concentration and which during the Dreyfus Affair had been consistently pro-Dreyfus, expressed views on 8 November not far from those of the Endecja:

> Today’s election by the Jews is the most flagrant demonstration imaginable...In voting for Mr. Jagiello, the Jews have attempted to show that our national will means nothing here, that they can impose their will on us, that they will seize the first opportunity to give the Polish nation a challenge to battle.

Let it be so. We stand in the presence of an accomplished fact.
We regard today’s election as a symptom. The concrete fact is less important than what it represents. We have lost our seat despite the fact that we made the greatest efforts in order to save it for the national cause. In exchange, we have gained a clear understanding of an important aspect of internal affairs, the knowledge of a danger which stands before us; we have recognised the features of the internal enemy.

The Jews’ triumph is momentary. We have a profound conviction that the Jews will pay dearly for it. Society must now begin quiet consideration, far from emotional outbursts, of systematic means of defence against enemies and means of struggle with a separatist and dangerous element.

Świętochowski’s reaction was similar, if more extreme:

The jelly-like mass of Polish society is now becoming crystallized as a nation. And the Jewish nation has for the first time stood squarely against the Polish nation. This is no longer an ignorant ‘ghetto’ crowd...or an amorphous mass, which we need to digest and absorb. We have spotted this enemy late, but fortunately he has now emerged from the fog into our view.9

For the Endecja, the boycott was both a means of political mobilization and a means of widening its constituency. If the consumer suffered, the Polish shopkeeper certainly benefitted. Many, though not all liberals were also attracted to the boycott as a means of mobilizing Polish society. Several former liberals were struck by the ‘miracle of unity’ after years of inner party struggle. The Jewish enemy could provide the basis for national consolidation. According to Stanisław Pieńkowski:

The tide is rising and now no more sentiments, no more bridges, no more agreements! The relentless, though non-violent Polish-Jewish war marks the beginning of a new era for Poland.10

There were those who opposed the chauvinist tide. Some were Marxists, like Ludwik Krzywicki and Julian Marchlewski, others were liberals like Sempołowska, Lubinska and others, who were motivated primarily by ethical revulsion at the reversion to the politics of the jungle and filled with apprehension at the future of a society in which relations between Poles and Jews were poisoned by mutual hatred. The most
consistent opponent of the spreaders of racial hatred was Jan Baudouin De Courtenay who saw its roots in the national idea itself and who staunchly defended the inalienable right of every individual to choose his own way of life.

Those who lost most in the new climate of opinion were the Jewish assimilationists. They had seen their views rejected by the most of the wealthier elements in the Jewish community (for the electorate was quite restricted). Nowa Gazeta continued to uphold the integrationist position, but Izraelita underwent a crisis, torn apart by the division between those who felt that not enough had been done to appease Polish society and those who felt that the journal’s posture was craven and lacked any dignity; it ceased publication early in 1913, although some attempts were to be made to revive it in the following year. More important, support for the assimilationists within Polish society had now considerably diminished. According to Andrzej Chołoniewski: ‘A man with a split national soul is an anomaly. There is no room for “hybrids”, hyphenated half-Jews, half-Poles’.11 According to an article in Kurjer Warszawski on 10 November, the assimilationists had shown themselves to be a ‘quantite-negligeable’, while Tygodnik Illustrowany argued on 16 November that they ‘had either demonstrated their utter powerlessness in the election or they were, secretly, in solidarity with the plan of the Jewish nationalists which has ruined for a long time to come the possibility of any sort of Polish-Jewish understanding.’

5. Conclusion: Situation on Eve of the First World War

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1Alexander Świętochowski, Wspomnienia, Warsaw, 1966, p. 86.

3 Quoted in ‘Deklaracja żargonowców’, *Prawda*, no. 16, 1910.


