

The Polish Intelligentsia: The Emergence and Transformation of the Social Group and its World View

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present the discussion on the origins of the Polish intelligentsia and to describe the process of its development from the Enlightenment until the Second World War. The author examines the emergence of the educated bourgeoisie in the 18th century and proceeds to consider the impact of the partitions. The Napoleonic Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815) and the constitutional Polish Kingdom with the Russian Tsar as King of Poland (1815–1831), provided the Polish intelligentsia with official jobs and permitted it to develop as a stratum of state servants. After the lost Uprising of 1830/1831, thousands of educated people had to emigrate. They developed a new ideology, a branch of European romanticism that extolled sacrifice and the fight for freedom and independence. As opposed to it, another ideology of gradual “organic work” appeared in the 1840s in Prussian Poland; the rivalry of these two approaches would from that moment become one of the defining features of Polish intellectual life.

The paper analyzes the impact of the policies pursued by the partitioning powers: the Russification of the Polish Kingdom and the parallel Germanization of the Prussian Poland closed job opportunities in the state sector for the Polish intelligentsia and alienated it even further from the state. In the Austrian partition (Galicia), in turn, the Polish intelligentsia could pursue the national culture and find jobs in the state service, but due to economic reasons it never assumed the role of “Bildungsbürgertum”.

In the conclusion the author examines the impact of the beginning of mass politics and the regaining of independence by Poland in 1918 on the functions, conflicts and views of the Polish intelligentsia.

In his introduction to the synthesis of the Polish intelligentsia in the 19th century, the editor Jerzy Jedlicki writes that the intelligentsia is the subject of continued analysis. This statement was true in the year of publication of his book (2008), and also in many other historical moments since the introduction of this notion into the Polish language in the 1840s. Indeed, it remains true to this day. Over the years, discussions have been generated by the following questions: does the intelligentsia serve its purpose? Is it drifting away from the rest of society? Is it too elitist and self-absorbed, or perhaps quite the opposite – too democratic and radical? People even questioned whether it existed at all, and if so, whether it was a positive or a negative phenomenon. Is the existence of the intelligentsia evidence of Poland's backwardness and Eastern European particularism, or on the contrary – a sign that Poland belongs to the Western world? These are only some of the subjects which gave rise to animated debate in the past, and which continue to provoke more or less heated exchanges of views today. However, while filling out official questionnaires we no longer write “working intelligentsia” in the social background section (as was customary until 1989), so the notion of the intelligentsia evidently no longer functions as one of the officially sanctioned elements of the social structure. Instead, more and more often we use other terms – mainly “the middle class”. Present in Aristotle's philosophy, this notion is two thousand years older than the concept of the intelligentsia. As regards its use in the Polish language, the benefits of the existence of the “middle class” were discussed already in the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski. It is thus interesting and worthy of contemplation (although we cannot delve into this subject here) to consider why this term seems more modern in today's Polish language than that of the “intelligentsia”. However, the notion of the intelligentsia has not been abandoned completely – in fact, it seems that over the last two years it has regained relevance in the public debate, mainly because the age-old discussion concerning the status of the elites in Polish society, the extent of their alienation, and the question of the legitimacy of their claim to be in a position to represent the whole of society has entered a new stage. Thus, an analysis of the origins of our ideas about the function of the intelligentsia in society and the role model of the intellectual may also have some bearing on our modern-day disputes concerning world view, and could help develop our understanding of the subject of the present paper, concerned as it is with the fate of the intelligentsia in Poland and other countries during the Second World War.

Introduced into the Polish language in the 1940s, the term *intelligentsia* comes from German and originates in the philosophy of Hegel. Just as different societies and states in successive eras are to be the embodiments of a spirit, one social group is supposed to personify *intelligence* – understood as an abstract category of mind – and consequently become the nation's intelligentsia. Although the term itself was introduced relatively late, it describes a phenomenon which emerged in the age of Stanisław August.

It may be traced back to even earlier periods of history, as may be evidenced by the title of Jacques le Goff's *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, but let us not dwell on references to such distant times.

Social change often precedes the formulation of theoretical concepts which develop as a consequence thereof and attempt to explain them. Transformations of material aspects and of the world view frequently go hand in hand. But sometimes society undergoes transmutation as a result of ideological and political change – and I am not referring here to the far-reaching social engineering projects of the 20th century and their on the whole terrible effects. The same [kind of transformation] happened on a smaller scale in Poland, in the second half of the 18th century. The reforms introduced by the country's last King combined with the ideals of the Enlightenment – which had been gaining popularity in Poland for quite some time – not only changed people's way of thinking, but also left an indelible mark on society. An urban milieu emerged, centered around several journals (“Monitor”, “Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne”), while the Thursday Dinners held by the King attracted the intellectual elite – this may not have been much, but it was enough for a new stratum of urban, educated citizens to emerge in Warsaw and – on a smaller scale – in Kraków and Vilnius. One must not forget the role played in this early stage of development of the Polish intelligentsia by the clergy – mainly by educational orders such as the Piarists and, more importantly, the Jesuits. Or former Jesuits, to be precise, as the Jesuit order was dissolved in 1773 by the Pope; in consequence, being released from their oath, they could pursue new careers, often choosing intellectual professions to which they were predisposed on account of their education. While continuing to live as priests, they were no longer monks, which allowed them more freedom of action. The belief in a specific mission of the intelligentsia undoubtedly originated from various sources, and perhaps the involvement of the Catholic clergy in its creation was one of them.

In the years 1807–1830, the process of the development of the intelligentsia was accelerated following the establishment of two successive, albeit ephemeral Polish states – the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815) and the constitutional Kingdom of Poland (1815–1831). These were organized in a completely different way than the former Polish Republic, being modelled on the bureaucratic state of Prussia (which ruled over central Poland, including Warsaw, in the years 1795–1807, that is between the third partition and the appearance of Napoleon), and also on post-revolutionary Napoleonic France. Rather than on local government institutions, this new system was based on a state bureaucracy, and consequently required a greater number of civil servants than its predecessor. In addition, there was also a greater need for people educated in various disciplines, such as lawyers, doctors, and military men. They in turn created a demand for other intellectual institutions, such as schools, theaters, publishing houses, and libraries.

Thus, the Polish intelligentsia was at first a group focused on serving the state. However, this changed after the November Uprising, and even

more so after the January Uprising, when the administrative system in the Russian Partition became subjected to increasingly persistent Russification. This process took different forms in the Kingdom of Poland and in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, traditionally known to 19th century Poles as the “Taken Lands”. Already in the first years after the Napoleonic Wars, a specific problem surfaced in these territories: Vilnius University provided a very high standard of education, but its alumni could not find employment because the Taken Lands were still governed to a certain degree by the self-government institutions administered by the nobility (as we remember from *Pan Tadeusz*), and by Russians on the higher administrative level. The administrative system was not as extensive as in the Kingdom of Poland, where the University of Warsaw produced candidates for administrative positions.

In the Kingdom of Poland, the collapse of the November Uprising did not automatically entail Russification of the administrative system. The Sejm, University, Society of Friends of Learning, and the Polish Army were liquidated; the highest posts in state offices – especially in the police – were taken over by Russians, but the administration remained Polish. At the same time, however, career opportunities disappeared, while more importantly still there was no hope of achieving Polish national aspirations under Russian rule. This turn of events had very important consequences, even though the repressive measures employed after the November Uprising seem rather moderate when viewed from a historical perspective. Until that point, the Polish intelligentsia was developing more or less in accordance with the German pattern; it was in the process of creating the Polish *Bildungsbürgertum*, i.e. educated middle class. Although exhibiting loyalty to its monarch, combining moral idealism with practical foresight and with the virtue of being content with simple things, as well as seeking happiness within one’s own family, such an educated Polish middle class would nevertheless have been different from that functioning in Germany, this on account of the fact that it was strongly influenced by the culture of the nobility (more on this topic later), and its lower material status. The above notwithstanding, however, it would have shared many important characteristics with the German prototype. But the November Uprising failed, bringing about the Great Emigration and the completely unexpected birth of an amazing phenomenon – Polish Romanticism. Let us just think about it: among the few thousand Poles in France was Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, and some time later Norwid – such a concentration of poetical genius was possibly greater than what could be observed throughout the 600-year history of Polish poetry (counting from the beginning of the 15th century). To describe this phenomenon, historians use the metaphor of “volcanic eruption”, as it seems that an erupting volcano is the only image that appropriately conveys its scale, importance and magnificence. Indeed, Romanticism fundamentally transformed the system of values of the Polish intelligentsia, transforming something even deeper – their perception of

the world. Although I am not competent to carry out a detailed analysis of poetry, I do know that when reading poems written by Mickiewicz or Słowacki one sees how they differ in terms of compactness and expression (putting the scale of poetical talent aside) from poems written during the Enlightenment by authors who created art in the spirit of classicism and sentimentalism. The great Polish Romantics gave birth to a new vision of Polish history – both of its past and future – and imposed it on society not by means of physical force, but rather through the power of expression and by the magnitude of their expectations.

The question of how popular this ideal was among members of society matters not for our deliberations. Historians of literature may have slightly overestimated its influence. It is also of little consequence for us here that this ideal – if adopted at all – was realized in a simplified and often distorted form. After all, systems created by the “Great Polish Romanticism” were intellectually complicated and very challenging in terms of morality. What emerged as a result was both oversimplified and stereotypical – something that Marcin Król referred to as “common Romanticism”. It frequently and deservedly met with criticism, sparking numerous ironic remarks: let us recall the bitter image of a small-town community at the time of the January Uprising presented in *Omyłka* by Bolesław Prus. There, Romanticism was reduced to promoting patriotic slogans and singing the song *Leci liście z drzewa, Co wyrosło wolne* (Wincenty Pol). But even oversimplifications and distortions attest to the magnitude of what is being simplified and distorted. On the normative level, Romanticism forced the Polish intelligentsia to assume a certain kind of radicalism: a belief in the necessity and value of sacrifice, the importance of non-material victories, and the elevation of the Polish question from the local issue of a rather small nation to that of a central element in God’s plan for mankind. There was no longer a place for *biedermeier* – the culture of the educated urban circles limited to family relations. To be more precise, even if this could have functioned in practice, there was no room for it in the realm of the ideal. Stefan Żeromski accurately presented this clash between ideals and everyday life in *Ludzie bezdomni* by juxtaposing idealist Judym with opportunistic physicians from Warsaw. This conflict between immaculate principle and the commonness of existence is also the subject of *Siłaczka*. Judym was alone, while his opponents were many; the strongwoman eventually lost; however, Stefan Żeromski won in the symbolic sense, for his perception of what it meant to be an intellectual was dominant for an extended period of time – and probably still is, at least to some degree.

The short story *Siłaczka* points to another important aspect of Polish Romanticism. The heroine, a school teacher who courageously toils away and eventually dies, is essentially an embodiment of Positivist ideals – she educates the people in the spirit of organic work. But Romantic and Positivist ideals were in fact intertwined – the idea of organic work as such emerged in the period of Romanticism, and all Positivist ideals drew

something from Polish Romanticism – a certain kind of moral pathos and idealism which accompanied all of the “sober” and practical actions. Stefan Kieniewicz expressed this thought very well in the title of his book about the Polish advocates of organic work: *Dramat trzeźwych entuzjastów. O ludziach pracy organicznej*.

This link between the Polish Romantic and Positivist ideals is connected with one more long-term effect of the “Great Polish Romanticism” which rarely gets noticed, for in order to see it, one has to compare the situation of the Polish intelligentsia and the educated groups of other nationalities in Central and Eastern Europe. For a long time the Polish intelligentsia firmly believed – more fervently than other nations, I think – in an ethical, universal significance of the Polish question. As we know, Polish Romanticism was internationalist. This of course does not entail a lack of patriotism – among the central problems contemplated by intellectuals in the age of Romanticism were various ideas of Polish identity and heated arguments concerning the fate and future of Poland. This meant that the Polish question was seen as a global issue and that the restoration of Poland was viewed as part of a universal, messianic calling to restructure the world. Polish independence was supposed to be achieved not in defiance of, but rather in accordance with the world (even though a need for using force and engaging in combat may arise). This universalist doctrine influenced the next generations of the Polish national movement to a greater or lesser degree. It was powerful and attractive – in the intellectual, emotional and moral sense – which was one of the reasons (not the only one, but I think one of major significance) why while being so distant from Romanticism, Polish Positivism was not against it as regards this important point. This belief in the transnational, universalist nature of the Polish question was not abandoned later, and it was important for something that we may call an “intellectual world view”: it made it possible to find a connection between Polish patriotism and the strong inclination towards leftist ideas that was exhibited by many intellectuals. Antoni Słonimski wrote that his father, a renowned doctor from Warsaw, “believed in socialism and Polish independence, and served these two ideas which to him were one and the same” (*Wspomnienia warszawskie*, Warsaw 1987, p. 9). I think that this sentence aptly encapsulates the way of thinking of an important section of the Polish intelligentsia. The prominence of this mode of thought is evident from the fact that in *Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka* Roman Dmowski presents the patriots of the old type, who considered the Polish question to be part of a universal common cause, as one of the groups who were against the new doctrine of national egoism propagated by the National Democracy.

I have mentioned earlier that after 1831 the administration in the Kingdom of Poland remained predominantly Polish. For a while it even seemed that most of the opportunities which the intelligentsia had enjoyed before 1831 would again be available. Prior to the January Uprising, margrave Aleksander Wielopolski re-Polonized the Kingdom’s administration and

restored some of the institutions which had been closed, most importantly the University of Warsaw, reinstated under the name of the Main School. This opened up new vistas for the intelligentsia. Contrary to what had been commonly agreed upon in topical literature, Jerzy Jedlicki opined that it was towards the end of 1850s (and not at the beginning of the 20th century, as some maintain) that the intelligentsia experienced its most rapid period of development. Further, he made a paradoxical statement – that the increasing number of intellectuals did not actually make the intelligentsia more powerful. It exerted the greatest influence over society when it was a relatively small group with strong internal connections, which became weaker and less pronounced as it expanded. If we were to continue along this line of reasoning, then starting from the beginning of the 20th century – and more so as time went by – we should have not one intelligentsia, but various professional groups with more or less differing interests and personal interconnections. At the same time, it seems that these groups maintained more or less the same world view – at least at the level of declarations.

The January Uprising and its collapse thwarted margrave Wielopolski's reforms with one important exception – the civil emancipation of Jews was not withdrawn. Jews and Poles in the Russian Partition had no political rights, but they were granted equal civil rights. This sped up the process of assimilation, which in turn allowed many Jews to join the Polish intelligentsia. Intellectuals of Jewish descent became an important element of this stratum, enriching its culture (unfortunately, we do not have enough space to illustrate this fact in detail) and remaining one of its most important and characteristic elements right until the Holocaust. But other of Wielopolski's reforms were withdrawn, and the Polish intelligentsia in the Kingdom of Poland (and indeed in the entire Russian Partition) had to develop in the face of increasing Russification. The Germanization of the Prussian Partition was conducted in parallel, and thus – as we know – Polish culture and political life was allowed to develop, more or less freely, in the Austrian Partition alone. As a consequence, the intelligentsia and society as a whole developed differently in the three partitions. The situation of the Austrian partition is especially interesting because the Polonization of the administration provided intellectuals with career opportunities. Due to economic underdevelopment, the aspirations of the Galician intelligentsia to function as a *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated middle class) were unattainable; they were simply too poor. The problem of poverty among civil servants and that of “overproduction” of the intelligentsia (of course in relation to economic means, not actual requirements) appeared time and again in public discussions throughout the period of Galician autonomy.

Obviously, similar problems appeared in the Kingdom of Poland, but they led to different results. Despite all the difficulties that they had to face, intellectuals in Galicia remained loyal to the state for the simple reason that the Polonization of the administration provided them with career opportunities (however illusory) and ways of progressing the Polish cause. But the

Russification conducted in the Russian partition and the fact that political concessions were postponed indefinitely caused the intellectuals living there – who had no chance of becoming politically active – to radicalize their world view. The difference between the Imperial-Royal bureaucrats from Galicia and the nonconformists from Congress Poland was analyzed by many contemporary and later authors.

Since our deliberations have reached the period following the January Uprising, we should make a digression, because the most important dispute concerning the history of the Polish intelligentsia – the one concerning the origins of the intelligentsia as a social group – is connected with this very epoch. Interestingly, this dispute does not seem to have become more widely known, or – strictly speaking – people are usually familiar with only one side of the argument, and wrongly regard the opinions of this side as inherently correct. In 1946, the eminent sociologist Józef Chałasiński published a study (reprinted several times) entitled *Społeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej*. He linked this genealogy to the culture of the Polish nobility, which strongly impacted the culture of the intelligentsia. According to Chałasiński, the intelligentsia followed the tendency of the gentry to act as though they were superior to the rest of society – separated by good manners and complicated customs, and maintaining a complex, “post-gentry” hierarchy within the intelligentsia. Chałasiński introduced the notion of the intellectual ghetto used on many occasions later on; obviously, he was referring to a “ghetto” in the sociological sense, for social groups deliberately isolate themselves from the rest of the world not through legislation, but through their behavior. Historically, Chałasiński attributed the origins of the Polish intelligentsia to the emancipation reform introduced after the January Uprising, which upset the economical foundations of many poorer gentry estates and drove a large group of impoverished gentiles of medium and lower status to the towns of the Kingdom of Poland.

This version of history is quite well-known and – as far as I am aware – accepted by a large group of researchers, essayists, and readers, who accept it as a description of a situation commonly agreed upon in historiography, when in fact it is not. The history of the intelligentsia begins at least a hundred years before the January Uprising, and various elements of society took part in its creation in addition to the gentry. In her works, one of the most prominent researchers of the history of the Polish intelligentsia, Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis, repeatedly opposed the image of the intelligentsia created by Józef Chałasiński. She pointed to two main issues: firstly, the hypothesis as to the continuity between the gentry and the intelligentsia is untrue – in her opinion – on the most basic, biological level. The intelligentsia did not emerge from the declassed gentry which migrated to the towns, but was comprised of various elements – commoners (from towns and villages) and assimilated foreigners alike. Secondly, the intelligentsia did not inherit the gentry’s system of values, for the ethos of the intellectuals was considerably more democratic and “inclusive”.

Who then is right? There are some true elements in the image presented by Chałasiński. The migration of the gentry to the towns which occurred after the emancipation reform did actually take place. And we can in fact list many instances when the intelligentsia treated the lower social strata with contempt, thereby justifying its association with the worst side of the gentile tradition of taking pride in one's status. The readers of *Szkice piórkem* by Andrzej Bobkowski may recall at this point a slightly grotesque description of a camp for Polish officers and their families in France in 1940 (22 September 1940), with simply grotesque disputes over who was to serve whom and who infringed upon whose dignity – this may serve as an illustration of Józef Chałasiński's hypotheses. On the other hand, the studies by Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis lead us to doubt the possibility of making these hypotheses more general or considering them as a model describing the emergence of the Polish intelligentsia as a social group. To an extent, the difference between the opinions of these two authors can be explained by the fact that they studied different eras. Chałasiński wrote about the migration of the gentry to the towns after 1863. In her three successive books, Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis studied the period before the January Uprising – and while she did not come across information about any major migration of the gentry to Warsaw or other cities in the Kingdom, she did find data concerning large and dynamically developing groups of intellectuals. In my opinion this is enough to considerably reduce (but perhaps not completely abandon) Chałasiński's hypothesis about the biological continuity between the gentry and the intelligentsia. The former was an important element in the creation of the latter, but by no means exclusive or dominant.

The issue of the inherited world view is more complicated. I think that it is possible to argue that there are certain elements of continuity between the traditional attitudes of the gentry and the intelligentsia's world view. Ryszarda Czepulis is definitely right in saying that the latter's approach, with its democratism and appreciation of the value of education, is very different from that of the gentry. Although it could be argued that these qualities which seemingly separate it the most from established tradition also make it dependent thereupon to a substantial degree. After all, the legacy of the gentry enriched 19th century Polish culture in many ways – often conflicting in nature: pride connected with status and separation from the lower strata on the one hand, while on the other – political rights and a sense of self-worth resulting in a democratism of sorts. This democratism of the gentry was transformed (and democratized even further when it lost the exclusivity given by status) by the intellectuals who became active in Polish democratic movements after the November Uprising, in the 1840s and 50s; but then, it was intended to include the whole of society. Whatever the case may be, I myself consider its gentile pedigree obvious, proven among others by the fact that many of these ideologies included the poorer gentry as a part of the Polish nation (such, for example, was the opinion of Henryk Kamieński). Intellectual democratism is in a way a reformulation

of the gentile tradition. Analogically, the pursuit of education can also be interpreted as the pursuit of independence, i.e. of the former ideal under altered conditions.

One should also remember that opposing the world view of intellectuals to that of the gentry is in all probability unjustified. One may question the theoretical validity of the construct of world views of entire social groups which I use here, but it would be difficult to discard it while trying to go beyond mere facts and arrive at a synthesis, especially as some elements of the traditional world view of the gentile elites in fact formed the core of the new educated elite. This was also true for other countries and had nothing to do with the question as to what degree the Polish intelligentsia inherited the Polish noble tradition. By “some elements” I mean a model of a gentile which in a way relates to the model of a knight (in her book, Maria Ossowska wrote how this archetype has changed). But perhaps this is not a sign that the intelligentsia assumed some part of the noble ideal? Maybe the intelligentsia and the gentry both drew their ideals from earlier sources, such as the virtue of courage from Aristotelian ethics? This issue is hard to determine, but definitely worthy of contemplation.

After this digression concerning the social and intellectual genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia, let us return to a chronological overview. The turn of the 20th century in Poland was another important period in the history of the intelligentsia. The whole of East Central Europe underwent significant social change in the wake of political life becoming accessible to the masses. Several dozen years after emancipation, a new generation of peasants grew up – one which had not personally experienced the burden of serfdom. At the same time, industry started to develop at an ever faster rate, leading to the growth of the working class in the newly developing cities. At least some peasants and workers were included (to a certain degree) in the emerging modern world, having a minimal level of education and being able to engage in political life. The emergence of mass politics resulted in the creation of political parties of a new type, operating more on the basis of emotions than arguments, and targeting a new, uneducated audience. For the intelligentsia, this was both a challenge – because its traditional paternalistic attitude was being questioned – and an opportunity, for those who managed to gain a footing in the new political system enjoyed excellent career opportunities. At the same time, the crisis of the rational mindset and positivist ideology that was apparent throughout Europe increased the strength of the political wave of change connected with the emergence of mass politics. These developments stemmed among others from the revolution which shook the Russian Empire in the years 1905–1906. It brought with it violence, and battles were fought not only with the Russian partitioning power, but within Polish society itself. At the same time, intellectuals exhibited far-reaching idealism and devotion, engaged in (an often dramatic) quest for ideals symbolized by the figure of Stanisław Brzozowski. Here I would like to refer my readers to the excellent works of Bohdan Cywiński

and Andrzej Mencwel; it is also worth mentioning that the intellectuals of the new generation were seeking new paths and pursuing a democratization of public life through various trends: popular, socialist, and national. The National Democrats were at first an authentically democratic party. Over time, it became the main Polish party on the right, replacing the conservatives of that period and, unfortunately, fueling an ever more radical strain of anti-Semitism which served as a tool in the political struggle and a way of attracting supporters.

The restoration of independence in 1918 was of course important for Poland for many reasons, however for our discourse the most important of these was the fact that the intelligentsia's dream of freedom had finally come true after more than a hundred years; along with it came the emergence of new career paths in the reestablished state. The Second Polish Republic was a centralized, bureaucratic state which needed Polish intellectuals. Many involved themselves enthusiastically in the rebuilding process, such as Szymon Gajowiec from *Przedwiośnie* by Żeromski. Many others, like Cezary Baryka from the same novel, were disappointed with everyday life and with what they considered as a betrayal of ideals. Ironically, it would appear that in the first half of the 20th century the Polish intelligentsia was divided more than it had ever been in the previous decades, and the assassination of Gabriel Narutowicz may be seen as a symbol of this division.

Perhaps the impression that in the first decades of the 20th century this divide was more pronounced than in earlier periods is misleading? The division between the broadly defined national-democratic camp and the center-leftist camp which was established at the beginning of the 20th century, and to a large extent functions to this day: Dmowski and Piłsudski may long be gone, but their ideas still shape the Polish political imagination. If so (and I am aware that this thesis is not obvious), then here may lie the answer as to why we see the divisions from the beginning of the 20th century as being deeper than those from the earlier periods: they are to a large extent the same as our modern-day divisions, and they still shape our political outlook and world view. When we read books by, for example, Jarosław Czubaty or Magdalena Micińska, which deal with the problems of treason and national identity during the partitions, we can easily see that emotions in 19th-century conflicts were just as intense as in the 20th century. However, the lines of the division were different. From today's perspective, it is easier (perhaps with several exceptions) to understand both sides of the conflicts of the time. Therefore, conflicts which engage us in a less emotional way seem less intense. It would therefore be misleading to say that 20th century conflicts were more fierce than those in earlier periods – such an assessment is a reflection of our modern perspective, not of historical reality.

Regardless of whether the conflict between various groups of the intelligentsia really intensified in the 20th century or whether it only seems that way from our modern perspective, 20th-century antagonisms are of

greater importance to us than those from earlier times, because they tell us more about ourselves. Suffice to say that prior to their most important trial, Polish intellectuals were (as was usually the case) divided – they disagreed on their ideals and were somewhat disappointed with the reality of an independent state which fell short of the ideal. At the same time, they exhibited quite opposite traits: they were used to the “normality” of a society that was slowly becoming modernized, and – there is no point in denying it – to the comforts connected with holding important positions in the state administration. And yet many memoirs and journals show us that the intellectuals felt a strong connection with their new state, a sense of belonging, and a shared responsibility for its well-being. This sentiment is evident in many texts written at the time, also by people who were critical of the interwar period – the journals of Maria Dąbrowska may serve as an example.

Many participants of social life in the interwar period thought that the fighting was over, and that a time of peaceful, honest work was ahead; basically, the old political divide from the period of the partitions would slowly become an anachronism. By that time, however, Poland had been independent for no more than two decades – the tradition of combat, of underground movements and the resistance, was still fresh in people’s memory. Unfortunately, these experiences were soon to prove useful – on a scale larger than ever before, and in circumstances considerably more difficult than those experienced during the partitions.

Suggested reading

A great many works deal with the topic touched upon in the present paper. The following selection is purely subjective: I list both recent and more dated books which I have personally found important and interesting. Please forgive me for starting with a book which I have co-authored, namely the three-volume *Dzieje inteligencji polskiej do 1918 roku* edited by Jerzy Jedlicki. I myself have written the first volume of this work, which deals with the period before 1831. Jerzy Jedlicki authored the second volume, which deals with the years between the uprisings, while Magdalena Micińska wrote the volume concerning the period after the uprisings (1864–1918). My view on the history of the Polish intelligentsia was shaped while I was doing research for this book, conducting conversations with the co-authors, and engaging in discussions at the Department of the History of the Intelligentsia at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw – the present paper is the product of these efforts.

With regards to the intelligentsia in the period of Stanisław August, I would like to recommend an older publication by Bogusław Leśnodorski *Polscy jakobini. Karta z dziejów insurekcji 1794 roku* (Warszawa 1960), which presents radical movements in the last years of the First Polish Republic;

these political milieux to a considerable extent shaped the intellectual radicals and conspirators of the next two centuries. Works by Zbigniew Raszewski offer an entirely different perspective on the emergence of the intelligentsia: basing his approach primarily on an in-depth examination of the history of theater, he proceeds to show the socio-cultural changes related to the emergence of this new intellectual elite with excellent clarity and detail (mainly in *Bogusławski*, Warszawa 1972, revised edition 1982). Hanna Jurkowska's *Pamięć sentymentalna. Praktyki pamięci w kręgu Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk i w Puławach Izabeli Czartoryskiej* (Warszawa 2014) is devoted to the specificity of the intelligentsia's culture that developed in the Duchy of Warsaw. A fundamental work presenting the situation of the intelligentsia in the "Taken Lands" before the November Uprising is Daniel Beauvois' *Szkolnictwo polskie na ziemiach litewsko-ruskich 1803–1832* (vol. 1–2, Lublin 1991).

As regards Polish Romanticism – a key period in the history of the intellectual mindset – one should first and foremost mention *Romantyzm i historia* (Warszawa 1978) by Maria Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka, as well as Andrzej Walicki's numerous works concerning the ideology of Polish Romanticism (the most important of these were selected in the book *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, published as the 2nd volume of his *Pisma wybrane*, Kraków 2009). Of equal significance are the writings of Alina Witkowska, which present various aspects of Polish Romanticism, and are peerless in terms of literary craft, psychological depth, and subtlety of analysis (e.g. *Rówieśnicy Mickiewicza. Życiorys jednego pokolenia*, Warszawa 1968, revised edition 1998; *Kazimierz Brodziński*, Warszawa 1968; *i Cześć i skandale. O emigracyjnym doświadczeniu Polaków*, Gdańsk 1997).

Józef Chałasiński presented his views on the hypothesis that the Polish intelligentsia originated from the gentry in *Spółeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej* (Warszawa 1946), and elaborated on this subject in his later works. Andrzej Zajączkowski chose a similar research perspective for examining the history of the intelligentsia in *Z dziejów inteligencji polskiej. Studia historyczno-socjologiczne* (Wrocław 1962). Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis, however, argued against this theory in a number of works, such as *Klasa umysłowa. Inteligencja Królestwa Polskiego 1832–1862* (Warszawa 1973) and *Ludzie nauki i talent. Studia o świadomości społecznej inteligencji polskiej w zaborze rosyjskim* (Warszawa 1988).

Jerzy Jedlicki examined the 19th-century disputes concerning the progress of Polish civilization in his classic work *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują. Studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku* (Warszawa 1988). Thanks to its broad perspective, in-depth analyses and novel conclusions, this book is one of the most notable achievements of Polish studies into the 19th century. Similar themes, but in relation to a more specific period, have been touched upon by Tomasz Kizwalter in *Nowatorstwo i rutyna. Społeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego wobec procesów modernizacji (1840–1863)* (Warszawa 1988).

The phenomenon of organic work has been discussed in Stefan Kieniewicz's *Dramat trzeźwych entuzjastów. O ludziach pracy organicznej*

(Warszawa 1964), and also in a selection of source materials with an elaborate introductory study: Tomasz Kizwalter and Jerzy Skowronek's *Droga do niepodległości czy program defensywny? Praca organiczna – programy i motywy* (Warszawa 1988).

On the subject of the intelligentsia's approach to national issues, and of discussions and accusations of treason, cf. Jarosław Czubyty's *Zasada dwóch sumień. Normy postępowania i granice kompromisu politycznego Polaków w sytuacjach wyboru (1795–1815)* (Warszawa 2005) and Magdalena Micińska's *Zdrada, córka nocy. Pojęcie zdrady narodowej w świadomości Polaków 1861–1914* (Warszawa 1998), referred to in the present text. Classic works by Maria Ossowska: *Moralność mieszczańska* (Wrocław 1956, 2nd edition 1985) and *Ethos rycerski i jego odmiany* (Warszawa 1973, the latest edition 2011) present the types of role models which fundamentally influenced the development of the intelligentsia's ethos.

The subject of the transformation of various attitudes at the beginning of the 20th century was raised in classic works by Bohdan Cywiński (*Rodowody niepokornych*, 1971 and many later editions) and Andrzej Mencwel (*Etos lewicy. Esej o narodzinach kulturalizmu polskiego*, Warszawa 1990), as well as in more recent publications, such as Wiktor Marzec's book about the Revolution of 1905: *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne* (Kraków 2016) and Grzegorz Krzywiec's work concerning the rise of radical antisemitism: *Polska bez Żydów. Studia z dziejów idei, wyobrażeń i praktyk antysemitycznych na ziemiach polskich początku XX wieku (1905–1914)*, Warszawa 2017.

As for the extent of conflicts in interwar Poland, cf. Paweł Brykczyński's *Gotowi na przemoc. Mord, antysemityzm i demokracja w międzywojennej Polsce* (Warszawa 2017), which is devoted to the circumstances of the assassination of Gabriel Narutowicz. Andrzej Mencwel discussed the issue of antagonisms among the intelligentsia from the broader perspective of the history of ideas in *Przedwiośnie czy potop. Studium postaw polskich w XX wieku* (Warszawa 1997). A general socio-historical view of the Polish intelligentsia in the Second Polish Republic has been presented in numerous works by Janusz Żarnowski. Regarding more detailed aspects, one may mention Włodzimierz Mędrzecki's study *Inteligencja polska na Wołyniu w okresie międzywojennym* (Warszawa 2005), concerned with the functioning of the provincial intelligentsia, its problems, dilemmas, and everyday lives, which differed considerably from those of the intellectual elites of Warsaw. Another noteworthy title is Magdalena Gawin's *Rasa i nowoczesność. Historia polskiego ruchu eugenicznego (1880–1952)* (Warszawa 2003), which examines a particularly tragic aspect of the modernization of the Polish intelligentsia's worldview, namely the gradual acceptance of elements of racist ideology.

Denis Sdvižkov presents an overview of the intelligentsia in the European context in *Epoka inteligencji. Historia porównawcza warstwy wykształconej w Europie* (Warszawa 2011). Among recent sociological studies, particularly noteworthy are those of Tomasz Zarycki, which show a most

interesting, although at times controversial vision of the intelligentsia's place in Polish political and cultural life from the time of the partitions to modernity. A comparative selection of articles concerning the Polish intelligentsia in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century can be found in a special monographic issue of the *Kultura i społeczeństwo* quarterly (2000, vol. 44, no. 2), edited by Jerzy Jedlicki.