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The Life and Death of the Old Polish Intelligentsia

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Contemporary political events in Poland provoke many questions concerning the old Polish intelligentsia. Has it survived the historical storms of the last thirty years? How potent is the value system of this stratum today? Has its dominating influence on the other strata remained, or does Poland now have a new value system derived from the goals and morals of a different class? The Polish intelligentsia can be analyzed from several standpoints—from the historical or the current perspective, in the light of its national function or its own structure, or as revealed in its aspirations and values. It is the conviction of the author that the value system determines the structure of both the spiritual and the material culture in every social class and stratum.

The intelligentsia is a sociohistorical phenomenon of Eastern Europe that has fascinated Western scholars, although many of them are well acquainted only with the Russian intelligentsia. It is quite natural that the West has taken a great interest in Russia but none in her defeated rival and sole opponent in the past—Poland. “*Vae victis*” has echoed throughout the whole history of mankind. But those who study Russian history cannot achieve a mature understanding of it if they overlook the historical relations between these two Slavic nations, which developed in favor of the younger and larger country and helped to determine its position in the modern world.

Taking a formalistic approach, one can attempt to find “intelligentsia” strata in all societies past and present. We shall, however, discuss only the old Polish intelligentsia as a strictly historical phenomenon. This means that we will analyze and describe a stratum that had its own determinants in time and space. All similar classes or social strata in other times and places, even when they call themselves “intelligentsia,” are considered only as resembling the East European original. The old intelligentsia is treated here as a culturally homogeneous social stratum of educated people united by charismatic feelings and a certain set of values. We must refer to the value system in order to differentiate the members of the intelligentsia from the bourgeoisie. In many cases differentiation on the basis of economic standard, social function, or even level of education would be impossible. The basic criterion that differentiated the intelligentsia from the bourgeois class in Poland was the value system that a man had to accept to be an *intelligent* (Polish spelling).

The values of this stratum were produced by a relatively small group of moral and intellectual leaders. The beliefs, the manners, and to a certain extent the political behavior of those leaders were not fully duplicated by the majority of the intelligentsia stratum. Thus our intention is to describe this social stratum not by discussing average members of the old Polish intelligentsia but rather by examining those values and virtues of their leaders that were generally accepted by the "masses" of the intelligentsia. The "ideal type" which was created by the upper ranks of the intelligentsia, and served as their model, had a strong influence on the entire stratum. In turn, the intelligentsia as a whole produced ideas and fundamental patterns for the national culture which other classes slowly adopted, at least in part, despite class antagonisms.

We use the term "stratum," assuming as the Marxists do that the intelligentsia has never been an economic class, but in opposition to the Marxists we stress the "above-class" position of this stratum, at least in some East European countries. Classes and class ideologies have been determined by their economic needs and the class struggle, but the old intelligentsia tried to play its role over and beyond these limits. Because their ideal was to be free of any class burdens, members of the old intelligentsia very often insisted that their economic or formal position could not determine their attitudes toward national problems. Even though this ideal was beyond the reach of most members of the intelligentsia, it was sufficient that it was realized by those who conferred their ethos upon the whole stratum. Particular groups among the intelligentsia were more or less bound to one economic class or another, but they struggled to give the impression that they were as independent as their ideal type should be.

In the first decade of socialist Poland the meaning of the word "intelligentsia" broadened to include all nonmanual workers. (The popularity of the term can only be seen as reflecting a continued attraction to the traditional culture and an awareness of the importance of the intelligentsia stratum in the past. We should add that the term "intelligentsia" never had the pejorative connotation in Poland that it has sometimes had in the West.) But it was, of course, found necessary to differentiate between the past and present use of the word to make the distinction between the conservative elements in the old Polish intelligentsia and the new meaning the word must convey in the socialist era. Therefore an adjective was added, and the official term "working intelligentsia" has been employed for all white-collar workers. Although the "working intelligentsia" takes third place in Communist rhetoric and in all "application forms" for jobs and schools (that is, it is classed below the workers and peasants, whose children now receive in advance three additional points in admission examinations to universities), millions of the new upwardly mobile people call themselves intelligentsia and try to identify with that stratum. In such a situation, the interest of the Polish sociologists in the

problem is not only historical and theoretical but also political, and is easy to trace in postwar polemics.

Polish Polemics on the Subject

There have been a surprising number of studies on the intelligentsia in Poland. But these offer only indirect insights into the interesting problem of the durability of the values which were sublimated in the intelligentsia milieu.

Polish intellectuals were concerned with the problem of the intelligentsia before World War II,¹ but after the war the subject was still alive and still captured the public interest. A new and vigorous discussion arose on the fresh ruins of Warsaw inspired by Józef Chałasiński's monographs: *Social Genealogy of the Polish Intelligentsia* (1946), in which he traced the gentry (*szlachta*) origin of this new social stratum that emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and *The Past and the Future of the Polish Intelligentsia* (1947).² While the nature of the first study is historical, the second is mainly concerned with the present character of the stratum. The most striking opinion expressed by Chałasiński was this: "The effort to produce a workers' and peasants' intelligentsia failed. The most important factor in this failure was the unattractive type of culture which one tried to use as a basis of this effort." One of Chałasiński's most important conclusions was that the present-day "new" intelligentsia, despite its working-class and peasant origin, shows no strong social and emotional links with its special background but adapts itself to the general national culture. Many opponents disagreed with his views on both the origin of the Polish intelligentsia and its contemporary character. They emphasized mainly the role of the bourgeois class in the rise of the intelligentsia and the assimilation of representatives of many other ethnic groups. All these critics may be right as long as they do not attack the essential point: the culture of the old intelligentsia was dominated by the historically developed culture of the old gentry class.

Jan Szczepański, writing in 1960 on the structure of the intelligentsia in contemporary Poland, surveyed the definitions of this stratum that had ap-

1. Some of the most important contributions in the prewar discussions are Zdzisław Klemens Dębicki, *Kryzys inteligencji polskiej* (Warsaw, 1919); Czesław Znamierowski, "Elita i demokracja," *Przegląd Socjologiczny* (1928); Kazimierz Zakrzewski, "Zagadnienie inteligencji," *Droga*, 11 (1929): 333-43; Aleksander Hertz, "Spór o inteligencję," in his *Ludzie i idee* (Warsaw, 1931) and "Inteligencja wobec mas," in *Pod znakiem odpowiedzialności i pracy* (Warsaw, 1937); Zygmunt Łempicki, "Problem inteligencji," *Marchoń*, vol. 1 (1935), "Kryzys inteligencji a potrzeby życia," *Drogi Polski*, 1937, no. 10, and "Kryzys inteligencji zawodowej w Polsce," *Drogi Polski*, 1937, no. 11-12; Adam Próchnik, "Problem inteligencji," *Sygnaly*, Mar. 1, 1937; Andrzej Jałowicki, "Mit narodowy," *Przegląd Współczesny*, 1939, no. 201.

2. Józef Chałasiński, *Spoleczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej* (Łódź, 1946) and *Przeszłość i przyszłość inteligencji polskiej* (Rzym, 1947; Warsaw, 1958).

peared in the postwar discussions.³ He classified them into seven categories according to the following criteria (quoted here in abbreviated form): (1) formal-legal, (2) social function, (3) qualifications, (4) educational degrees, (5) psychical characteristics, (6) active or consumptive relations to the national culture, and (7) social form of association. It is true that the intelligentsia has never been a completely uniform stratum. But its distinguishing psychic and social features were much more evident before World War I than after the twentieth-century upheavals. The structure of the Polish intelligentsia in the interwar period has been systematically investigated by the historian Janusz Żarnowski.⁴ After the events that shocked the country in 1968, discussion of this subject began again. A sociologist, Marcin Czerwiński, has publicly suggested, "We should stop speaking about the intelligentsia at all." He realized that this term no longer designated any real social entity in the Polish People's Republic.⁵

Differences Between the Polish and Russian Intelligentsia

Many historians assume that the term "intelligentsia" was coined by a Russian author, Peter Boborykin, in 1860. This is a misconception. The term was first used in Polish literature by Karol Libelt in 1844. In Russian literature it was used by V. G. Belinsky in 1846. In an old Polish encyclopedia the expression appeared as early as 1863. It is probable that the word is strictly Polish in origin, because the suffix *-cja* (*-tsia* in Russian), common in Polish, is less frequently encountered in Russian. In any case, as Waclaw Lednicki has written, Russia and Poland "were the birthplace of this class, and their languages created the term 'intelligentsia' (*inteligencja*), a term which was later accepted and is now used in all civilized languages of the world."⁶

A glimpse of the Russian intelligentsia will not only increase our understanding of the Polish stratum but will help to establish the latter's unique characteristics.

3. Jan Szczepański, "Struktura inteligencji w Polsce," *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 4, no. 1-2 (1960). The main articles considered here are Stefan Kieniewicz, "Rodowód inteligencji polskiej," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1946, no. 15; Karol Wiktor Zawodziński, "Socjologiczna typizacja a rzeczowy skład inteligencji polskiej," *Kuźnica*, 1946, no. 29; A. Litwin, "O społecznej genealogii inteligencji polskiej," *Kuźnica*, 1946, no. 29; Stefan Zółkiewski, "Obecna sytuacja inteligencji polskiej," *Więź*, 1947, no. 29; J. Sierkierska, "O manowcach elitaryzmu i drogach kultury," *Nowa Kultura*, 1950, no. 9; Leszek Kołakowski, "Intelektualiści a ruch komunistyczny," *Nowe Drogi*, 1945, no. 9; Andrzej Werblan, "Inteligencja czy nowa warstwa społeczna," *Polityka*, 1959, no. 7.

4. Janusz Żarnowski, *Struktura społeczna inteligencji w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* (Warsaw, 1964).

5. "Inteligencja polska wczoraj i dziś" (a record of the discussion organized by *Miesięcznik Literacki*, Jan. 23, 1969), *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1969, no. 5, pp. 114-25.

6. Waclaw Lednicki, "The Role of the Polish Intellectual in America," *Polish Review*, 12, no. 2 (Spring 1967): 40.

Because the European East did not pass through the first Industrial Revolution, a basic difference between the social stratifications of Eastern and Western Europe occurred. At the time the victorious Western bourgeoisie were founding their own democracies, there appeared in Poland (erased from the map of Europe in 1795) as well as in Russia a new social stratum called the "intelligentsia." The official status of this stratum was almost the same in both countries. But the goals and systems of values of the Polish and Russian intelligentsia were quite different as a result of their completely dissimilar historical heritages and the differences in the political conditions of these two nations in the period beginning with the last decade of the eighteenth century and ending with World War II. These circumstances influenced the development of these two groups of educated people, and different cultural traits determined their characteristics.

During the nineteenth century the Russian state was still a growing power. The stability of the empire and its social hierarchy was strong and seemed inviolable, but the Russian nation was becoming more and more polarized. At the same time, in a conquered and partitioned Poland a deep transition in all fields of life gave birth to a modern nation.⁷ It was divided into antagonistic classes, but social antagonisms were never as strong as the unifying feeling of hatred toward invaders. Patriotism spread among all classes, and a new stratum, the intelligentsia, was its herald.

The Russian intelligentsia was a social stratum that developed on the margin of the governmental and economic life of the tsarist state. We can even say that all the important governmental positions were occupied by the aristocracy, while the whole economy was in the hands of merchants, who became a much richer group than their counterparts in Poland. From its beginning, the Russian intelligentsia consisted of alienated individuals—alienated basically because of their education in Western culture, which separated them deeply from the traditional way of life of both the Russian aristocracy and landed gentry on the one hand, and the lower classes on the other. Moreover, in the nineteenth century most of the Russian intelligentsia of humble origin were not permitted to occupy higher positions of governmental service. These estrangements inclined the Russian intelligentsia to develop its revolutionary attitudes.⁸ It must be pointed out that the problem of "Westernization" never

7. Tadeusz Łepkowski, *Polska: Narodziny nowoczesnego narodu, 1764–1870* (Warsaw, 1967).

8. In Russia the term intelligentsia was closely linked with political affiliation. Thus the Russians were more likely to recognize Mensheviks as members of the intelligentsia than even the best-educated Bolsheviks. Hugh Seton-Watson in *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, ed. Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (New York, 1964), writing mainly on the Russian intelligentsia, noted: "The distinctive and modern culture which such an intelligentsia enjoys separates its members from the rest of society. This sense of isolation, and the vast contrast between the realities of its own society and the modern ideas with which its education has made it familiar, are powerful factors leading first towards

existed for Poles. For centuries Poland had been the eastern “frontier” of West European civilization.

Some historians find the origins of the Russian intelligentsia in the eighteenth-century nobility.⁹ However, the social origin of the intelligentsia was similar for both countries only at the very end of the eighteenth century. But the “intelligentsia” of this period existed in Russia and Poland only in the sense that we might also say it existed in ancient Greece or during the French Enlightenment—as a group of bright individuals who did not yet create a separate social stratum.

At the end of the eighteenth century a relatively small group of Polish patriots undertook a supreme effort to restore political institutions and national life, but the effort came too late—and it was broken down by partition. These people were almost exclusively of noble (gentry) and aristocratic origin, and can be considered precursors of the Polish intelligentsia; they did not as yet form a separate stratum. At the same time, a small group of Westernized nobles in Russia began to feel their obligations toward the people, but the life situations of these forerunners of the Russian intelligentsia were not the same as for their counterparts in Poland. While in Poland the gentry intellectuals cooperated with their king in the elaboration of a progressive constitution and the modernization of the educational system, in Russia Alexander Radishchev, an outstanding representative of the Enlightenment, was condemned to death.¹⁰

In fact, during the nineteenth century one of the fundamental differences between the Polish and the Russian intelligentsia was determined simply by their diverse class origins. The overwhelming majority of the Russian intelligentsia had moved up from the lower classes. “Our intelligentsia,” wrote one of the distinguished representatives of the stratum, Nikolai Berdiaev, “were a group formed out of various social classes. . . . They were derived to begin

uncritical acceptance of revolutionary ideas, and later to leadership and organization of revolutionary action” (p. 341).

We should add that “Westernization” was not synonymous with a friendly attitude toward the West. Even the most “Westernized” Russian usually looked very critically on Western political, social, and economic institutions. Benjamin Schwartz made an interesting comment on this attitude of the Russian intelligentsia: “(it) may spring in part from their implicit awareness that, in a sense, the Petrine state with its bureaucratic, military, and police machine was the most ‘modern’ and ‘rationalized’ sector of Russian society” (“The Intelligentsia in Communist China: A Tentative Comparison,” in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Richard Pipes [New York, 1961], p. 181, n. 3).

9. Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York, 1966).

10. A. N. Radishchev (1749–1802), a writer and thinker of the Russian Enlightenment, was sentenced to death for the anonymously published *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), in which he attacked all aspects of Russia’s social and political life. He was pardoned by Alexander I in 1801. Criticism of his radical views even by his friends induced him to commit suicide. See David Marshall Lang, *The First Russian Radical: Alexander Radishchev, 1749–1802* (London and New York, 1959).

with mainly from the more cultured section of the nobility, later from the sons of the clergy, small government officials, the lower middle class, and, after the liberation, from the peasants.”¹¹ As a result of its heterogeneous origins, the intelligentsia in Russia did not adopt the cultural patterns and value system of the nobility to the great extent that the Polish intelligentsia did.

The notion of freedom also differentiated these two groups. The Russian boyar of the sixteenth century could not understand the ideal of the “golden freedom” (this term, describing the privileges of the gentry, appears frequently in Polish historical literature), nor could the Russian *intelligent* of the nineteenth century sympathize with the idea of national and individual independence. Even a great writer like Dostoevsky had a negative attitude toward his Polish fellow convicts (*katorzhniki*), because in his eyes they demonstrated an antipathetic pride when they resisted not only unjust sentences but also Fate. But it would, of course, be too idealistic to attribute such differences solely to values and ideas. The Polish state stood for centuries on the Russian road to the Baltic coast, and later to the West. It has thus been a source of irritation even for the most Westernized Russian democrats.

History as a Status-Generating Mechanism

In the West the contemporary intelligentsia is known to be the product of the middle class and a part of it.¹² But not in Poland. In order to understand the origin, as well as the value system, of the Polish intelligentsia we must glance at the social structure of old Poland and her ruling class, because the intelligentsia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century inherited the culture, the social prestige, and the role of the gentry class. Under the adverse conditions of the partitioned nation’s life, the new stratum came to have a higher degree of charismatic leadership than the old gentry had enjoyed. There is extensive historical evidence that the national charisma of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century gentry declined in the eighteenth century but emerged again and reached the time of its greatest blossoming among the nineteenth-century intelligentsia.

Two events which determined the history of old Poland affected the germination of the intelligentsia and hampered the further development of

11. Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, 1962), p. 19. (One of the popular ways to the higher stratum led through the clergy seminary. Stalin was a typical example of such social mobility; but he was never treated as a member of this class, because of his personal characteristics—boorish, vulgar, mannerless.)

12. *Webster’s New International Dictionary* (2nd ed.) defines intelligentsia as “Informed intellectual people collectively; the educated or professional group, class, or party;—often derisive.”

the nation: (1) the rise of the “gentry democracy” and (2) the resulting breakdown of the middle estate and subsequent decline of the cities. The “gentry democracy” had two class aims—to restrict the power of the aristocracy and the king on the one hand, and the development of the bourgeoisie on the other. Let us remember that the “absolute monarchies” of early modern Europe arose from an alliance between monarchies and moneyed burgher classes. This alliance, directed against the aristocracy and the gentry class, supported the fast development of cities and bourgeois culture. But in Poland the political structure was quite different, and slowed down the growth of modern society.

The “democracy of the gentry” was a unique phenomenon in European history. The Polish gentry, as a class, was proportionately much larger than in other European countries. In the sixteenth century about 11 to 13 percent of the population consisted of noblemen, who had the right to vote, whereas at the same time in England only 5 percent had the right to elect deputies. Contemporary historians list the percentage of the gentry at the turn of the eighteenth century as 9 to 10 percent, but they add that among Polish-speaking dwellers of the country the gentry accounted for 25 percent. (Olgiard Górka, before World War II, and Bogusław Leśnodorski, Andrzej Zajączkowski, and Tadeusz Łepkowski, in the later period, represent this view.) This large proportion of gentry affected all fields of national culture and for centuries imposed some gentry characteristics on the whole spectrum of social life.

This stratum created the first Polish republic, often referred to in historical literature as the Republic of the Gentry (1454–1764).¹³ All noblemen had equal rights, and any one of them could be elected king; but because they were afraid to break down the equality of their estates, the gentry usually elected a member of some foreign dynasty to be king. This prevented the inception of strong nationalistic feelings (which appeared just after the partition of Poland). On the other hand, the gentry, afraid of royal power, limited the rights of kings by constitutional laws. No aristocratic titles could be formally used by Polish nobles. (Only a few ducal families from the Ukraine and Lithuania were permitted to use their native titles.) In 1605 the greatest leader of the “gentry democracy,” Jan Zamoyski, coined the famous watchword, “Rex regnat, sed non gubernat” (“The king reigns but does not govern”). In their frantic drive to achieve absolute freedom of the individual, the gentry allowed Parliament to accept new laws only on the basis of unanimity (*liberum veto*). This system functioned successfully for only two centuries. From about the middle of the seventeenth century on, the healthy organism of the gentry democracy became corrupted by the growth of the oligarchical power of mag-

13. The contemporary historian Andrzej Wyczański has also accepted this view: *Polska, Rzecz Pospolita szlachecka, 1454–1764* (Warsaw, 1965).

nates and the policy of the foreign powers. The extremely individualistic conception of voting became a national tragedy.

The sociological aspect of the "gentry democracy" is the most interesting one. It developed mainly because of the absence of the classical feudal structure in medieval Poland. In the middle of the fifteenth century the Polish knights, who were becoming an actual ruling class, created a democratic system for themselves. They considered themselves the only members of the nation, and were convinced that they built their gentry state on the pattern of the ancient Roman republic. Unfortunately, from the end of the seventeenth century the equalitarian ideology of this system became a very useful instrument in the hands of a few aristocratic magnates. The social function of this ideology could be compared with the contemporary phenomenon of social life in the United States, which S. M. Lipset calls "ideological equalitarianism."¹⁴ The ideology of "gentry democracy" was used to maintain the belief that economic differences were meaningless. The Polish gentry were convinced they were equal in the deeper sense of the term. All had nominally the same political rights, all were "brothers"—in fact, they addressed each other as "Sir Brother."

In the sixteenth century capitalism began to appear in Poland as well as in the West. But as the wealth and political influence of the burgher class grew, the Polish nobles quickly recognized the potential danger of these rivals and crushed them to such an extent that during the next two centuries the cities declined sharply and the burghers were pauperized.¹⁵ This also had a disastrous effect on the peasants, who lost the town markets for their products. The decline of the towns was accompanied by the growing oppression of the peasants by the gentry class (who based their whole agricultural economy on the toil of their serfs). The Polish gentry were not allowed to engage in trades or live in cities; thus capitalistic occupations (trades, industrial enterprises, banking) were held in low esteem. In contrast to the West, country estates rather than the cities became centers of national culture. This rural ethos impregnated the heirs of gentry culture with contemptuous attitudes toward all kinds of bourgeois occupations, and these attitudes greatly inhibited Poland's economic development. The absence of strong towns and a rich, enlightened, and powerful bourgeoisie delayed considerably the process of industrialization in Poland. For the same reasons the Polish kings had no social elements at their disposal to balance or restrict the power of the gentry—particularly the few magnate families who rose above the gentry class.

In the eighteenth century the gentry democracy became in fact an oligarchy

14. Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley, 1959).

15. The first historical book on this problem was written in Poland by Wawrzyniec Surowiecki, *O upadku przemysłu i miast w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1810).

of magnates. The accumulation of land by the magnates was accompanied by the rise of the landless gentry, who were economically dependent upon them. The partitions of the Polish Gentry Republic (1772, 1793, 1795) revealed the fictitious nature of the eighteenth-century "gentry democracy" and accelerated the rise of a new stratum. This appeared first within the formal framework of the gentry, which was undergoing a political polarization into a small group of patriotic radical reformists and a large mass of indifferent traditionalists.

Two main factors created the Polish intelligentsia. The first was socio-economic in character and basically the same as the stimulus that brought to life the intelligentsia and modern enlightened middle class in other European countries in the nineteenth century. The second was strictly political: it appeared only in Polish territories and was most instrumental in shaping the particular character of the Polish intelligentsia.

During the early nineteenth century the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (1806–15), created by Napoleon, needed a modern national administration. At the same time, the country itself, undergoing industrialization and the development of its urban life, needed educated people for its bureaucratic apparatus, educational system, trades, and the like. On the other hand, the new style of life of the land magnates and the modernization of agriculture eliminated the need for many functions previously fulfilled by the landless gentry. Gradually many of them moved to the cities—a move they considered to be a decline in status, even when their economic situation was improved by it. This segment of the gentry, living in towns and cities and forming the ranks of a new social stratum called the intelligentsia, held tenaciously to the old patterns of gentry culture. The nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and intelligentsia remained strongly opposed on the level of values, even though they had much in common concerning the material matters of everyday life. Children of the bourgeoisie might become members of the intelligentsia, but the reverse never held true. Among all strata of this nation the term "bourgeoisie" had a pejorative meaning. Therefore, even the true bourgeois liked to call himself an *intelligent*.

After 1795 the Russian, Austrian, and German courts became aware that this stratum of nobility, unique in Europe in terms of the relatively large numbers that were living within a defeated nation, could stand in the way of the subjugation and absorption of the nation. They also realized that the idea of personal freedom in this stratum far exceeded that of their own noble classes. They were right in their fears. Within the span of 124 years (1794–1918), the Polish gentry, and subsequently the intelligentsia, organized and led the nation to fight for independence on eight separate occasions.¹⁶ For the

16. 1794, Kościuszko Insurrection; 1797, Polish legions in Italy; 1830–31, November Uprising; 1846, Cracow Revolution; 1848, Polish contribution to the Spring of Nations; 1863, January Uprising; 1905, Polish contribution to the Russian Revolution; 1914–18, Polish legions under various names participating in World War I.

courts of the Holy Alliance the destruction of the formal unity of the Polish gentry by the partition of the state was not enough. They decided to divide them into several ranks.

In 1836 the Polish gentry were subjected to special status investigations. Nicholas I issued the "Law Concerning Nobility," which proclaimed the civil death of the Polish gentry. The tsarist government organized an investigation to determine the noble status of each member of the gentry. (For hundreds of years none of the Polish gentry had cared about legal identification. It was quite enough that neighbors were aware of the gentry origin of a given family.) The Polish gentry were accustomed to checking the rights of their elected kings, but the king was never in a position to check, limit, or change the rights of gentry. The new bill imposed a stratification that was incompatible with the spirit of law that had determined the whole history of the Polish nobility. Poles had known only one type of nobility, equal for all—for magnates and for the poorest members of the class. But now many types of hereditary and personal nobility were created, and military officers and governmental officials were divided into ten ranks.

The oldest gentry families found themselves less fortunate than those who had become nobles fairly recently, because the latter could more easily prove their nobility to the special office of heraldry. The poorest ranks of the gentry had their nobility denied by governmental authorities in great numbers. Often the older gentry did not have the money needed to pay for an archive search for their ancient diplomas or documents.¹⁷

The whole affair had two political aims—to destroy the dangerous unity of the gentry and to adapt them to the hierarchical structure of the Russian nobility. As a consequence of this bureaucratic procedure the richest members of the gentry received or could buy aristocratic titles and thus acquire equalization of privileges with their Russian fellows. The poorest gentry, and those who were either too proud to apply for recognition of their social status or were unable to supply needed documents, were denied their gentry privileges. A new law also stripped gentry status from persons sentenced for participating in uprisings (even those who were fighting beyond the boundaries of the Russian Empire in Galicia, Hungary, and Prussia). The gentry were also punished for many other offenses; and those who were drafted into the Russian army could lose their nobility by committing a misdemeanor. Though a simple thief "could not be sentenced to the loss of nobility without the sanction of the emperor, the sanction of a Russian colonel was enough in the case of an insurgent."¹⁸

17. An excellent work on the situation and changes within the Polish gentry in the period 1764–1863, based mainly on archival materials, was published recently: Jerzy Jedlicki, *Klejnot i bariery społeczne* (Warsaw, 1968).

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 390–91.

The consequences of this procedure were not only the decline of the gentry as a culturally homogeneous, ideologically integrated estate, the population of which was by 1827 reduced to one-sixth of its former size.¹⁹ The doors of upward mobility were closed to all those whose nobility was taken from them. All higher ranks of office and all officers' ranks in the army were reserved for nobles. Noble status also played an important role in the law courts and in the educational system.

The systematic dispossession of its landed property was an additional factor in the destruction of the gentry class. After the uprisings of 1794, 1830, and 1863, thousands of the insurgents' country estates were confiscated and given to tsarist dignitaries. Moreover, a bill in 1865 prohibited politically questionable people from possessing land. They were required to sell their landed property within two years and were not permitted to dispose of it by testament.²⁰

These legal procedures for liquidating the Polish gentry were somewhat similar under the Austrian and Prussian monarchies. The Russians, however, also carried out a physical decimation of the gentry, especially in the territories administratively annexed to the Russian Empire. This decimation took many forms, ranging from denationalization of children to mass deportation to Siberia. It was mainly carried out in the eastern provinces of Old Poland and lasted from 1768 to 1865. The impetus of this policy was directed mainly against the gentry.

For all of these reasons a huge number of Polish gentry families were forced to start a new life as city dwellers. They thus created the bulk of the Polish intelligentsia.

Characteristics of the Polish Intelligentsia

Most modern European cultures are the product of bourgeois development. Some of them include peasant characteristics. It is mainly the lack of dominating bourgeois and peasant elements in the Polish national culture that differentiates it from other European cultures. The elements of nobility in the Polish culture enhanced the privileged status of the intelligentsia because of the esteem in which the gentry class had been held in the past, despite all its faults, and because of the power of its cultural heritage.

In a nation surrounded by the most reactionary powers in Europe, the Polish intelligentsia became strongly democratic, and under the famous motto "For your freedom and ours" participated in all revolutionary movements. During the whole century, Polish independence movements were closely allied

19. *Ibid.*, p. 422.

20. See Lepakowski, *Polska*, pp. 133–34.

with the struggle for social change. Consequently the championing of social freedom and national independence became not only a basic characteristic of the Polish intelligentsia but also helped to determine its character and destiny. In a nation without institutions or formal political leadership, the intelligentsia acquired an actual, though informal, position of national leadership and strong charismatic feelings. Compared to the Russian intelligentsia, the Polish stratum had proportionately fewer members who were involved ideologically in social revolution. They preferred to regard it as an instrument in regaining national independence. This does not mean that they wanted to reconstruct the old regime in a free Poland. They did want to introduce deep social changes, but more for the sake of Poland's independence than for purely revolutionary motives. This may explain why feelings of alienation were never a characteristic of this stratum and why nihilism was rare among the Polish intelligentsia. They had no inclination toward the abstract considerations of state, society, human nature, and the essence of revolution that tore at the minds and hearts of Russian revolutionists. They were less dogmatic than their Russian counterparts because their goal was much clearer.²¹ Abstract planning of the future and consideration of sociopolitical problems as derivatives of philosophical assumptions—characteristics which usually lead to dogmatism—were alien to them.

Politically, the intelligentsia had many orientations, from the revolutionary left to the more or less conservative right. Sociologically, the most interesting phenomenon is the marriage that took place between the left and the most active and influential elements of the gentry, and later intelligentsia.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century the gentry-intelligentsia often struggled against their gentry heritage and exposed and criticized the failures of their ancestors. But even then they held strongly to gentry manners and basic values. It must be emphasized that the majority of the leaders in all Polish revolutionary movements were of gentry-intelligentsia origin—Jacobins in the 1792 Insurrection, officers of the Gentry Revolution of 1831, the Democrats of 1846 and 1848, the Red Party of the January Uprising in 1863, and finally those who founded the Polish Socialist Party in 1892 and created a military cadre for the future army, which saved Poland from the first Soviet invasion in 1920.²²

21. "Russians are always inclined to take things in a totalitarian sense; the sceptical criticism of Western peoples is alien to them. . . . Among the Russian radical intelligentsia there existed an idolatrous attitude to science itself. When a member of the Russian intelligentsia became a Darwinist, to him Darwinism was not a biological theory subject to dispute, but a dogma, and anyone who did not accept that dogma (e.g., a disciple of Lamarck) awoke in him an attitude of moral suspicion." Berdyaev, *Origin of Russian Communism*, p. 21.

22. The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-21, is usually described by Western historians, as

It is thus not surprising that in contrast to their Russian and other European counterparts the Polish intelligentsia followed the cultural patterns of the gentry much more closely and in many cases subscribed to less critical attitudes toward them. There was sometimes even a blind admiration. One of the typical representatives of the Polish right wing, Bronisław Trentowski, wrote openly in the first half of the nineteenth century: "A European must generally condemn nobility as a rotten body belonging to the grave of past centuries; a Pole, however, should defend our gentry at least as the head and heart of his own nation. What produced this difference in attitudes? It is so because Europe is independent, and Poland subjugated; because the former is looking for revolution or reform, the latter for restoration."²³ But even to the conservative Trentowski "restoration" meant a return to the May Third Constitution, which was the most progressive one among all monarchies of eighteenth-century Europe. That was the opinion not only of Western historians and diplomats but above all of the autocratic Russian and Prussian governments, which prevented the implementation of the constitution by immediate invasion (1792).²⁴

well as by Communists, as an imperialistic attempt of the Polish bourgeoisie. However, it should be realized that even if a group of the Polish aristocratic landowners from the Ukraine wanted to save their estates on the old Polish territories, the year-old Polish Republic was too weak, too small, and too devastated (by the aftermath of World War I, when the front lines rolled twice through the country). The actual situation at that time was openly described by Soviet military historians: "operations in Lithuania, White Russia, and Poland devolved on a special military unit named the 'Western Army.' The beginning of the offensive depended upon the readiness of the military forces directed to this task; however, it should have begun no later than the end of December 1918. The aims were stated as follows: (1) occupation of White Russia, (2) movement toward Warsaw, including the Western Bug River. The advance of the Red Army to accomplish the specified aims was very successful because Poland was also involved in fighting on other fronts and therefore its Eastern boundaries were poorly defended." *Grazhdanskaia voina, 1918-1921* (Moscow, 1930), 3:152-54. Quoted by Wiktor Sukiennicki, *Biała Księga* (Paris, 1964), pp. 33-34.

It is also instructive to note Lenin's comment on the war: "Attacking Poland we were by the same token attacking the Entente. By destroying the Polish army, we were destroying the Versailles Treaty upon which the whole present system of international relations depends." *Sochineniia*, 3rd ed., 25 (Moscow, 1929): 402. Quoted by Sukiennicki, *Biała Księga*, p. 45.

It should also be taken into account that the Ukraine, fighting for independence, was invaded by the Bolshevik army. The leader of the young Polish state Józef Piłsudski supporting Ukrainian Marshal Petlura had in mind the Old Poland idea of a federation and not a conquest.

23. [B. F. Trentowski], *Wizerunki duszy narodowej z końca ostatniego szesnastolecia* (Paris, 1847), p. viii. (There is an anecdote that reflects the spirit of the Polish leftists. One outstanding revolutionist, when he heard the news about the resurrection of Poland in 1918, said, "I will not believe that Poland is free again until I am arrested by a Polish policeman!")

24. Even after more than 150 years the Soviets prohibited Poles from celebrating the anniversary of the constitution, one of the greatest national holidays in Poland. On May 3, 1946, Russian tanks in Cracow broke up a meeting of ten thousand students who

The Polish intelligentsia was controlled by the other classes to a lesser degree than anywhere else, and it also felt no responsibility to the hated foreign courts that occupied Poland. Because there was no Polish state in the nineteenth century and because the Polish propertied classes were divorced from the political apparatus, the intelligentsia preserved most of its moral independence. Hence it felt itself to be a charismatic stratum, and was recognized by the other classes as the leading force in the nation. The Polish phrase "government of souls" well describes the role of the intelligentsia leaders during the last century.

From its beginnings the intelligentsia formed a "ghetto" and attempted to separate itself from all other inhabitants of the country. But there was a contradiction in this tendency, for it was in a way an "open" ghetto. The rate of upward mobility to this stratum has always been very high. According to the findings of a leading historian of science and education, Franciszek Bujak, at the turn of the nineteenth century in the Galician high schools (which also covered the equivalent of two years of the present American junior college), the so-called gymnasiums (*gimnazja*), 40 percent of the students were of peasant origin. This is significant because in the second half of the nineteenth century and at least the first two decades of the twentieth the gymnasium diploma opened the door of this "ghetto" to all people. In the intelligentsia stratum the diploma of these schools became the equivalent of the gentry coat of arms, because the gymnasium not only provided young people with a broad humanistic education but also tended to produce gentlemen. The myth of the gentry gave the new intelligentsia a feeling of complacency. But even though the intelligentsia was an "open" stratum, we must emphasize some aspects of its "ghetto" character.

The new members of the intelligentsia were required to accept the whole traditional culture if they wanted to establish their social status. They developed their own type of culture based on and strongly linked with the old gentry culture, and they considered themselves the elite of the nation. Their emphasis on humanistic education and their negative attitude toward business are related to the slow process of impoverishment of the gentry-intelligentsia. Retaining their rural cultural patterns, the gentry also retained their natural rate of growth. This resulted in a gradual impoverishment of the stratum, because the slower development of the national economy did not keep pace with the increase in gentry population. The rate of downward mobility of this class was not as great, however, as the rate of transformation into intelligentsia. We know from studies concerning social mobility in other societies that econom-

tried to celebrate this anniversary for the first time after the war.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 somewhat resembles the invasion of Poland by Russia and Prussia in 1792. Reforms in neighboring countries have always created a danger for despotic establishments.

ically declassed people are usually more strongly attached to the cultural patterns of their former class than to new patterns.²⁵ For the poor families of the Polish intelligentsia the only way to preserve the old cultural patterns and the social status of their children was to provide them with a good education.

Upwardly mobile children of the lower classes also acquired, through education, the cultural patterns of the old intelligentsia—their style of life, their ideas of honor, freedom, and patriotism, and their emotional attitudes toward work and leisure, business and money. This process of adaptation to the “new gentry” culture took place because the whole system of secondary and higher education was ruled by the idealized mores and values of the old gentry. Their world outlook, hierarchy of moral and cultural values, and patterns of personality were involved in the legacy of the greatest poets, writers, and artists of the nation. Aleksander Hertz described this phenomenon perfectly:

Neither in the United States nor in England does it [education] provide social distinction in the same degree as do personal success, fortune, or even birth. . . . in both countries a college graduate may be a member of an “intellectual” group—a faculty, a learned society, a professional association, the bar, etc.—but by no means does his education make him regard himself as a member of a separate social class or caste bound to lead the nation to its destiny. In most cases he defines his social status as that of the middle classes.

Matters were different in Poland, in pre-revolutionary Russia, and in a number of countries of a kindred social and cultural pattern. In these nations formal education acquired in an institution of higher learning meant, and still means, more than personal success as expressed in terms of money. There education is not a means to achieve personal success but rather a *permanent asset* which sets the individual apart and gives him access to a higher social sphere. The diploma from an institution of higher learning not only entitles a person to follow a particular profession. It gives more than that: *it bestows a title, a dignity that will remain forever associated with its bearer*. It is easy enough to trace a parallel to the ancient tradition that went with the bestowal of a title of nobility.²⁶

The oppressed nation, deprived of the normal possibilities of political and economic development, devoted more attention to the spiritual substratum of its existence. The greatest poets appeared during this tragic period of Polish history and played the role of national prophets (Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński). These visionaries had such a great influence on society that they were considered to hold the reins to the “government of souls” in their hands. It is not surprising that they are buried among the

25. Lipset and Bendix, *Social Mobility*.

26. Alexander Hertz, “The Case of an Eastern European Intelligentsia,” *Journal of Central European Affairs*, 11, no. 1 (January–April 1951): 13.

kings of ancient Poland in the royal castle (Wawel), which has been the sanctuary of the great of the nation.

The fact that the spiritual development of the nation was not accompanied by material progress resulted in the development of the humanities rather than the natural sciences. The blossoming of humanistic activities was compatible with the hierarchy of values of the gentry culture. Therefore, the "personal model" ("ideal type") of the intelligentsia was created by poets, writers, historians, and artists rather than businessmen and technocrats. One can of course say that this way of development was determined by the economic backwardness of the country and not by the inherited values. However, Czechoslovakia, placed in a similar political situation but without the gentry-intelligentsia and the burden of Poland's historical heritage, developed the trades, industry, and pragmatic attitudes of modern society earlier and more extensively than its neighbor did. The antipragmatic attitudes of the Polish intelligentsia were also derived from Catholicism, which since the end of the seventeenth century has been treated as the national religion.

In the West the cities became the centers of culture, and the values of urban dwellers impregnated the works of the greatest creators. In Poland all of the classical works were created by the gentry or those who had adapted to the gentry culture. A contemporary Marxist essayist has contemptuously called the famous Polish painter of the nineteenth century, Jan Matejko, "the petit bourgeois adopted by the Galician aristocracy."²⁷ This is true. Only one Polish poet of the twentieth century, Jan Kasproicz, has said that he does not understand or feel this particular legacy of the Polish past—most likely because he did not pass through a Polish gymnasium but was educated in Prussian schools.

Education became so highly appreciated in the value system of the Polish nation only in the nineteenth century with the development of this new social stratum. The intelligentsia's special interest in the humanities was determined not only by snobbery but also by sociopolitical motives. The natural sciences could not supply motivations for the actions that were treated (at least by the leaders) as a moral duty. Sociologists will find it especially interesting that the intelligentsia derived their most basic values from the past. Knightly values not inherited from the corrupted gentry of the eighteenth century but sublimated from the best traditions of the national history were refined by the members of this stratum. The first period of the passionate marriage of knightly values with the ideas of democratic reform occurred when the Polish "Legions" participated in the Napoleonic epopoeia, in which peasants and nobles were united not only by their common fate but also by the ideas of the Great Revolution. "Honor i Ojczyzna" (Honor and Fatherland), a slogan

27. Maria Janion, *Posytywizm*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 1951).

embroidered on the battle colors of Polish revolutions and uprisings of the nineteenth century, was not an empty phrase. The idea of honor became closely linked with patriotic duties. The only acceptable way for a member of the intelligentsia to fulfill these obligations, apart from political conspiracy or military resistance, was through education. In private life, education was also associated with the idea of honor. Only a man who had at least a gymnasium diploma could challenge or accept a duel.

The intelligentsia greatly prized the virtue of courage. Courage was required on the battlefields and in daily life as well. The stronger the policy of denationalization, the more need there was for civil courage among a people striving to preserve their national identity. The knightly ethos of bravery sustained by the literature of the nineteenth century influenced all social classes, and the "Polish cavalry syndrome" rapidly conquered the imagination of the young, rendering them much less susceptible to the ideal of pragmatic sobriety called for in modern times.

Thus a nineteenth-century member of the intelligentsia living without landed property, without vested interests, basing the life of his family mainly on professional (in the narrow sense of the word) or creative work—including science, literature, and the fine arts—began to develop an attitude of *noblesse oblige*. After the last decade of the eighteenth century the great dream of the Polish gentry-intelligentsia was to awaken the national consciousness of Polish peasants by conceding them the full rights of citizenship.²⁸ The economic revolution would not support their goals if the peasants could not experience those feelings of gentry-citizenship which had to be defended on the battlefield. There were various plans for achieving this aim, but one fundamental idea underlay them all. The gentry were not to be deprived of their privileges, but rather their rights would be extended to all other estates of the nation. They believed that the gentry exploitation of peasants would disappear as the civil rights and human dignity of peasants and other lower classes increased. This idea, however unrealistic, had a tremendous influence on the people of all classes. It was truly the unrealized Polish way to democracy, to be sure, but real in its aspirations. This "nobilitation" of all the people was never elaborated as a fully developed social program. But during the period when the monopolistic privileges of the Polish gentry (personal immunity and freedom to express convictions and to organize social and private institutions) were cancelled by invaders, its historical heirs, the intelligentsia, adopted the old ethos of social ideology. This ideal of upward equalization contrasts markedly with both the Bolshevik and the Western mass-culture ideologies, which include expressed or unexpressed ideas of downward equalization.

Polish patriotism, blossoming in the ashes of national calamities, became

28. Maurycy Mochnacki, "O rewolucji społecznej w Polsce," in *Pisma Wybrane* (Warsaw, 1957).

a chief component in the intelligentsia's value system, and was strictly separated from nationalism—at least in the entire left wing and center of the intelligentsia. For them Poland was a mother of several nations. The leftists were therefore closer to the old gentry image of Poland than the rightists, who were much more influenced by the idea of the modern national state. The conviction that the way to the resurrection of Poland lay through the destruction of the old regimes of Europe explains why one could find Polish officers, generals, and soldiers in all the revolutionary movements of nineteenth-century Europe. The political polarization of the Polish intelligentsia on the left and the right never resulted in the sharp class and political conflicts often experienced by other nations, because both wings were united in their desire for independence, however different their methods.

The idea of individual freedom had a certain effect on the personal life and manners of the Polish intelligentsia. This historically determined love of freedom, together with the characteristics carried over from the life on country estates, created a special kind of personality which, to use the words of an outstanding contemporary writer, Hanna Malewska, possessed a "dignity of internal liberty."²⁹ This feature, typical at least of the "upper intelligentsia," performed the serious social function of binding to this conquered nation a great number of foreigners living in occupied Poland who wanted to be assimilated into this irrationalistic, romantic, and antipragmatic—almost "crazy"—culture. Practicality may provide welfare, but never sublime happiness, and has nothing to do with the beauty of life. (The youth of the so-called postscarcity culture in affluent societies perhaps reach too fargoing conclusions from this fact.)

The old intelligentsia considered one of the highest values to be the virtue of fidelity. This was not only a remnant of the knight's heritage but the result of a hundred years of conspiracy. Only under conditions of absolute fidelity and veracity could conspirators prepare resistance. However, these virtues are also criticized as being conservative, since they are needed to support the status quo. It is true that they are first of all the virtues of soldiers, and only secondarily and partially those of politicians. In the fighting nation, these virtues brought a new tragedy at the end of World War II, when masses of Polish underground soldiers were determined to fulfill their duties toward the Polish government in exile rather than submit to a new government made in Moscow. It is not accidental that the most popular author of these soldiers was Joseph Conrad, called by Bertrand Russell "an aristocratic Polish gentleman to his fingertips."³⁰

Of course, not all members of the class were honorable people who ob-

29. Hanna Malewska, *Apokryf Rodzinny* (Kraków, 1965).

30. Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1967), 1: 320.

served strictly the extremely high standards of their spiritual leaders. Nonetheless, these values created by a small group of intellectual and political heroes greatly influenced the behavior and outlook of the whole stratum.

The historical writers and diplomats of the three states that partitioned Poland in the eighteenth century spread false and contemptuous opinions about anarchistic inclinations of Poles. These opinions created a basis for the justification of all the rapes of the victim nation. But the truth is far from such simplifications. Anarchism and love of freedom are not synonyms.³¹ The blossoming of individualism in Poland took place in the “golden age” of Polish history (in the sixteenth century), and played a positive role in the cultural, economic, and political life of the country. In the tragic events of the next centuries, gentry individualism was abused by foreign powers (as well as by national magnates) for anarchical purposes. But in all great national efforts the Polish gentry and later the intelligentsia, as well as the whole nation, showed many times how much stronger their *esprit de corps* was than any anarchical inclinations. A member of the Polish intelligentsia was a man whose character was molded—using Riesman’s terminology—by a combination of two tendencies, “tradition direction” and “inner direction.” This combination was possible because the traditional education was based on moral imperatives such as “Be inner directed!” “Judge and behave according to your own heart and mind!” “Hold your own opinion even against the majority!” On the other hand, the Polish historical literature also had a strong influence on the young. The past of the nation, with its tragic heroes and idealized virtues, caught and shaped their imagination.

The Polish intelligentsia’s ardent love of history also reproduced in the national mentality many of the foibles and faults of the former ruling class—impracticality, poorly hidden contempt for manual work, frivolity, extravagance, overconfidence and conceit, and an exuberant individualism that made it difficult to achieve social consensus in hundreds of important matters. Strong individualism coupled with pride and conceit often caused bursts of quarrelsomeness—one of the reasons this stratum never achieved political unity. Members of intelligentsia stood at the front of all other class parties—workers, peasants, and bourgeois—but they never created their own independent social force. In fact they never fought in the name of their own group interests (at least formally).

Despite the failings of the Polish intelligentsia it can be said, *sine ira et studio*, that their historical role was to sublimate and preserve the cultural wealth for other classes and for the future. Today some of the brightest minds in the hemisphere of economic affluence appreciate the need for those “old-fashioned” values. One can find them expressed in the writings of Malraux,

31. Aleksander Gella, “Anarchia a wolność,” *Przełqđ Kulturalny* (1962).

Saint-Exupéry, Hemingway, and Faulkner; and even Bertrand Russell declared his approval of them.³² It seems probable that the people of the future “technetronic” civilization, if and when they become free of the struggle for existence and the burden of repressive culture, will very much need a scale of values such as the old intelligentsia elaborated—the kind of manners and “dignity of internal freedom” which are now burning out on the dumping ground of mass culture.

Foreigners of the upper and middle classes, as well as upwardly mobile people of the Polish minorities, were largely assimilated by the intelligentsia. It was a particularly unusual phenomenon that in the period of the deepest humiliation of Poland thousands of foreign families (mainly German, Czech, and Italian) settled in the country, and supplied the captured nation with heroic patriots, scholars, scientists, historians, artists, and poets. The last three decades of the nineteenth century experienced an increasing assimilation of the Jewish upper class. This process was related to the growth of anti-Semitic policy and movements in Russia, Austria, and Germany. In Russia a twenty-five year period of pogroms (1880–1905) was part of the state plan for the liquidation of the “Jewish question.” In Germany the term “anti-Semitism” was invented in 1879, when Bismarck spoke of a Kulturkampf against the Jews. After it had begun, a vast storm of anti-Semitic agitation and feeling was spread by some writers (Hellweg, Marr, Glagau, Dühring), by student organizations, Kyffhäuserverband and Der Verein Deutsche Studenten (1880), and by a national association, Allgemeine Deutsche Antisemitische Vereinigung (1885). In Austria, Georg von Schönerer organized a nationalistic movement in 1880 (Deutschnationale Bewegung) with strong anti-Semitic ideas.

During this period, in Galicia (southern Poland occupied by Austria) and the Congress Kingdom (occupied by Russia) there was a strong assimilation movement among Jews. The Polish intelligentsia was thus greatly enriched by a number of brilliant minds who combined their traditional pragmatic orientation and abstract thinking with Polish romanticism. The increasing participation of intellectuals of Jewish origin in Polish cultural life lasted until the time of the hecatomblike calamity of World War II and was resurrected with special vigor after the war. It is possible to say that the participation of Jews in the Polish national culture increased parallel with the growth of lower-middle-class anti-Semitism. It is an incredible fact that during the period of anti-Semitism, which spread over most of Europe and was spoiling

32. Russell, *Autobiography*. Recently Maria Ossowska wrote a note about Russell's opinion in “Ethos rycerski w legendach średniowiecza,” *Studia Socjologiczne*, 1968, no. 2 (29).

the unique historical coexistence of the inhabitants in Poland, three of the greatest Polish poets were of Jewish origin—Julian Tuwim, Bolesław Lesmian, and Antoni Słonimski. (It should be added that Polish poetry has played and still plays a role of great national importance.)

The Destruction of the Old Intelligentsia and the Dawn of a Mass Society

In the Second Polish Republic, between the wars, the intelligentsia began to divide itself vertically into three subgroups: intellectuals,³³ professional intelligentsia, and technical intelligentsia and “white-collar workers” with a general humanistic education. Even as this division became evident, the tradition of ideological equalitarianism that the intelligentsia had inherited from the gentry made members of these three groups consider themselves to be from approximately the same class, tradition, and national calling. The final process of the disintegration of the intelligentsia as a more or less homogeneous stratum took place after World War II as a result of the rapid growth of industrialization and the accompanying political upheaval. However, this increasing division is only one of the decisive reasons for the demise of the old type of intelligentsia. There are three other reasons—they are biological, psychocultural, and educational.

During World War II the losses suffered by the Polish intelligentsia in the general martyrdom of the nation were greater than in other classes.³⁴ The occupation authorities knew that they would succeed in controlling the masses only by completely exterminating the educated people and destroying the charismatic stratum of the nation. Thus, without taking into account a consider-

33. Here we should explain what the definition of an intellectual is in contemporary Polish terminology. When Americans speak of intellectuals, they usually mean “all those who create, distribute, and apply *culture*” (Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* [Garden City, N.Y., 1970], p. 311). In Poland the term is not related to profession or occupation but refers to specific mental and cultural capabilities, and neither academic title nor particular social position can justify the appellation. An intellectual is a man with a higher education who has a wide cultural background, participates (or at least is genuinely interested) in literary and cultural life, and can comprehend the philosophical and political implications of his time. Therefore, not every scholar or scientist is considered to be an intellectual. According to this definition, you can find many more intellectuals among writers and, generally speaking, among men of letters than among specialists in science.

34. The number of Polish citizens who were killed by the Nazis is known, but the number who died in Russian concentration camps is still not established, because we have no exact data on the large number of those exiled to Russia in 1939–41 and in 1944–45. Before World War II Poland had 3.5 million Polish citizens of Jewish origin. Also unaccountable is the number of former Polish citizens of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Lithuanian stock who remained on the territories annexed to the USSR. According to postwar statistics Poland lost 223 out of every 1,000 persons (the USSR lost 40 persons out of every 1,000, the United States, 1.4).

able number of displaced persons who did not return to the country after the war, we know that the total war losses among the intelligentsia were proportionally the highest—estimated at about 35 percent.⁸⁵ The almost complete loss of the Jewish population was not only the greatest human tragedy in the common history of two nations but also a great blow to the social development of Poland. The rapid upward mobility of this ethnic group had strongly influenced the slow changes in the attitudes of the Polish intelligentsia toward modernization. The war also caused a political exile and emigration of Poles that was the greatest dispersion in history since ancient Israel. Jan Szczepański, the author of a number of studies on the Polish intelligentsia, has compared the productivity of this stratum in 1937 and 1947: “The number of scientific publications went down from 7,974 in 1937 to 426 in 1947; the number of literary works from 1,560 to 645; the number of works popularizing the sciences from 2,274 to 353.”⁸⁶ The composition of the intelligentsia since the war has changed considerably, because the ranks of the intelligentsia, in the enlarged new sense of the term, had to be filled through a fast upward mobility—the so-called social advance of members of the lower classes during one generation. The rapid increase in the number of nonmanual workers of all sorts who consider themselves members of the intelligentsia, and who have received the official name “working intelligentsia,” has caused the intellectuals to form into a separate group of their own. The people of these various groups of intelligentsia resemble the “organization men” of W. H. Whyte.⁸⁷ They are as oppressed by the social machinery of modern society as their colleagues in all other industrial societies.

On the level of psychocultural change there are two conflicting factors—traditional literature, theater, music, and historical art versus the ethos of the new mass education in the spirit of Soviet Marxism. First of all, literature, art, oral tradition, and even elementary education have influenced the new generation of educated people by showing them the traditional patterns of culture. It must be emphasized that classical literary works were published in huge printings after the war and found the best consumers in the masses of the new intelligentsia. Yet the ethos of this literature is deeply incompatible with the needs of the economic orientation of modern society. The government has tried to change the traditional attitudes of the new generation through political education, mass propaganda, and organized criticism of the old view of the Polish past, and by imposing new patterns of behavior and substituting the new heroes of the Communist movement for the personal models embodied in the

35. Bolesław Olszewicz, *Lista strat kultury polskiej* (Wrocław, 1947).

36. Jan Szczepański, “The Polish Intelligentsia: Past and Present,” *World Politics*, 14, no. 3 (April 1962): 414.

37. William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organisation Man* (New York, 1956).

old-fashioned heroes. The conflict of these two factors—traditional literature and current educational policy—results in two standards of morality. The new generation (mainly the “working intelligentsia”) has been called the “generation without historical roots.” But the new cultural patterns have not been attractive and stimulating enough for those who still have at the back of their minds the old historical patterns, despite their alleged “uselessness.” Liberals in Western countries who have been inclined to accept some of the Soviet propaganda still find it hard to believe that the tremendous effort of the new regime to indoctrinate the masses, both educated and uneducated, has been a resounding failure. The spiritual independence of the intelligentsia was broken down not only by political terror but also by the party administration of literature and art. Party imposition of principles of “socialist realism” as a compulsory apotheosizing of social reality in the Communist state, and censorship to an extent unknown in Europe since the French Revolution, except for the fascist right, have caused a most significant change in the character of the so-called creative intelligentsia. Many of them were subjected to individual brainwashing. More important, however, is the fact that the fundamental principle of all creativity—freedom of expression, in both form and content—was denied them. Despite all financial support and status privileges, the new generation of socialist writers has not produced a literature able to conquer the imagination of the masses. Officials do not produce art. Officials never hold the reins of the “government of souls.” Writers on state salaries do become state officials of a new type and create many tons of spoilage. The world view presented by novelists and poets of the past and those who live and write in exile still dominates the Polish reader’s mind. What has happened to the mentality of the best writers captured by the tongs of party demands and the religion of dialectics has been well expressed by Czesław Miłosz, a Polish leftist writer who left the country in the early 1950s. In his famous book *The Captive Mind* he analyzes the artistic and intellectual disaster brought about by the imposition of dialectical materialism in the Stalinist version. The writer—whose dominating characteristic has become, Miłosz writes, “his fear of thinking for himself”—has ceased to be a spiritual leader of the people, who now believe much more in any voice broadcast to them from abroad.

In the course of two decades the economic structure of Poland has changed: it has become an industrialized country. To accomplish this task of rapid industrialization a concurrent rapid development of higher education was needed, and was accomplished. It is enough to compare the number of students for three academic years: 49,500 students in 1937–38, 86,500 in 1946–47, and 288,788 in 1967–68.³⁸ The majority of the contemporary “work-

38. Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Rocznik Statystyczny*, 1968.

ing intelligentsia" have a working-class or rural background. This means that they come from that part of the nation that was for several centuries in a direct economic and class conflict with the gentry. But the generation of those who felt any direct injury on this account is now dying out. On the other hand, members of the new generation accept the heritage of the historical past without emotional resistance. More than this, they feel a need for it; they are making their own background out of it, in order to feel at home with patterns that are new to them. For example, many people changed their quite attractive sounding peasant names to gentry names in the Polish People's Republic. The gentry intelligentsia manner of addressing one another as *pan* (sir) has become common among all classes. At the same time, the Polish people have accepted many of the ideas proclaimed by the new school of life. But this process is softened by their knowledge of classical literature, art, and customs and by all the old residual attitudes toward work, money, pleasure, authority, patriotism, and value goals which are based on long tradition. Changes in deeply rooted attitudes take longer. But the increase in the number of white-collar workers and the "technical intelligentsia" also has necessarily resulted in the development of the cultural values of the middle class, typical to all Western civilization, and of the patterns of behavior spread by the mass media.

The highly qualified professionals, who constitute the upper level of the working intelligentsia, also differ from their forerunners of the nineteenth century. Some of them deserve a more appropriate contemporary name: *priviligentsia*. They face the great danger of specialization. Jan Szczepański wrote a few years ago, "One can suggest that the creative intelligentsia began to change themselves into salaried specialists and certain groups of them are becoming officials."³⁹ After the tragic experiences of the last three decades they were inclined to see only the failures and inadaptability of the old Polish cultural patterns and national ideas. Therefore they consciously tried to modernize Polish attitudes, and in many cases went much too far. New cultural patterns, and the attitudes created by them, determined the social behavior, trends, and hidden movements of the society only to a certain extent. The main problem that Polish intellectuals face is not how to reject modern life but how to save and adapt to it some of the great moral values that emerged in the course of Poland's history.

The "war generation" of the Polish intelligentsia was obedient to the call of Juliusz Słowacki (one of the nation's three greatest poet-prophets) from his "Testament":

39. Jan Szczepański, "Inteligencja a pracownicy umysłowi," *Przegląd Socjologiczny*, 13 (1959), no. 2.

I implore the living not to lose hope,
 But, when the time comes, to go forth to their death,
 Like stones thrown by God upon a great rampart.⁴⁰

But the children of the greatest national calamity have wanted, above all, to free the nation from these too idealistic patterns that led it to collective suicide on several occasions. After the experiences of the nineteenth-century uprisings and the twentieth-century wars they no longer want to follow the old Polish destiny. The contemporary Polish intellectuals no longer want to see Poland as the betrayed fortress of the Western world. This feeling led many of them to the Communist Party.⁴¹ They are looking for a new way of survival for the nation in the modern world. But the burdens of the tragic history of their country are too heavy to be removed by the efforts of the intellectuals of a single generation.

The sons of the old Polish intelligentsia, who in 1939 together with the masses of Polish soldiers of all other classes went through Rumania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia to continue their hopeless fight against Nazism on all fronts of the European war theater, were faithful to the old Polish phrase, "We are everywhere where people are fighting for freedom." They seemed to be the last of this historical tradition. Yet in 1968 Polish students, born and educated in the Polish People's Republic, in their struggles with police on the streets of the university cities, manifested their support of the same ideals their fathers and grandfathers had held—freedom, democracy, independence. But in their mouths these worn slogans had a special connotation—"freedom" in the Western sense of the term, freedom *hic et nunc* (here and now) and not in some distant future; "democracy," meaning a multiparty system of governing in which even the rulers obey the law; "independence," meaning "Leave us alone, our Eastern 'friends.'" These young people make up the bulk of the "new intelligentsia." All descriptions available to us of their activities make us think about national imponderables that survive even the deepest changes in the social and cultural structure.⁴²

The old Polish intelligentsia developed in the course of several generations. Even though its members differed seriously on many issues, the same ethos and the same or very similar attitudes were transferred from generation

40. Translation based on the English version of an underground publication by Juliusz Górecki (Aleksander Kamiński), *Stones for the Rampart* (London, 1945).

41. Many of them survived that moment when the Resistance Radio broadcast to the West from dying Warsaw one of its last messages: "This is the stark truth. We were treated worse than Hitler's satellites, worse than Italy, Rumania, Finland. May God, who is just, pass judgment on the terrible injustices suffered by the Polish nation." Col. Kazimierz Iranek-Osmecki, "Warsaw Uprising—The Polish View," in *History of the Second World War*, vol. 5, no. 13, 3/6 (published by Purnell in 96 weekly parts, London).

42. *Wydarszenia Marcowe* (Paris, 1968).

to generation and survived for over a century. All generations accumulated a wide range of experiences, but none can compare with the span of experience of the generation born at the turn of this century. They had the opportunity to know and survive many different social and political realities.⁴³ Born at the time of the Holy Alliance of three emperors, they were taught conspiracy in childhood. They witnessed the poverty of the growing proletariat and the charm of the luxurious rural life on the country estates of the landowners. Having lived with the remnants of the feudal past, they became leftists or national democrats. Most of them were compelled to fight—sometimes against each other—in the uniforms of Russian, Austrian, and Prussian armies during World War I. Then they experienced the greatest day in the history of the subjugated nation—the restoration of Poland. In their subsequent work to rebuild national and social institutions they met with failure and success, but they were basically happy—the happiest among all the generations of Polish freedom-fighters. They survived in 1939 the deathblow of their work and their world—the German and Russian invasion and the fourth partition of Poland. They did not surrender, and did not resign themselves to their fate, but went to fight abroad or in the underground movement. They built the greatest underground state in occupied Europe, with an underground army, administration, courts, and educational system. Alas, they could not share in the victory of the Allies. Their underground government and the commander in chief of their army were deceitfully arrested by the military forces of their Eastern ally and sentenced in Moscow (June 18–21, 1945).⁴⁴ They and their sons were persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, or transported to Russia. After ten years of terror they were told that it all had been caused by the “cult of personality” and the “period of errors and distortions.” Once more they survived a period of hopes and illusions. Most of them wanted so passionately to participate in the rebuilding of the state and country that they even accepted limited independence and the imported government. Then this dying generation saw their grandsons fighting with police forces on the restored streets of their beloved cities. They felt defeated for probably the last time in their lives.

43. The problem was recently undertaken by B. Suchodolski, “Wychowanie pokoleń w okresie 1918–1968,” *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1969, no. 3.

44. The vice-premier of the Polish government, three ministers, the last commander in chief of the Polish underground army, the most distinguished representatives of the four main Polish political parties, and leaders of the Polish underground movement were arrested by Russian military authorities. They came to meet Colonel-General Ivanov, representative of the High Command of the First Belorussian Front, on the basis of his written invitation for the purpose of conversations on Polish-Soviet relations, and were given the Russian “officer’s word” concerning their security. “Documents Concerning the Sixteen Polish Leaders Arrested and Tried in Moscow,” Republic of Poland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Confidential, unpublished mimeographed report (London, 1945), no. 5, p. 4.