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BY

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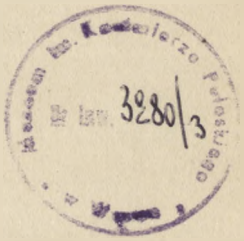

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PART I

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

I

THE shock of the Partitions, proceeding piecemeal from 1772 to 1795, of itself wrought profound changes in the thought and action of the Poles; reaching elements which had hitherto played but a subordinate role in the national life. Resolute and highly commendable steps had been taken in the years 1788–1791 to end the anomalies, not to say absurdities of the older political order, e.g. the principle of unanimity that had so long paralysed both legislative and administrative action; and, apart from the inevitable die-hards, everyone knew that a return to anything like the former 'commonwealth of the gentry' was out of the question.

But there were other, no less important, influences at work also. Along with the other peoples of Central Europe, the Poles felt deeply the outreach of the French Revolution, the claims of the townsman to a partnership in public affairs, the coming to birth of modern Europe. Behind all this there lay, of course, the general cultural ferment radiating from the Enlightenment—the challenge offered by the Age of Reason to all entrenched interests whether associated with monarchies based on Divine Right or with Churches wielding vast powers derived from revelation: in particular the leaven of science and the extending of education to the masses. The task begun in Renaissance days but never finished was now to be taken up afresh; in the first stage by the critical intellect, in the second by the emotional dynamic of Romance. In the wake of Locke, Newton and Montesquieu came Tom Payne, Rousseau and the poets of Britain and Germany; to be followed a generation later by men like Lelewel and Mickiewicz in

Poland, and by Pushkin, Herzen and Lermontov in Tsarist Russia. As we shall see below, the pioneer of at least two phases of this transformation in the Polish world was the scientist and social reformer, Father Stanislaw Staszic.

The popular expression of all this urge, though it shone with but a brief flame, was the Rising under Kosciuszko in 1794, in which a conspicuous part was played by the peasants and townsmen. But a more enduring witness was that of the Legionaries of succeeding years: those men of all classes of society who went into exile to fight alongside the French armies in their struggle from 1797 onwards with the dynasties that were bent on maintaining the old order in Europe from the Baltic to the Mediterranean—not the least in northern Italy. The evidence of this witness was brought together at the turn of the century by Limanowski in the early pages of his *History of Polish Democracy*, and it shows not only the extent to which both officers and men were animated by truly democratic ideas and ideals, but also the ways in which, although thwarted on every hand—not the least by the Emperor himself, they endured in the face of every obstacle and indignity in their resolve to help on the liberation of Europe.

What Stein and Hardenberg were able to achieve in Prussia for the welfare of both peasant and townsman could certainly have been effected in the neighbouring Slavonic lands, had not the powers-that-be been set on restoring the old order; and had they not found in the decisions of the Congress of Vienna the confirmation of their efforts. The year 1815 saw the Fourth Partition of Poland, and the creation 'in the Name of the Sacred Trinity' of the Holy Alliance—a League of Dynasties, whose purpose was to maintain the Divine Mission of those in authority in State and Church against every attack made on its validity. Invoking the principle of Legitimacy, the sovereigns bound themselves to assist one another in sternly repressing all movements from below that might subvert the established order. The watch-dog of the new structure was the able and energetic Metternich.

Before long it became clear that all this was a labour of Sisyphus. In the twenties came the insurrection in Greece, and in November 1830—following on the outbreak in France, came the Rising of the Poles against Tsarist absolutism. This event is of supreme significance for our present argument; since for the first time in Polish history it revealed a clear line of cleavage in thinking and action between what we should call Liberals (or Radicals) and Conservatives. In the records of this year of struggle and disaster can be found the birth-story of Polish Democracy; and its prophet, if not its hero, was the historian, Joachim Lelewel.

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Behind these pioneers of social and political democracy there was a long tradition of liberal thinking in Poland, and not a few examples can be discerned of liberal practice. In the tumultuous 16th century they were rooted chiefly in humanitarianism and religion, but as time went on considerations of enlightened self-interest came strongly to the fore.

Frycz-Modrzewski, a Reformation leader of European fame, saw his generation faced with a new social and economic issue. In response to a growing demand in Western Europe for Polish corn and raw materials, agriculture began both to expand and to improve on the plains of the Warta, the Vistula and the Bug. Labour was therefore a commodity with a new scale of values, and a tightening-up of what had been unusually mild regulations in regard to the village elements ensued. This amounted to the introduction of the *corvée* on western lines, and the binding of the peasant to the soil. In the minds of many of the aristocracy the latter was in any case meant to be a beast of burden: what was needed was a pair of arms and a strong back; little or no regard was paid to the human being, none at all to the potential citizen.

Against this class attitude Modrzewski raised his voice

in 1543 in a passionate demand for even justice in the state. Before God, he argued, every man was equall No legislation was worthy of a Christian commonwealth which set a heavy penalty for killing a squire, but only the smallest of fines for killing a serf. Elsewhere he showed that with every social privilege (and he accepted the Athenian pattern of democracy which had its ruling class and its two non-participating elements as the ruled) were matched concrete responsibilities, the non-recognition of which was a transgression of both human law and divine. 'The peasant,' he said to the squire in an inspired phrase, 'is not your slave: he is your neighbour.'

No one knew better than the author of these demands that they were ahead of his time, and that for the most part his warnings would fall on deaf ears. So indeed it turned out; with the result that to meet the rising claims of the landlords the villagers resorted to force (nowhere on a wide or organised scale). They resisted the new rulings, mostly by flight; their destination being very often the 'New East,' the rich black-earth lands that beckoned between the Dniester and the Dnieper, full of adventure and prospects. Nor could all the efforts of their would-be employers (scores of statutes passed by the Diet from 1550 to 1700 included) check the stream which brought a considerable change of balance of the Polish population in its train.

But this was not all. The year 1565 saw another type of class legislation effected, this time directed by the landed aristocracy against the towns. The result was the crippling of what had been in the way of becoming as well-to-do an urban population as any other country of Western Europe. The rights of export trade were taken away from the burghers and handed over to agents of the primary producers—in many cases foreigners. At the same time the aspirations of the townsmen to possess country properties, and to share the rights of the gentry in the army and the political field were destroyed. A period of decline set in, whose disastrous nature affected the whole

nation and state. It was accentuated by the fearful invasion years, 1648–60, with the result that virtually up to the time of the First Partition the once flourishing towns and cities of Poland were a picture of ruin and wretchedness. The failure to listen to the voice of Modrzewski and others was being paid for at a frightful price.

The next generation after him heard another resounding voice in the cause of social justice—that of the eminent Jesuit preacher, Father Peter Skarga. But it remained for the satirist Opalinski, who lived precisely through the invasion years of the 17th century, to lash out with his pen in a way worthy of Juvenal, at the folly of his fellow-aristocrats in their dealings with their serfs:

> 'In Heaven's name, my Poles: have you gone mad?
> For goods, for wealth, for living, for your harvests
> You've but your serfs to thank. 'Tis they who feed you;
> And yet they only know you for your harshness!'

His contemporary, Starowolski, demanded government interference. 'The state should look into this, as other nations do: see to it that nobles do not take the lives of their subjects at will, or burden them with unjust toil—as if they were dumb cattle!' It was he, canon of the Cathedral on the Wawel, who was forced to show his church to the conquering Swedish King, Carolus Gustavus, but reminded him quietly, '*Fortuna mutabilis, Deus mirabilis!*' Fortune did prove changeable; thanks in large part to the rallying of the peasants, Poland was cleared of its invaders in a very short time. The more's the pity that the pledge given by the returning king, Jan Casimir, in the Cathedral in Lwow, that he would see justice done the masses of the common people, was never carried out!

Not that the position of the serfs was any worse in Polish lands during these times than elsewhere in Europe, for it was not.[1] But her critical geographical position demanded of Poland right through the ages that state and

[1] Serfs from neighbouring Prussian lands were constantly seeking refuge in Poland, and eager to make new homes there.

nation should be strong; and this involved social and economic harmony and co-operation, above all the existence of a sturdy and energetic middle class. The nature of the danger threatening Poland from without became clear from the moment when Prussia became a kingdom, and Peter the Great advanced to the Baltic. The moment was one of Poland's darkest, for a Saxon was on the throne, and the ruling classes had wrapped themselves in a mantle of 'faith' that Heaven would in any case care for their well-being. Long before this, an observer had pointed out that in the joint Polish-Lithuanian kingdom there were 3,000,000 'chimneys,' and that one recruit from each score of cottages would mean a standing army of 150,000 men. But the marginal note made on the suggestion was this: 'God forbid that weapons, which are the privilege of the nobility, should be given to the commons! They would at once sense their new dignity, and would rise to a position of prominence in the internal politics of the nation.' Such was the prevailing view of the aristocracy that was to drive the Reformers of Partition days almost to despair. Small wonder that Staszic, to whose teaching we shall come in a moment, wrote: 'Where the farmer is a serf, the nobility will be subject to foreigners.'

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Reasons of space compel me to pass over the witness of many others; including in the early eighteen-hundreds the Palatine of Poznan, Stefan Garczynski, and the exile King Stanislaw Leszczynski, known in France as the Duke of Lorraine.[1] A century after Opalinski's death came the First Partition. With a start the nation roused itself, and what had been up till then the anxiety of a few now became the concern of the many. 'What thou doest, do quickly!' may be said to have been the slogan of the hour. The next twenty years did indeed see astonishing reforms. In the teeth of opposition from the die-hard aristocrats

[1] See the author's *Stanislaw Konarski* (Cape, 1929), Chap. 3.

and from the agents of Catherine and Frederic the crying evil of the unanimity principle (the *liberum veto*) was removed, a regular state budget was framed and provision made for a standing army. Above all, a National Board of Education was set up, which for the first time made provision for schooling for the children of the commons. A step of supreme importance was the calling to Warsaw in the autumn of 1789 of a Congress of delegates of the already reviving towns, whose work went on right through the winter, and ended in the securing for the burghers of their long-lost status as citizens. The Constitution of 3rd May 1791 was the crowning work of the decade—a document that won the attention of some of the first thinkers in Europe, and whose realisation would have gone forward but for the action of the neighbour powers in completing the Partitions in 1793 and 1795.

Nevertheless, it was heavy going. No one knew this better than the son of a burgher from near the Prussian border, who was sent by his parents on completing High School to the universities of the west to carry on his scientific studies. Mainly in Paris, where he was a pupil of Buffon, Staszic gathered a rich store of learning and experience, and returned to his homeland to offer his services to the nation. He was soon to learn that they were not wanted. Social discrimination was too strong, he could get no admission to public office. After some waiting, thanks to the friendship of a later famous Pole, Jozef Wybicki, author of the immortal hymn,

'Poland's soul has not departed
While we live to love her!'

he became a tutor in the house of one of the most forward-looking magnates of that generation—Andrew Zamoyski. Here he devoted his spare time to a study of the past of his nation.

The result was seen in two notable books. The first was historical in design, setting forth the character and aims of the great Chancellor of the 16th century, John

Zamoyski; but in such a way that those who read with care could see how much of the book applied to the crisis of their own day. Appearing in 1785, it was followed five years later by a frankly topical work, *Warnings to Poland*, in which the author tore the veil from the realities of his time, and proved himself a Daniel come to judgment. It was a challenging political pamphlet on a large scale, and it created something like a furore.

Rightly called 'the patriarch of Polish democracy,' Stanislaw Staszic was a figure of whom any nation in Europe might be proud. Though destined for the Church, he never was active as a clergyman, preferring to regard Poland as a whole as his parish. During forty years he gave his strength to the service of his people, never demanding or accepting either office or recompense. When the loss of independence came in 1795, true to the watchword announced forty years earlier by Konarski, 'Nil desperandum!' he turned to the field of education, and became the chief founder in Warsaw of the Society for the Promotion of Learning. As a geographer and a geologist, both physical and economic, he laid the foundations of those two sciences by his personal efforts, publishing works that are of value even to-day. Attempting great things for his people, he could rightly expect from it great things in return. For that reason, and because he was a man both of head and of heart, he could utter the prophetic and challenging sentence for which he will ever be remembered: 'Even a great nation may fall, but only a worthless one can perish!'

One issue alone remained the master concern of his life—the solving of the social problem. After half of his years of service were over, he tried to purchase with his savings a modest farm property; only to find that, not being by birth a 'gentleman,' he could not own an estate! Not until the introduction of the Code Napoléon in 1807, with the founding by the French Emperor of the Duchy of Warsaw, was all this changed. Even then, the emancipation of the serfs, since it gave them no land, was

to be of no real value. As one critic wittily said: 'The constitution took the fetters off the peasants' feet, but it took their shoes as well.'

How sober was the attitude of Staszic from the start to all that was needed, had been shown by his analysis in *Warnings to Poland* of the real source of weakness. The collapse of his country had been due in the last analysis to the lack of a standing army for its defence. In order to have this bulwark, said Staszic, one must have an adequate national income. For this an optimum population was essential, and some sort of well-being for that population. Such well-being would only then be possible, when the land brought forth reasonably good harvests. But when would the land do this? 'When work on the land was increased,' was his reply, and he went on: 'People will not work their best until they are all made eligible to be owners of the land!'

No Pole before Staszic had made so clear something that cried out to be said, though it was very unpalatable to most of the aristocracy even after the Partitions. The gentry of Poland were not the nation, though that had been the traditional view. They were only a part of it, a much larger fraction, be it observed, than in the countries of Western Europe. They were only one of 'the estates'; whereas the nation was a compound of all its parts, and only then a nation in the modern, let us say scientific sense, when those parts were knit together so strongly that the misfortune of one was felt to be the misfortune of all. Only then would resistance to blows from without be possible. Reversely, everything done for the good of the workers would rebound to the benefit of all. To quote the German proverb:

Hat der Bauer Geld,
Hat's die ganze Welt!

'Save yourselves!' was the message of *Warnings*. The ruling classes were assured that they were in no fear of losing their liberties, but they should share them with

others. This would increase vastly the number of free and responsible Polish citizens.

Nowhere did Staszic allow himself to become a demagogue, to preach innovation for its own sake. Nowhere did he even demand the franchise for the emancipated peasant; or that he should have his delegates as deputies, sitting in the Diet; or that peasants should at once occupy public offices. First things first!—was his motto. An end of serfdom, the granting of private rights, the insurance of freedom of movement and the privilege of contracting on something like equal terms for his labour. These things realised, the peasant would soon become a citizen.

'Five-sixths of the nation stand before my eyes,' he wrote in one of his most moving paragraphs. 'I see millions of beings, of whom some go half naked, all are lean, worn out and dirty: their eyes deep in their sockets, their breasts panting as they toil; they are dour, stupid, stunned; they feel little and think little—perhaps that is their only good fortune; scarcely a reasoning soul can be seen among them. Their name *chlop* is a term of derision. They live on black bread, but for one quarter of the year they have only greens. They drink water, or the gin that burns out their bowels. They live in holes, or in huts scarcely raised above the ground; into which the sun does not come, but only the smoke that keeps the light of day from revealing their wretchedness. Their lives are short, and mortality is greatest among infants. . . .

> 'Esteemed fellow-citizens, that is the life of this portion of the people on whom the future of the Commonwealth depends. That is the man who feeds you, the tiller of the soil in Poland!'

A dark picture, no doubt, and perhaps overdrawn by the man whose heart yearned for improvement. Fortunately, for masses of these people that improvement was already on the way. Staszic himself lived to see many changes, and to make his own characteristic contribution. If he was impatient, and hoped for changes in Poland

which were only then being effected in Western Europe, he can be forgiven for it. Out of his burning love of country came not only this outburst, but his appeal to the clergy, to the educators, and to all in high office, to address themselves to this task. He knew well where the obstacles lay—chiefly in the prejudices and selfishness of the privileged classes—common to all Europe: in particular of many of the great magnates, some of whom proved to be not only enemies of reform but also traitors to the national cause.

In all this there was no mention of class hatred, no demand for a class war. Not the man or woman who was better born, or better situated than his fellows was the villain of the piece; but the well-born or well-to-do who not only did not work, but who looked on his right to be waited on and served by others as one designed by Heaven, and which no one should dare to challenge. In other words, Staszic was the pioneer in Poland of the doctrine that work is the source of all values, and by inference the duty of all citizens. What is more, by contrast with certain advocates of reform who followed him, he was himself a shining example of all that he taught. A long and tireless career of service was sealed when he died in 1826 by a testament which left his property at Hrubieszow to his tenants.

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By this time, although no Poland was to be found on the map, much had been done to show Europe that the loss of political independence—so far from meaning an end of the nation—had rather brought about its regeneration. In 1809 the serfs of the Prussian provinces got their freedom, though in Upper Silesia this did not become effective till 1848. During the brief existence of the Duchy of Warsaw the Code Napoléon conferred undoubted benefits, setting a new standard for civic relations in Eastern Europe. Many of its principles can be discerned as lasting over into the post-1815 régime in the Congress

Kingdom. At bottom, nevertheless, the new order was rooted in absolutism and it aimed rather at securing what was than at reaching out for something new. In a word those in possession were to be kept there, disturbers of the traditional form of things were not favoured.

The autonomy granted to the Kingdom was carefully limited on the side of politics; in economic matters, on the other hand, there was complete freedom of action. The Poles at once set about using these privileges to rebuild the fabric of their social and business life on modern lines. For once they began in the right way, working from the centre. Warsaw, which had stagnated through twenty years of wars, was cleaned up and extensive plans made for new buildings in the Empire style. When the veteran traveller Niemcewicz returned home after years of absence he was astounded at the transformation. Of no less importance were the steps to link up the capital by trunk roads (not macadam as yet) with the provinces. Postal communications were reconstituted, regular 'fairs' arranged for the exchange of goods of all kinds, arts and crafts encouraged, and provision made for Credits and Loans to agriculture. The old trouble of administering the city, which had been composed really of two parts—the burgher 'Old Town' and the collection of palaces with their 'mews' making up the aristocratic 'New Town'—was finally disposed of, and the city that numbered only 60,000 souls when peace came set about virtually doubling its population every twenty years until in 1914 it was close on a million.

As Director of Industry and Trade, Staszic took in hand the improvement of existing mining and foundry works, and the construction of new ones. The coal mines of the Dombrova region in the south-west were reopened, the production of iron begun on modern methods, and the extraction of lead started in the nearby Olkusz. Two veins of silver, discovered in 1820, furnished metal for the first ten-zloty pieces to be struck in the new mint.

In the field of education not a little of the fine work set

on foot in the eighties by the National Board of Education was able to go on. A Polish university was founded in Warsaw, two teachers' colleges were functioning in Lowicz and Pulawy, a network of elementary schools rivalling those of Western Europe was maintained over much of the country, and the number of secondary schools grew. Attention began to be paid for the first time to training for the practical professions. Most of this was the work of the Minister of Education, Stanislaw Potocki, trained as a boy in the Piarist College of Father Konarski; and until his dismissal in 1820 on the charge of holding high office in Freemasonry things went well. From then onwards little fresh advance was possible, the Poles were soon trying to hold what they had.

Not that times were easy, for everything still felt the effects of the long war. Farming had ceased to pay, owing in the main to tariff barriers against the export of breadstuffs. More and more landed proprietors got into debt. The burden of pensions and other liabilities from the past did not diminish, and the cost of the army was heavy. The yearly deficit mounted, but the stress did effect one good thing. Farmers, both large and small, began to improve their methods, change from corn to roots and cattle-breeding, and develop subsidiary industries. By 1821 the crisis was severe, and with it went a growing tension in the political field. In the nick of time a genius in finance was found in the person of 'Prince' Lubecki, and the story of rehabilitation in material things that marked the next decade is largely that of his work.

Help came from outside, though not till the spring of 1825. The English market for corn was reopened, and wheat exports to Liverpool went up twelvefold by 1828. Everything was transformed by this change—both private enterprise and public finance moved on to a new plane. The population of the Kingdom rose by 60 per cent. by 1840. Clearly there was promise of great things under the protection of the Tsar!

The other side of the coin was seen in the stern measures

taken by Lubecki to restore the public credit. Taxes remained high, and they were ruthlessly extorted—something not known in the older Poland. The landowners grumbled, but had to admit that on the long-range view the Minister was right. In 1828 he was able to found the Polish Bank. Two years earlier he had annoyed the Berlin brokers by borrowing £1,000,000 in London and Paris. One year later they were ready to let him have a similar sum for 25 years at 5 per cent.—a remarkable concession for those days.

Among the new industries, perhaps the most important was that of textiles, founded by immigrant Saxon weavers in the wooded region south-west of Warsaw, and soon to be famous as the Lodzh textile centre. From the outset Russia offered the best market, and the value of such exports went up from 140,000 zlotys in 1820 to ten times that sum in 1826. Here it remained stationary for some time, owing to Russian complaints, only to go forward again by leaps and bounds.

A social process was getting under way, which was in time to give Poland something it had sadly lacked hitherto—a healthy middle class, something without which democracy is only a name. Fed both from above and from below, i.e. both from the families who had belonged to the landed aristocracy and from the artisan or even peasant classes, it was composed of all people engaged in productive labour, whether of the hand or of the head: in labour that would not only prosper them as individuals, but also enrich the community. In all this the growth of business and industry, the rise of the profession of engineering, the sense of dignity accruing from the possession of a stake in the country, did their part. Time would show how much this was to mean for the life of the towns, to which the countryside has always looked for guidance; and even for the villages, from which a mounting wave of fresh blood would gather into these towns, forming the social factor needed for consolidating the nation as a whole.

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The prospects thus offered were, unfortunately, rudely interrupted soon after the death of Staszic. The new Tsar was a man of wholly different timber from his father. What has been called by a distinguished Russian 'thirty years of darkness' set in for all his possessions. Before long revolt was ripe, and it broke out at the end of November 1830 in Warsaw. A National Government was set up, in which one can see clearly defined Conservative and Liberal, or Radical, parties. At the head of the former were eminent aristocrats and military leaders: the moving spirit of the latter was the historian Lelewel.

The immediate roots of this radicalism were many. On the one hand Freemasonry, which had been making itself feared in Tsarist Russia as a disruptive element, and to whose lodges many notable Poles belonged. Of a somewhat similar character were local secret societies, such as that founded among the students in Wilno by Tomasz Zan, of which Mickiewicz was perhaps the most distinguished member, known as the Philomathians. On the other, and not unrelated, there was the drive of the Youth Movement in literature, known as Romanticism, of which more will be said later. Influences from the west, including those of Byron and Scott, were prominent in letters and history. More than anyone else, Lelewel was the promoter of these currents, and it was inevitable that he should be called to play an active part in the insurrection, once it had broken out.

Space does not permit an account of the Rising here, nor is it relevant to our purpose. One reason for it was the resolve of the Poles not to allow Russian armies to be sent to the west to help quench the revolution in France, and in particular in Belgium. But the end in view was the emancipation of Poland from the Tsarist yoke, and the help of France and Britain was expected.

The Radicals differed from the Conservatives fundamentally on certain points. In addition to a national rising

they wanted social revolution, including the freeing of the serfs. They recalled the mistake, as they saw it, of Kosciuszko in 1794, when he did not heed the advice of Kollontaj and add this point to his programme. 'Poland was of old a democracy of the gentry,' was the phrase: 'it would be right if, on recovering her lost liberty, she became a democracy of the commons.' What is more, the Radicals differed from the leaders of the Right, among them the veteran Prince Czartoryski, in urging that the least possible dependence be placed on diplomatic action from abroad. The words of Lelewel are memorable:

> 'Woe to that people which rises by the help of others! Such a nation will never be free. Experience has shown that counting on diplomacy to help kills every move. Such material is poor stuff to build with. From it can arise at best a Duchy of Warsaw or a "Kingdom" . . . clay structures, which rain and sleet will suffice to wash away.'

Events were to show very soon, however, that the historian, with all his insight and his fine qualities, had neither the personality nor the experience necessary for political leadership.

> 'The most popular man in the Kingdom,' says Feldman; 'learned, and more energetic and deserving than a whole college of teachers under other circumstances, he was built for research rather than for politics. Yet he was the living embodiment of what he was in later years to put into a single sentence: "The heart is the last and only impregnable fortress of every nation." '

The demands of violent revolution were distasteful to him, and yet he found himself in the midst of one. The result was compromise at a time when all compromise spelt disaster. Even as late as the end of January, says Feldman, Lelewel was still unable to see that, when once the die was cast, boldness was the only virtue. 'When did any revolution ask the question,' wrote Mochnacki, 'who gave

it permission to break out? When has any nation asked itself the question, whether it desired to be a nation?'

Leadership passed into other hands, the commons of both town and country who were straining at the leash were neither encouraged nor organised; the Russian Viceroy remained with his army in the vicinity of Warsaw, and the hopes of the Radicals of drawing the Eastern provinces into the struggle were allowed to be frittered away. True, a Revolutionary Club had been formed in December, with Lelewel as Chairman, in an attempt to save the situation by insisting on their whole programme; but its significance was only to be realised later, and it failed in the immediate end in view. Time was lost, and the faith of the common people was shaken. From the moment when, with a hostile Prussia behind them, the Poles faced the advancing Russian armies, the issue could not be in doubt.

The insurrection failed, those responsible for it went into exile, the shadows of repression and of a harsh servitude settled over the nation. But one thing had become clear. In the debates in the Diet, in the discussions of the Press, and in the pamphlets that were eagerly read by tens of thousands, there was proof of a new force in Polish life—the emergence of the common man. The efforts of those who carried through the Constitution of 1791, of the pioneers of popular education, of the men who had fought abroad in the Legions when there seemed to be no hope any more, but who lived to contribute to the restoration after 1815, had not been in vain.

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This was to become evident when the exiled leaders, after a triumphal passage through a Germany at that time democratic, arrived and settled in France at the end of 1831. Welcomed by the people, they were less favourably received by the Bourbon régime. In particular those of the Left, with Lelewel at their head, were soon in difficulties.

Becoming Chairman of the National Committee, the historian-patriot was the hero of the hour with all who stood for democratic liberties, and he at once took upon himself an enormous burden of work. But the odds were against him. The aristocratic Right, with Prince Czartoryski as leader, had both money and connections. They set up in the Hotel Lambert a sort of Foreign Office abroad, in the hope of winning the intervention of the powers. It soon became clear that the Radicals had little common ground with these people. Secondly, the French authorities, at once subjected to severe diplomatic pressure from St. Petersburg, looked on the Poles of the Left as troublers of the peace. Their French friends, among whom was Lafayette, could do little to help, and Lelewel's position became impossible. Many of his own colleagues withdrew their collaboration. Recognising how things stood, he withdrew to Brussels, and returned to his historical studies.[1]

Nevertheless, the work went on. France was regarded by the Poles as their second motherland. Already in July 1831 Louis Philippe had declared that the Polish nation was not to perish! For a time it seemed to men like Mochnacki that a united Polish front could be formed, and with a liberal, progressive programme of action; but these hopes were to prove abortive. The upshot was the forming on the 17th March 1832 of the Democratic Association, which from now on was to carry the banner of the popular cause. 'Europe,' said one of its pronouncements, 'is alive with new conceptions of the social order. It is being organised on new foundations. . . . In order to live in Europe Poland must do the same.'

The details of the organisation of this new body, interesting though they are, cannot be given here. Cells, or units, were formed all over France, and even in England. Live correspondence went on between them and the Central Office; the latter being also in touch with sympathisers of many nations, not the least in Russia. It was

[1] Later in life, Lelewel was a friend of Karl Marx, and gave his approval to the famous *Manifesto*.

the age of Utopian Socialism, rooted rather in religion than in economics, the time of St. Simon and Fourrier, of Robert Owen and the Reform Bill in England, of the Young Italy movement under Mazzini—something that spread quickly elsewhere. Hopes were high, general revolution was felt to be at the door. Not only Poland but the other subject peoples of Central Europe would be set free, the Holy Alliance would tumble in ruins. Lamennais' *Book of the People* was put out in Polish for the use of the Association Members, and Cabet's *Le Vrai Christianisme*, with its idealisation of the communism of the Early Church, was devoured as the pure milk of the word.

In 1836 there appeared the historic *Manifesto* of the Democratic Association, in which were distilled the ideas and aspirations of these pioneers: men who were indeed idealists in regard to the end in view but realists with regard to the ways and means of attaining it. At the time when Metternich was in charge in Vienna and Uvarov the most influential person in the Russian empire, these men—though knowing that they were powerless to act—pegged out their claim with vision and faith; not hesitating to commend far-reaching plans for execution by their colleagues in the homeland, subject to the empires. Direct contacts between the leaders abroad and their agents in Poland sufficed for interchange of views, and for keeping the fires of purpose alive.

Few documents in history can have been threshed out in all their details by so many people in scattered groups as this *Manifesto*. When asked by the Central Committee what they regarded as the crux of the whole matter to be set forth, the local units replied with a wide variety of answers. They showed conflicts of views, e.g. on the question of the land, in regard to private ownership, to the ideas of nationalism, of progress, of brotherhood, etc. The Portsmouth unit were strong for ownership of the land by those who tilled it. The London unit were critical of the draft *Manifesto* sent out for discussion by the Central Office. 'In attempting a confession of political faith, you

have chosen equality as your focus point. The choice to-day should be on a higher plane—that of humanity.'

The general end in view can be put in a sentence: an end to privilege, and recognition of the principle of equality in the social order! 'Society,' ran the preamble, 'if true to its responsibilities, will ensure the same kind of advantages for all its members; it will aid everyone equally toward the satisfying of his physical, moral, and intellectual needs; only to those who work will it concede the right to possess land and other property; it will develop the powers of its members by a uniform system of public education made attainable for all, and by unrestricted freedom of expression of opinion; it will not threaten freedom of conscience by persecution or intolerance; by untrammelled development of the national forces it will purge itself of egoism and ignorance; and it will lead not only a part but the whole of the nation on the pathway of steady progress and improvement.'

Sancta simplicitas! will be the ejaculation of the doubters, wise after the fact. It does indeed savour of Locke, Jefferson and the Utopian Socialists, but the authors were men of the Romantic age, who—in the Polish phrase, 'would attack the moon with a pick-axe.' They were true to the dictum of Mickiewicz, 'Measure your powers by your purposes, not your purposes by your powers!' Or perhaps, if one will, they took the line that one might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. But, as the sequel showed, they were men of realism too. This comes out in the answers formulated to seven questions put, all relative to the ways and means of conducting revolution with prospects of success. Of one thing they were certain: no Rising could have a chance of succeeding unless it had the backing of the common people. Reversely, a Poland whose masses were free citizens would one day inevitably recover its independence.

In that spirit the men who put out the *Manifesto* continued to work—not only abroad, but at home. There is a definite link between the action taken in Paris in 1836

and the Rising ten years later. The same tradition carried on through 1863–4, to reappear in new forms in the succeeding generation. Both the spirit and body of a Democratic Party were at work all through these trying years, preparing the ground for the parties proper that were to come. As we shall see, and for good reasons, the chief fruitage was to appear in the Austrian provinces.

CHAPTER II

THE MAKING OF A MIDDLE CLASS

THOUGH deprived of her political independence, the Poland of 1815 was on her way to a new life. 'Her people differed widely,' says J. H. Rose, 'from the divided and deadened classes which invited the First Partition. Thanks to the French Revolution and to Napoleon, they were of one mind and of a high spirit. Her troops, like those of Italy, had learned to conquer Austrians, Prussians and Russians,—exploits which threw beams of light on the dark days that were to follow. Also, the application of the leading principles of the Code Napoléon had tended to unify her people. Nationality, on which Napoleon had trampled in Germany, Spain and Russia, was by him vivified in Poland. And her future reunion, though delayed for a century, was to reveal the lasting influence of Napoleon's inspiration.'

What I have called elsewhere 'the Ordeal of the 19th Century' was indeed to be a trying experience. But it has become a characteristic of the Poles to be at their best in adversity, and this was now to be seen. Not of all Poles, of course, and not in every respect. That would be asking too much of human nature. Still, the fact remains that wherever the Partitioning Powers left them a loophole, they made use of it—how different from the practice of a century earlier! And it so turned out that in rotation, first under one and then under another of the dynasties, these opportunities came. We have already seen how the fifteen years of the Congress Kingdom did much for the cause of rehabilitation. When a change in the atmosphere there made further action impossible, fortune opened the way for important work in Poznania. And when, after the coming of Bismarck, things became in some respects

hopeless in Prussia, favours shown by the Austrian House of Habsburg made possible notable creative efforts in the south. Something was going on everywhere all the time: but the achievements that stand out, of a positive kind, were the consequence of less ruthless oppression on the one hand and of the ability to seize opportunities on the other.

I

In the grim 'thirties, when with Polish educational funds the later notorious Citadel was being built on the banks of the Vistula just below the Old Town of Warsaw, with its guns turned on the city—a proper symbol of the Uvarov régime, plans were being matured in Poznania which were to have a lasting significance for the whole of Poland. The leaders in what was later to be called 'organic work,' ushering in very soon the era of 'realism,' were the well-known landowners, General Chlapowski and Edward Raczynski, and the young doctor, Karol Marcinkowski. It is the work of this latter, whose blue eyes and ascetic features took me by surprise when I saw them looking out of his portrait in pre-war days in the city museum of Poznan, that chiefly concerns us here.

After taking part in the Rising of 1830–1, and sharing the disappointments of defeat, he returned to his native town and settled down to practise medicine. But his real life-work was to be that of physician of society. With uncanny prescience, he discerned the real weakness of Poland's position: it lay in the lack of an enlightened and energetic middle class. To remedy that evil became the prime purpose of his life. He had plenty of time to meditate and plan, for the 'thirties were marked by Prussian severity associated with the Flottwell régime: the first signs of what was to be done a generation and more later on a much greater scale by Bismarck, and afterwards by Buelow. But the coming of Frederick William IV to the throne in 1840 changed the whole face of things. He disliked persecution

of any kind, and he had personal friends among the Polish aristocracy. Language rights were restored to the Poles, the economic discriminations in force against the landowners were removed, and a milder control over all daily living followed. Nothing was done in the field of political relations, but this was the last thing that Marcinkowski cared about.

He was a man of ideas, and with a gift for organisation. Faced with a social order consisting of a relatively small gentry class and a great majority of recently liberated peasants, but with almost no artisans, business people, or members of the professions, he attacked the problem at its root. There was human material enough, but it had to be educated. There were schools, German and even Polish, but few children of the Polish masses ever got beyond the elementary stage. Secondary schools existed only in the towns, and attendance meant for the teen-age boy leaving home and spending money his parents could not afford. Marcinkowski created an Association of interested citizens, who set up scholarship schemes of varying kinds that would make possible for poor boys training both in arts and crafts and in the professions—from pharmacy to law, medicine and engineering. In one decade a change was noticeable, particularly in the mechanical arts. In county towns where no Poles could be found as bakers, tailors, joiners or even shop assistants in the 'thirties, their names began to appear. The Germans and Jews who had carried on these shops in the past were glad to sell out, and move to the newly opened-up industrial areas of western Germany—the Rhineland, a region rich in opportunities and crying out for recruits. Those boys who took the path of the professions needed longer time to educate themselves, but they too soon appeared; and they found a welcome among their hitherto neglected compatriots. While earning a good living, they reinforced in obvious fashion the Polish urban communities.

The development of the Rhineland, as well as of other German industrial centres at the same time, rendered

Poznania another service. Known as 'the granary of Prussia,' the province took advantage of the recently completed railway connections to sell the produce of farm and homestead under favourable conditions never known before. The result was an era of prosperity for all agriculture, both for the large farmer and the small. There was more money in the country than ever before, and Marcinkowski did not want it wasted. He therefore turned his attention to the problem of the grown-ups. Again he put his finger unerringly on their essential need, and his quick mind saw a way both to meet it and to do a service to the nation.

There was almost no contact between the manor houses and the city. The big landowners rarely came into town, unless for amusement during 'carnival.' Then they and their families found no suitable quarters, but had to put up in whatever rooms were to be had in the public-houses of the time. These were mostly in Jewish hands. There was no centre either for social or for more serious contacts, whether for these country people among themselves or for them and the townsfolk. Clearly something could be done about it.

The plan for a Stock Company was drawn up, and debentures were offered to the gentry; the proceeds to go for the erection of a decent hotel-club on the main square of the city. It got the name 'Bazar,' and soon became the very thing its promoter desired—a gathering place for the well-to-do, where not only entertainment of all kinds, but business and national matters could be discussed. There was now a 'forum,' something missing hitherto, and it served many good ends. General Chlapowski had been at work urging on his fellow farmers improved methods of cultivation, and the introduction of such subsidiary industries as the making of sugar from beetroot, and brewing and distilling. In the new quarters this sort of thing could be aired more effectively. Marcinkowski too could now get at his clients in another important matter. The young graduates from the schools and workshops needed loans

in order to set them up in life. A Fund was established for this purpose, which more than paid its way. One other step forward was taken. Men with profits from their fields needed a sure place to invest them. At the suggestion of the doctor, they began to buy town property, and even to set up business enterprises. Legend has it that when Marcinkowski began his work only one building on the Town Square was owned by a Pole: but that before he finished it only one was not in Polish hands! It is fitting that one of the streets leading out of that square was named after him, and that on the corner stands the fine 'Bazar' building, serving our generation as it did his.[1]

Just across the way stands one of the imposing structures of Poznan—the Raczynski Library. It is the chief memorial to the activities of Marcinkowski's most effective helper. Interested in history and letters, he not only began to collect books, but he was instrumental in making Poznan the most important publishing centre for Polish works in the forties. Not only periodicals, but books of all kinds, lighter and more serious, began to flow from the press.[2]

One feature of this publishing was the provision of school books in the Polish language. By royal permission, the management of the schools for children of Catholic homes was entrusted to the clergy, and the demand for text-books of all kinds was enormous. Many of them were read just as eagerly by the parents as by the children—perhaps more so. The hitherto unenlightened country-people, most of whom recalled the days of serfdom, began now to understand things they had dimly felt before—something that was of endless value to the cause of social and national solidarity. As will appear later, this process went on under such favourable auspices that nothing of the class conflict appeared in this part of Poland, of the kind to be found in Austria, or even in Russia.

[1] This has not, of course, been the case since the Nazi occupation of Poznan in September, 1939.

[2] It is notable that here in Poznan there appeared the first collected edition of the works of the exile historian, Lelewel, working in his cold garret in Brussels.

The events of the revolutionary years 1846–8, inspired and directed chiefly from Paris, cannot detain us here, although Poznania gave to the movement one of its ablest leaders in the person of Ludwik Mieroslawski. Stern measures were taken by the authorities to suppress 'sedition,' and there were armed skirmishes in more than one county. It was noted that the Polish peasant was in no way awed by the action of the government; reversely, every police action only served to provoke keener opposition. People knew by now what human rights were, and they held together in asserting them. This sort of thing was easier, because the Poles knew how strong German liberal sentiment was in favour of their enjoying equal status in the community. At that time a wave of anti-Russian sentiment prevailed in most of Germany, and there was every wish to deal fairly with the Poles in order to have their goodwill in case of war.

Unfortunately this attitude did not last long. At Frankfurt voices were heard on both sides of the question, but that of Wilhelm Jordan, advocating 'a healthy national egoism,' prevailed. In addition, there was a good deal of alarm at the aggressiveness shown by some of the Polish leaders, and at the extent of their demands. When the revolution failed all over Central Europe, the Poles in Prussia were caught by the general reaction. The Polish League was dissolved, and a campaign against any leniency toward non-Germans in Prussia set in. The landed gentry, many of whom had mortgaged their estates in order to help on the Rising, were in a very bad way. Nor did things get better at once, for a decade of low prices set in, and bad crops marked the years 1853–5. By 1860 as much as 300,000 acres of Polish farmlands had come under the hammer. Then, however, a change came—of which more in a later chapter.

I have dwelt at some length on this period of social consolidation in the most westerly situated of the Polish provinces, because of the example thus set for the rest of the nation. For the first time Polish society, irrespective

of class interests, was learning to stand together in the face of alien domination. That kind of thing is of the essence of democracy at its best, since people think less of their rights as individuals or as a class, and demand to be given a partnership in the common cause. The splendid fruitage of these beginnings was to come in the crucial struggle with the extermination policy of Bismarck, a generation later.

. . . . . .

We must now turn to what was going on during these years in the adjacent provinces of Polish Russia. Here from 1830 onwards, under the brutal administration of Paskevitch, conditions were bad. Repressions were the order of the day. Their symbol was the citadel-prison erected just north of Warsaw, and the ring of forts around the city, which hampered its expansion for nearly a century. Confiscation of estates and deportation to Siberia was the lot of many a patriot.

On his visit to Warsaw in 1835, Tsar Nicholas had said, 'I am here no more the King of Poland; I am the Tsar of Russia.' By keeping the Poles in their place, he felt that he was saving Europe from revolution, and preserving the Divine Order, signalised by the terms of the Holy Alliance. In the early stages he was able to reconcile the Vatican to his plan, but when he proceeded to liquidate the Uniate Church beyond the Bug and the Niemen, the Pope took occasion to condemn his whole policy.

The Organic Statute of 1832 was meant to put a rude end to whatever obligations St. Petersburg had conceded toward the Poles in 1815. Universities and schools were closed, libraries were confiscated, a stern censorship was imposed, the publishing of the works of the great poets (written in exile) forbidden, and Polish students were refused permission to go abroad for study. Political activities of all kinds were out of the question, and such patriots as were able to remain at home were at pains to rescue what they could of their patrimony for their families. These years ended with the death of Nicholas and the

disaster of Sebastopol. Under his successor a change set in for the better—the 'era of reforms', including, of course, the liberation of the serfs.

Already in the early 'fifties greatly daring Polish patriots had begun in a quiet way to work again for the national cause. Visible change was at work all around them. The railway from Vienna had reached Warsaw in 1847. Ten years later gas lighting was to be found in the main streets of the city, and in 1859 the first permanent bridge spanned the Vistula to Praga. Warsaw was no longer isolated as heretofore, and men of vision decided to capitalise this fact. Two members of the aristocracy led the way, the one more daring—a veritable romanticist—the other more cautious, but a stubborn administrator. The former, Andrew Zamoyski, scion of a famous line, was one of the most enlightened men of his time, and an almost fanatical apostle of better farming. His zeal in organising his fellow Poles in the interest of agriculture and all that went with it was only matched by his mistrust of politics. The latter, Alexander Wielopolski, had made himself famous a decade earlier by his *Open Letter* to Metternich, in which he called down divine vengeance on all Germans for the part played by Austrian officials in instigating the peasant riots of 1846 in southern Poland, and placed his country under the protection of Tsar Nicholas as being 'the most generous of our enemies.' He was now to show himself ready to do something many Poles could not swallow, viz. to accept office at the hands of Alexander in order to improve the condition of his people.

In 1857 the new Tsar gave his approval to the Agricultural Society, recently formed by Zamoyski in order to encourage the holding of local fairs, and by its meetings and publications to stimulate farming activities. The membership of this body soon approached 1,000, and it came to be looked on as an unofficial parliament. Its sessions were at once involved in controversy as to the manner of bringing about the emancipation of the serfs—a reform which the Tsar was known to be considering with

favour. For half a century debates and discussions had gone on in regard to this question, and men like Staszic had set an example. There were two schools of thought—one of them for making the serfs into tenants, more or less on the English model; the other for making them into small-holders, owning the land they tilled. Zamoyski favoured the former, but the pressure of radical opinion in Warsaw was so strong that a resolution went through for private ownership. Before action could be taken, however, there came the *ukase* that freed the serfs of all the Russias late in February 1861. The Polish nation had the unpleasant experience of seeing its masses set free by an alien ruler; but the fruitage of the work done by the members of the Agricultural Society was not lost.

There is no doubt that Wielopolski's known adherence to the Slavophile idea and his antagonism to everything German, played a large part in getting for him the post of Director of Education in Warsaw, to which were soon added other duties. He was too much of an aristocrat to be able to deal fairly with such questions as that of the land, but he did great things in education. What had begun as an Academy of Medicine in 1857 was now made into a Polish University, though the name given to it was only 'Chief School.' During its ten years of existence, this institution helped to train many people for notable work in the national cause, among them the philosopher-publicist Swientochowski and the novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz. Apart from this, he brought about the raising of the Jews of Central Poland to full quality of civic status with the Poles, an event which led to their numbers increasing beyond expectation in the chief cities. Favours shown them complicated the problem of strengthening united business and petty industry in the towns.

The 'fifties had seen a marked expansion in trade and industry in Russian Poland. The railways were coming in, increasing out of mind the demand for steel and its attendant commodities. The Crimean War years brought much transit trade, which continued to hold after it was

over. This was true of the textiles of the Lodzh area, whose dimensions doubled in a decade. Already in the 'forties the first steam boilers had been installed here. In 1854 the first power plant was built, on the Belgian model, with 18,000 spindles and 100 looms. Ten years later the railway reached this 'Manchester of Poland,' as it was soon to be called; by the end of the 'sixties gas lighting had been put on the streets, and the town could now boast of two banks.

The Rising of 1863 had psychological rather than practical effects on the process under discussion. Or, rather, it had both, the one causing the other. With the defeat of 1864 came the end of the romantic approach to the task of national liberation. For the second time a resort to arms and bloodshed had failed. People asked themselves more frankly, '*Cui bono?*' The answer was not long in coming: other ways and means must be found than this 'direct action.' The realists, who had themselves been practising 'organic work' for years, could give at least a plausible alternative. Its outlines will appear below.

On the surface, the visible consequences of the Rising were mostly grief, depression and—from the side of the authorities—brutal reprisals on the families of all who had taken any part in the fighting. Landed properties were confiscated and given to Tsarist officials. The sons of the owners had nothing for it but to forsake the countryside and turn to the towns. They became lawyers, doctors, engineers of all kinds, teachers, journalists, bankers. This influx of new blood was an event of first-rate importance for the process of urbanisation. Polish names began to appear in firms where they were unknown before. But the countryside was transformed also. Those who were able to keep their farms began as never before to make agriculture a profession, even an industry. There did indeed remain some of the absentee type of estate-owner who left everything to his manager and spent half the year at watering-places abroad, but not many. For the first time in the history of Poland the 'play-boy' attitude to life came to be eschewed even by the 'classes': a new era had set in.

Once more help came from outside. In 1870 the Russian tariff barriers were lifted, and the great market of the east as far away as Vladivostok opened up. A few figures—all of them small, by comparison with western standards—will show what happened in consequence. In 1864 industrial production in Central Poland amounted to only £5,250,000 value: forty years later it was ten times that amount. The output of steel rose in roughly the same period from 13,000 to 500,000 tons. The number of workers in industry was 64,000 in 1870: by the end of the century it was a quarter of a million. The number of towns with over 10,000 souls went up from seven to thirty-six. The total population had been 6,200,000 in 1871: according to the census of 1897, it was 10,500,000, of whom one-fifth were now town-dwellers. Even this percentage was too low, but it was a great advance on the conditions of 1850.

Realism

There is a known tendency in history for people to swing from one extreme to the other. Having done so, they look about for reasons to explain their action. This is shown by what happened in Central Europe after 1850. Having indulged in extravagant hopes of 'a new world' in 1848 and seen those hopes dissolved in vapour, most people resigned themselves to 'the inevitable,' forgot their dreams of national and social emancipation, and either became out-and-out defeatists or turned their attention again to their private affairs. Some no doubt withdrew from the front line on the well-justified principle, *reculer pour mieux sauter!*

Four factors were at work in Europe as a whole, which served as reinforcement for this kind of thing: (i) the rising tide of business and industry (e.g. in the whole Rhineland), which offered to both employer and employee new standards in material things; (ii) a tissue of intellectual forces, e.g. the cosmopolitan ideas and ideals of men like

Auguste Comte, with an appeal to reason rather than feelings; (iii) the effect, when watered down for popular consumption, of the scientific theories of Darwin and Huxley and of the works of Buckle and Taine; and (iv) the Marxian, as distinguished from Utopian, Socialism, which did indeed seek to promote ferment, but on lines that traversed the frontiers of nationalism.

Each of these, in its own way, was a revolt from the romanticism of the former generation. Each of them was at the same time a step toward the secularisation of life: an invoking of the critical mind as the arbiter of human destiny, as against the uses of revelation and the traditional authorities of 'the Altar' and 'the Throne.' Each of them was proclaiming itself a part of the widely-hailed gospel of progress, the march of dynamic forces that was putting an end to the static condition of things so long existing. Each of them, finally, made its appeal to the 'have-nots,' to the long-forgotten 'little' man, holding out the prospect of a world in which 'privilege,' that chiefest of social evils, would no longer flourish in society. Small wonder then that, each in its own way, these schools of thought attracted attention, possibly out of proportion to their true worth; and that their influence on Polish society was enormous. Up to a point, that influence was salutary. It introduced a factor that was necessary for the consolidation of the nation—the growth of an enlightened middle class. As we shall see, the moment came when an alarm was raised: and with the 'Young Poland' of the 'nineties a reaction set in. Romanticism came back, but *quantum mutatus ab illo!*

The ancient dictum *ubi bene ibi patria!* has always had an appeal for the common man. How often have I heard in Central Europe the expression, 'I want to live where I can have the most butter on my bread!' But there have been plenty of the other kind: of people who were ready to submit to poverty and toil for themselves and their children for the sake of ideas and ideals. In the peasant world, where men and women are engaged in a constant struggle with the often ungrateful forces of nature, one is not

surprised to find less of idealism, yet even here it has not been lacking. For ages inured to the spectacle of wars and the consequent changing of masters, between whom there was often little to choose, the toiler must have a good deal of the spark of nobility in him to survive the simplest of all urges—that of tilling his bit of land, tending his few cattle, and hoping dimly for a better to-morrow.

Only when someone set about interfering with that bit of land, or tried to take away his mother-tongue, or touched the sacred matter of his traditional, often rather primitive, faith, did he rouse himself in revolt. But this sort of thing was not necessarily a part of the old imperialism. Indeed, the peasant, though not always rightly, looked to the far-away emperor as his protector and friend against the injustices of his nearer oppressors. If then, the attention of the masses could be directed by their rulers toward material well-being, and at least something done to dangle a juicy carrot before their eyes, there was hope of relative quiet. As long ago as Suetonius, the view had been put that everything was more or less all right, 'so long as the commons could be kept quiet.' This was certainly easier in the late 'sixties in the areas now under consideration than it had been a decade earlier; and although a big slump came in the 'seventies it too soon passed away, making room for even greater things. The philosophy of Comte and his fellows came just at the time it was likely to make a big impression, helping on the task of the rulers.

Why, said the apostles of the new cosmopolitanism, remain stuck in the outworn and decadent creed of nationalism? Why make of it a point of honour, even at the cost of one's fortunes, to be a Pole or a Czech or a Slovene? Were not all men first citizens of the world, members of a common humanity? Why not, then, be content to become Germans, or Hungarians, or Russians—in a word, to belong to what Heaven was revealing as 'the master peoples'? In the days when men lived by myths, even in those of popular philosophies, attachment

to one's speech, or one's mother-church, or one's national heritage, may have had its justifications. The modern age was rejecting all this; science, reason, common sense were bringing something better in its place. In it there would be no place for mysticism, for the following of creeds or dogmas, based largely on revelation. The 18th-century Age of Reason had not completed its work; now the fulfilment was to come, and bring not only well-being, but an end to the strifes based on the emotions, and the reign of harmony and peace!

The theories of Darwin seemed to carry this sort of reasoning even farther. Nature was the best teacher; and the most obvious lesson to be learned from nature was that the stronger survive, that the weaker are thrust aside, or are destroyed unless they submit. Against this 'law' there was no appeal. Only fools, then, would try to combat it. Enthusiasts might seek ways and means of throwing themselves in the breach, or reversing the order of the universe, but the wise and prudent would know better. At best one could adapt (the right word was 'adjust') oneself, if one had any hope of remaining in the game!

From 1862 onward, when Bismarck came to the helm in Prussia, and began his plans for the unification of Germany and the nurturing of close ties with Tsarist Russia, it was surely clear that only madmen could seriously contemplate resistance. Every sober person should have seen with half an eye that there was no choice but to make the best terms possible with the ascending star of the 'Master Race.'

Unless, indeed, one abandoned altogether the plane of national affiliations, and switched the battle to that of 'class.' This was the gospel of Marxian Socialism, dictated at bottom by a real desire to help the victimised workers in an age of *laisser-faire* economics. After all, few things form so strong a bond of sympathy between people as community of occupation. Those engaged in similar tasks have usually similar interests. Actually, said the apostle of

materialism as the key to history, they have more in common than people of different occupations, even though they may speak the same mother-tongue. And the growing masses of industrial workers had this in common: by contrast with their grandfathers, who had worked under the guild system, or in that of cottage industry, they were now deprived of that priceless possession of the artisan—his tools. They entered the factory-gate with their bare hands in the morning, they left it with their bare hands at night. They were at the mercy of the employer! Why let this go on? Why not unite in defence of their common rights? Socialism offered more than patriotism. With its triumph, the things long promised but never achieved would be assured—in particular 'a full dinner pail.'

Finally, as the advocates of realism were soon to argue, there was something of value to be learned from that home of prosperity and progress—Britain. There the accepted tradition had never been that of revolution. What is more, the English had never liked the idea of solving their problems by the political method. They preferred to keep everything possible out of politics—business, religion, education, the arts and sciences—and to deal with them on private lines. This was the famous Liberalism of the 19th century, and it was dubbed 'Manchesterism' by the Poles. Used as a creed in this time of new prospects, it might work wonders in their sorely tried society!

The distilled essence of these trends of thinking, with now one, now another feature getting the emphasis, worked as a leaven in the society that had been flattened by the disaster of 1864. Forty years of romantic dreaming ('Give me liberty, or give me death!') had brought only bloodshed and defeat. Political action might be useful at times, perhaps on the Sundays of life; but in a workaday world it had gone bankrupt. The way of progress was a slower, less spectacular, less heroic one: it was the way of soberness, or toil!

This view had already been put by the rising young historian, Father Kalinka, in 1857 in the columns of the

Polish News, a journal founded by the veteran Prince Czartoryski, in these words:

> 'War with Russia is indeed the goal of our hoping, and it must also be the crown of our striving. But it is not only war that counts in history. Achievements won in time of peace are no less honourable. They are also no less lasting and decisive.'

It was now to be put afresh, in a striking metaphor from natural science, by the novelist and social philosopher, Boleslaw Prus:

> 'When a bullet strikes a wall, it halts and generates heat. In mechanics this process is called the transforming of mass motion into molecular, of what was an outward into an inner force. Something like this happened in Poland after the cruel quelling of the insurrection. The nation as a whole woke up, ceased to fight, and to conspire, and began to think and work.'

The same contention was made in the late 'seventies by the organ of the aristocratic Conservative Party in Austrian Poland, the daily *Czas* (*The Times*), in the following terms:

> 'We have said to ourselves: no organism can live for a long time in a fever. New ways must be found; for if we follow the old ones our devotion will inevitably be burned up at least every fifteen years in a conflict of blood. It will be exhausted in useless adventures, and the toil of the interval be wasted at the very time when it might bear fruits.'

Reinforcement for this attitude to public questions had come at the end of the 'sixties from an unexpected source—the department of history in the now liberated university of Cracow. What has since become famous as the Cracow School of historians, under the leadership of the eminent Jozef Szujski, embarked on a stocktaking of the nation's past, and ended by reversing the accepted views as to the Partitions. During the period of Romance the argument

had been that Poland was the innocent victim of alien and predatory powers: the new view was that the misfortunes suffered by the nation were the result of and punishment for its own sins and weaknesses. For all that had happened, therefore, Poland had herself chiefly to blame.

In *Some Truths About Our History* (1867), Szujski had argued that Poland ceased to be a sovereign state through her own faults. If she were to rise again, it would be through her own merit. The year 1791 had put an end to the old vice of *liberum veto*: the events of 1863–4 had closed once for all the epoch of *liberum conspiro*. To carry on revolutionary tactics now, in whatever form, would only hand over the nation to destruction. The inference was that the past that was Poland should be forgotten, while the present, and the future, which were Austria, should take its place. 'Five centuries ago our enemy was the German; to-day it is Russia, and Russia only!' History, then, was to be called in as *magister vitæ*; and woe to the people that is unwilling to learn the lessons it should learn from its own past!

Such was the situation when the man appeared on the scene in Warsaw who was to carry the banner of Positivism for close on a generation, and wage ruthless war on his opponents wherever he could find them—the brilliant journalist and pamphleteer, Alexander Swientochowski. Combining the elements of cosmopolitanism, English liberalism, and the challenge to make one's way in the world, he made his periodical *Prawda* (*Truth*) the instrument for education of a large part of the younger generation. He proclaimed the superiority of the race as a whole over any national group, and that of the religion of humanity over any of the recognised faiths. Appealing chiefly to the growing professional classes of the towns, he echoed in Poland what Thiers is reported to have said to a Polish acquaintance when asked what was to be done in view of the defeat of Sedan: *enrichissez vous!*

Swientochowski had a programme, though he did not always keep to it. The term had been given by the older,

much-read novelist, J. J. Kraszewski, in a booklet in 1872 which reversed his whole view of the national question as set forth earlier in the tale, *We and They*. Having seen the bloodshed in Warsaw in 1861, he set himself in this story to keep open the wounds made by the years 1863–4. Now he declared himself a disciple of 'soberness,' and preached the gospel of 'organic work,' with its corollary of conciliation (the word in Polish was *ugoda*) toward the Russian empire and people.

The younger man rang all the changes on this programme in articles written for the *Weekly Review* before he established his own *Truth*. He began by joining in the battle going on already to destroy the last remains of the Romantic tradition in literature. This had been everything Swientochowski disliked: it had proclaimed the mystical faith of Messianism, it had idealised the past of the nation, it was in the main the work of men of the gentry class—the *ancien régime*; and in its later pseudo-romantic stages it was overdoing the martyr *motif*—a true example of decadence. Too many people were putting their most sacred feelings into verse, and poor stuff it was. A contemporary, Wiślicki, subjected these people to scathing criticism in a pamphlet, *Peas Against the Wall*, as early as 1867; arraigning all hawkers of sorrow and suffering, who, on being asked what they were suffering and what they desired, could only reply, 'We don't know!'

Swientochowski called his first outburst *Literary Parasites*. It was a frontal attack on dilettantism, on elegant idleness: and a challenge in these words: 'Work is energy, the building up of powers not given you by nature.' Of all this, he says, the fine dandies who write for the times know nothing. They have long hair and finger-nails, they cast yearning eyes at the fair sex: they spin eloquent yarns out of empty heads, but they themselves do not understand them. Over against this he set the French dictum: 'If genius is an eagle, learning is its cage!' He went on to say that literature was not a market where one sells anything from a good article to a hoax, nor yet a rich meadow

meant to pasture asses. Literature was the temple of learning and of toil!

A similar admonition appeared in a second paper, *Social and Literary Mouldiness*, which declared that the crudest prejudices rubbed shoulders in Poland with scientific work, and that obscurantism flourished alongside progress. There must be an end of all this.

'Our common life is not enlightened, it has not reached even the lowest rung of the ladder of culture. . . . We protest in verse against the railway and the telegraph: but poetry has no right to pull down civilisation for the sake of a fine landscape or a tearful feeling. . . .'

Clearly a Daniel come to judgment, though rather a stern one, with even a trace of the philistine in him. At thirty Swientochowski founded *Truth*, and in it this aristocrat of the mind, this champion of cold intellect divorced from deeds, at one time chastised the patriots with their passion for national independence, at another argued the case for city business men and industrialists in their zeal to make fortunes, at still another turned his artillery on the Church and the clergy. More than anyone else, he held up the virtues of 'Manchesterism,' parading his dislike of the State, which he called 'an outer decoration.' The mind alone was for him the stronghold of being: and the one sensible person was the citizen of the world, who in certain moments looked very much like a Panslavist. Nationalism was branded as 'predatory,' whether its instrument was the sword or the book. It was better then to forget it and to give oneself to the freemasonry of commerce and industry. Here all men, no matter what their race or creed, were brothers!

In 1883 came the essay, *Political Suggestions*. The thoughtful reader of it at once saw that the author was a Utopian; whose counsels in normal times could have been of real value, but under existing conditions acted rather as a narcotic than as a remedy. As later critics were to point out, his counselling of the younger men to seek careers in Russia robbed the nation of much good blood at a time

when it was needed, and hindered rather than helped the very things 'organic work' was meant to advance. It left urban life where it had too long been, largely in the hands of Jewish or German families; and its rejection of politics as a worthy field for service did the damage against which Plato had warned his own Greek world long ago. *Nolo episcopari* on the lips of the honest and able citizen lets vital matters get into the hands of charlatans!

Nevertheless, the contribution of this knight-errant of the pen to the making of Polish democracy was a very real one. He made thousands think who had never thought before. He compelled people to observe the warning of the gospel not to embark on an enterprise without considering whether the raw materials were at hand to justify it. In a word he compelled a stocktaking of everything connected with the social order—its resources, its aims, and the choice of ways of attaining them. We shall see how this phase of the realist position would be carried much farther by others, notably by the founders of the National Democratic Party. Few more salutary things could have happened at this time, and the fruitage was to appear in due course.

. . . . .

The relevance of Swientochowski's work lies in the way it helped to form and inform the fast-growing element in Polish society known as the 'intelligentsia'—a term first used I believe, in Russia. This term has a far different meaning in Eastern Europe than with us. In the countries of the west, where the middle classes had developed on more or less normal lines through generations, neither the thing nor the name has any functional significance. In Central and Eastern Europe, however, 'the third estate' was still almost non-existent a century ago and an enormous gulf separated the landed gentry of various grades from the masses of peasants or serfs. Such business elements as existed in the relatively small urban communities were often foreign rather than native born, e.g. Jewish, German,

or even Greek or Armenian. As yet the towns had no influence on the corporate life of the nation.

The 'people who understood'—for that is the meaning of the term, lived by the power of secularising influences, which represented in Slavonic lands more or less what the Encyclopedists aspired to be in 18th-century France. They refused to accept as inevitable and final the traditions, ideas and institutions that had come from the past; resolving to scrutinise them, and appraise them by the simple test of their worth in a changing world. Composed of recruits both from above, i.e. from members of the gentry families, and from the sons and daughters of the masses (now at last forcing their way into higher education), this daring and at times eccentric body of people became no less indispensable to the future of the nation than the middle class of business and industry.

In its widest sense, the term 'intelligentsia' included all the professional classes; among them even the large group of civil servants. The majority were hard-working members of their local communities, whose voices seldom reached beyond those limits. A few, however, chiefly the journalists and the seekers after knowledge, became known up and down the land as the makers of a new thing—public opinion. To achieve this on lines like those of the west was the goal of these crusaders for a better future.

There had always been even in the older Poland a certain number of people who took active interest in the welfare of the masses. In the 'sixties and the 'seventies this number was to increase enormously. To popularise knowledge became the passion of the rising generation. 'Going among the people' was the slogan to become famous in the Russian empire, even though or because it was not welcomed by the police. Opposition, however, only drove these apostles of progress to greater efforts, and led, of course, to the extreme position of the anarchist or nihilist. Not only Poles, but also Russians were to be found who made no secret of their dislike of existing authorities.

Strict censorship made the publishing of books in the

Russian provinces almost impossible after 1863: hence the heyday of the journalist and the pamphleteer. A ready public was at hand in the growing towns, and the Press came to be the chief moulder of contemporary thinking. A special example of the use made of periodicals for educational purposes was seen toward the end of the century in Warsaw, thanks to the courage and energy of a young engineer, Stanislaw Michalski.

One of the larger enterprises employing Polish workers was the privately owned railway linking up Warsaw with the industrial areas of the south-west and going on through the Moravian Gate to Vienna. In order to provide means for self-education for thousands of employees of this railway, Michalski began to publish in serial form a popular science encyclopedia, which in due time ran to a score of sizable volumes. These manuals reached a wide circle of readers, who had never known schools in their mother tongue and to whom help of this kind came as a godsend. Unfortunately, the Tsarist authorities saw fit to decree the taking over by the whole enterprise by the State, thus snuffing out another of the sources of light and national tradition.

Separate chapters will be devoted below to the stage in the process of national building which was realised in the generation preceding the outbreak of war in 1914. I refer to the founding of the three chief political groups or parties, which are still in existence as I write—National Democracy, the Socialist or Labour movement, and the Peasant movement. But before closing this part of the story, something should be said about the leaven that was working in the nation right through the second half of the 19th century, which stemmed from the manifesto of 1836, and persisted in using the name of the Party of Democracy. The chief fruitage of its work was for obvious reasons to be found in the Austrian provinces—what was then known as Galicia.

From 1833 onwards the Metternich régime had entered

on a more ruthless policy toward its Polish subjects. The year 1846 brought the murdering of the squires by rioting peasants—at the instigation of agents from Vienna—and the abolition of the free city of Cracow, which had existed since 1815. The hopes of 1848 were to end in disappointment, although the emancipation of the serfs was a welcome move. Even the prospects offered by the Crimean War came to nothing; and it needed the defeats in Lombardy in 1859 to wring concessions from the imperial government. These were in part the work of a Polish statesman, Count A. Goluchowski, to whom his nation owed much. But the real work of defining and nurturing the sentiments of the nation was being done by men who had formerly been in prison—chiefest among them Francis Smolka of Lwow.

All through these years, and in spite of setbacks, Poles pinned their hopes of liberation chiefly on Austria. This was partly due to the brutalities practised by the Tsarist (Uvarov) tyranny, partly to the fact of a common religious faith with Habsburgs lands. When the Diploma of October 1860 had laid the foundations for the autonomy to be granted seven years later as a consequence of the defeat at Sadova, this faith in Vienna seemed to be justified by facts. We shall see below how it led to the Declaration of Loyalty by the leaders of the Polish aristocracy in December 1866. But commitments of this kind did not meet with universal approval. They were firmly contested by the Party of Democracy, through its spokesman, Smolka. Though not an enemy of Austria, he made it quite clear that he and those who held to the tradition of 1836 were patriots for Poland—and had no second *patria*. As a deputy to the Reichsrath, he was known for his championing of the rights of subject peoples, including even the Jews. When the issue was being weighed in 1867 as to what the Austria-Hungary of the future would look like, he stood out for a federal system: in effect, that United States of south-east Europe which so many have felt the need of since then, but which has not been realised. Regarding Tsarist despotism as

a threat even to the smaller Slavonic peoples, he sought the best understanding with Vienna, but not at the price of his birthright.

As we know, not a federal but a Dual System emerged, with the Slavs subjected here to the Germans, there to the Magyars. But the Polish provinces did achieve autonomy; and it was thanks to men like Smolka that, often in the teeth of the Conservative elements, much was done to improve at least the town life of southern Poland. Slowly but surely some industries were established, secondary schools appeared with Polish as the mother-tongue, the two universities of Cracow and Lwow were rescued from Germanisation and set on new paths of progress. Smolka had the help of the resolute Ziemialkowski. Somewhat later came the courageous Mayor of Cracow and Rector of its university, Dr. Dietl, and the economist Dunajewski. Last, not least, the poet Adam Asnyk, whom we shall meet again in these pages. Each of these men, by word and example, helped to educate a younger generation: men and women who read Mill and Buckle, even Marx and Darwin, but without losing their faith in the idea and ideal of national liberation. Always a minority, they were nevertheless like leaven: and the good they did was not buried with them.

CHAPTER III

TRIPLE LOYALTY

Trojloyalyzm as a programme, says Feldman, was formulated by the Cracow Conservative Party after the disappointment brought by the Crimean War. It was the thought-out statement of something which had been in practice for some time. The disruption of life consequent on the Partitions had caused a rift in the spiritual consciousness of the nation: people felt that the only right thing was to seek for the most advantageous conditions possible under alien flags.

We have seen in earlier pages what the main features of this view of things were: the 'organic work' begun in the Prussian provinces, accompanied by a virtual indifference to political action; the analogous movement in the Russian provinces, to which men like Wielopolski added the fact, and others like Swientochowski the theory, of conciliation or compromise (*ugoda*) towards the imperial Romanov régime; and, finally, the realist attitude to history of the Cracow historians, which went hand in hand with an unambiguous acceptance of the Habsburg overlordship as the manifest destiny of the Polish nation.

As motives that entered into this combined philosophy of life and political strategy, we identified the sense of helplessness that dictated resignation, the weariness felt by many of unfruitful and prodigal bloodshed, the material prospects offered to all who would submit to 'the inevitable' in politics, and the wave of cosmopolitanism that flooded Eastern Europe, partly owing to the influence of Comte, partly for other reasons. Rarely was one of these to be found without an admixture of others. Little of the profit motive could be found in the Austrian provinces, if this be interpreted in terms of pure mammon. Little or nothing of cosmopolitanism was to be found in the

Prussian provinces, although something analogous could be discerned in the attachment of the Poles there to the Universal Church. War weariness passed off long before Triple Loyalty was dead. The desire to build up economic well-being did not lead anyone in Poznania, so far as I know, on the road to assimilation; as it led so many Poles in the Russian provinces into occupations that meant their being lost almost certainly to the nation. There were special groups, e.g. the Cracow historians, who came to subscribe to this creed for quite special reasons. Beyond doubt many of the Poles under Tsarist rule were attracted by the Slavophile idea, and dreamed fantastic dreams—usually quite unreal, about Slavonic brotherhood —simply another Utopia. Whatever the motives, there can be no doubt about the power exerted by the idea during a good twenty-five years; and for that reason a brief survey of its essential character and working is relevant here. In its own way Triple Loyalty helped on the growth of Polish Democracy.

It may be said at the outset that, if understood as meaning a double allegiance, there was little of Triple Loyalty ever to be found among the Poles of Prussia. The fault was, of course, that of the Prussian régime, which did every possible thing to make itself hated by many of its own subjects. A record of the blunders, both of omission and of commission, made by Berlin in regard to its Polish subjects would fill a volume; many of them were unpedagogical, though they were the work of a nation that prides itself on its traditional wisdom in this field. A few Poles of the ruling classes managed to square the circle—for there is no other name for the achievement—but precious few, particularly after Bismarck had showed his hand. A notable example was Count Hutten-Czapski, whose two volumes of *Memoirs* appeared some years ago largely in order to explain how he did it. As for the long-submerged and almost forgotten peasant and workers' elements of Upper Silesia, they do not enter into the discussion at all. They had kept their Polish speech through-

out the ages, together with their Catholic faith; these two things sundered them out from their German environment. Of nationalism, however, they knew nothing: at best they were regionalists—Silesians. 'These people are Poles, but Poles as of the 15th century' was the shrewd remark of an observer. When, thanks to the *Kulturkampf* and the exploitation they suffered at the hands of their German employers, they began to discover that they were Poles, it was too late for them to be Prussians as well. They heard too often the term 'Polish' used as a reproach or a term of contempt. Rightly did a German observer say of them: 'These people are Germans only until they give notice!'

Bismarck, who hated the Polish aristocracy and still more the clergy, believed almost to the end in the devotion of the Poznanian peasant; chiefly because he had seen him fight well in the war of 1870—where, be it observed, Polish national airs were used to play regiments into battle! In this respect he was guilty of a fatal blunder. The Poznanian peasant was only a Prussian because, at that time, the alternative for him was to be a Russian. There was no Poland. Subsequent events cured him even of this attachment: at best it was that of a child to a stepmother. The hyphenated expression may have been used by others about him; he never used it of himself. During the war of 1914-18 the Polish Press of these provinces never spoke of 'our,' but always of 'the German' forces.

Both in Austria and in Russia things were different. The centenary of the first Partition evoked various confessions of faith. A former official of some standing explained to the Poles that only one way was open to them, and that both theoretical and practical grounds favoured it: they should dissolve themselves in the broad ocean of Slavdom, i.e. of Russia. Society, ran the argument, was a more enduring thing than the State; the latter had perished, never to return. Nothing was to be hoped for from Prussia, scarcely more from Austria. Common sense pointed to Russia. And since any real union meant a common

speech, no one need jib at the prospect of Polish disappearing as a language. It was a law of nature! Such a union would guarantee the Poles against the German threat, and against that of—socialism!

This sort of thing was too much even in the heyday of realism. The editor of *Kraj* called it 'the politics of suicide.' One can see to-day that the author rendered the cause a service, the reverse of what he desired. From henceforth the majority of 'conciliationists' of the Russian provinces, even where they sounded sincere, were known to be tacticians and little more. So with Kraszewski, whose *Program* has been mentioned already. Organic work, yes: education and the development of the social order also: but with them the nurturing of national loyalties, and towards Tsardom an attitude of waiting. Things were changing, argued Kraszewski, even in Tsarist Russia. The future was quite unpredictable. One might then accept the existing relations to that empire, refrain from provocation, share in the growth of material wealth—and prepare for the coming struggle with the Germans!

The hopes of the Slavophile enthusiasts were destined to disappointment for many reasons, but two alone would have sufficed: on the one hand the rising tide of Russian nationalism, on the other the strong Latin element in Polish culture. Napoleon's campaign of 1812 did for Russia what the Armada of 1588 did for England. Four years later came Karamzin's *History*, and with it the foundations on which in due course would stand the famous Trinity—Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism. The 'sixties saw the less lovely side of this emotional power thrust into the foreground—in the writings of a man like Katkov. By a different path people like Samarin arrived at the same goal. Analysing Polish culture, he found in it statehood, nationhood and—'latinism.' The first two could be dealt with, not the third. Whatever represented the Latin tradition had to be destroyed; otherwise it would destroy all that Russia stood for. As we know, the Tsarist government took this doctrine to heart, putting an end to Polish

schools, abolishing the Uniate Church in Russian lands, and laying serious restrictions on Roman Catholicism. Nothing suited the book of those responsible for this policy better than that the Poles should look on with as much unconcern as possible, all the while devoting their energies to making money and telling one another that they were becoming better and better 'citizens of the world.'

It was the old story again. The hope of the moderates was rendered void by the last-ditchers of both parties to the understanding. The crusading elements in Polish culture, of which the Church Militant was one, were possessed of a sense of mission toward a backward (or forward) East: the no less zealous crusading elements in Russian culture, with the Church Militant again in the centre of the picture although, perhaps, more on the defensive, saw the West either as materialistic or decadent, or both; and took the view that regeneration for Europe had to come from the primitive childlike Orthodox communion. Thus was entered on another phase of the conflict between the two rival civilisations, and the end is not yet.

No one can say that the Polish leaders did not go very far to meet the demands of the hour. In 1880 the Tsar celebrated his Silver Jubilee. An address sent to him from Warsaw reversed completely the line that had been taken on the eve of the Rising of '63.

> 'The great solemnity of this day and our steady endurance in loyalty to Our Most Serene Reigning House make us bold to bring to the foot of Your throne the request, that Our Most Serene Sovereign would deign to forget the past and with a magnificent return of confidence would give us the possibility of devoting our powers to peaceful national development, for the good of Your Polish kingdom and to the glory of Your Majesty and the profit of the Empire.'

This was signed even by the people who twenty years before had stood firmly by Zamoyski, and against the

policy of Wielopolski, scorning the asking of favours or the taking of office at the hands of a Romanov. It is probable that not three of the people signing, and they were all of the ruling classes, did so for precisely the same reasons. One may even wonder whether many of them realised the implications of what they had done. The net effect was that from now on only the masses could be counted on to resist the inroads of Russianisation: the workers who were already achieving class consciousness and building for Socialism; and the peasants, who after a few years of flirting with the Russian reformers saw through the scheme and returned to their old defence of their soil and their mother-tongue. The educated classes, even if they had disliked the Triple Loyalty plans that reached them from Cracow, at last gave in. They were as much for their reigning house as their fellows in Austria were for the Habsburgs.

And that was saying a good deal. For at least two reasons there could and did exist a relationship between loyal Polish patriots and the Austrian Crown which might even be compared with the feelings of a Canadian for the British Commonwealth. Actually, in the case of most of those who avowed their allegiance to the Habsburgs, the tie was far simpler. Again, the aristocracy led the way, and one cannot help thinking that there was a relict of the days of feudalism in their regard for the Emperor Franz Josef. But the House of Habsburg was Roman Catholic, and the direct path to Rome for the Poles lay through Vienna. To the nation that was proud of the recognition *Polonia semper fidelis!* this meant much. Secondly, the alternative to the Austrian relation was subjection to the Russian Tsar. What saved the thing from being set down as an absurdity was the fact that the loyalties were of different kinds—on the one hand to the nation, on the other to the State. There was no Austrian nation, and the principle of a nationality state was at least implicit in the Habsburg constitution. All this made a dualism of allegiance possible—for a time. We shall see how the younger generation would

have none of it, perhaps because—as on the Russian side of the frontier, their fathers overdid it.

Things looked settled at the end of the 'sixties. So far did the Cracow historians go that one critic remarked: 'for these men the existence of an independent Poland was one of history's blunders.' The logical conclusion from their work was that the hope of Poland lay in Austria. 'In my judgment,' wrote Kozmian, 'that bond (*sc.* with the Habsburgs) is the greatest fact of our post-partition history.' It had found classic expression in the declaration made at the end of the year 1866, i.e. just after Sadova, by the Polish aristocracy to the Austrian Emperor, in welcoming the newly announced federal system for Austria:

> 'From the depths of our hearts, Most Serene Lord, we declare that at your side we stand, and we desire to stand!'

This somewhat unctuous profession of loyalty was to come in for pungent criticism later on. It should, nevertheless, be understood and judged on its merits. When so scrutinised, it has saving graces. The men who made it did not do so on the morning after a great victory, with a view to getting something from a victor in a good mood. Reversely, it was made to a proud sovereign who had just suffered the bitterest humiliation of a generation, and was meant to be a declaration of solidarity with the defeated. Again, it happened when neither in Berlin nor in St. Petersburg was there a trace of readiness to discuss public affairs with any Pole; and now, suddenly, the Habsburgs—after close on a century of stern assimilation policy—showed themselves ready to take their Polish subjects into partnership.

One of the notable consequences affected the university of Cracow, where these men taught history. It had managed to survive since the Partitions, part Polish, part German, part Latin. Now, in a matter of months it became out-and-out Polish. True, the men who occupied chairs of learning

did so as Austrian state officials, and only after taking the formal oath of allegiance to the reigning House. Nevertheless, from now onwards Cracow was to be a centre of national ideas and ideals, and of training for national service such as the Poles had never known before. A large measure of liberty obtained, and only on the rarest occasion did conflicts arise. When they did, the reason was rather religious than political. The 500th anniversary of the founding was celebrated in 1900 with guests in attendance from all over the world.

But to return to our story. The 'Stanczyk School,' as the Cracow realists were called from the name of the 16th-century court jester who took a critical view of things, had now got their way. In the place of the politics of 'feeling,' they had now got one of soberness. Their purpose was 'to effect a state of things in which each of the partitioning powers would consider it a matter of self-interest to assure to the Poles their national existence, within limits that fitted the constitution and the prevailing system.' Instead of being an element of disruption, the Poles should be in each empire one of work, and of political and social stability and harmony.

Such an aspiration had in it from the start the seeds of discord. Triple Loyalty toward the prevailing system in every one of the empires meant the acceptance of the sacred principle of legitimacy, something regarded as 'given' and therefore not to be tampered with; in other words, with an order that was static and even unalterable. On its other side, Triple Loyalty meant on the part of the Poles renunciation of political action and the putting of the idea of society and of social progress in the place of national politics. These two things could not march together, for the one was avowedly a conservative policy, the other no less a recognition of the doctrine of progress. As always in history, thinking about society has led, not to the acceptance of what is but to a consideration of and demand for what ought to be. This was to be the case in

spite of their 'realism' both with the Positivists of Warsaw and with the Stanczyks of Cracow. Swientochowski was to be seen as perhaps the greatest advocate of Utopias Poland has known: the Cracow historians and those who followed them were to ask of the Polish-Austrian 'honeymoon' things it could never achieve.

Even regarded as a *pis aller*, Triple Loyalty had come by the 'nineties to involve its advocates in situations that left a bad taste in the mouths of those who observed them. Formulated as a general principle meant to transcend the frontiers that cut the nation into three sections, it asked of each part something that was bound to annoy the others. An example of this was seen in connection with the death of Tsar Alexander III in 1894. Although he had been one of the worst oppressors of the nation, a deputation of Poles sent from Warsaw to congratulate the young Nicholas on his succession laid a wreath on the grave of the departed. What sort of feelings could such an action evoke in the millions of Poles living in Prussia or in Austria? Or even among the masses in the Central provinces, the more so as they knew that official circles had frankly stated their belief in the whip as the best tool for 'educating the Poles'?

There were still signs of a better atmosphere setting in with the coming of a new Sovereign. It was announced that he was to visit Warsaw, and his coming in the autumn of 1897 had in it vast possibilities for Polish–Russian understanding. Boleslaw Prus is said to have stood, watch in hand, at the station waiting for the Imperial train, saying to his neighbours something about the dawning of a new day for his nation. Nothing of the kind happened. True, permission was given for the setting up in the centre of Warsaw of a statue of Mickiewicz; but at the ceremony of unveiling not a word was allowed to be spoken by anyone to the vast assembled crowd. When the figure of the poet was disclosed to the people they stood a moment in expectation, and then broke out in weeping. The new Viceroy, Prince Imeretynsky, was reputed to be kindlier than his predecessor. Offered a million roubles by the

Polish public, he used it to build in Warsaw a Russian Institute of Technology. In 1898 Polish Socialist agents got hold of a secret Memorandum prepared by him for his Master, setting forth a plan for the incorporation of the Central Polish provinces in the Russian Empire, and putting an end to what still remained of the special status provided for by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. When this, printed in London, became known in Poland the prospects of Triple Loyalty toward Tsarist Russia were doomed. The action of some three score members of the aristocracy in being present at the unveiling of a statue of the Empress Catherine in Wilno in September 1904 was an exception that only proved the rule. Instead of making an impression on the masses of the nation, this act filled them with shame, if not with disgust.

We shall follow below the direction taken by the Poles of the Prussian provinces during these years. Under Austria things were better—and worse. The confidence and loyalty exhibited by the ruling classes of Galicia, as well as some of the Democrats, toward the Habsburg monarchy could only have been justified had Austria-Hungary been able and willing to play the role in south-east Europe certain people dreamed of: that of a sort of United States, whose constituent parts would enjoy a wide measure of equality and liberty, and whose future would not be dictated by Berlin. Unfortunately neither the first nor the second of these conditions was realisable. To make matters worse, those of the Poles who had influence in Vienna and in whose hands lay the guidance of policy never permitted abler men than themselves—men of Democratic tradition like Francis Smolka—to exercise any real control over events. They were contented with the easy-going policy of Vienna, and feared change above most things. What they did not realise was that change would come, anyway. Others came into the picture, with far different views of life—the Peasant and Labour leaders—and they were soon challenging the right of the aristocracy to a monopoly of controls. With the granting of manhood

suffrage in 1906 the fate of the older type of political thought and action was sealed.

But apart from these popular movements, devastating attacks on the fortress of reaction, including searching analyses of its pet doctrine of Triple Loyalty, had already come from men of the middle class. The challenge of the dramatist Wyspianski will be noted elsewhere. I want here to mention the somewhat different exposure of the whole creed by the mining engineer, Stanislaw Szczepanowski, of Lwow, in his justly prized essay, *The Polish Idea.*

Szczepanowski had spent years as a young man in the city of London, and drew many useful lessons for his countrymen from the life of the United Kingdom. Already steeped in the best thought of the Polish Romantic period, he saw the possibility of reconciling the idealism of the spirit with the practical economy of everyday living. But he did not believe that such a union of the inward and the external, the invisible and the visible, could be won by renouncing the previous heritage of the national past, least of all by any flight into rationalism or cosmopolitanism. An ardent advocate of 'organic work,' he himself set a shining example by helping to open up the petroleum industry of the Eastern Carpathians. His famous study of the economic conditions of the countryside round about him, entitled *The Misery of Galicia*, survived a storm of impatient, and mostly ill-informed, criticism. But he had no place in his nature or his teaching for any 'politics of suicide.' Quite the reverse.

In his notable essay he called on his fellows 'to disinfect themselves' of the currents of cosmopolitanism that were undermining the spiritual structure of Polish society. It was as if he had in mind, among other things, the famous *History of Poland*, published in 1879 by one of the most distinguished historians of the Cracow School, Professor Michael Bobrzynski (later to render signal service as Governor of Galicia), which had put the whole blame for the Partitions on the Poles themselves. A pessimist, says Feldman, in regard not only to his own nation but to

mankind in general, he had proclaimed the gospel of centralisation in government, and of the supremacy of *raison d'état* as a guiding principle of public policy. Against this creed of the strong state, which would justify a Louis XIV, a Frederic of Prussia, or a Bismarck, Szczepanowski set the ideal of a healthy, flourishing society: not something passive, to be moulded by 'leaders,' but possessing a dynamic of its own. In his view the forces we call political should be built from below, not from above, from within, not from somewhere outside the nation. Others might see in an all-wise officialdom the hope, even the guarantees of a better future; with his eye on the slowly unfolding democracy of Anglo-Saxon countries, he knew better. His influence, hampered by circumstances in his own day, has steadily grown in an age in which the social engineer is coming to play an increasing role in modern life.

But something else was happening at that very time, which was finally to turn the faith of Triple Loyalty into a comedy, or even a tragedy of errors. I refer to the mounting tension in the international field between the ambitions of Austria-Hungary, backed, of course, by Berlin, and Tsarist Russia: in particular to its implications for the Poles and their immediate neighbours, the Ukrainians of the Uniate faith in Eastern Galicia. Few better examples can be found of wheels working within wheels, and of the incompatibility of the older type of imperialism with national aspirations.

We shall see elsewhere how the logic of National Democracy, as expounded by Roman Dmowski and others in the *All-Polish Review*, and dictated in part by the balance of power in Europe, worsened the relations between the almost solidly peasant Ukrainian elements and the largely aristocratic and middle-class Poles. The latter were a minority in Eastern Galicia, and were Roman Catholic: the former were more numerous, they had common social aspirations, and they were fast developing a national consciousness.

For a better understanding of the issue, one must be careful not to overlook certain older facts. The Ruthenian peasants (the term Ukrainian was not brought into general use until after the turn of the 20th century) had the usual desire to get more of the land held by the owners of big estates into their hands; but they were also in conflict with their own clergy, which was at that time largely Russophile in sentiment. In their struggle for emancipation from clerical control, they got help of a two-fold kind from the Poles: (i) official support from the Provincial Diet in the founding of more elementary schools, as well as of popular libraries and cultural institutions, and (ii) fraternal collaboration on the part of the incipient Peasant and Socialist movements. Ukrainian leaders like Dragomanov and Ivan Franko worked together with the Polish crusaders for the good of the masses, preparing the way for a new social order for all. The time came, however, when this kind of thing provoked the concern of the Austrian authorities, and the latter were not slow to discover ways and means of spoiling the good work. In this they were soon being seconded by agents from Berlin—anxious where possible to stir up trouble between Slav peoples. By the 'nineties the tide had set in in the wrong direction, and the line taken by the National Democrats only helped things still further.

Clearly Tsarist Russia could not be indifferent to the nurturing on its borders of Ukrainian nationalism, which might be a useful Piedmont for the reunion of all Ukrainian peoples. To Austria, on the other hand, this development was welcome, if only as a buffer against Russian aggression. This fact was certainly in the minds of those who introduced manhood suffrage in the Dual Monarchy in 1906–7. In the ensuing election Ukrainian voters sent 30 members to the Reichsrath in Vienna!

Nevertheless, this essentially democratic move complicated the relations between the neighbour peoples in Eastern Galicia. Already in 1902 the landowners there had been suddenly faced with a serious strike on the part of

farm labourers during the busy season. Now they were confronted with the enfranchising of these workers, and the prospect of their hitherto privileged position in politics being formally challenged. To many of them, who would not be convinced before, the contentions of Dmowski became suddenly clear. It was no longer safe for the Poles of Galicia to attach themselves for good and all to the cause of the Habsburgs! A schism in the ranks of the Conservative Party followed, and a good part of them went over to the National Democratic persuasion. The elections of 1907 were stormy. They were followed in April 1908 by the assassination of the Governor, Andrew Potocki, by a Ukrainian patriot.

We cannot follow further the difficulties faced by the new Governor, Professor Bobrzynski, or the courage he showed in trying to recover something of the earlier and better atmosphere. Suffice to say that Triple Loyalty had received a severe blow. The instincts of the common man, e.g. of the fast-rising Peasant Movement, had been sound. Either one was a Pole, or one was not: any other view of the situation was an attempt to square the circle. In Prussia, as the next chapter will show, it had never been contemplated. In Russia it met mostly with rebuffs and repressions. Now it resulted in a splitting of the ranks in Austria. Triple Loyalty was perhaps one of the inevitabilities of history, and it cannot be condemned out of hand: one may wonder at the enthusiasm with which people of all classes accepted it, and admit that it did some good: but it was the child of abnormal conditions, and as such was bound to be rejected in time in favour of something less equivocal.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRUSSIAN PROVINCES

We saw in the second chapter how the hopes of 1846–8 were followed by disillusionment and material misfortunes in the next decade. Three bad harvests, defeat at the elections of 1855, and a series of measures enforcing economic reprisals struck the Poles of Poznania like a cold tidal wave. It left them half dazed. Only when things were at their worst did a turn for the better set in; and during the next fifty years the two million strong Polish community occupying the plainland of the Warta River reinforced their material and cultural position, setting an example to the whole nation, indeed to Europe. At last an effort was made of all for each and each for all. So striking was this witness, so relevant to the subject of this book, that it deserves a brief description.

Having lost his post as a school-teacher, a certain Hipolyte Cegielski turned his attention to business. He soon discovered how completely his people were dependent on German industry and banking, and he decided to found a modest workshop for repairing and even making farm machinery. Meeting an obvious need, the enterprise grew, and it became later not only a source of material advantage to the Poles, but a stronghold in the struggle for national recognition. While this was coming to pass, Cegielski and his friends decided in 1859 to found a newspaper in Poznan which would be devoted solely to the promotion of mutual interests, to the speech, culture and social well-being of the nation. They called it the *Poznan Daily*.

The decision was taken just in time. The Prussian government had shown of late less inclination than ever to be bound by the guarantees given in 1815 in regard to the Grand Duchy of Poznania—witness the fact that its

official description was now 'the province.' The issue was taken up by the *Daily*, seconded by a courageous pamphlet by Father Pruszynowski, editor of the *Catholic Weekly*, and with good effect. But it was not the purpose of the founders to spend paper and printer's ink in arguing political questions. True to the beginnings made earlier by Dr. Marcinkowski and General Chlapowski, they concentrated their main attention on the economic and social bettering of their community. An Agricultural Society was founded, with branches all over the country.[1] Then came a Loan Bank for farmers, and in 1863 an Industrial Bank was founded. A beginning was also made with organising of Co-operatives. The response was not immediate, but there was a response.

In 1873, for reasons that will appear below, the Agricultural Society was reconstituted on a more active basis. Already in the previous year the scattered Co-operatives were brought together in a Union. In 1886 this Union was made both stronger and more useful to its members by the creation of a Union of Co-operatives Bank, which remained until the outbreak of the present war as one of the soundest institutions of its kind in Poland. As late as 1878 there were only 73 Co-operatives with 14,500 members; by 1900 the number had doubled, and in 1910 it had risen to 265. The Bank turnover in 1891 was 15,000,000 marks; in 1910 it was 208,000,000 marks.

Why did all this happen? How did it come about, and what was the secret of its success? Who achieved it, and with what result for society? The answers are of uncommon interest.

In 1862 Otto von Bismarck was called by his king to take the helm of political life in Prussia, where the democratic elements were becoming unruly. The next eight years saw three wars carried to successful conclusions, and far-reaching changes in the attitudes of the German people. In 1871 at Versailles the German Empire was created with

[1] The last President of this Society before the outbreak of war in 1939 was the present Prime Minister, Stanislaw Mikolajczyk.

the King of Prussia as Emperor. The Poles looked on with dismay; the disaster to France at Sedan was equally bitter for them. The years 1863–4 had seen the collapse of their own effort of arms against Tsarist Russia. A tightening up of the reins of government in the Prussian provinces had ensued, severe penalties being laid on Poles who had ventured to show their sympathy with their compatriots. There was a promise of worse to come.

The first of these two years marked the millennium of the founding of the Polish kingdom, and they would have been worthily celebrated had it been possible. The next year saw the completion by Archbishop Przyluski of fifty years of service in his Church. Who would succeed him? Would the Berlin government accept a Pole?

The nominee of the Vatican was the well-known Father Ledochowski, member of a distinguished family, who had spent most of his life in Western Europe, and of whom it was said that he had forgotten his mother-tongue. Any satisfaction the Poles may have felt at the choice was to be dampened by the first instructions given by Ledochowski to his clergy: they were advised to keep out of politics! In August 1866 came a more serious warning: the loved hymn 'God who hast Poland' was no longer to be sung in the churches! A storm of protest broke out when this became known. Clearly the rumour must be true: the new Archbishop had ceased to have in his heart any patriotism. A fresh blow followed the next year. The clergy were told not to take any part in the election campaign!

But things went no further. The zeal of the Lutheran Governor Horn outran his discretion, and came to the rescue of the anxious Polish Catholics. His interference in school matters compelled the Archbishop to react with firmness, and by 1869 the latter had won back the full support of his clergy and people. They accepted his line of strategy. The battle would be fought out on the religious, rather than on the political front.

It was soon to begin, had in fact already begun. Both Poznania and Pomerania had been officially included in

the North German Bund as provinces, against the protests of the Polish deputies. The real issue was revealed after the victory in France. It was that of the faith, and the Polish language.

Bismarck had watched with concern the rise of 'ultramontanism' in German lands since the 'forties. Among the events that disturbed him were the Concordat with Austria in 1855, the recently completed Vatican Council, and the creation of the Centrum Party (Catholic) in the Reich. It seemed to him that the axis—Rome, Vienna, Poznan—constituted a threat to Prussia. There was too much ecclesiastical influence in Prussian life, and of this the Poles were a mainstay. Something would have to be done about it, particularly in the field of education.

In January 1872 a new Minister of Education appeared, the soon-to-be-famous Falk. One of his first acts was to end the part played by the Catholic section in the Ministry, and in the direction of school life. On the 9th February the Chancellor made his immortal pronouncement, 'Gentlemen, we are not going to Canossa!' Then came a demand for the replacing of Polish by German as the language of the schools and the law-courts; and a plan for distributing the Polish army recruits among German regiments. Within a year Polish had disappeared from the High Schools, even for the teaching of religion. In May 1874 German was made compulsory in all educational work, and Polish tolerated only where no other tongue was understood. Two years later this rule was extended to all public offices and to the courts of justice.

Against these laws protests were launched in vain. Bishops were arrested for not submitting; and although he had done his best to keep the peace, Archbishop Ledochowski himself was taken into custody in February 1874. Two years later he was deposed, and for 12 years no one succeeded him in office.

Meanwhile the first of the famous 'discriminatory laws' was proclaimed. From the scheme of local self-government in Prussia set up in 1872 Poznania was excluded. As before

the power was to remain in the hands of district Commissioners, who with the help of the police governed the country. Added to the famous 'three class suffrage system,' which was based on taxation and often gave the squire more votes than all his villagers, this administration left the Polish masses in a most unenviable position.

They were far from willing to submit to this invidious treatment, and circumstances favoured them. First, of course, the beginnings of economic and social self-help referred to above. Secondly, the social transformation long since going on in the countryside as the result of the outreach of Prussian power. On this latter, then, a few sentences first.

As the heavy industries developed in the Rhineland many townsmen from the Eastern Marches of Prussia felt the attraction and began to move thither. Their places were taken by Poles, often by those who had been helped with their training for life by Marcinkowski's scheme. In consequence of this a trend was under way that was to have momentous consequences for the Polish nation. Between 1849 and 1871 the number of Protestants (mostly Germans) in Poznania rose from 409,000 to 508,000; while the number of Catholics rose from 847,000 to over one million. On the manorial estates of Poznania the number of Germans dropped by 6,000 between 1871 and 1896 to 57,662; while that of the Poles rose from 292,000 to 334,429. The percentage of Catholics in Poznania in 1867 was 62·5; by 1895 it was 67·1, and by 1910 it was 71·3. Four per cent. of the population was Jewish in 1871, while in 1895 it was only 1·5 per cent.

These vital statistics speak for themselves. Alone, however, they would not have availed much. What counted more was the spirit that was abroad among the Poles, and the type of leadership that emerged to guide them in their public and private life. During the 'seventies it came mainly from the gentry, in particular from the tireless Maximilian Jackowski. Fifteen years later it was taken over by a clergyman, Father Wawrzyniak, who came to be

called 'the uncrowned king of Poznania.' Around these two men the nation gathered as a whole—peasants, townsmen, and aristocracy—with a discipline and endurance that nothing could stop. There was no question of party, none of personal or individual advantage. What the Poznanian people were to achieve will remain for all time an example to the Polish nation.

Jackowski, himself a farmer, observed closely the early efforts of the Agricultural Society and the Co-operatives, and spotted their weaknesses. In two pamphlets, published in 1870, he told his fellow countrymen some plain truths. 'Our education,' he said, 'has done too little to nurture the spirit of work.' Not many people read the pamphlets at the time, but the policy of the Prussian government in the next three years changed all that. Now that every Polish household was affected, the truth of what Jackowski had said became the talk of the countryside. The local Farmers' Circles were quickly consolidated in 1873, as noted already. Their number rose in four years to 105, and reached nearly 300 by 1914. As Patron, Jackowski journeyed everywhere, attending their monthly meetings, and drumming up people for the annual Congresses. The *Farmer's Counsellor* was read religiously in thousands of homes, and results were not long in being seen.

We have noted elsewhere how the vast improvement in means of communication had opened for the cornlands of Poznania ready markets in the rising industrial areas. Breadstuffs, cattle and dairy products, timber, sugar—everything that could be grown—was eagerly sought for. In order to secure a square deal for the primary producer only one thing was needed—Sellers' Co-operatives, which would save the farmer from the often shameless hands of the middle man. At the same time provision was made for collective purchasing of the essential needs of the farmer, e.g. machinery, in so far as this could not be manufactured in the province: with the net result that an economic organism was built up with the whole community the gainer, and through it the individual farmer or local

business-man as well. The founding of the Union of Co-operatives Bank in 1886 put the final touch to the structure.

This too came just in time. Bismarck had gone over from the cultural to the economic field. Better said, seeing that the struggle with the Church had got out of hand, and jockeying as he was for a bargain with Leo XIII that would save as much as possible from the failure of his plans, he now turned to his great Colonisation scheme to get the land into German hands. He started by ordering out of the country some 35,000 non-Germans settled there, who were not citizens of Prussia. Then he got a grant made of 100,000,000 marks for the purchasing of Polish estates, on which he hoped to settle German immigrants. 'Germans' was his phrase, 'but with German wives, not Polish ones!' At the same time the right of communities to choose their own school-teachers was taken away; and the German prelate, Dr. Dinder, appointed to the Archbishopric of Gnezno-Poznan.

The colonisation scheme came too late. Since 1861 the Poles had been steadily if slowly losing land to German purchasers, but from now onward, in spite of the big government appropriation, they began to improve their position. The reason was the organisation of counter-offers, thanks to the funds made available by the new Bank. All politics had been excluded from its activities, but the genius of Father Wawrzyniak was now revealed in a telling way. He got the principle accepted that money could be advanced for the saving of threatened property, or even for the purchasing of whatever came on the market, provided always that the deposits in the Bank were sufficient to warrant the loans. Thus was provided for everyone an extra incentive to thrift. By saving money, he could not only help himself, but also help the national cause. A battle of wits and of endurance was now on, and the Poles won out.

But something else happened that few people could foresee. Naturally enough, competition for purchase of properties sent the price of all land soaring. What could be

bought for 560 marks a unit in 1886 was costing nearly 1,400 marks twenty years later. The result was that many Germans, who would otherwise not thought of so doing, were ready to sell and move elsewhere, and the reverse began to happen of what the Chancellor had planned. Already by 1905 the Poles had bought from the Germans 50,000 hectares more than they had lost; although in 1898 and again in 1902 fresh appropriations had been made, totalling 250,000,000 marks, to reinforce the Fund. In 1908, in connection with a new law making possible compulsory selling (expropriation), a further 125,000,000 marks was added, bringing the grand total to nearly half a billion. Nevertheless, according to the great German authority, Professor Laubert, the net balance in 1912 showed that the Poles held their own. It looked then like a counsel of despair when in 1913 still another grant was made, equalling the total of all former ones. In the journal *Ostland* of that period a hopeful account was published of the 'grand design' in which the author prophesied that by 1927 the task of consolidating the German hold on the Polish parts of Prussia would be complete! *Dis aliter visum.*

The outbreak of war held everything up; but it may be doubted whether, even if war had not come, the Prussian government would have been able to conquer a resolute and resourceful people, which had learned the value of a united front. What Laubert has called Jackowski's 'peasant republic' proved too strong even for Bismarck. True, the four years' reprieve that came with the Caprivi régime in 1890 was most welcome. It gave the Poles a chance to heal their wounds, and to gird themselves for further combat. When 'the honeymoon' was over they recalled the slogan of the *Poznan Daily* of just thirty years earlier, 'Let's not fool ourselves!' and returned to the fray.

It was well that they did, for at the end of the decade came the founding of the notorious *Ostmarkenverein*, a Union for the consolidation of Germandom in the Eastern Marches, whose extreme line of policy recalled the 'exterminate' of von Hartmann, something to which even

Bismarck never subscribed. It did find favour with the young Wilhelm II and in due course with Buelow. The result was a grim issue over the schools—the second phase of the *Kulturkampf*, made famous by the strikes instituted by thousands of Polish children. The greatest of these came in 1906. New decrees were issued in the economic field as well: including one forbidding the erection of any cottage or barn unless to replace an old one that was unusable, and another (in 1908) making it unlawful for any meeting to be held in Polish unless the community was more than 60 per cent. Polish speaking. This sort of thing was too much for many Germans of high position, and the policy of Buelow came in for severe criticism. This makes the more striking the line taken in 1940–2 by the Nazi Press and policy in regard to the same great task. According to present-day writers, the Prussian authorities never had a chance of success because they were too gentlemanly, and because they hoped for solutions on political lines, when the only way to the goal is biological extermination!

Controversy aside, enough has been said to show how, under conditions in which little could be gained from any sort of political action, the Poles of Poznania and Pomerania turned their attention to and achieved striking successes in other fields; fields not less important, because fundamental to survival in a way that not even politics can claim to be. A by-product of all this was the development of the individual citizen and the reinforcing of the social and economic order to a degree never known heretofore in Polish lands.

This does not mean that politics was despised, or even neglected—far from it. The Poles fought every election, and they sent men to Berlin, notably to the Reichstag, who were able to make use of the forum thus provided for the ventilation of many matters the Press could not discuss at all. In so doing they got a good deal of support from two German quarters—from the Catholic Centrum on the one hand, and from Social Democracy led by Bebel on the

other. But what went on in Berlin was only by-play: the real job was being done in the local community, at home. An example was furnished for all to study of democratic action based on work and on the respect of every citizen for his fellow. Only one thing counted—loyalty to the cause: station in life, occupation, creed and what are called 'externals' were of little account. In more than one respect the years 1919–39 were consumed in extending to the rest of Poland the attitude to life, work and the rewards of work made famous by the Poznanians of the 'nineties.

By way of completing this chapter, something should be said about the developments during these trying years in Prussian Silesia, in which alongside an open plainland of farms lay the most densely populated heavy industries area in Central Europe. Made by its frontiers into an outpost, first of Prussia and then of the German Reich, it was something almost unique; a sort of pocket of civilisation, highly developed on the material side but revealing shocking contrasts in the cultural and economic fields. The chief points that are relevant to our present theme may be summed up as follows.

Finally released from serfdom in 1848, the rural masses were very soon drawn into the maw of expanding industry. This was for the most part in the hands of members of the landed aristocracy: but when money became 'easier' from the French indemnities after 1871, Joint Stock Companies arose—great corporations, with their usual impersonation of all contacts between employer and employee, and the emerging of a true industrial proletariate. All the factors were now present for the growth of the class struggle; which was likely to be the acuter here as the owners were mostly German and Protestant, while 'labour' was Polish-speaking and Catholic. The first strikes came already in 1871: the greatest of pre-war strikes in 1913, the cause of which (on the word of a prominent German manager) was 'political and not economic.'

Already before 1870 there existed among these almost forgotten workers the slenderest beginnings of a native-

born cultural awakening in the form of their own Press. This scarcely living flame was stirred into a raging fire by the *Kulturkampf*, in which the simple farmer or miner saw himself likely to be robbed of his mother-tongue and his faith. Joining forces with the German Centrum, the Polish lay and clergy leaders greatly extended their influence over their 'flocks,' the cultural factor being now added to the older class cleavage. By the end of the century, largely owing to the incredibly bad tactics of those in authority, this combination of forces had become a full-fledged Polish nationalism.

In 1902 the younger Poles turned their paper, *The Upper Silesian*, into a nationalist instead of a Catholic organ; and polled 44,000 votes in the election, sending Korfanty to the Reichstag, in the following year. In 1907, due in part to outside reasons, an even greater success was scored, the Polish vote being 117,000, while the German was reduced to 172,000. This was astonishing in an area where a decade earlier no Pole had even stood for election, and no issue of the kind ever raised. By now the older Poles, who had previously stood by the Centrum, linked themselves with their younger colleagues in order to form a solid Polish front.

Even now, and indeed as late as 1915, it could not be said that these men were not 'loyal subjects of the King of Prussia.' But the grounds of this loyalty were becoming more and more insecure. The question of daily bread played the greatest part; but the reason was also that there was no choice open to them, unless to become Russians. There was no Poland! By 1917 things had begun to change. The workers knew very well what was going on in the outside world: above all, Imperial Russia had ceased to exist. Now there was hope of the resurrection of Poland—the motherland from which they had been separated since 1335. The sequel showed how many of them knew their mind, and how resolved they were to win their way home again.

CHAPTER V

NATIONAL DEMOCRACY

By the early 'eighties the first strength of the Realist movement was beginning to be spent, at least in so far as it advocated political resignation. A younger world was maturing, which had heard of the Rising in the home-circle, but had not seen it: and in the stories told there was more to rouse the youth to emulation of 'the heroes' than to warn him away from it. In general the atmosphere had lost some of its gloom: hope cannot be banished forever from men.

This change was in part due to the influence exerted by the work of two men—the one a painter, the other a story-teller. Jan Matejko, a Polish artist of Czech ancestry, had been at work in Cracow since the 'sixties on a series of vast canvases meant to set out the glory and the shame of the Poland of other days. They were not, as are so many documentary pictures, simply huge posters, but the result of years of careful historical studies and of painstaking brushwork. Even the most crowded scenes, in which a score of figures were involved, revealed exactness of portraiture taken from ancient coins, seals and documents. Before long these pictures were attracting attention throughout Europe. In them the nation could see how its forefathers faced times of responsibility and crisis: how brave men had toiled and fought and how cowards had bargained away the national patrimony. No Pole could stand before them and remain unmoved.

Much the same could be said of the tales of Sienkiewicz, in particular of the three long stories known as the *Trilogy*. The younger Sienkiewicz had been a realist, but by the 'eighties he turned about and produced romantic narratives that made him the idol of the nation. On his own admission, the *Trilogy* was written 'for the cheering of souls,' and the end was achieved. Tens of thousands of readers

found 'escape' from the trials of their own days in the endurance and loyalty of Skrzetuski, in the Falstaffian humour of Zagloba, in the devotion to his duty of Sir Michael. I knew one Silesian Pole who told me in 1922 that he had read through the roughly 3,000 pages of the *Trilogy* every year for twenty-five years, and I can believe it. There is in the tales a fervent patriotism, some of which has been called chauvinistic by Ukrainian critics; but the merits far outweigh the defects so long as one realises that, though based on history, they are not to be taken as history.

The events of the year 1885, while the stories of Sienkiewicz were appearing in serial form, revealed to many Poles the seriousness of their position. It brought the end of the court trials of the pioneers of Polish Socialism in Warsaw, and the condemnation to death of seven brave men.[1] It saw also the climax of Bismarck's campaign for the gradual extermination of the Polish population in the Prussian provinces. This was recognised by observers as a challenge to the death—the most serious single blow since the Partitions. As usual, this increase of Prussian severity was a signal for corresponding measures on the Russian side of the border.

Since 1882 the notorious General Hurko had been Governor-General in Warsaw, and he was ably seconded by his School Administrator Apuchtin, who had a fanatical sense of his mission. Not even the most thoroughgoing of the Polish conciliationists, to whom belonged now the editors of *Kraj* (*The Homeland*) appearing in St. Petersburg, could persuade the rising generation that this sort of policy was a benediction for Poland. Dissatisfaction was in the air, and a group of younger men gathered around Jan Poplawski to found in 1887 in Warsaw the weekly *Glos* (*The Voice*). This man, though less vitriolic in temperament than Swientochowski, was to share with him the work of educating the nation for the next two decades, and become the real father of the National Democratic Party.

Poplawski was a realist, but he was not a Slavophile.

[1] See below, p. 86.

He saw clearly the need for making the best of Tsarist rule, but he hated both the machinery and the spirit behind it. Uppermost in his mind was dislike of 'the political hysteria' inseparable from revolutionary activities, and he preached soberness with conviction, arguing above all for constructive work, based on sound diagnosis of possibilities. Yet he had no patience with the doctrine of Triple Loyalty; for him the end in view was liberation. In a series of articles he put down concretely his views as to how a free Poland should look on the map, giving special attention to her western provinces. This was done both out of regard to the Russian censorship and because he felt that the mistakes of the 14th and 15th centuries in expanding eastward and not securing the Baltic coastline had cost his nation dearly, and must somehow be made good. Unless the Vistula, from source to outlet, were in Polish hands, he saw little hope for the future.

Along with these articles went, however, others dealing with the conditions and needs of the Polish common people everywhere. *Glos* was the first paper in the country to interest itself in the lot of the 'small-towns'' folk, and in the factory workers. Even the long-forgotten mining and foundry areas of Upper Silesia were remembered; where a million and a half people still spoke Polish although they had been separated from their mother-nation for five and a half centuries. Finally, Poplawski aired the question of the rising tide of emigration from Polish lands to the U.S.A. He disagreed with those who condemned such tactics as running away from danger, and defended the right of the father of a family to seek better conditions for it abroad. He even dared to prophesy that in the long run the nation might be the gainer! In a word, the editor of *Glos* took the view that, being a Pole, everything Polish was of interest to him, no matter where or of what kind. How far things had come in fifty years!

The Tsarist authorities were well aware of all that was going on, and in 1894 they had their opportunity. The people of Warsaw organised a giant celebration of the centenary of the Rising of 1794, when the master-cobbler

Kilinski had led the militia of the capital in the national cause. *Glos* was shut down, the editors arrested, and Poplawski spent a year in the famous Tenth Pavilion of the Citadel.

Meanwhile a signal given from abroad had been taken up in the homeland, and was bearing fruitage. In the year *Glos* was founded, a group of Polish exiles in Switzerland, with Jeź-Milkowski at their head, had founded a secret society to work for the liberation of their country, and given it the name of the Polish League. Funds were to be gathered for a National Treasury and friends won for active intervention the moment such a thing promised results. In his pamphlet, *On the Defence of the Nation and the State*, Milkowski used this sentence: 'We must now return to active enterprise!' This was taken as a challenge by the more resolute spirits at home, and helped them in carrying out their celebrations in 1791 and in 1794, in both of which the young Roman Dmowski took part.

In the latter year the League was renamed 'National.' Taking the *Manifesto* of 1836 as its basis, it declared the resolve 'so to develop our national strength that the powers of Europe will have to reckon with us.' A hitherto little-known advocate of the League appeared in the person of Zygmunt Balicki, whose pamphlet, *National Egoism*, based in good part on the teachings of Herbert Spencer, soon became the Bible of the movement.

Escaping from the Warsaw police, Dmowski got away to Lwow, where he was joined a year later by Poplawski. Here, in the kindlier atmosphere of Austria, they reorganised their forces, and in 1895 founded the *All-Polish Review*—meant to carry farther and do better the work begun by *Glos* in Warsaw. This journal became an organ of first-rate importance for the consolidation of Polish opinion during the next twenty years. At the same time they issued a Proclamation, of which the following points are relevant:

1. Unceasing work at the building up of our national forces, the rousing and maintenance of every activity, every political and social movement, of the common

people, which can thus turn into positive national asset.

2. Leading these forces into battle with the enemy, not in a mass armed movement, but in unceasing revolutionary activities.

3. Satisfying in underground ways such needs of the nation as cannot be satisfied by legal means: the replacing of gaps caused by the barbaric repressions of the authorities with the help of underground literature, press, schools and societies.

In a word, the National Democrats regarded themselves as revolutionary but not as insurrectionist—a rather fine point of distinction. One of their difficulties from the start was that, although they enjoyed the hospitality of Austria and most of the work to be done was to be found in the Russian provinces, the founders of the movement belonged logically, and by conviction, as time was to show, to the 'conciliationist,' or even to the Slavophile tradition. Rootedly anti-Prussian, they were by inference pro-Russian: as for Austria, they tended rather to ignore its existence. One corollary of all this is important, however: the resolve of the National Democratic Party, which was founded in 1897 as a supporting body for the *Review* to work for good relations with Tsarist Russia compelled them to take up a hostile attitude toward the Ukrainian National movement then taking shape in and around Lwow. This was a grave misfortune, since it undid much good work that had gone on toward finding a common ground for action between Pole and Ukrainian, and sowed seeds of trouble for the future.

The *spiritus movens* of the new Party was Roman Dmowski. He earned this place not only by the energy and ability he showed as an organiser, but also by his record as an educator. In 1902 appeared his *Thoughts of a Modern Pole*, which took many people aback. In effect its argument was that European history for a century had one lesson to teach—might, in the physical sense, had come to rule! Of this fact Prussia was the obvious example.

It was pointed out how Bismarck had described the Germans as a nation of men, while the Poles were one of women. The conclusion for Dmowski was that his people should go to school to the Germans! Just as with the latter, so the former would have to raise their patriotism into a religion. The traditional passivity must be sloughed off at all costs. 'The Polish spirit,' he said, 'can only be born again from the common people.' Education then was the supreme need, but education for action. The law of life was that only the fit can survive; and it was valid for peoples no less than for individuals.

In this essay Dmowski dotted the 'i's' and crossed the 't's' of what Balicki had argued in *National Egoism*. There was in it nothing of idealism, but cold and calculating diagnosis of political prospects as the author saw them. What is more, the book drew attention to the menace of Socialism inside the nation, as well as to the threat coming from the Jewish element. Both of these represented international forces which could do no good, but might well do much harm. Before long the National Democrats were committed at least to some degree of avowed anti-Semitism.[1]

Dmowski's political opponents, and others as well, were disturbed by the extent to which he seemed to have gone to school to the very people, whose uncompromising attitude toward all the claims of the Poles to national recognition had brought down on them the condemnation of liberal and humanitarian sentiment all over Eruope. What good could come of it?

They recalled the words of Balicki:

> 'The nation, being a living organism, has the moral right to grow; whether at the cost of passive, thoughtless and shapeless groups or even at the cost of other nations: provided always that this growth is a natural one and is not based on brute force or on discriminatory laws . . .'

[1] This attitude is explained in part, though not justified, by the way the Jews in Polish lands, right through the 19th century, were mostly to be found supporting the policy of the partitioning Empires.

which he then proceeded, one would think, to retract in the very next passage:

> 'Even when raised to the dignity of ethical standards, the nation is still not an end in itself, which can justify any or all means of realisation. It represents only the conscience of its citizens, whose conduct should always conform to the universal and unchanging laws of social ethics.'

What is to be done with a thinker who asks the reader one moment to face west, and in the next to turn and face east? In his *Thoughts* Dmowski was at least more consistent. He recalled the days when Poles had been desirous of always making concessions to their fellow nations inside the Joint Kingdom, not excluding even the Jews; but that sort of thing is no longer possible. Modern patriotism demands, he says, the limit of effort and force; only the strong can concede anything to another without running the risk of being thought to have done it in weakness. 'This is the philosophy of national combat and pressure—perhaps it is. But what is to be done, when that combat and that pressure are the reality, and universal peace and universal freedom a fiction. . . . One must have the courage to look the truth in the face.'

We must be fair. Everything in Europe since 1815 had looked as though but one law prevailed:

> That those should get, who have the power,
> And those should keep, who can!

and more than ever since the ascendancy of Prussia under Bismarck. *Realpolitik* had proved its worth, and the wise man was he who was ready to learn from his opponent. But where would it lead to? No one knew this better than Dmowski himself, just as no one knew better than he that in so writing he was making enemies for himself of Jews, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and other neighbour peoples; and equally of all Socialists, if only because they did not rate the national claim as the first to be served in society. In defence of his views, he could point to the measures

for self-defence taken with such success by the Poles of Poznania (described in an earlier chapter), and fairly ask his critics what was the alternative.

Drawing conclusions from the course of the Boer War, the *All-Polish Review* took a line that was consistent with this doctrine that the weaker will go to the wall and only the fitter survive, but was curiously at variance with the tradition of 'compromise' and the revulsion from active effort toward liberation. It advocated the forming of some sort of military organisation, to be based on England, and went on:

> 'Independence will not fall as a gift from heaven, or by the favour of others; neither will it be given us by the most intensive organic work, even though carried on in the national spirit. It has always been won, and always is won by blood and iron, and there is no other method of attaining it.'

True, the admission was added that this position was rather a theoretical than a practical admonition, since nothing of the kind was at the door; nevertheless, no one should dismiss the idea of popular revolts as something doomed to failure, the more so as the example of the Boer successes showed the reverse to be true.

Following the example of his older colleague, Poplawski, the editor of the *Review* was resolved to make of it a forum for the discussion of every problem faced by the nation, a clearing-ground for news of all kinds as to the doings of Poles in the homeland and abroad, and an instrument for the education of his people in matters of public interest. This last was his chief aim, and this may account for seeming inconsistencies in his points of view. Only by putting different types of suggestions before his readers could he whet their intelligence; only by doing this could he provoke them to further study, and only by this could he make them really intelligent in the face of whatever the future might bring. One thing only is clear. Dmowski was himself more attracted, both in his earlier and his later years, by the enigma of Poland's position on the map,

and the implications of that position than by the problems of internal well-being. For that reason he was absorbed above all with the question of Poland's relations, on the one hand with the German Reich, on the other with the might of Tsarist Russia. The Austrian 'orientation' interested him scarcely at all, since he regarded the Dual Monarchy as indeed a 'ramshackle' empire. Discussing the matter in 1901, he wrote:

> 'Undoubtedly the answer to the question would not be as similar in all three parts of Poland as it would have been twenty years ago. But there is only one answer—either with the Germans or with the Russians: no third possibility exists. The most fitting, and purely Polish answer, i.e. without Germany and without Russia, or rather alone and by our own strength against them both, does not exclude in certain circumstances the necessity of declaring ourselves for one combination or the other.'

He then went on to say that Austria was more likely to be allied with Germany against Russia than with Russia against Germany. It was therefore arguable that alliance with Germany would give more favourable prospects for Poland, since with Austrian help some kind of *Zwischenstaat* (his own word) might be achieved. It is notable that this point of view, the reverse of what was to be taken a few years later, was aired more than once in the years before the *entente cordiale* in the west had more or less settled the shape of things that was to come in 1914.

If the anti-Jewish programme advocated by Dmowski and his colleagues can be explained partly on grounds of out-and-out nationalism and the feeling that at bottom the Jews are internationalists, partly on the evidence to be found everywhere of the too strong hold the latter were getting on business and industry, the antagonism of the National Democrats to the growing Ukrainian movement in East Galicia was based rather on grounds of strategy. No one who desired above everything to keep on good terms with the Tsarist régime could sympathise with or

even countenance Ukrainian nationalism. By declaring themselves enemies of Ukrainian separatist aspirations, the National Democrats served the cause of Russian imperialism, without strengthening the cause of Poland. Rather did they win away from the Conservative Party in Galicia not a few of the landed gentry—on the basis of class interests, and thus helped to destroy much of the hope of Polish-Ukrainian understanding that was slowly taking shape in this 'Ireland of Eastern Europe.' The net result was to create a situation in south-eastern Poland more and more analogous to that existing in Poznania. To the 'Prussian' attitude taken up toward them by this type of Polish sentiment the Ukrainians later opposed social and economic forces very like those displayed by the Poles of Poznania toward Berlin, and with very similar results. Something like a 'peasant republic' (cf. p. 67) grew up; the hopes of maintaining the older principle *gente Ruthenus natione Polonus* began to fade, and the reverse was achieved of what was hoped for.

The truth is that Dmowski was always far better at analysing situations than at finding the right way of dealing with them when analysed. With regard to the Ukrainians, whom he always called Ruthenians, he wrote:

> 'For our national future in respect to the Ruthenians one of two things is necessary. Either all or a part of them must become Poles, if this is possible, or they must become a strong, independent nation, able to defend their independence not only against us but also against the Russians [he called them 'Muscovites']; able to fight for their freedom and in that way to become our ally in the struggle with Russia.'

In his view the existing relation with the Ukrainians could lead nowhere. If that people were not willing to be assimilated, then they must learn the same lessons he sought to teach the Poles—that only the strong can survive.

When the National Democratic Party took concrete shape and form in 1904 it was faced with a real dilemma in

the Austrian provinces. Plans had long been under way for the introduction of manhood suffrage in the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy, and this was actually done in 1906. Seeing what this would mean in Eastern Galicia, where the Ukrainian peasant was in overwhelming majority, Dmowski opposed it stubbornly, and even proposed something recalling the three-class franchise of Prussia, based on the amount of taxes paid and giving the landed gentry more votes than the masses of peasants put together! It was this kind of thing that made opponents of what was from now onward known as the Endek (N.Dec.) movement regard its leaders as opportunists rather than sincere educators of the nation. At the same time, the services rendered to the cause by the *All-Polish Review* were enormous. Even where it backed the wrong horse, there was gain in the fact that at least more and more people were learning that there was a horse to back at all.

As things turned out, the year 1904 was critical for the nation in many ways. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war brought many things to a head. The Poles had to decide on the attitude to be taken to the new crisis: were they to do again what their fathers had done in Crimean days, look for every chance of hindering the Russian war-effort, e.g. by opposing the recruiting of their sons to fight in Manchuria; or should they support the Tsarist régime through thick and thin, and hope for the best for the nation and its cause? A most difficult choice to make, the more so as both the situation at home and the international alignment had to be taken carefully into account.

For once logic prevailed. The middle and upper classes, in general all who had come under the influence of National Democracy, took the latter course. Since Prussia rather than Russia was the age-old enemy of Poland, and since Russia, France and Britain were linked in a sort of alliance, common sense dictated loyalty to the Tsarist cause, and the avoidance of everything that would menace the war effort. The opposite view was taken by the Labour movement, and it found expression in a big demonstration in Warsaw

protesting against the taking of Poles to fight other people's battles in Manchuria. Shots were fired, people were killed, the tension was keen. Two months later, when news came of the action of the workers in St. Petersburg—the march led by Father Gapon to the Winter Palace—a general strike was declared in Polish industry.

Dmowski viewed this sort of thing with grave concern. Hearing that plans were on foot to establish contact with the Japanese, he hurried off to Tokio and succeeded in stopping the plans of Pilsudski for joint Polish-Japanese action. When the promise of a Constitution was given it looked as if the National Democrats were right; and when in due course the Polish Club in the *Duma* came into being the position of the 'conciliationists' was stronger than it had ever been before. Even the plan for autonomy, with a Diet in Warsaw, was laid aside. By the inevitability of gradualness and thanks to the inherent superiority of the Poles as a nation over the Russians (one of Dmowski's pet views), everything could be attained. When war came with Germany, a Russian victory would bring the uniting of all Polish lands under the Tsar, and the issue of the degree of independence could then be faced on its merits.

In 1908 appeared in French Dmowski's notable book, *La Question Polonaise*. In masterly fashion he set out the general situation in Europe, and put the rights and claims of his own nation in their proper place in the picture. The central theme was the rivalry of Teuton and Slav, the real danger was the *Drang nach Osten*. To meet this the Poles must stand with the Russians; and in return for loyal co-operation they should be given autonomy, with the right to feel themselves partners and not helots in the joint effort.

Viewed with detachment, this position was unassailable. The difficulty was to be found in the actuality, in what had been going on in St. Petersburg. Already in the Second Duma the Polish representation was down from 37 to 14 owing to the franchise regulations. Offers made by the Poles to the Kadet Party for a sort of working alliance met with no response. Finally, the Second Duma was sent

home, and what is known as 'the White Terror' was begun. The next years saw fresh blows dealt at the Polish heritage on the Vistula; not even the most optimistic could say that things looked better. Some of Dmowski's ablest colleagues left him. Both the general tendency and their leader's own actions prompted them to this. In 1908 he took part in a big meeting called to found a Society for Slavonic Culture—the first of the moves for what has come to be known as Neo-Slavism. Here he said something that Poles could not forgive: 'We accept a Slav policy, setting no conditions whatsoever.' And he stuck to his guns, even though one of those who left the Party made the remark that N.D. had now come to mean 'National Demoralisation.' The Neo-Slav line did not last long. Observers noted the fact that no Ukrainian was allowed at any of the congresses held, though there were 'Ruthenian' delegates at the congress in Prague.

Biographers of Dmowski draw attention to the fact that, whereas his work up to the year 1906 was done entirely within the nation and was democratic and educational in character—designed on the one hand to rouse them to a consciousness of the issues at stake, on the other to draw people together for common action—from that date onward he entered the field of active politics, representing at least a good part of the nation in matters that were both delicate and controversial. Judgments passed upon his work should therefore take this fact into account, and be governed accordingly. This is certainly true, though one should not attempt to separate two things that were closely related as cause and effect. From now onward, just as it was no longer possible for any of the three partitioning Powers to consider the Polish question as something solely its own business, so it was impossible for the Poles living in any one of the empires to work out their own salvation without regard to the nation as a whole. Triple Loyalty as a solution was either dead or dying. It had only then a chance if the three empires could have lived side by side in real, and not only in seeming collaboration.

CHAPTER VI

LABOUR-SOCIALISM

It was a natural consequence that with the coming of large-scale industry to Eastern Europe there should also appear in some form the response of organised labour. Moreover, if only because industrial enterprise was new and still undisciplined, and the labour market relatively cheap, the limits of exploitation were broad. One might almost say that they did not exist, for the absolutist régimes of the three empires tended everywhere to lend their support to the *entrepreneur*; and to regard any unrest among the abused workers as a threat to authority in general. Faced by this situation, and unable to get any protection from governments, the workers were compelled to foster class interests, and by every means to educate their fellows in the theory and practice of group action. They knew that this was a breach of the law, and that repressions would follow, but there was no other redress. The result was something like open warfare, and the time would come when at a meeting of the three Emperors the menace of Marxian Socialism, and measures for dealing with it, were the chief theme of discussion.

In effect, the seeds of Marxist doctrine were sown among the workers of the Russian Empire chiefly by students from the universities as a part of the *narodniki* movement—'going among the people.' These seeds soon found their way to the Polish industrial centres, which entered on a period of expansion after 1870; and it need not surprise us that they were received with enthusiasm. The fact that *Das Kapital* was first published in a Russian translation in 1873 helped on the work, though the book was sternly forbidden in the country. Before long it was being read by thousands of eager people, and its theories being

discussed in scores of secret gatherings from the Vistula to beyond the Urals.[1]

There were, of course, other influences at work also, equally distasteful to the ruling classes. In lands where State and Church had long been closely allied and where the principle prevailed that the existing political order was an expression of the will of God for humanity, the teachings of Darwin and Huxley were bound to be condemned as subversive of all tradition. Science was a danger, unless in the hands of a chosen few; its popularisation was to be hindered at all costs. For that reason the Nihilist of the type of Bazarov was an enemy of society. Any appeal to the mind of man, any using of that mind for other than approved purposes was to be regarded as savouring of sedition. Particularly when an admixture of Comte's Positivism was added, whose aim was to apply the scientific method to the field of social relations. All enshrined convictions as to the common life seemed to be in danger, and stern measures of repression were in order. These, however, did nothing to stop the rot, and only provoked increased devotion on the part of the innovators. Two extremes were opposed, and the hope of finding the golden middle way as good as destroyed.

In all the earlier stages of this development Polish labour leaders collaborated to the full with their Russian colleagues. The first Pole to assume the mantle of leadership in Warsaw was a certain Ludwik Warynski, himself of middle-class birth, whose qualities as a speaker and organiser soon won for him the confidence of his fellow workers, and the attention of the police. The activities of the secret society known as 'The Proletariate' were under steady supervision, and such of its members as were caught at work were summarily punished. For a time Warynski was compelled to flee the country and take refuge in Cracow. Here too he was soon a marked man, and his arrest followed.

[1] The first Socialist literature in the Polish language appeared in Warsaw in May 1878. Published in Leipzig, it was brought in via the industrial region of Upper Silesia by the Warynski brothers.

Defending himself against the charge of sedition in the open Austrian court, he showed such skill and courage that he was acquitted; and the day of his release was made one of a popular demonstration in the city that marked the beginning of new things for the cause of Labour in Galicia.

Early in the 'eighties he was back in Warsaw, but he was not long to enjoy his freedom. The troubled times following on the assassination of the Tsar were felt everywhere, even in the Polish capital. Some two hundred arrests were made, among them of men who were later to play distinguished parts in the national liberation. The famous trials of 1883–5 followed, but by different methods from those of Austria. The conclusion was foregone; seven men were condemned to death and were executed in January 1886 on the now sacred spot between the Citadel and the bank of the Vistula. Warynski himself was sent to the Schlusselburg Fortress, where he died three years later—probably of starvation.

The blow to the cause was severe, the whole movement was driven underground. But the witness given by the martyrs would not die. In part at home, in part abroad, the work went on, with the result that a Polish delegation was able to appear at the Congress of the International in Brussels in 1891. Among its members was Ignacy Daszynski, also of middle-class origin; by now the accepted leader of the Socialists in Galicia, and destined a generation later to hold high office in a restored Poland. But another, hitherto silent figure had appeared on the scene, that of a man who had long worked quietly behind the scenes, whose passion was the education of the worker to play his proper role as a citizen—Boleslaw Limanowski.

Born in the middle 'thirties, he grew up in north-eastern Poland (Lithuania) and by the time he was twenty-five was already at variance with the Russian police. Exiled from the country, he gave himself to a study of Mill and La Salle before returning *incognito* to Warsaw to work as a common labourer. After seven years of this, he moved to Lwow

and gave himself to writing and organisation. His allegiance to Socialism was complete, but he knew that it could not win through unless it was rooted in the convictions of the common people. Apart from this, he saw in it an instrument for national emancipation. In Limanowski's work were united the traditions of the *Manifesto* of 1836, of the Rising of 1863—as a social phenomenon—and of a wider than Marxian Socialism.

In 1881 he became one of the founders of a group known as 'the Polish People,' the word *lud* being used instead of the traditional term *naród* (nation). Seven years later another step was taken, this time abroad. The Poles living in Paris formed the National Socialist Commune or Community, and began to publish the *Clarion* (*Pobudka*). This journal was smuggled into the homeland and read by thousands, many of whom were startled by its advocacy of the use of force as a means for recovering independence at a time when Realism was decrying all such tactics. (It would be worth while to discover whether this was not the first use of the term 'National Socialist' in Europe.) Limanowski was a member of the editorial board, and thus helped to bridge over the period until an organ of the same kind would be established on Polish soil.

While in Lwow he had sought to persuade the workers to associate themselves with the first experiments in the Co-operative Movement made in his country. In 1874–5 he had the co-operation of the veteran Ukrainian labour leader, Dragomanov, in all this work. Poles and Ukrainians stood together, and from the pen of one of the latter, Ivan Franko, came a striking document, *The Socialist Catechism*, which was used even in Warsaw in spite of police efforts to suppress it. Nationalism was eschewed by all these men unless on the basis of the Socialist State. As a whole the ideology, whether in Warsaw, in Lwow, or in Cracow under the guidance of Daszynski, was Marxist and cosmopolitan.

But the influence of Limanowski was growing. 'Patriotism,' he wrote, 'is the most important bond that holds

societies together. To destroy this sentiment means the death of independence for the national organism, and ensures its being devoured by other nations around it.' He found no clash between this bond and Socialism. Both were designed to put an end to economic bondage of every kind, both stood for the idea of equality, and for the respecting of human personality. 'For the Poles the issue of independence remains the most vital of all.' In his correspondence with Dragomanov he was always stressing this point, even though he knew that it raised the vexed question of frontiers. This, he said, should be settled at the right time by those responsible. As a regular contributor to the *Clarion*, he endorsed its programme: 'the restoration of a free Poland . . . the transformation of its social and economic conditions, the nationalisation of the land, and public ownership of public utilities.' A thorough-going attitude, if you will, but one that had been thought out by no emotional or unbalanced agitator. Not only did he know at first hand the lot of the common man in Central Europe, but he was on the way to becoming one of the notable social and political historians of his time. It is a source of great satisfaction to all who knew him that he lived far beyond the usual span, reaching his hundredth year and seeing the realisation of a large part of what he was working for in his restored motherland, before dying a Senator of the Polish Republic in 1935.

Meanwhile vigorous steps were being taken to recover at home the ground lost after the execution of the pioneers of *Proletariat*. Five numbers of a small journal had appeared under that name, and they make thrilling reading for the student of a later generation. Industry continued to flourish, and the *laisser-faire* methods of unscrupulous employers achieved many triumphs. A not unfair picture of these can be read in Reymont's striking two-volume tale, *The Promised Land*, which describes the unruly conditions obtaining in the great textiles centre of Lodzh. The early 'nineties furnished occasions for outward manifestations of popular sentiment in the form of the

centenaries of the Constitution of the 3rd May 1791 and of the Rising under Kosciuszko in 1794.

The repressions practised by the Tsarist police, added to the news that kept coming over the border from Prussia about the policy being carried out by Bismarck, sufficed to rouse not only the class feelings of the Polish urban workers, but also their national devotion, to a fresh level of resolve. Side by side with the Poles of Christian blood worked their Jewish colleagues—men of high idealism and courage like Stanislaw Mendelsohn and Felix Perl. Alongside the loyalties of the masses to the 'international' there sounded more and more the note of national emancipation, and it soon became clear that sooner or later an open issue would be made on this point.

In the summer of 1892 there returned to Poland, after five years' exile in Siberia, the young Jozef Pilsudski. He had been banished along with other innocent victims in connection with the attack made on the life of the Tsar in 1887. He settled down in Wilno, not far from the site of his birth, and in which he had grown up. From now onward his energy and resolution came to make themselves felt more and more, not only in the shaping of policy, but also in the carrying out of the most daring projects. Born just after the disasters of 1863–4, he had grown up strongly under the influence of his mother, and nurtured by the tales of suffering that were universal at that time. Writing in 1903, he spoke of his childhood on a small estate as a country idyll, while his High School days in a Russian school in Wilno were 'a sort of penal servitude.' Looking back, he regarded all those years, for the reasons already described in these pages, as a time of heart-searching and reflection on the part of his nation. In his home, although they were forbidden, there had been nothing but Polish books. The cult of Napoleon survived, and with it the hatred of everything connected with Tsarist Russia. This last got more firmly planted in him than ever as a result of his years under Russian schoolmasters. What Zeromski, his contemporary, set out in

detail in *The Labours of Sisyphus*, though it applied to the province of Kielce, was equally true, or even truer, of the world of the north-east.

Banished from the university of Kharkov, where he was studying medicine, he became a mature man during the exile years. Remembering from student days the great trials in Warsaw, he had formed a sort of liking for Socialism and read some of its popular literature, e.g. Liebknecht's *In Defence of Truth*. He had even got through the first volume of *Das Kapital* in Russian, but found Marx too abstract. He could not accept the view that things rule humanity. In Siberia he had time to think, and he drew lessons for his whole life from the brutalities meted out by some of the keepers to their prisoners. By the time of his release he had formed a clear idea of what was needed for his subject country. He had also matured his attitude to Russia, one of unambiguous hostility. In this he may well have gone too far, but his views were shared by many Russians. The machinery of Tsardom, its baleful influence on the life of all its peoples and the danger arising from this for Russia's neighbours, were things which in his judgment must some day be done away with. Inside this general framework he had one resolve: Poland must be freed from the yoke of Tsarist Russia, whose flag was imperialist and whose guiding principle was the centralisation in a few hands of complete authority. For him, as for many others, even anarchy was preferable to that.

Once returned home, he was not long in finding plenty of compatriots who thought as he did. The years 1892–3 mark the founding in Paris of the Polish Socialist Party (henceforth known as P.P.S.) whose chief plank was the uniting of all labour elements in Poland in the cause of liberation. As the organ of the new society, there appeared at intervals, but in London, *The Dawn* (*Przedswit*), of which whole bundles were smuggled into Poland for the use of adherents. It was a somewhat stodgy, learned and argumentative journal, with Stanislaw Mendelsohn as

responsible editor. By visiting the homeland at the end of the year, Mendelsohn established closer contacts with the leaders there, and thanks to a mutual friend he and Pilsudski became acquainted in January 1893. From then on the latter was a regular contributor to the new paper. Constantly on the road, he visited all the main industrial centres of Central Poland, coming as Chairman of the Lithuanian Section, and represented his own area at a number of congresses.

It would be a mistake to think of the programme of this new Party as a well thought-out and final 'philosophy of life' to which all members subscribed as a matter of course, like subservient worshippers at a shrine. That has never been the Polish way; reversely, it might have been better had there been more of readiness to think the thoughts of other and more qualified people. Nevertheless, there was in it a measure of accepted theory about society and its redemption, set forth chiefly by the man best fitted for the task—Kazimierz Kraus. One is struck by the extent to which these principles correspond to what we call Fabianism in Britain. In contrast with many others, the P.P.S. did not consider that world revolution was an immediate aim, to be achieved by all possible means. It did, on the other hand, stress the needs of the masses, demanding an end of the reign of the profit motive as the main spring of the economic system; but even this goal was to be won by degrees. Step by step, the masses should extend their power, ultimately taking over the controls that had been used by the privileged few heretofore. Class-war as a means to this end was not proclaimed, seeing that all parts of the social organism are interdependent—witness the ancient Roman fable of the belly and the members. The mere massacre of 'tyrants' would not of itself mean a solution of the problem.

On the other hand, slavery in whatsoever form must be abolished as the enemy of human happiness. Especially the subjection of one people by another, since for any nation to prosper on the ruins of another, or at its expense, was

bad for both. (Note the contrast here to the root principles of *National Egoism*.) The admitted needs of all in respect to material things should and can be met. This involved a lowering, if not an end, of trade barriers, with a return to something like free exchange of goods. Every nation was to enjoy its own government, and belong to the fellowship of nations, each respecting in the other what it demanded for itself. The idea of a single world-state was not welcomed, since it would tend to jeopardise the natural differences, such as speech, traditions, faiths, etc. No conflict was found here with the admitted trends of modern science, whether the doctrine of development, or the variety of the species, or the inborn inequality of faculties. The splendour of the result thus to be achieved was noted: a structure that would be free from discord but at the same time would nurture the diversity that enriches the human heritage. Unity was the goal, not uniformity.

The obstacles to be overcome in getting these views to the attention of the Polish workers were enormous. Everything of the kind was illegal, the police were constantly on the alert, and reprisals of the cruellest kind were the order of the day. Those who undertook the colportage of literature were faced with every kind of danger and difficulty. The work was strenuous, and only the stoutest of body and spirit could achieve it. Not only the people to be reached but the emissaries themselves were mostly dependent for their daily bread on their employers, and these latter were as hostile as the authorities. The envoy then might find himself suddenly faced with a blank wall: the danger of betrayal was all around him, his life and his family were at stake. Even in Poland, where courage in a good cause has never been lacking, there were more people willing to try than there were competent for such perilous work. In the sequel a major part of the work was done by heroic and resourceful women; but everyone was faced by the lack of material resources. Money is a power, and these people had little even for their daily bread.

Pilsudski found an undaunted helper in the person of Kazimierz Pietkiewicz, and when he was arrested his place was taken by the future President of Poland, Stanislaw Wojciechowski. The latter was to make himself an everlasting name by his success in building up the Co-operative Movement as not only an economic but also a social and cultural force in the country. With the help of the printed page, these and other leaders sought to keep alive the needful contacts with the textile workers in Lodzh, Zyrardow and Bialystok, the glass workers in Piotrkow, the foundrymen and miners of the Dombrova district, and many another smaller group—not to mention the growing numbers of urban workers in the capital. A good account of this pioneer service is to be found in the account given of it by Pilsudski, as published in English by Mr. Gillie, or in the more recent *Memoirs* of Madame Pilsudski.

The hazards were legion, and everyone recognised the need of founding a journal on Polish soil. This would do away with the difficulties of smuggling, and bring the whole project home more closely to the public. Early in 1894 a single sheet, *The Worker*, was issued in London, and in July of that year the first number of the celebrated *Robotnik* appeared, printed on a secret hand-press in a village not far from Wilno. Not many people believed that the series of this illegal journal would reach the stately number of thirty-six, spread over six years. Most of the work was done by Pilsudski himself. 'The whole nation suffers,' he wrote, 'but to whom am I to turn unless to you, the peasants and workers, who suffer most of all.'

No one can turn over the pages of this journal, of which but few copies have survived, without mingled feelings of curiosity as to its contents, and of reverence for the hands that produced it. One finds news of all kinds as to the toil and struggles of the working masses; articles on the general issues at stake; sharp criticism of the methods employed by the more unscrupulous of the employers; and plenty of fearless thinking on the question of national

liberties. Sooner or later every number got into the hands of the police, and their anger and chagrin grew as time went on at their inability to discover the source. As the annoyance of the Tsarist authorities grew, so did the pride of the publisher and the reader in the dimensions of the achievement.

A printing-press cannot be kept, like a fountain-pen, in the fold of one's waistcoat. Nor can it be worked as quietly as, let us say, even a sewing-machine. Being heavy and noisy, it is difficult to conceal. But the worse problem is the procuring of paper to feed it. This has to be purchased, and then delivered; and it must be done in quantities, and without exciting the suspicion of the seller, the carrier or the watchful police. Tons of paper are needed for thousands of numbers, even if they are only four pages in size. Then comes the task of distribution, since nothing has value unless it reaches the reader. For these reasons, and because such activities are more easily disguised in a busy city than elsewhere, the press was removed to Lodzh; and here, at long last, on the night of the 21st February 1900 and by a sheer accident, the whole enterprise was discovered by the police.

These last years of the old century were trying enough, but they laid good foundations. Alongside the work in the Russian provinces, which was wholly conspiratorial in character and in which a major crisis developed (to be described in a moment) there was no less important progress being made under the Habsburg rule. The conditions being here more favourable, political activities of a high order were possible both in the local community and in the Vienna Reichsrath. The rise of a Labour-Socialist movement was welcomed neither by the State, nor by the Church, nor by the ruling classes. At the same time, there was little or none of the police action to be met with on the Russian side of the border. Trade Unions became legal, and political clubs of the workers (if allowed in Vienna) could not be forbidden in Cracow or Lwow. They were not

welcome, since they savoured of godlessness, and were 'red'; but they had the right to exist. The Polish Social Democratic Party (named in line with the term used in the Reich or in German Austria) came into being in 1890. Before long its delegates appeared at international Congresses. Separated from the P.P.S. in the Russian provinces, it nevertheless remained in spiritual contact; like the latter, holding firmly to the demand for national liberation.

In connection with the events of 1897 a full-scale Socialist election campaign was possible, in which Daszynski proved his maturity as a leader. In parliament he was recognised from now onwards as a 'tribune of the people' worthy of any nation. In the 'Galician debates' he made Socialism, as Feldman puts it, 'the synonym for battle with all social injustice, with the ancient system of abuses and corruption connected with the aristocratic government of the country.' For this he had to pay the penalty of a whole series of summonses for libel and sedition, but this sort of treatment only gave him fresh opportunities of pursuing the enemy, and he used them to the full. In the matter of national emancipation he took up an attitude of reserve, accepting for the time being the federal system as it stood, and using the privileges granted by autonomy to the full.

As for the international Congresses, here too the chief work had to be done by Daszynski, although he was helped by others, e.g. Tadeusz Reger from Austrian Silesia (Teschen). Among the Poles in exile who served as delegates although cut off from the homeland were Stanislaw Grabski and Tytus Filipowicz, both of them destined to hold high office in a free Poland a generation later. The former was to edit the first Polish paper in the interests of Labour to be published in Berlin until he was ejected from the country. It was he who toward the very end of the decade, when the Boer War was stirring the minds of all nationalists in Europe, proposed openly the formation of armed forces abroad for the liberation of his country. The Socialist Party, he argued, should become

a national government, and organise a popular revolution. He estimated that half a million soldiers could be recruited for such an effort—to be directed, of course, against Tsardom. But the practical difficulties were obvious—whence was equipment to be had? Above all, what could infantry do without heavy weapons?

The fact that such a suggestion could be considered in Polish Socialist circles at that time, shows how far the leaders had departed from the class-war idea, and the doctrines of the International. The rupture had been in preparation for some time, and not all the members had come out of it on the national side. We must turn back for a moment and see what happened.

Already at the Zurich Congress of 1893 a fraction of the Polish labour leaders presented a report from Russian Poland in which they declared that the result of Realism was a complete surrender on the part of the 'bourgeoisie' to the attractions of money-making and 'a mess of pottage,' and an acceptance of the existing political order, signalised by the traditional 'altar and throne.' The only live opposition to this state of things was the Labour movement, and even this was being seduced from the true path of Marxian doctrine by people who mixed with their class loyalties a large measure of nationalism. Led by Roza Luksembourg and Julian Marchlewski (later famous as a member of the Bolshevist régime in the U.S.S.R.) this group proclaimed themselves as Polish Social Democracy, and did not cease to twit the P.P.S. group as being 'Social Patriots.' They declared themselves out-and-out for the international ideology, and based their position on a simon-pure form of dialectical materialism. According to the authors, the natural destiny of Poland had been fulfilled by the Partitions, and the only thing for the Polish workers of the Central Provinces was to work hand in hand with their Russian colleagues. *Tertium non datur.* This point of view was worked out by Mlle. Luksembourg in due course in her Ph.D. dissertation at the university of Zurich in 1898. Put simply, she argued that the industries of Central

Poland could not hope to exist without the Russian markets; *ergo* Poland should remain a part of Russia, indeed welcome complete absorption in that empire! 'Even the extremest fancy of a coffee-house politician,' she declared, 'cannot believe to-day that the independence of Poland could follow as the result of a war between Germany and Russia.'

Such a point of view, put forward by Polish delegates at an international Congress, could not do other than stir up friction. Daszynski relates his satisfaction at the help he found in combating it, notably from such a veteran as Victor Adler of Vienna. What concerns us more is the actual upshot in Polish labour circles at home. The position of the new Social Democracy was at once denounced as being more 'conciliationist' than the conciliators of the Realist camp. The breach was unfortunate, but it had a good side. More men and women than ever before had to ask themselves the question: What are the values we hold dearest? And they had to find an answer. As we have seen, the P.P.S. won out to this extent, that they maintained their hold over the majority of the workers, and, when the testing time came in 1904–5, they showed how ready they were for action.

Meanwhile, following the discovery of the *Robotnik* printing-press in 1900, Pilsudski was out of the picture for two years. Held in the Tenth Pavilion of the Citadel, he was felt by his friends to be a lost man. The story of how contact was established with him, of his feigning madness for months, of his transference to the asylum of St. Nicholas in Leningrad, and of his escape from this 'prison' with the help of Dr. Mazurkiewicz need not detain us here. During his absence gallant helpers got out the next number of *Robotnik*, just as if nothing had happened: of course in another place and with the help of a new press. But it is of interest that when in 1903 Pilsudski wrote of 'How I became a Socialist,' Roman Dmowski published an appreciation of it under the caption 'The History of a Noble Socialist' in his *All-Polish Review*. Distinguishing between

the genuine and the false kind of social crusader, he numbered Pilsudski with the first:

> 'In our social order, where strong characters are met with seldom, in which the capacity to devote oneself to an idea and to work for it day in and day out without fear of any danger, however great, is a great rarity, a figure like his must be considered an exception. For when a man of gentle and civilised temper and unusual intellectual calibre, a man who has demands to make on life, can condemn himself to live in constant unrest and peril, when he sticks to this in spite of years spent in Siberia, and still others spent in prison—all in order to serve a beloved idea, then everyone will agree that such a man is in every way a person of uncommon moral power.'

I have cited this passage, not so much because it was a generous tribute of a political leader to his firmest opponent, but because of its general implications. Nothing could show better how far the development of Polish democracy had gone than the emphasis on devotion to work as the mark of the new age. All kinds of it presented themselves to be done, and there were now to be found people ready to undertake it. They might differ and even cross one another's path—precisely what these two men were soon to do; but the cause drew them on. What is more, the end goal was the same.

We have seen already how these two main tendencies in public life were in conflict with one another. National Democracy stood for emancipation, but was more and more moving in the direction of complete 'conciliation,' resolved at all costs not to annoy or to oppose the Tsarist régime. Directly opposed to it was the mounting power of the Socialist-Labour Party, openly independentist in policy, and preparing for 'direct action' if and when necessary. The former were friendly to the Slavophile idea, and were later on to embrace it openly; the latter saw nothing in it but a veiled form of Panslavism, and

rejected it out of hand. The former had declared themselves anti-Semitic in theory and practice, while the P.P.S. was convinced of the moral evil inherent in anti-Jewish action, and numbered among its members very many adherents of the Mosaic faith. Finally, National Democracy was at least formally loyal to the Roman Catholic Church (although its opponents could not see any Christianity about National Egoism); while the Socialists did not like either institutional religion in general or the Catholic form of it in particular. The time was at hand when each of these tendencies would have to declare itself, and the issue between them would be clarified as never before.

In 1904 Russia found herself at war with Japan. Again, so it seemed to the Poles and the Finns, after a long time of waiting, opportunity was knocking at the door. Even if one did nothing else, a firm stand could be taken against the conscripting of Poles to fight someone else's battles on the far Manchurian plains. Under an assumed name, Pilsudski had come over from Galicia to the Russian side of the frontier, and he at once got his friends to work. In November, as the people poured out of church into Grzybow Square on Sunday the 13th, banners were produced, and a procession was formed to protest against conscription. It was fired on by the police, and eleven persons were killed. At last, after forty years, Poles were again active against the domination of an alien power, and the nation was moved at the thought. Two months later revolution broke out in Russia itself. At once the P.P.S. sounded a call for a general strike, issuing on the 27th January a manifesto that ended with the words: 'Down with the Tsar! Long live Independence! Long live Socialism!'

Anxious to seize the opportunity, Pilsudski set out for Tokio with his colleague Filipowicz; and on his arrival found Dmowski already there, determined to thwart any attempt to get a common policy between the two nations. The Japanese had little faith in anything the Poles might be able to do, and the mission failed. The envoys returned,

and Pilsudski began the organising of the campaign of partisan warfare that was to go on long after peace had been declared—the destroying of railway bridges, robbing of trains, the seizing of stores, etc. Unmoved by the promise of a Constitution for Russia, he was equally convinced of the futility of any Polish representation in the Duma. One may defend or condemn his strategy, but there is no denying that it did much to fire the imagination and rouse the slumbering sentiments of the people. For nearly half a century no one had dared to strike a blow for national freedom, and at last someone had come who lived to do just that kind of thing.

The way was not easy, nevertheless. The days of 1904–5 had settled the issue with the Roza Luksembourg group and in favour of the national thesis. But to all appearances the tactics of Dmowski were winning out, while the insurrectionist elements had completely failed. The nation was indeed stirred by the attacks on Russian official trains; but it was none the less vexed at whatever brought disorders or—reprisals. The Socialist congress in Lwow in January 1906 was divided, the autumn meeting in Vienna even more so. Endless debates—words, words, words! Led by Pilsudski, the more restless spirits broke away and turned to the practical task of training volunteers for future armed conflict—of course in the Austrian provinces, and with the tacit consent of the government. War with Russia was only a matter of time!

But it would not do to end this chapter on a note of romanticism or conspiracy. That was only one side of the picture. While these men were doing what seemed to be the work of the hour, others were engaged in no less important tasks. The rise of the Co-operative Movement in Poland will get brief attention later in these pages. Among its apostles was a thinker of international reputation, Edward Abramowski, whose mind ranged over the whole field of human symbiosis. He died in 1918, at forty; otherwise his work would have become better known in Western Europe. From his reflections on the need of his

people, and the prospects of the future, written in 1907, I quote the following:

> 'Democracy grows only where it has become the need of the masses. It appears as a reaction against absorption by the State; as a necessary defence of self-created institutions and of the people's organised economic and cultural interests against bureaucracy. . . .
>
> 'If the Swiss people defended their democratic order with such a logical stubbornness against the various demands of a central government, and if they succeeded in extending it to the farthest limits of political freedom, let us not forget that the defence of democracy in their case was the defence of their very existence. The political constitution which they created has for its broad foundation thousands of unions, groups, organisations: thousands of self-created agricultural, trade, labour, and cultural organisations; democratic customs—the customs of equality and respect for man, which are rooted in the whole civilisation of this people. . . .
>
> 'The Polish people do not even now possess such a culture. They are not a modern society organised in multiform groups and free unions. Even until recently they were no more than a loose collection of units passively awaiting reforms and expecting to be shown new channels of government in which they might direct their lives.'

Going on, he said that even the existing Parties were concerned above all to ask: 'What should we demand from the State?' 'All ideals bowed before the one State-Providence. It alone was to think and act for us. It was to feed, cure and protect us—and we called this "democracy."'

> 'In the course of politics of this kind everything could develop but not democracy. . . . Democracy requires a people that knows not only how to demand reforms from the State but also how to effect such reforms by means of its own institutions. . . . It requires strong

individualism and a full consciousness of the need to regulate one's own life as well as respect for the independence of others.

'The creation of democracy by society itself, the creation of its being, its inner strength, means both the salvation of life and the moral liberation of a people. . . . For it is the people themselves who create the conditions of their existence.'

These views of Abramowski seem on the surface to have asked of the Polish nation something which at that time it was unable to give. In actual fact much of what he wanted was already in the process of being born. What strikes the reader as so important is the uncanny way in which he foresaw the issues with which his nation, although he could not know it, was to be faced a decade later. We shall see in the sequel how well, and with what inadequacies, they rose to the occasion; and with what results.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEASANT MOVEMENT

ACCORDING to tradition, the first royal line in Poland—the Piasts, were of peasant stock. The most beloved sovereign of his time, coming nearly four centuries later, was called the 'King of the Peasants.' Not until much later still did what we know as serfdom become an accomplished fact in Eastern Europe, including Poland. In parts of the country, however, notably in the southern uplands and in the area north-east of Warsaw there remained an unbroken continuity of free peasantry (yeomanry), surviving through the ages.

Even after the introduction of the *corvée*, chiefly owing to an increased demand for labour for agricultural purposes, there was enough of a spirit of independence among the masses to provoke local *jacqueries*; just as there was enough of patriotism among them to make possible a general rising in the bad years (1654–60), resulting in the expulsion of the Swedes and the liberation of the country. We have seen how King Jan Casimir, impressed by this, made a pledge, alas! never kept, in the cathedral in Lwow, that he would see justice done to the brave villagers, at least as far as the restoration of the rights possessed by their forefathers.

During the hundred odd years that followed, ending in the Partitions, the lot of the rural workers was much the same in Poland as elsewhere in Europe, although conditions were in places extremely primitive. As pointed out in Chapter I, there were landlords who were brutal in their exploitation, and indifferent to the lot of their toilers; just as there were others who treated them reasonably well. There were also outstanding examples of denunciation of social injustice, conspicuous among them being King Stanislaw Leszczynski and Father Staszic. Those who have

heard that the social system prevailing alienated the serfs from their motherland would need to qualify this belief by recalling not only the valiant conduct shown by the villagers of Novosielce in the 17th century, but also the part they played in 1794. It was a Peasant Battalion which captured the battery of Russian field guns at Raclawice. True, their leader, Bartosz Glowacki, who has since become a national hero, was miserably rewarded at the time for his work; but one might venture the view that things would have been done differently had the insurrection been successful.

The majority of the landed squirearchy, right through these decades and well into the 19th century, were oblivious of the just claims of the rural workers, and unalterably opposed to their being elevated to the status of citizenship. The reproach therefore remains that the emancipation of the Polish serfs came from alien governments—from that of Prussia in 1809 and succeeding years, that of Austria in 1848, and that of Tsarist Russia in 1864. The consequences were thus bound to be less happy than they should have been. It was easy for agents of all three foreign powers to represent their governments as the kindly wardens of the oppressed, and as their defenders against class injustice. They did this assiduously, but without much profit. The story became current that in neither of the Risings of 1830–1 or of 1863 did the common people take any part, knowing that at best they would only achieve a change of masters! Recent investigations of the relevant military records have shown that this story is quite untrue: in the earlier Rising whole units of more than one army were peasants, and even in 1863 the number of villagers and artisans was considerable, although the recruiting and organising of the forces was lamentably poor. Even though he had suffered much under the hated *corvée*, the peasant was none the less a Pole and a Catholic—a fact that was soon to become apparent to the Tsarist agents engaged in efforts to convince him to the contrary.

The year 1846 had seen in the Austrian provinces one

of the few social revolts in Polish history accompanied with bloodshed: an outbreak of rioting and lawlessness on the part of the serfs, which brought death to many of the squires and the destruction of much property. Proofs were not lacking that it was the work of Austrian agents, who played on the misery and discontent of this most overcrowded part of the country. A feeling of horror went through the nation, and the forces of those pressing for radical measures of social reform were strengthened. We have already seen how the whole outlook of the nation underwent a change after 1863, so that not only the sense of justice but recognition of economic interest came to help on the work. Though not yet recognised as partners in society, the peasants had long since proved their worth for the national cause. Had it not been for their tenacity in clinging to their speech, their faith, and their soil, it may be doubted whether Poland could have survived as an independent nation. We shall see below how the literature of 1880–1914 recognised and attested this fact.

There were many reasons why the beginnings of organised action for self-help should have come in the Austrian provinces of Poland. For one thing, conditions there were hardest. Not only because of the relative poverty of the soil, from which an overcrowded population tried to wrest a bare living; but because from the time when in 1772 these lands came under the Habsburg domination, the centralising, paralysing policy known as 'Josefinism' (from the Emperor Josef II) settled like a blight on the landscape. Both in Prussia and in Russia things were much better, at least until after 1831. Oppression and exploitation went hand in hand with a studied programme of Germanisation—and the net result was 1846.

One special feature of this policy deserves mention, viz. the deliberate maintaining of Galicia, as it was called, as a sort of colonial possession, lying outside the more progressive because urbanised and industrialised parts of the Austrian half of the Monarchy, and meant to provide them with cheap food and raw materials. Lying beyond

the Moravian Gate, remote from the Danube, this naturally rich country could deliver the fruits of farm and forest, the salt and (later on) oil, as well as the meat, hides and other needed treasures—all at rock-bottom prices; in return for which that same remote land would pay dearly for such manufactured goods as it could afford to buy, often enough produced from its own raw materials.

In 1852 the Polish lands of Austria, though numbering one-fourth of the population, had only one-fortieth of the steam-engine power. Ten years later the railways came through, and things improved in one way—but the same policy went on. As a result, long before the end of the century Galicia was sending tens of thousands of families—Polish and Ukrainian, as emigrants overseas to Canada and the U.S.A., while every summer hundreds of thousands of people made their way to the Reich or to Moravia in order to earn a few pounds against the coming winter. The creation of home industries, related to and demanded by the local situation, would have stopped most of this. It would have kept the wanderers at home, have effected the 'processing' there which was handed over to outsiders, and so have built up the wealth of the community. The wealth of water-power waiting to be tapped in the whole line of the Carpathians would of itself have been a justification for getting something done.

The almost incredible thing is that almost nothing was done. For this the main fault must be laid at the door of the ruling classes of the Polish population: the landed aristocracy of the more or less 'blue blood,' who not only before the granting of autonomy in the 'sixties but even more afterwards revealed themselves as scarcely a whit better than their grandfathers of the 18th century. In striking contrast with their compatriots in Poznania, of whose example they could not but know, they insisted on keeping their monopoly of privilege, on holding firmly to the reins of government, of excluding the masses from any say in public affairs, and in throttling every move for a corporate action in the direction of economic and cultural

advancement. In their view, the masses were poor and ignorant because it was the will of Heaven. They argued against common schools because a little learning would do no good but a great deal of harm. Their one thought was for their own class interest: something that might have been more reasonable a century earlier, when the gentry represented at least 8 per cent. of the population, but as the stern critic, Stanislaw Szczepanowski, pointed out, was only ludicrous when they represented as now less than half of one per cent. of the whole.

All this did great harm to the national cause. During the century of direct Austrian rule the Emperors had posed as the protectors and friends of the under-dog. This was particularly the case with the young Franz Josef, who had succeeded his father on the wings of the emancipation edicts of 1848. From now onward the masses of common villagers everywhere acquired the description 'the emperor's fellows'; and this fact came very near to leading them away from their proper national loyalties than anything else.[1]

The Diet granted to Galicia in 1861 contained a very large proportion of peasant members, put there by a franchise system that counted on these men being a check on the national ambitions of the upper classes. Within a few years (1866) the latter had become so obedient to the claims of the dynasty, that this representation was not needed in the House, and it disappeared. Only by a laboured process was it restored a generation later.

The chief blame for this state of things was to be laid on the system of elementary schooling, such as it was. As late as 1898, the future peasant leader Wincenty Witos wrote

[1] 'In the summer of 1936 I visited a Hootsool (Hucul) farmhouse in the Eastern Carpathians, where over the door was one of those enamel group photographs of the Habsburg Family that were well known toward the end of the past century. It was still in its place, and I asked the old farmer whether he had still affection for the 'Kaiser.' The question was put somewhat differently by the friend who introduced me: 'Which was better, the Emperor that was, or the President of to-day?' The answer we got, after some reflection, was characteristic: 'Well, you see, the Emperor was a sort of daddy; while the President at best is a good uncle.'

with indignation of the kind of pabulum furnished in the class-rooms of his county to the village children—even though for a generation already the controls had been in Polish hands. 'The teacher tells them of China and of Japan, but he says little about Poland. . . .' The business of the school should be, he went on, to see that the lad leaves it 'a good Pole'; but in his village nothing of the kind was done. Beyond their names, Kosciuszko and Mickiewicz were complete strangers to the rising generation. In places things were better, depending on the initiative of the teacher; and the results for the community life had been striking; but there was too little of this. 'It is often the case that the older men, although they cannot read or write, are good patriots; while the young after years in school do not always even know that our motherland, Poland, exists.'

A year later he returned to the same theme, and told of a case where, some years back, a boy who was pasturing his mother's cow used to take a little book someone had given him and read it in the meadow. Some illiterate peasants were passing, and asked him to read to them. Glad of being suddenly so important, the boy began:

> 'Poland, our motherland, is in fetters: but we, her sons, will drive out her enemies, no matter what their names—whether Prussians, Russians or Austrians.'

He got no further. In wrath they fell on him with sticks, and left him unconscious until his mother came to look for him. It should be added that he survived, grew to be a man, and became a most useful citizen in his community.

Such, more or less, was the condition of things when the great-hearted parish priest, Father Stanislaw Stojalowski, decided in the early 'seventies to devote all his energies to the cause of material and spiritual uplift of his people. It was a brave thing to do, for every existing power was against him. On the one hand, as is generally the case, many of those who most needed his help were quite innocent of interest in what he wanted to do. Such is the

force of social inertia. On the other, both Church and State authorities opposed all his plans bitterly, regarding him as a sower of discord and unrest, and even of sedition. Driven from his living, he was forced to defend himself in the courts, thereby losing all his money. Then he did imprudent things, and brought more serious trouble both on himself and the cause. Nevertheless, long before his death in 1911, he had seen a start made with new things, and his name will be remembered among the pioneers of the new age in Poland.

Samples of the attitudes taken to the whole issue by the aristocratic leaders of Galicia can be found in the second volume of Swientochowski's *History of the Polish Peasants*. One of them had told the Czech politician Rieger in the 'sixties the following:

> 'The peasant is an enemy of us and of his country. We must be careful in the matter of spreading enlightenment among the common people.'

In vain did the progressively minded Dr. Dietl of Cracow, one of the reformers of the ancient university, seek to persuade the provincial Diet that money spent on schools was the best possible investment. The budget for education was pathetic, and continued to be so for years to come. In the middle 'eighties, when over 3,000 communes were still without schools, the same reactionaries protested 'that elementary schools are of no benefit to us,' and declined to add a tiny supplement to the tax-bill for the building of them. The old arguments were trotted out about the danger of an overplus of intelligentsia, the ferment that would result if the workers got to take an interest in anything beyond the tilling of the soil, the tending of their cattle, etc. There were already enough teachers; and as for doing anything to improve their lot—miserable as it was—it could not be thought of. Finally, in 1887 the idea of compulsory schooling was condemned by one speaker in the interests of the parents. They, he said, had the first rights over their children, and no one should interfere with them.

'The child of the peasant, if sent to school, would lose his simplicity, while not attaining civilisation: he would lose his inborn prudence, but without acquiring knowledge; and unfortunately he would also lose his faith.'

What these well-meaning gentlemen did not realise was the practical consequence of all this for the countryside. In their own ignorance, they preferred to go on as before: but they were suddenly brought up short by the publication in 1888 of a book, *The Misery of Galicia*, by the daring and able mining engineer and publicist, Stanislaw Szczepanowski: which showed that the productive power of the Galician peasant was only one-third that of Belgium. A few figures, not necessarily his, will be sufficient to show what conditions were in the rural communities of Southern Poland, when compared with the much better situated province of Bohemia just to the west.

With a far smaller population, Bohemia had twice as many school class-rooms as Galicia. In the former there were less than 200 children without school facilities, in Galicia over a quarter of a million. In Bohemia the percentage of illiteracy, above six years of age, was under five, in Galicia it was over sixty. Or, to take the field of public health. In Bohemia there was a doctor to every 2,500 inhabitants, in Galicia to every 5,100; a hospital bed for every 691, as against 1,264 in Galicia. The level of law-breaking and the incidence of alcoholism were correspondingly high. To quote Szczepanowski:

'Our peasant was emancipated and got his land; but he remained ignorant, ragged, poor and helpless. . . . When a teacher appeared in a village, he had to get the headman to beg for him a florin from each of the cottagers as a salary. It was fortunate if in a community one man could be found who could read and write. . . . The cottages were dirty and stuffy, and none of them had a floor, or a chimney to carry off the smoke. No

wonder that people turned to vodka, "to drown the worm."'

Such extremes were, of course, not to be found everywhere. What is more, even as the book appeared, striking changes were on the way. No better picture of these, and of what they led to, could be desired than that given in his life story by Jan Slomka, village mayor of Dzikow, near Tarnobrzeg. Born in serfdom, he lived to see his country set free at the end of 1918, and even to share in some of the privileges that followed.[1]

What does not come out in this book, because the Tarnowskis were other-minded, was the ignorance, and consequent 'bliss' of many in high position, who should have known better. Father Badeni recorded in the 'nineties what one such public figure said to him: 'No agitation will disturb us. The masses are content and peaceful: they work as of old in house and field, and praise their God!' Fortunately there were others who knew better, and who watched while what had been a peaceful mill-pond, as one man wrote, was being transformed into a turbulent river.

Father Stojalowski founded his first newspaper for the villagers in 1875. From the outset he declared war on all who exploited and persecuted the rural workers. Taking what was going on in Poznania as a model, he founded a Union of Farmers' Circles, delegates of which he got together at a Congress in 1877 in Lwow. This action was regarded by the aristocracy and the clergy as a direct challenge to all authority. The Father was a devoted son of the Church and a true shepherd of souls, but that could not save him. In the eyes of his superiors he sinned in taking his task too much to heart, and himself too seriously. As Wickham Steed showed so clearly in *The Hapsburg Monarchy*, published in 1913, the Church in the Dual Monarchy was meant to be an instrument for social control, a sort of department of state, but little more. Father Stojalowski found himself faced by this tradition, a thing

[1] *From Serfdom to Civilisation—the Autobiography of a Village Mayor*, Minerva Press, London, 1941.

of which I was to hear Protestant pastors complain of a generation later in Austrian Silesia.

He was condemned from the pulpit and in the Press; he was deprived of his parish, and forbidden to say Mass in private chapels. Finally, a malediction was laid on by the Bishops, and he was eleven times thrown into prison. Yet he held to his course; the only charge that was ever proved against him being that of incurring more financial responsibilities than he seemed to be able to carry. This was not surprising, in view of the nature and scope of his crusade, and of the steps taken to ruin his good name. One false step he did take, after long provocation. As a correspondent, he published materials in a Warsaw weekly, which was known to be subsidised by the Russians. For this he was condemned and not only by his opponents—undoubtedly with justice. But this transgression cannot change the fact that 'he was the chief creator of the movement that shook the peasant masses' as Swientochowski puts it, 'and brought to the surface the currents and forces that have changed the visage of our society.'

In 1909 his followers formed the National Peasant Union, as a wing of the National Democratic Party; and over his grave two years later his younger colleague Witos pronounced a worthy tribute and farewell. By then the movement, though not anti-religious, had accepted the principle of lay leadership.

* * * * *

Exactly ten years after the parish priest began his work, another start was made on the same thorny path, this time by people working in the spirit of Socialism. Boleslaw Wyslouch and his wife Maria settled in Lwow, and began to publish *The Social Review*. Expelled from the university of St. Petersburg for his patriotism, Wyslouch had come to Warsaw early in the 'eighties, and was involved along with Warynski in the famous trials for sedition already described. By some means he escaped from prison, and found his way to safety in Austrian Poland. In 1886 he

printed a flaming protest in his journal against both the tyranny of the existing political order, and the apathy of so many people in the face of it all. One thing only, in his view, gave promise of a better future, viz. the awakening of the common people, in particular the younger generation, to the situation. The education of these potential leaders, in particular those coming from the countryside, became from now onward his chief concern.

The year 1886 was, as we know, an important one for the whole Polish question. Wyslouch was in touch with the men who founded *Glos* in Warsaw, just as he kept in touch with the people who were soon to create abroad the Polish League; but he did not belong among them, he was rather too much of a radical. He concentrated his attention on the nearer task, and soon had gathered a few helpers, best known of them was Jakob Bojko, in the pursuance of his task. In 1889 there began to appear a paper for the villagers, called *The People's Friend.*

It soon became clear, however, that Wyslouch did not know the language of the simple masses. We should say to-day that his paper was 'highbrow.' Its level and tone were not adapted to the reader, and the fact that its publishers either ignored the religious factor or took up an attitude of criticism toward the Church made the outlook uncertain. Soon, however, a change came, when a brilliant young publicist joined the group, who was able to supply precisely what was missing. Jan Stapinski had all the gifts of the popular agitator, and as much zeal for the cause as Father Stojalowski himself. Unfortunately, his ambition was greater than his good sense or his integrity; and before long projects were launched that were to bring a good deal of trouble on the movement.

In 1894, in connection with the Centenary Exposition in Lwow, the group held a Congress of Peasants in that city; and this led in the following year to the forming of the Populist Party. The path was not easy, for the same obstacles blocked it as had been faced by Stojalowski. Even worse ones, for the new movement was secular, and

challenged the ecclesiastical tradition just as strongly as the political. The tide was in its favour, however, for in March 1896 there appeared in *The Friend* the first of many letters and articles from the pen of another rising champion of the common people, Wincenty Witos.

Born in 1874, the son of a small farmer, he had pastured geese and cattle as a boy, and never known more than the slenderest of opportunities for schooling. No one knew better than he how much his fellows needed guidance and leadership, if they were to attain a position of partnership in the social and political order. Ground down by poverty, their worst misfortune was listlessness born of ignorance. Treated as wards both by the State authorities and by the clergy, they were at the mercy of the Jewish middleman in all their economic relationships: never allowed to grow up, they had nothing for it but to take things into their own hands, and make the power of their numbers felt by means of organised self-help.

'The peasants have no luck with their leadership,' he remarked on one occasion, having in mind the mistakes of Stapinski. At last there appeared a man of themselves, who came from the poorest conditions of Central Galicia: a man of energy and vision, completely self-made and of unusual skill in winning people. In 1905 he was to be elected to the County Council of Tarnow, three years later to the Provincial Diet in Lwow, and in 1911 to the Reichsrath in Vienna. In 1920 he was to become Prime Minister of a free and independent Poland.

Not the man, but rather his work interests us here; yet it is fitting to say that the story of his rise 'from log-cabin to White House,' even if it stood alone, would be a proof that the too widely prevalent notions about Poland as a country where only 'the quality' have counted is nonsense. He was not a Lincoln, but in the greater freedom of the new world he might have been. Still alive, as we hope, it is too soon to decide whether he can be called 'great' or not. Certain it is, however, that he has made a signal contribution to the life of his nation. To his eternal credit, he

never descended to demagogism: and, even when unjustly treated by rival leaders, he never contemplated unconstitutional measures of revenge.

Nothing of all this could be foreseen by the man who was writing to *The People's Friend* in the early years of the century on a variety of subjects, including the danger of depending on the clergy for any real leadership. But he learned much from his work as county councillor, and when he was elected to the Diet in 1908 by an overwhelming majority, he found himself a member of the second largest group in the House. Both in September and in the following month he took part in the debates, each time raising the still burning question of more and better schools for the masses. Not only was the number of schools quite inadequate, but the teaching programme was still far from satisfactory. In his second speech, he emphasised the outstanding position of agriculture in the province, and pleaded for vocational schools in this field.

A year later he made a telling indictment of the abuse of alcoholism in the country, and the uses made of the village pub as a source of taxation. In a polemic with supporters of the system he derided the notion that the tavern-keeper was rendering a social service, and fulfilling a social mission! His quarrel with it all was based both on economic and on ethical grounds. No one knew better than he the extent of depravity sown by excessive drinking in his own and neighbouring parts of Central Europe.

The struggle was not easy, even after the granting of manhood suffrage in Austrian lands gave the masses a chance to make their presence felt in the legislature. So stubborn was the opposition of the privileged classes that even the titled Cracow professor, Stanislaw Tarnowski, warned his fellows that a social process was under way which, if they were not careful, would fulfil itself 'without them, in spite of them, and against them.' Had these gentlemen shown something of the spirit of their compatriots in Poznania many things would have been different. One of the reasons why they did not was their relation to the government in

Vienna. The Austrian connection gave the Poles many advantages, but in presenting them with no challenge to a life-and-death struggle, it left too many people satisfied with things as they were, and ready to do nothing about the future. As we shall see, Witos and his group had no patience with this point of view.

To the casual observer the darkest side of the situation was the poverty of the villagers, but to all who knew the facts there was something worse—their ignorance. For that reason the constant theme of his writings before and after the turn of the century was education. Without it, he said, all the Farmers' Circles and Agricultural Societies in the world had only a paper value. As one observer said, they gave the impression of a colossus on feet of clay. Certain superficial needs were served, but the root of the evil remained. It was, therefore, a promise of new things when, by way of celebrating the centenary of the Constitution of May 1791, on the initiative of the poet, Adam Asnyk, a champion of the democratic tradition, steps were taken to found in Cracow the Society of Village Schools (T.S.L.). This organisation became a union of local units, with a Governing Body in charge, which set itself to found schools wherever they were needed—elementary, secondary, vocational and teacher training. In addition it took up the problem of adult education, the producing and publishing of school-books and other materials, and even the founding of reading-rooms and museums. In one year 33 units came into being, with 5,000 members; and by 1901 there were nearly 300 units with 30,000 members. The reproach of Austrian Poland was at last being done away. The quality of work done could compare with that of any neighbouring country, and the benefit to the nation was enormous. The Society received a grant from the Diet, it had many substantial gifts—even from Poles in America, and on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the battle of Tannenberg (1910) a special appeal was made which brought in over a million gold francs.

To these very real gains in cultural matters must be

added significant progress in the field of material well-being. Of lasting value for the common people was the network of Savings and Loan Banks initiated and guided by Dr. Stefczyk, which served the masses in a similar, though not so effectual way as the more comprehensive Co-operatives in Poznania. Providing both short- and long-term loans to the needy farmer at a reasonable rate of interest, they reinforced the whole movement for better agriculture, as well as encouraging thrift, and bridging the hitherto fatal gap between the village and the towns. Along with their development went that of local Agricultural Societies, designed to improve the quality of tillage, to encourage dairying, to raise the standard of livestock, and even to do much for housing, hygiene and elementary schooling in methods of farming. With all this went, as a natural consequence, an awakening of the peasant's interest in and appraisal of his role as a citizen, even if only as a taxpayer in his own community. In the sequel the villages of southern Poland were to provide an increasing number of young men and women who went on to High School and University, and were ready to undertake responsible positions when liberty came in 1918.[1]

Such changes were bound to bring great encouragement to the leaders of the Peasant Movement. In 1911 Witos was elected to represent his county in the Reichsrath in Vienna. Thanks to the new suffrage, the province of Galicia had 106 seats in the Imperial Parliament, out of 516. Of these about 70 were held by Poles, 27 were Ukrainian, and a few were Jewish. The Populist group, led by Witos, had 23 mandates. One of the first public appearances of

[1] A whole chapter could be devoted to the contribution made in the closing years of the old century by the author of *The Misery of Galicia*, the mining engineer Stanislaw Szczepanowski, already referred to above. Having spent years in France, and even more time in London (where he worked in the India Office as a regular official), he could distinguish clearly between appearance and reality. Both in his pioneering of the oil industry in the Eastern Carpathians and in his work as a deputy to the Reichsrath, as well as in his writings on public questions, he set a standard that was unique in the Poland of his day. He was throughout a loyal member of the Democratic Party (cp. *supr.*, p. 56).

the leader, after his election to the Reichsrath, was at the graveside of the veteran Father Stojalowski. Although he had never agreed with many of his activities, the speaker paid a warm tribute to the deceased pioneer: 'he wrought an invention no one had ever wrought before—he awakened the people!'

Both because of his inborn convictions and of the traditional behaviour of the Conservatives, the peasant leader from the beginning of his public career held high the banner of national independence. True, he regarded the social issue—enlightenment and well-being for the masses, both Polish and Ukrainian, as his main concern; but he had no use whatever for the Triple Loyalty as a watchword. When in 1913 a breach came with Stapinski over the policy of the Governor, Dr. Bobrzynski, and Witos was made Chairman of those who broke away, with Bojko as his deputy, a clearing of the air resulted. The new Group numbered 18 in the Diet, and among its members was the painter, Wlodzimierz Tetmayer, colleague of Wyspianski and later Senator of the restored Poland. A new journal *Piast* was founded in Cracow, which was destined to play a notable role in the years to come.

The days were full of hope, but also of anxiety. Of hope, because the Christian peoples of the Balkans were at last freeing themselves from the Turkish yoke: of anxiety, as Witos saw it, because the Polish nation looked on and did nothing. In a New Year's message in 1914 he referred to the damage done in parts of Galicia by serious floods during the past year, and ventured a hope that the New Year would bring better things. Two months later, in a memorable speech in the Diet he appealed for an end of 'the three orientations' (Austrian, Russian and Prussian), and the birth of a single national outlook on life. But he was under no illusions as to the difficulties in the way. Neither the aristocracy nor even the townsmen, in his view, could be depended on. 'There remains only the people.' If they were once enlightened and well-to-do,

they would be 'a power'—the phrase echoed the famous line of Wyspianski.

When the storm of war burst over Central Europe in August 1914 the work of forty years had done much to prepare the masses of southern Poland for the ordeal. As yet little had been done, or could be done, to reach the peasants under Tsarist rule (we shall see in a moment how this was now to be changed), but it meant volumes for the cause that the villagers of Galicia—now to be the scene of great battles between the Austrian and Russian armies—knew what they were and where they owed their allegiance as few of their fathers had known it. At the end of August Witos put the matter thus in *Piast*:

> 'The frightful hurricane of war that involves almost the whole of Europe has not passed us by. Battles are on on Polish soil and for Polish soil, battles such as the world has never seen. For our nation too there has come that long-awaited and dreamed-of hour—the hope of recovering liberty for our motherland. That hour has found complete recognition in our midst. . . .'

The Populist Party gave its unqualified support to the military action being undertaken by the Legions, under the leadership of Pilsudski. Many sons of villagers volunteered for service in the ranks, and Witos did what he could to enlighten them as to the greatness of their task. The summer of 1915 brought its reward, when the Russian armies were driven out of Poland, and the southern half of the one-time Russian provinces passed under Austrian occupation. But even this time of triumph brought its horrors. The army leaders of the Central Powers listened to the tales told them by all kinds of people of treachery on the part of villagers; and there were gallows set up in every county on which innocent peasants met their death. Witos had an opportunity, at long last, on 1st July 1917 of making his maiden speech in a plenary session of the Reichsrath; and he spoke plainly of what this meant for a nation which had always been loyal to the Austrian

Crown. His picture of the sufferings of his people under the injustice of requisitions and other abuses was not forgotten by those who heard it.

Not that his position was easy, for among his enemies were those of his own nation. The Polish Club in Vienna parliament was still dominated by the aristocrats of the Conservative Party, who continued to pin their faith to the Habsburg dynasty. They, and many others, had been startled by the action taken at the end of May by the meeting of the Populist Group in Cracow. Here, a resolution moved by Wlodzimierz Tetmayer demanding a united and liberated Poland with an outlet to the sea had been passed by acclamation. This echo of Wilson's proposal was followed up at the end of August by Witos himself in an article in the Party journal, *Piast*, in which he defended the right of self-determination of peoples as something given them by nature, and urged his followers to stand together firmly for its realisation. Six months later, in the same journal, he branded the terms of the Treaty of Brest Litowsk, which had disposed of Polish lands without allowing the Poles to sit at the council table. Count Czernin's plan for 'a Peace of Bread'—the latter to come from the rich cornfields of the Ukraine, including the cession of the province of Chelm, lying west of the Bug river, to the proposed Ukrainian state.

Having followed the growth of the Peasant Movement in the Austrian provinces, it now remains for us to show briefly how something analogous had come into being in the Congress Kingdom.

Here conditions were not of the kind to encourage any peasant action for political ends until the creation of the Duma as a result of the Revolution of 1905. Nevertheless, agents of the Labour-Socialist movement had been at work for years in rural communities; and in 1905 two organised peasant political groups came into being, one of which published as its organ, *The Dawning*, until it was shut down by the Tsarist police. Steady progress was

made during the decade, though in a somewhat restricted area, attention being paid to all three fields of interest—political, economic and cultural. When the Russian armies were driven out in August 1915, a more than three-year period ensued during which the German authorities wooed the Polish peasant as best they knew. Late that autumn three existing Peasant Groups came together to form what was later to be known as 'Liberation'—the radical Peasant Party of the restored Polish republic.

A clue to the situation existing in the Central Provinces can be found in the views set out for his military chief, Graf von Beseler, by the famous German 'expert' on Slav questions, Herr George Cleinow (author of the two-volume work, *Die Zukunft Polens*, published in Leipzig, 1914). The essence of it is contained in this passage:

> 'We must pay attention only to the Polish intelligentsia —mobile, sensitive, easily subject to influences and atmosphere, but making itself stand out by a certain patriotism. The common people are passive and incompetent; one need think of them only as those who can serve to produce the needed foodstuffs for the fighting forces.'

Time was to show that this view, like so many other German judgments in regard to their neighbours, was wide of the mark: was in fact largely based on wishful thinking. What had been true at the end of the old century had changed completely by 1914.

True, it was clear to the Germans how glad the masses were to be rid of the hateful Tsarist police régime; and they made much of their role of 'liberators.' But they were soon to discover that the Polish peasant liked their methods not a whit more than he had liked those of pre-war days, and that he was a stubborn fellow the moment his vital interests were endangered. In the very first proclamation put out by the veteran leader, Nocznicki, satisfaction at getting free from Tsardom was followed by this statement: 'Poland must be a free and independent state, with its own legis-

lature, government and army. It is up to us to make her such.'

The chance soon came for the farmers to show what they were made of. By way of preparing the ground for the creation of a Polish army under German command, the authorities called a congress of Peasant representatives in the Philharmonic Hall in Warsaw. They hoped to get a resolution passed that would further the task of recruiting men to serve in France. Polish town circles, notably the student leaders, were alarmed. Something should be done to obstruct these plans, otherwise the simple peasants might be taken in! The fears were quite ungrounded. When approached by those concerned, the Peasant leaders smiled. 'You seem not to know us. Of course we are glad to come to Warsaw in our Sunday best, and to parade the streets with our home-made banners. It gives us a chance to shout for independence!'

When the day came, the Germans made an effort to get at least a portion of those who came to the capital to accept an invitation to the Royal Castle for vodka and sandwiches. Von Beseler himself would act as host. The answer given by the peasants was short: 'Tell the General that none of us will come to his party; and that the countryside will not give him the troops for his army. Our blood belongs to a Polish government, but never to occupying powers—here to-day, but gone to-morrow!'

But the peasants did more than simply show passive resistance. The local groups began to take things into their own hands, and quicken the pace of self-organisation far beyond anything known in peacetime. They formed local militia. Many of them joined the secret P.O.W., i.e. the Polish Army Organisation. They bent their energies to improve and greatly to extend the scope of the Co-operatives—both buying and selling agencies, which had just begun to take root before the war as a measure of self-defence against the hated middleman. They even created local industrial units for the producing of farm machinery and other necessities; and of course they

organised every possible obstruction for the piratical requisitioning being carried on by the German occupants in the interests of their war machine. When the Germans succeeded in getting one section of the Polish middle and upper classes (the 'activists') to collaborate with them in various administrative activities, e.g. in the founding of schools and the organising of local law-courts, the peasants accepted these advantages gladly, but only dug themselves in for sterner resistance. Above all, they resented the robbing of the country by the military machine to feed the cities of the Reich.

As it turned out, even the activists did some useful service, and the peasants profited with the rest of the nation. Take the field of elementary schools. On the tiny substructure of pre-war days, when a few training colleges, carried on in Russian, gave some hundreds of teachers yearly some sort of education for their life-work, there was formed a Polish Teachers' Union, mostly from sons and daughters of the villages, which soon numbered 8,000 members. Even before independence came at the end of 1918 these people had made a signal contribution to the future national school system. Thousands of villages got schools for the first time, other thousands doubled and trebled their capacity. A farmer who had been evacuated from the Lublin district to Russia, returned home in 1918, and could scarcely believe his eyes. 'The *folk* have awakened from a long sleep,' he wrote. 'Progress can be seen on all sides.'

The temper of this growing Peasant Movement was seen in its attitude to the ever-present issue of land reform. The leaders took a radical view: the land should be the property of those who tilled it and never of absentee landlords. A state programme for the parcellation of all remaining big estates was demanded, the ideal being a 15-acre holding, the property of the tiller. Credits should then be provided from public sources, and marketing facilities organised in the interests of all. Finally, middle and higher schools of agriculture, in which the youth of

both sexes would learn how to farm better, and at the same time how to play their part in society more intelligently. Only a doubling of the productive capacity of the land could hope to take care of the problem of overpopulation already felt, and later on to become a serious issue for the nation.

It is to the credit of the peasants of the one-time Russian provinces that they made the best of their opportunities during the war years in order to win experience in dealing with their own affairs, and to organise plans for the future. For the most part they had to depend on the guidance given them by Labour-Socialist agents working in their midst; with the result that their whole attitude toward human institutions was other than that of the older Peasant Movement on the Austrian side of the border. Though younger in experience, the Liberation Group entered the years of independence at the end of 1918 with considerable forces, and a dynamic to be reckoned with. Best known of their leaders was the publicist and founder of Co-operatives, Stanislaw Thugutt, destined to be a member of the first Polish Cabinet. Others associated with the organisation were MM. Poniatowski and Koscialkowski, both of whom will be heard of again as Ministers in the 'thirties, and the future editor of the official *Polish Gazette*, M. Miedzinski. These men went over to the new Party founded in 1927; an action which in effect meant a return to their original political home.[1]

We shall see below how unfortunate it was for the country that the two Peasant Groups developed on such diverse lines, and so were not able to show a united front in political life until their consolidation in the Populist Party in 1931.

[1] There is ground for the view that they had been 'placed' as leaders in the Peasant ranks by Pilsudski, and were in part responsible for the radicalism of the 'Liberation' people which caused much trouble later.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEWER LITERATURE

THE rhymes one learns as an infant, the verses learned at school and the books one reads in after life have a large part in the making of one's pattern of living. The literature of any generation, if it gets an appreciative public, is a factor of the first importance for the determining of the national character. For this reason we cannot overlook the role of letters, in particular of that most-read form of writing, the novel, in the social process going on during the 19th century. Least of all in Poland, where, almost more than in any other country in Europe, literature was a major form of expression, and at the same time one of the bulwarks of the national tradition.

It can hardly be denied that the prevailing tone of the great romantic age of the early half of the century, whether in poetry or in prose, was aristocratic. Not, of course, in any but the best sense of that term. There are two reasons for this. Letters were chiefly the work of men who belonged to the gentry (most of them, it is true, to the lesser gentry rather than to the propertied, leisured class). Secondly, the content and spirit of most writing was highly intellectual, and hence aristocratic in the demands it made on the reader. There was a full measure of understanding of the social problem—I can recall no instance of antagonism to, or of a sense of, superiority over the commons; but it was more or less taken for granted that every man is born to his station, and that, like St. Paul, one does well to be content with it. A striking exception was the later Mickiewicz, who, as editor of the *Tribune des Peuples* in Paris, became the apostle of extreme egalitarianism; while Slowacki also broke for the most part with the older tradition.

In the main some degree of education was necessary for

the reading, better said the study, of the works of the three Great Bards—Mickiewicz, Krasinski and Slowacki; with the result that until the creation of a national school system in our own day the fraction of the nation capable of appreciating it was limited. Long ago, nevertheless, there were to be found in the working classes individuals who knew these poets and understood them; and in some cases loved them more than their children have learned to love them from their classes in High School! One reason for this is, of course, that the thoughts of a nation in bondage seem rather out of date when it has won back its freedom; with the result that the youth growing up in the 'twenties looked at the work of the 'masters' as something rather far away, and in a sense unreal. To the majority of these the more difficult flights of philosophical and religious speculation remained a closed book, and it may be said that Slowacki's *The King Spirit* or Cieszkowski's prose masterpiece, *Our Father*, are known only in name.

In this respect things were not different in Poland from, let us say, in France or even in Britain. It is even possible that a fair proportion of the lyrics and ballads of the Polish romantic writers did find their way 'under the peasant's roof,' to use the famous phrase of Mickiewicz; particularly those of less intellectually fastidious men like Niemcewicz, or Pol, or Lenartowicz. It is certainly true that the 'folk motif' was strongly in evidence in the work of some of the greatest. How could it not be, when among the chief inspirers of the whole Romantic revolt was Herder, not to mention the poet-peasant Burns?

A link with the realism to come can be seen in the slender but exquisite legacy left behind by that restless searcher for the enigma of life, Cyprian Norwid. Leaving his troubled country in the 'forties, at the age of twenty-one, he never saw it again. Gifted both as a painter and a sculptor, he studied in Italy, then sought escape from an unhappy love affair in the New World, and finally returned to live—and die—in poverty in Paris. Unable to accept the Romantic view of the world and of the arts, he worked

out his own, far ahead of its time, curiously akin to that of Morris and Ruskin. One of his lines gives us the clue:

'The simple people is the greatest poet!'

A striking mark of the Romanticist's view of life was the exaltation of the individualist, the egocentric. The bard was important both to himself and his nation in that he was a possible Saviour! To Norwid this kind of thing was meaningless. Not the single man, but the group, the race, 'humanity' was what really counted; just as not the flight of feeling or imagination of the single soul but rather the work, the labour of the common man was the supreme value in life. Labour had been laid on man as a penalty for transgression, and he had come to hate it. This was all wrong. Work under these circumstances might produce the useful; but only work joined to love, work done for the love of it, could produce the one thing worth having—the beautiful. Norwid objected to the distinguishing of the artisan from the artist. Such things were a consequence of an enslaved society; in a free world there would be no such distinction. There the peasant who made house utensils out of wood, or shaped folk-pottery (no less than the master-painter or sculptor) would be a 'poet' in the generic sense of the word; and what he produced would be recognised as part of the national patrimony. It may be added that we have here the germ of the idea realised in life by the painters of Young Poland at the end of the century, e.g. Wyczolkowski, and worked out by Wyspianski in *Liberation*.

This 'ennobling' of the living and creating of the common man became the master passion of the novelists of the age of Realism. They made man and his surroundings the prevailing theme of their writing. This can be seen in the women novelists, Elizabeth Orzeszkowa and Marja Rodziewiczowna, the works of Boleslaw Prus, and in the younger Sienkiewicz. It was the main interest of the somewhat later masters of the novel, Wladislaw Reymont and Stefan Zeromski, not to forget the poetess, Marja

Konopnicka. Reversely, the two supreme poets of the pre-1914 generation, Jan Kasprowicz and Stanislaw Wyspianski, who were both born in the humblest of homes, became aristocrats of the mind and spirit, but never forgot the rock from which they were hewn. The one was the son of a small farmer in Poznania, the other of a humble townsman of Cracow. In their work one sees achieved the hopes and dreams of Norwid.

Orzeszkowa was as much an emancipated woman as George Eliot. She recognised none of the traditional bonds linking the past with the future save that of the farmer's attachment to his land, and to the tilling of that land. Her tales of the 'dirt farmers' ' region on the banks of the river Niemen, a life that was never easy and often tragic, have a power and a pathos that struck a new note in Polish letters. So much was Kasprowicz moved by the story, *The Boor*, that he sent one of his own works to the author with the laconic but eloquent dedication, 'To the Author of *The Boor* (signed) A Boor.' For her the peasants are the '*bene nati*'—they, not those usually so-named, are the 'well-born.' And in later life, living in the town of Grodno, she did for the neglected and still unenlightened Jewish urban population the same service as she had done earlier for the farmer.

Less grim, because warmer, is the delineation of the simple owner of his homestead in the countryside to the south-east of the Niemen valley and nearer to the Prypiet marshlands as we see it in the tales of Rodziewiczowna. The title of the striking story *Dewajtis* is taken from the name of a great oak, which symbolised for Mark Czertwan the eternity of the Polish peasant tradition. Things come and go, but the oak stands; and conscious of this as he passes it daily Mark is at once the knight of the soil and its chaplain. The same theme is given a group significance in *They Were and They Will Be*, in which the tilling of the soil and love of it, handed down from generation to generation, are inseparable. Finally, in *Czahary* it is a woman who plays the hero. Unjustly deprived by the Russian law of

the greater part of her inheritance, because she was not a man, she takes up her task undaunted, and sees it through to the triumphant end.

As for Prus, I cannot do better than quote the words of Professor Dyboski: 'With a Dickens-like, democratic understanding and human pity, he remained absorbed in the daily tasks and patient achievements, the small joys and lasting sorrows of the oppressed and labouring Poland of his day.' In his short stories we have a kaleidoscope glance at the world around him—children and students, country folk and city workers, the selfish and the unselfish—all of whom he portrayed with a rich and varying humour. Had he written nothing else than *The Outpost*, he would have won enduring fame. The hero, Slimak (Snail), is the slow-moving but tenacious husbandman, whom immigrant German colonists tempt hard to sell his patrimony for good money, but in vain. Nor can resort to threats or any other means move him. He and his land are wedded in his mind, and cannot be separated. That alone makes him a national hero in the new age of the novel.

Henryk Sienkiewicz is known to the world for his *Quo Vadis?*—itself an allegory from long ago of the struggle of his nation for the right to live its own life. He is known to some outside of Poland for his romantic *Trilogy*, written in the style of Dumas, telling of the brave men who saved their country in the bad years of the 17th century. His claim to be mentioned here is to be found in his earlier work, mostly short stories. Two are characteristic: the one of Bartek, the Poznanian peasant who took part in the battles in France in 1870; the other of the lighthouse keeper on the coast of Central America. Skawinski lived far from his homeland in the solitude of his tiny island, but wherever he was there was a bit of Poland. The spark of his affinities for his beloved country shone in his soul no less brightly than the lamps he trimmed daily, in order to guide the mariners off the nearby rocks. They were the knights of modern times, just as Skrzetuski and Pan Michal were of the trying years of two centuries earlier.

We come to Reymont and Zeromski, both of whom belong to the Neo-Romantic revolt known as Young Poland. The former won the Nobel Prize for his tale in four volumes, following the circle of the seasons, *The Peasants*. As has been well said: what *Sir Thaddeus*, the epic of Mickiewicz, set forth for the gentry of the end of the 18th century—still at that time regarded as 'the nation'—this prose epic now set forth for the new nation of the common man. This comparison, or contrast, has some value, although the grimness of much of the prose tale is quite absent from the epic.

Reymont is true to his subject. His peasants are seen as governed more than everything else by the turn of nature's wheel; the struggle for existence is not easy. But they were also at the dictates of the Russian police, and of still strong remnants of the manorial system. The tale has in it almost too much of the shadow side of life, but there is also much that is noble. The picture of the aged Boryna, rising from his sick-bed to go out and sow his field, and of the finding of his body on the soil he had tilled so long, is one which the reader can never forget. As a young aspirant to journalism, Reymont had asked Swientochowski for advice as to how he could best study a cross-section of the common people in Poland. The answer was: 'Join a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Madonna of Czestochowa!' Reymont did so, and wrote his impressions; but what he learned on this occasion was of value to him for the rest of his days.

The other tale by Reymont to be had in English is entitled *The Promised Land*. In two volumes it takes us to the gambling existence of the mill-town of Lodzh, where we see the old *laisser-faire* system of production at its worst. Polish and Jewish workers who have come from the humblest of village homes to seek their fortunes are caught in the grip of the great machine, and their lives are governed by its turning. There is far less of intimate knowledge and feeling for his theme in this book than in *The Peasants*. It is more artificial in structure, but its value as a picture of the *mores* is none the less permanent.

Zeromski was the avowed champion of the under-dog. Much of his work had in it a deep note of pessimism. He found the nation about him baulked in its search for all that life should give by the same kind of forces that haunted Victor Hugo in his great *Trilogy*—the forces of nature, the dictates of fate, and, above all, the injustices of the social order. Nevertheless, in *Labours of Sisyphus* he could show how fruitless were the efforts of the Russian High School to quench the national loyalties of the Polish schoolboy; and in *Homeless People* he could send a doctor, who had made his own way in life, into a career of service for the poor and the destitute, from whom he could expect nothing in return. Although he turned to the history of the Legions, fighting abroad under Napoleon, for the materials of his greatest work, *Ashes*, Zeromski was intimately bound up with the sorrows and successes of the Socialist Movement of his own day. He had lived through the scenes of 1905, and made them the background of a drama, *The Rose*. He lived through the years of war and occupation, 1914–18, and from them he took materials for three stories, which show us the figure of a factory owner with ideals, whose aim it was to turn over the whole plant to his workers, but who delayed in doing so and paid the penalty with his life. It may be added that, when Zeromski saw about him in his restored motherland many signs of undesirable social qualities, he spoke his mind in *Snobbery* with a directness worthy of Thackeray.

There remain the two great poets, who tower like Mont Blanc above all their fellows. Kasprowicz had pastured geese on a small farm-holding in one of the Prussian provinces, and he rose to be the Rector of the University of Lwow. He is of special interest to Britons for his inspired translations of works of Shelley, Browning and other of our own masters. But there is something about him that commands our respect in the same way as does the ancient legend of Prometheus. Few men of our time have faced so courageously the forces that eternally deny, and found their way through to a positive answer so well,

as did Kasprowicz. He faced the spectres of the mind and laid them; and like Tennyson's friend, he won a larger faith which shines through much of his work.

Because he would not be a 'good Prussian,' he was expelled from High School, although he was one of the best pupils in his class. Finally, far from his home, he got his school-leaving certificate, and then he left Poznania for ever for the kindlier air of Austrian Poland. For a long time attracted by Socialism, he then became convinced of its barrenness; and while earning a scanty living by journalism, he thought and prayed his way to the Christian view of the world. His literary achievements brought him distinction, for he was elected to the Chair for Comparative Literature at the University although he had never taken a degree—an almost unique thing in Central Europe. During the ferment and suffering of the war of 1914–18 he returned to seek a fresh kinship with nature in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, in a way that reminds us of St. Francis himself. Here he wrote the series of lyrics, *The Book of the Poor*, which will live as the testament of a rare and heroic soul as long as the Polish language survives.

When we come to Wyspianski, poet, painter and philosopher in one form, the mind and the pen falter. Years of study and work in the freer air of Paris as a young man made him conscious on his return of the unfruitful and soul-destroying atmosphere of his native Cracow under the, for him, pestilent air of Triple Loyalty. This was the more poignant to him, as he knew its historic charm, had grown up amidst buildings which speak to one from the past, and could recall a time of its glory. What palled was the temper of its people, the indolence of their minds, the complacency of their outlook. Realism was playing itself out, and the younger generation was looking for guidance, but there was no one to lead it. On the one hand the political inertia of the Conservative party leaders, on the other the humdrum business life of the townsman. To make matters worse, the Church seemed

empty of inspiration, and the university did not yet reach the masses. Outside the city the poverty and backwardness of the peasant population was well known. There was here the raw material for good citizens, but as yet neither opportunity nor a helping hand were extended. Over all was the, for Wyspianski, fatal nimbus of a divided patriotism: the view that since Poles could live on as Austrians (or Prussians or Russians), it mattered little what happened to Poland!

With two of his colleagues, the poet Rydel and the painter (afterwards Deputy and Senator) Bronislaw Tetmayer, he decided that an example should be set of bridging the still wide gulf between the intelligentsia and the peasants, and all three of them took farm girls as wives. Working at his canvases, later to be almost priceless, and at his dramas, Wyspianski lived almost in poverty, finding time to help place the City Theatre on to its feet and to serve on the Town Council. By the end of the 'nineties he had attracted attention by his plays, but the two that concern us here appeared just after the turn of the new century—*The Wedding* in 1902, and *Liberation* in 1904.

The former was a scathing indictment of the unreadiness of Polish society either to realise what was at stake or to consider ways and means of changing things. In a modest farm home near Cracow, a few miles from the old Russian border, the wedding of a townsman with a peasant girl was being celebrated, with all the social groups represented. Suddenly, late at night, the word came that the Russians had crossed the border. Everything was thought to be ready for a 'general muster' in defence of the country, but in reality nothing was ready. So the party went on as before, the band playing the rather sleepy folk-music of the time, and the dance uninterrupted. Needless to say, the effect made by this play on the audience, when put on the scene in Cracow for the first time, was terrific.

In *Liberation* Wyspianski dealt two years later a death blow at the Romanticism which amounted to a worshipping of the past or at best to 'words, words, words' about the

future. In his fury, the author even hounded poetry from the arena of national life. The other villain to be arraigned before the bar of public opinion was Triple Loyalty, along with all those who subscribed to it—gentry, townsmen, professors, churchmen and the rest. The title was taken from the term used for the 'freeing' of the apprentice, after he had learned his trade. The theme when rightly understood is the making of the master-workman for life. To Wyspianski it was intolerable that the net effect of the older romantic poetry had been to glorify those who had given their lives for the nation. In his judgment, those should rather be glorified who lived and worked for it. To the city and the world he threw down the gauntlet. 'A nation has no right to exist unless as a sovereign state.'

No Pole could see the succession of scenes of this play pass by on the stage, unless he failed entirely to penetrate its meaning, and ever again resign himself to the grave-like atmosphere about him. More than a century earlier Staszic had cried out, 'Even a great nation can fall, but only a worthless one can perish.' Wyspianski may have gone too far, but his sensitive nature could not refrain from putting it to his fellows: 'Which of the two are we?'

ADDENDUM

The final honours in this chapter should have been given to the poems, stories and *Letters* of the peasant-born and bred Wladyslaw Orkan, who has become the patron saint of the Young Peasant Movement in southern Poland. Born in the highlands, almost in the shadow of the Tatras, he knew the hard life of his fellows, and pictured it with frank realism. Unfortunately, owing to war conditions, the writer has not been able to get access to Orkan's works, so nothing is possible beyond this word of tribute.

PART II

CHAPTER IX

WAR AND LIBERATION

I

THE ordeal of war from 1914–1918 undoubtedly did much to develop and reinforce Polish democracy. Amid the general misery, due to campaigns fought out over two-thirds of the country and to three long years of military occupation and exploitation, the peasant had both the worst and the best of it. Great numbers of them lost everything they had, many of them made money as never before. But the presence of alien armies and the treatment meted out to the simple people taught them afresh that they were Poles: for the most part the name was given them as a mark of inferiority! Everyone in uniform assumed the right to order the peasant (and the worker) about; to requisition his labour, his crops, his cattle, even his homestead and all it contained. Often enough not even a pretence existed of giving him some sort of compensation.

Poles had to fight in all three imperial armies, kith and kin often facing one another across the trenches. Both the Central Powers and Imperial Russia posed as liberators, but neither was able to convince those thus honoured. True, the nation as a whole breathed a sigh of relief when the Tsarist armies had to evacuate Warsaw in August 1915: but I shall never forget the anguish of a Polish friend in Silesia when the news came that German armies were in the capital—'Lost, lost, lost!'

The proclamation by the Central Powers in November 1916 of a free and independent Poland, to be established the moment the war was won, was not taken seriously. There was one good thing about it, however: the Allies were now compelled to pay attention to something about which there had been up till then a conspiracy of silence.

By a tacit understanding they had been leaving the Polish question to be settled by Tsarist Russia.

Then came, in the spring of 1917, the collapse of the Romanov régime, and a new order in Russia. One of the first acts of the Soldiers' and Workers' Council was to declare that 'the brother Polish nation' had the same right to determine its own destiny as any other. This was confirmed officially a month later by Prince Lvov's government, which declared its resolve to assist in the restoration of a free Poland containing the lands in which Poles were in the majority. Apart from Wilson's general statement as to the terms on which peace should be restored in Europe, this was the first pronouncement from an authoritative source on the Polish issue. It was felt by the Allied Powers to release them from their former obligations, and a year later they had endorsed what came to be the charter of Polish liberties, viz. Wilson's Thirteenth Point.

Before this, and as if by way of pegging out their own claim, the Poles themselves had taken action. Not once only, but twice—first in Warsaw and then in Cracow. Late in 1916 a 'Declaration of 100 Men' had been made public in Warsaw, which set forth in unequivocal terms the will of the nation to be free. The signatures represented business and professional classes, and the whole Labour-Socialist movement. It was done under the nose of the German High Command—an act requiring a good deal of political courage. A few months later, at the end of May 1917, came something of even more significance. The Peasant Group of the provincial Diet in Lwow held a convention in Cracow, and passed unanimously a resolution demanding the establishing of a united and liberated Poland, with an outlet to the sea—an echo of Wilson's sentiments but anticipating his Thirteenth Point. Thus, while many of the aristocracy were still thinking in terms of 'conciliation,' or at best unable to make up their minds, the common people placed on record their convictions in no uncertain fashion. They went a step further early in

1918. When the news came of the handing over by the Treaty of Brest Litowsk of the Chelm region, lying between the Vistula and the Bug, to the proposed Ukrainian republic, a general strike was instituted in Austrian Poland, which paralysed for some time all the public services. For the first time, it is said, the French authorities woke up to realise the dynamic of Polish public opinion.

Enough evidence of what the masses thought had already been shown, but rather by way of passive resistance. When, on the morrow of the Act of November 1916, the Central Powers set about the recruiting of a 500,000 strong Polish army to help them fight their battles in France and Italy, they met with a stubborn refusal. The Provisional Council set up in Warsaw declined to countenance any such action unless and until they were sure that such an army would be controlled by a Polish government and under Polish command. We have seen already what the peasant masses thought about this. The fiasco of the plan for enlisting men was shown by the result—1,500 men were recruited. Further, when it was announced that the Legions would be expected to take the oath of allegiance to the Kaiser, Pilsudski disbanded them. For this he was arrested, with his adjutant, Colonel Sosnkowski, and sent to Magdeburg Fortress for the remainder of the war. Younger men, acting under his instructions, set about the secret enlisting and training of volunteers for the army of the future—but not for the service of the enemy.

Meanwhile other and valuable work was being done, this time outside the country. When he saw that Imperial Russia was likely to collapse, Dmowski obtained permission to come to England to work for the Allied cause. He was taken into counsel by those in authority, and given an honorary degree in Cambridge. Early in 1917 he settled in Paris, and formed there in due course the National Committee, which soon won recognition as the spokesman of Polish interests. With the backing of Polish-American opinion, and the help of Paderewski (who had gone to the New World) the same sort of campaign was set on foot

as was being carried on by Professor Masaryk and others for the Czechs, Slovaks and South Slavs. The net result was the creation of a Polish army in France, of which in October 1918 General Jozef Haller became the Commander. Representative Poles, chiefly of the Right, were brought from the homeland via Switzerland to strengthen the ranks of the National Committee. Poland was now in effect one of 'the Allied and Associated Powers.'

2

Few people realise even to-day the extent to which the assumption of authority in Poland in the historic November days of 1918 was an achievement of the common people. When the empires crumbled, it was not the upper classes but the working masses that became the heirs. They did not always know just what they wanted, but they did know that the past was gone, and that something different would take its place. The splendid action of the Czech people in effecting their liberation on the great day of the 28th October cut off the Polish provinces of Austria from all contact with Vienna. A National Council was set up by the local leaders in Teschen. A Commission, of which Wincenty Witos was Chairman, was set up in Cracow for the liquidation of the Austrian administration in Galicia. Before the arrival of Pilsudski in Warsaw on the 10th November, and because they could not accept the Cabinet of the Right that was acting with the Germans in Warsaw, leaders of the Socialist and Liberation groups got together in Lublin, seat of the Austrian Occupation Offices, and announced a Populist régime. The post of Prime Minister was taken by Ignacy Daszynski, and his right-hand man was Stanislaw Thugutt. Not only this, but for some weeks local district councils were set up in various places, in which even the clergy took part; whose single purpose was to rescue whatever could be saved from the ruins and to maintain order. The Prussian provinces were still under the control of German troops.

One need not take seriously the charges made against the Lublin 'government' that it was in sympathy with Bolshevism. The simple fact is that as soon as the situation in Warsaw was clarified, all of the regional committees (with perhaps a single unimportant exception) declared their allegiance to the capital. On being set free by the Germans, Pilsudski had accepted authority as Chief of the State, and he showed a fine sense of realities in proceeding at once to form a Cabinet of the Left. A Socialist became Prime Minister, and Thugutt became Home Secretary. Plans were announced for the holding in February of a General Election, on the basis of manhood suffrage, for the choosing of a Constituent Assembly. Precisely this strategy was necessary; since any attempt to place the authority in the hands of the aristocracy would have resulted in unrest, and even of civil war. Even the radical Home Secretary, as he tells us in his *Memoirs*, when on journeys made in connection with his duties of securing local instruments of law and order, found himself held up more than once by pickets who demanded that he show reason for his passage, and would have made short work of him had he not been doing things with which they were in sympathy.

In a short space of time vitally important things were done, as visible proofs of the will of the nation to be master in its own house. Almost without a shot being fired the German and Austrian armies of occupation were sent home. A steady, though much crippled service of communications was maintained, by which hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war were transported in both directions—Russians eastward from Central Europe, Germans and Austrians westward from Russia. In varying degrees, but at least far enough to reassure the people, local authorities restored law and order, and took steps for the feeding of countless numbers of destitute and homeless. In general, the nation had the feeling that someone was 'in charge,' and that by a common effort a better future could be built.

But there was one grave problem to be faced. Chagrin and perplexity were rife in Paris. Not only the Chairman of the National Committee, Roman Dmowski, but also his colleagues and the Allied governments that trusted him, saw things happening that were not to their liking. A government was in control in Warsaw with which they were not in touch, with a man at the head in whom they had no confidence. The Press was soon printing stories about a Bolshevist régime in Warsaw. It was even condemned for maintaining any sort of 'correct' relations with the Germans. To crown everything, word had been sent by Pilsudski to all the Allies that the Poles had now taken over, and that any efforts from outside to upset the new order would be viewed as hostile. It was some time before the Powers could adjust themselves to the new situation. From the Warsaw side the corresponding question arose: how about the Polish representation at the Peace Conference, soon to meet and confer about matters affecting the whole continent?

The dilemma was resolved by the arrival of Paderewski from America. This remarkable man, whose patriotism was proverbial, whose disinterestedness no one could question (although many doubted his political wisdom in linking his fortunes with National Democracy), was to play the part of mediator. Landed in Danzig from a British cruiser, he arrived in Poznan on Christmas Eve. His coming was the signal for a popular rising, which effected in a short time the expulsion of German troops from Poznania. Going on to Warsaw, he was received by Pilsudski, and conferences began.

At first they gave little promise of success; but after a 'palace revolution' had cleared the air a compromise was reached. The visitor was to become Prime Minister of a Coalition Cabinet and Foreign Minister, Dmowski was made Head of the Peace Delegation in Paris, while Pilsudski remained as Chief of the State and Commander-in-Chief. Representatives of the Left were chosen to join the National Committee in Paris.

This joining of the nation's forces came just in time. An *interim* arrangement had been reached by which the two rival political leaders and the man whose personality symbolised Polish national aspirations to the outside world could now work together. Of each one the phrase was used again and again by men of different parties, 'he is a providential possession for Poland.'

In the general elections held at the middle of February not all the provinces later united with Poland could take part. Unsettled conditions made elections impossible in the south-eastern regions, and the same applied to the north-west. The Diet, when it met, had a preponderance of Peasant deputies. Seen politically, it had a slight majority of supporters of the Right. The Chief of State was received, and he laid down his office. He was at once reinstated, and the action taken in regard to representation in Paris was confirmed. A Special Commission was appointed to work on the draft constitutions which the different Parties were known to have in preparation. The consideration of these, and debates on the projects, went on for two full years. The third week of March 1921 saw the acceptance of a document, opposed only by the Socialists and the Liberation group, which provided for a two-chamber system of government. We shall return to this whole matter in the next chapter.

3

The war had ended in the late autumn, and there was a long winter—mostly of 'discontent'—to be faced. Of uncertainty also, for no one knew whether the Germans were really beaten; and no one knew what the rising tide of social revolution in the new Russia might bring. Even a child could see that certain things cried out, and not only in Poland, for the immediate attention of those in authority. Not to face them would spell disaster.

The first was the maintenance of as large a measure of law and order as was possible. This was a categorical

imperative, not only for political reasons, but also for those of a physical nature. To use a metaphor from the sea: the ship of state had ridden out the storm, but it was fearfully battered, many people on board were hungry and helpless, there was a shortage of food and fuel, and the way to a safe haven was still a long one. Someone had to be in charge, tendencies to mutiny had to be dealt with firmly, discipline had to be maintained, otherwise disaster was still possible. Though devastated and plundered by the occupying armies, Poland had still some reserves of food. These must be protected from destruction and waste. The good of all demanded a great measure of obedience on the part of all.

On the other hand, any measures that seemed to perpetuate the *gendarme* methods of the old order would be fiercely resented. People were willing to be led, but they would not be driven. Above all, save for the really depraved, and of these there were many owing to past conditions, people wanted to be taken into partnership, wanted to share responsibility: and it behoved those at the centre to realise this, even if they had to take risks in agreeing to it. It behoved them also so to act that the masses could have the assurance that what was being done was in their interest; not in the interest of a group, or of strangers.

The first few months were bound to be difficult. For years an excess of restraint had been imposed upon all; now there was an urge to enjoy freedom. For years military law had spelled, in effect, lawlessness; and many people were now ready to say: 'If they could do that sort of thing, so can we!' The whole countryside was alive with derelict people—Poles and non-Poles, the majority of whom had been in uniform or in some other compulsory service, and had learned that he who fends for himself has the best chance of survival. In the middle of winter, and with things still unsettled, there were many chances for adventurers to try their hand at individual or group terrorisation. Further, there were always people who had

waited a long time to pay off old scores of many different kinds: now was their heaven-sent opportunity, why not use it?

Fortunately, there were whole parts of the country which had escaped war conditions, viz. the western provinces. These had always been the best tilled and best organised, socially and economically. Apart from minor points of conflict, these could be well left to take care of themselves; and they were. In the larger towns, it could be assumed that the local authorities would manage to deal with their own problems, always provided something was done to get food supplies delivered to them. Of course in the vast city of Lodzh, to which we return below, there was a frightful problem of unemployment. That always leads to trouble.

The slowly-growing army, created company by company out of such men, returning from any of the imperial armies, as volunteered, or from the secretly trained Army Organisation (P.O.W.), or from released prisoners of war (the first divisions from France arrived only at the end of April 1919), were needed for service at certain frontier points, or for guarding the main lines of communication. Rarely could they be used for maintaining order, and it was just as well. The task was one for civilians, and for dividing up into the proper 'pieces.' Thugutt found that not everyone was willing to accept the duties demanded of him by his positioin or his office. In some cases local officials from other days proved worthy of the new situation, in others they did not. As yet the radio did not exist, and he had to depend on the Press. This did not always lend its assistance as desired, sometimes for political, sometimes for other reasons. But men were usually found, in some places simple farmers, who did accept responsibility, and when given the right sort of guidance they proved to be competent helpers. People grumbled, but they obeyed.

In the sweat and anxiety of those first weeks, the Home Secretary was visited by one of the most valiant leaders of the nation in its struggle for survival against Buelow,

Bernard Chrzanowski of Poznan. He knew this man to be politically an opponent, and was a bit anxious. Asking what he could do, he received an answer that cheered his heart: 'I have no request, nor do I want to bother you in the least. All I ask is to sit and have a good look at a man who is at the moment being so much abused!' That is the fate of every courageous servant of society in times of stress.

The second crying need of the hour was thought-out and organised action for the most primitive relief of want. Only those who have been through such an experience can realise how utterly bare town and country were stripped of the first articles of human necessity. For example, soap! One could go on and add such things as matches, tobacco, tools of all kinds, every article of clothing: above all of medicines, hospital equipment, surgical appliances, etc. There were no rubber gloves for the use of those operating, no scalpels for the clinics, there were only rags and tatters of linen for the hospital wards. I can recall how, even in 1921, it was still almost impossible to buy nails, screws, bolts or other necessaries for the repairing of damaged or tumble-down buildings.

There was food enough in the country, so far as staples went, and no one needed to starve—although many did. When this happened, it was due mostly to lack of transport, or to ill-will or bad management. Milk was scarce, and the children suffered most. Fats were also hard to come by. My first guide in Warsaw, in February 1919, was the distinguished geographer and meteorologist, Dr. Henryk Arctowski. As we went about, seeing the frightfully neglected conditions on all sides, he remarked that what the whole place needed was a coat of paint. But he knew that there was no paint, chiefly because there was no oil to be had. The same was true of other essentials: they had been used up by the armies of occupation, or they were being hoarded by speculators.

I have mentioned Lodzh. This huge textiles centre, the largest in Eastern Europe, was completely without raw materials. Even if raw cotton had been available, not

much could have been done at the start, for every bit of serviceable machinery, every motor, every pound of copper or other precious metal had been carried off by the German armies. The value of manufactured goods, raw materials, and machinery which had been taken from Lodzh, and for which worthless vouchers were given but nothing else, was 270,000,000 gold marks—about £12,000,000. For this neither then nor afterwards was any reparation ever made. The city, which had been reduced in population to less than half a million, had never been allowed to construct either a sewage system or a common supply of drinking water. Its treasury had been 'evacuated' by the Russians in 1915. People wanted only one thing, viz. the means to repair their great workshops, and a renewal of the supply of raw cotton. For a long time they got neither. No wonder there was unrest.

The worst *malheur* of all was the housing shortage. Every bigger town was crowded past belief. For years no building had been possible, and in places there had been destruction from war. People were fortunate if they had a roof over their heads, still more if they had any fuel. For the second shortage most in evidence was transport. The railways had survived, but the condition of the rolling-stock can only be imagined. Poland had never owned any before, now she got only what was on hand and could be kept. In particular, the lack of locomotives, and the condition of such as could be used, was catastrophic. This alone complicated every problem, most of all that of getting supplies where they were most needed.

4

Although the masses knew very well that none of the misfortunes they suffered could rightly be laid at the door of the new government, it was not in human nature to refrain in their hearts from holding that government responsible. Someone had to be the scapegoat, and the

officials had to face that fact.[1] It mattered little, therefore, whether the demand was reasonable or not, those in charge had to face the necessity of getting a quart out of a pint pot, or even of squaring the circle. The amazing thing is that so many of them succeeded in performing those miracles.

During two weeks spent in Warsaw in February 1919, I had the privilege of seeing something of what was even then being done. From an account written at the time I find a record of visits made to social welfare institutions both for children (orphans, defectives and regular attendants at school) and for the aged: institutions run by the city, and those managed by Catholics, Protestants and Jews. The Home for the Aged nestling under the ancient church of St. Mary in the Old Town had been founded in 1388. Its whole endowment of 800,000 roubles had been carried off by the Russians in 1915. Now it was caring for 242 old people, chiefly women, and doing a first-rate job. The work for defective children was conducted on the lines of the newest pedagogy. In the Jewish day-nursery, and still more in the Hosenpud Orphanage, I got the impression that people were in charge who combined the highest qualities of head and heart with indomitable courage. But at every turn I saw how pitiful the equipment, how great the pinch of want, how modest the results must be.

It was a benediction—indeed, an act of salvation—when before the end of that winter the first consignments of medicines and food for children began to come in from outside—the work of the Hoover Relief Administration. Of this only one word need be said. Even those who were not helped took fresh courage when they realised that far-away friends were thinking of them; and the task of the administration was made much easier by the presence of these good Samaritans with their supplies. Every govern-

[1] I recall that simple people in southern Poland, during the terrible winter of 1929–30, when the frosts were Siberian in character, were heard to say, 'We never had such a winter in Austrian days!'

ment in Central Europe received both moral and material reinforcement from the relief agencies. Every harassed state official had cause for gratitude when he knew that these evidences of goodwill from abroad were at hand with not only words, but also deeds. And every John Citizen, man or woman, who had toiled during war days to keep the wheels of society moving was stirred to fresh efforts.

A third crying need of those first weeks and months involved things invisible, rather than those that could be seen, touched or counted. It might be described as the capitalising of the spiritual forces of the people, which had made survival possible: their joy at being once more in charge of their own homes, their will to attain at least that measure of unity without which no political fabric can prosper, their aspirations in regard to the future.

The assets of the new Poland in this field were very real and manifold, but they were not all of the kind that would help in the task of state-building. They needed, moreover, to be carefully husbanded and nourished. Carelessness and clumsiness might injure or even destroy them, brutality was sure to. Put simply the problem was this.

For generations the energies of all who cared had been directed towards the preservation of the nation; now the task was rather the harnessing of the nation to the work of the State. The two are by no means the same thing; least of all in that part of Europe where nationalism had to live for so long without the help of, or even in defiance of, the State. Devotion to one's nation or people is chiefly a matter of the heart, of the feelings; it has in it much that savours of mysticism and requires a great measure of faith. Service of the State calls for other things. To use an old figure, patriotism might be called the soul, but the State, politics, economic life, all that we see around us, is the body in which that soul must dwell. The demands made by the former could be surrounded by an aureole of romance; the workaday tasks and demands of the latter are prose by comparison, the grim realities of a workaday world.

Visitors to Warsaw have remarked that between the buildings that reveal the fashion of the 18th century and those of the 20th there is a great gap. That is quite true. In the time when other peoples of Europe were experiencing more changes than during far longer periods of the past, the Poles—and other neighbour peoples—were forced to stand still. Not wholly, of course, but to an extent that left them far behind. Their minds were active, they produced poetry, music, pictures and other treasures on a par with the best in Europe, but they could not create the things that minister to the creature comforts of life, they could not enjoy the institutions (and learn from working them) that are the framework of modern civilisation. Abroad in the great world they proved their worth as bridge-builders, mining engineers, promoters of industry and commerce, but at home they were hamstrung.

There was also another difficulty. Passionately attached to personal liberties throughout the ages, they had never consolidated their political and economic life. During the ordeal of the Partition days, they had been faced with alien governments and developed the mentality of opposition. Would they be able now to change this, when faced with a government that was their own? We can pass over the naïve people who thought that once they were free they would not have to pay any more taxes: but the fact remained that the new conditions were to lay not less but even heavier burdens on them than before. Would they recognise them, and respond to the challenge?

5

There were plenty of people in Europe who thought they knew from the start the answer to this question: it was a prompt 'No!' They pointed to the past, when Polish public affairs had been the laughing-stock of Europe; they fancied that most Poles pictured freedom as meaning the right to do what you like; and they said sagely, 'Human nature does not change!' Even Poles shook their heads at

the gigantic tasks before them, and the handicaps imposed on them. Was the thing possible? Some doubted. I recall one man of high intelligence who said to me in Warsaw, 'We are all cripples. None of us is normal after what we have been through. How can we compete in the race of the world with others who have lived healthy lives?' Another—the only Pole who ever said this to me—regarded the whole act of liberation as a mistake. For him the old order was better: he saw only misfortune ahead!

This was not the view of the majority of the nation—quite the reverse. From the high-school lads, who helped to disarm the German troops of occupation, to the aged couples who gave their wedding-rings to the Treasury (receiving token iron ones in return, which they wore to the end of their days); from the ragged ex-Austrian army prisoners of war who at once volunteered for the Polish army although they had served for years and wanted to get home, to the Poles in the New World, who sold whatever they had and set out for the homeland to lend a hand in the rebuilding of the common life—one and all took a different view. Duty said, 'Thou must!': the general reply was, 'I can!'

Three main groups existed, and within a few years a fourth was added, each of which had more or less clearly defined ideas as to what the new Poland should be like; and each of them felt that it could claim a mandate from the nation to take over the task of government. From previous chapters the reader will know that the three were the National Democrats, the Labour-Socialists and the Peasant Populists. The fourth did not as yet exist, even in idea. It came into being with the turnover of 1926, taking the name *Sanacja* (Sanitation), on the ground that its main task was one of house-cleaning. Officially it became known as the Non-Party Bloc for Co-operation with the Government, for which the abbreviation in Polish was BB. Out of this Bloc emerged two things—a sort of ideology and a sort of clique. We shall return to them in later chapters. At this point it suffices to see what

the traditional groups could offer, and what chances they had of gaining the mandate they desired.

In a notable little book, published late in 1935, the ex-Prime Minister, Wladyslaw Grabski, set out in striking fashion his reflections on precisely this point. Right through the 19th century distinguished Poles—poets, thinkers and men of action—had given to the world their views as to 'the Poland that shall be.' We have seen how, during the first half of the period, these views were strongly romantic in temper; but how later on stern realism prevailed. The 'ideas of Poland' represented by the Parties in 1918 were undoubtedly an amalgam of both.

Though himself the scion of a line of landed proprietors, Grabski rejected out of hand 'the squires' idea of Poland.' He did it for the following reasons. Rightly distinguishing it from the older philosophy of the nobility, who based their claims on their lineage of the blood, he says that the modern landowner took his stand rather on the extent of his stake in the country. This was a double stake: on the one hand his properties, on the other his superior intelligence and experience. If, says Grabski, in addition to these the claimants had the moral qualities, the desire to serve the nation, of an Andrew Zamoyski, their case would be strong. But there were too few of that calibre, too many of the type revealed in his *Memoirs* by Korwin-Milewski, who defended the Tsarist régime because it was indulgent of the landowners, and who was angry with the Polish leaders after 1919 because they did not pay attention to his personal claims, but even let him sell his estates 'in order to assure himself of a quiet life.' Men of this type were patriots of a sort, but they were usually in the camp of 'conciliation.' They did not give up the hope of independence, but they postponed it, retiring like Plato's philosopher under the wall of their own homes, and their Catholic faith. They were ready to do battle for the cause by legal means: they did not see that this would lead nowhere.

Although, from the national point of view, they had always been strongly anti-German, they carried this con-

ciliation attitude to the point of collaboration with the German occupying forces from 1915–1918, and damaged their reputation in the eyes of the masses. The Poland that emerged in 1918–1919 was a Poland of the people, and it tolerated no trucking with outsiders. This may have been a mistake, but it left the conciliationists stranded. They worsened their position by their unbending opposition to the projects for agrarian reform demanded by the common people; and when the latter refused to bate a jot or tittle of these demands, the gentry were forced into a position of hostility to democratic government as such. Right here then lay the tragedy of their position: instead of throwing in their lot with the people, and of realising their undoubted right to share in the national life, they have let their idea of Poland become a 'class idea'—something unfruitful and out-of-date in the modern world. From possessing one quarter of the land at the time of liberation they had come by 1935 to possess only one fifth, and with each year of land parcellation their 'stake' has become less. As a group their political significance has become doomed: only as individuals could they hope to exert influence, and this only if they moved with the times.[1]

One offshoot of aristocratic thought and action had a different emphasis; this, as Grabski says, was 'the national idea of Poland.' Closely intertwined with ardent Catholicism, it found expression first in the Rising of Bar in 1768; mixed with the patriotism of the peasants it inspired the Rising under Kosciuszko in 1794; and tempered by the wisdom of the reformers in the Four Year Diet and subsequent times, it marked the best work done by the Poles during the 19th century. Scores of the gentry sacrificed all they had on the altar of the national well-being, thousands of simple people—both villagers and factory and mine workers, risked their existence in the same good cause.

[1] There is, of course, something to be said for the view that, no matter what government was in power, the National Democrats ruled the country, owing to their social and economic position, to their presence in the civil service, etc. This is an extreme position, but it is held both by friends and foes of the Party—for different reasons!

Hundreds of men and women gave their lives to social work before the war of 1914–1918, in order that the lot of the masses might be improved, and their thirst for at least a smattering of learning might be satisfied. Had this idea and ideal not shone like a beacon on a dark night, it may be doubted whether there would have been any Poland to 'resurrect' in 1918.

But when the time of crisis came, it was not the national element that found the solution. Its leaders contributed invaluable help, but mostly from the outside. Neither in 1918 nor in 1920 was there any vital drive to be found there, any compelling directive. That vital force came from the masses—the Labour-Socialist elements in the towns and the Peasant Populist in the countryside. And the man of the hour, whom the masses regarded as the incarnation of their aspirations, was Jozef Pilsudski. What is more, says Grabski, Poland was not a national state; nearly one-third of its inhabitants were not Poles. When it became clear that the Nationalist Party was not ready to work with the minority elements as equals in dealing with public affairs, even though those elements seemed to be of doubtful loyalty, it also became clear that 'the national idea of Poland' would not work. We shall see in the next chapter exactly how this happened.

There remains what I shall call for the moment 'the folk-idea of Poland,' as represented by the Labour-Socialist and the Peasant Populist Parties. This idea is not a new thing, but has only become articulate in our own time. It meant, says Grabski, that in Poland the people were to be master of their fate and of the fate of the country. In its more moderate form, this idea envisaged a Poland in which everyone will be a partner; in its radical form it sought to create a class administration, to the exclusion of those who did not belong to the lower class. This movement was able to develop in the Austrian provinces on more or less legal, recognised lines: in the rest of the country it had to work mainly underground, using the methods of conspiracy, and it was ready at any

time to resort to violence to establish its right to live. Actuated in part by the struggle for better economic conditions, the masses never lacked the emotional drive necessary for common action; they did on the other hand lack the knowledge and experience without which success would be jeopardised from the start. Hence the need for long and steady toil in the field of popular education.

In the sequel, it was to become too clear that the Labour-Socialist and Peasant Populist elements could not find ground for united action. This was to be the major misfortune of the restored Poland, as will appear in the sequel. To make matters worse, says Grabski, the leaders of the Left showed themselves rather ready to bargain with other Groups in the interests of their own class than to work with others in the interests of the state and the nation. On similar lines, the leaders of the Populists were ready at times to compromise 'the folk-idea' of Poland by seeking an alliance with the nationalists. Finally, when an up-till-now-unknown Group appeared which set at defiance all the existing Parties, and even resorted to illegal means of muzzling their leaders, the masses of the people took the whole matter with resignation, revealing thereby their immaturity or at least their readiness to accept the dictates of those in authority, whether they were justified by the right ideals or not. What was done in 1930, in Grabski's opinion, showed that not the folk-idea but the 'state-idea' had triumphed in Poland. This might or might not be something better or greater, but at least it was something new and different.

6

If words mean anything, those who govern the State should be people of ability, of moral integrity and of experience. Would one choose 'steersmen' for a vessel on the high seas on any other terms? From this the corollary that in the restored Poland the rulers should be men (or women) as nearly as possible meeting these demands:

a sort of elect, men of wisdom and knowledge of affairs, who in addition were known to have strength of character. From among the possibles, there would be a few who had special understanding of what the State is for, and some idea of how to realise their ideas in practice.

Did Poland possess such men? To this plain question, a plain answer is possible, and in the affirmative. But there were not enough of them to complete the crew needed to man the ship of state: and most of them had never had experience of doing team work under difficult conditions. It would have been a fine thing—amounting to a miracle, if a nation deprived for four generations of all experience of political institutions, had been able to provide overnight people able not only to guide the body politic and economic, but also to convince the public of the wisdom of their guidance. As we have seen, able leaders had been thrown up by the events of the pre-war generations, but they had party rather than national ends in view, and party rather than State training. What is more, not one of them could have said with a clear conscience that he had a properly enlightened and disciplined Party behind him (the nearest to it was undoubtedly the Labour-Socialist Group), including the majority of those in the nation who thought more or less as he did. (I pass over the group known as the Cracow Conservatives, since in the new Poland they did not compete as a Party for public office, though exercising a certain influence on affairs.)

What were called political Parties were rather loosely, or only partially coherent organisations—in places mature, but in others adolescent. As a consequence, in the words of a recent writer, 'names replaced programmes'; and cliques rather than principles tended to determine policy. In contrast to the experience gained by those who had sat for years in a legislature, whether in Lwow or Vienna, most Poles from the former Russian provinces had seen nothing of the procedure of legislation or government. Instead they had been driven to use conspiracy, and they had become masters of the kind of leadership that slips

easily into demagogy. What is more, they tended to exalt ideas, but too much as absolutes—often very fine absolutes, but needing to be watered down before they could serve practical ends. These men hated compromise, forgetting that it is one of the *mala necessaria* of democracy. This fact alone tended to unfit them for the game of politics.

Poland possessed an intelligentsia, of which she had no need to feel ashamed. We have seen how it had grown in pre-war days to sizable dimensions and influence. It was, however, sundered and diverse in character. The most numerous element was that associated with National Democracy: the most outspoken, and in some ways most clear-thinking, was to be found under the banner of Socialism: the least numerous, but perhaps the healthiest from the standpoint of the commonwealth, was that holding with the Peasant Movement. Only individuals got as far as thinking in terms of a restored State organism: it is notable that Wyspianski is claimed as an adherent by almost every one of the political camps!

When Poland became free, this sort of thing tended to create a sort of vacuum, and we shall see in the next chapter how there entered this vacuum something new—a special type of intelligentsia with the 'state-idea' as its guiding principle, composed in part of mature people who had not allied themselves to any existing Party, but promoted by those who had played an active part, in the Legions, in the national liberation. Some observers claim that this was done in large measure under the influence of what had been going on in Italy, and that the urge which developed toward a one-Party system was only a copying of Fascism. In any case, as Grabski points out, these men did under new conditions what the aristocracy had done of old: they too echoed the ancient slogan, 'Poland—we are it!' and with consequences that were fateful for all concerned.

CHAPTER X

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS—I

SAVE for a baker's dozen of baronial estates, on which the more or less patriarchal relationships of the 18th century still survived, there was little in the restored Poland of 1919 that could be identified with the Older Kingdom: unless, of course, the architectural glories of town and country that look down on human change in every land. Even the Church, usually most conservative of institutions, was different. The one-time serfs had long since become free peasants, most of them tilling their own land, and thousands of them organised into economic and political groupings for common action. There had developed a hardy and self-conscious urban workers' class, men engaged in shop, factory, mine and foundry—numbering well over half a million strong, and possessing already a tradition of national and social service. Finally, there had come into being a business and professional middle class (including in the Austrian provinces the civil servants), which had been quite unknown at the time of the Partitions, and was now to be not only the most articulate but also the most efficient instrument of public opinion.

What survived from the older days, and even been enhanced by the trying experiences of the 19th century, was the extraordinary love of liberty of movement, the overdone individualism which has been a characteristic of Poles in every age. It had even taken a not too desirable turn in that, deprived of a normal life in their own body politic, and of the sobering restraints attendant on the holding of responsibilities, many men became much sharper critics of others than they should have been—became in a word doctrinaire. Idealising liberal democracy, they dreamed of it as the solvent of all human problems;

whereas in fact it is rather an adventure, and one that can only succeed where exacting conditions are fulfilled. Put another way, democracy is a great game, but there is no use attempting it unless you are willing to keep the rules.

There can be no doubt that, with very few exceptions, all Poles wanted a State organism that would ensure an end of class privilege, and as much as possible of equality of rights and opportunity, irrespective of sex, creed, blood or mother-tongue. They had seen enough of the other thing, had suffered enough from it. It is also true that those conversant with their own past history knew what the penalty would be of not practising self-discipline, of not learning to work as a team. The problem was one of ways and means of realising the desired forms of freedom, and preserving the needed measure of civic obedience.

Viewed politically, the twenty years of independence can be divided into three main periods, of which the first two fall again each into two parts. The first period includes the seven years of parliamentary government which ended in May 1926. Of these nearly four were the time of a provisional (what the Poles call the 'Little') Constitution, the remainder coming under the Presidential régime. The second period lasted for just nine years, until the proclaiming of the second Constitution (and the death of Marshal Pilsudski) in the spring of 1935. This also falls into just over four years of experimentation in the building of a new Party, and about the same period of the realisation of this, with the traditional Parties excluded from any influence on policy. The third period has been called that of 'a dictatorship without a dictator': that of the 'Succession,' during which those in charge were reaping the harvest of their mistakes, and (while hanging on to power) trying to re-establish their lost contacts with the electors.

From the standpoint of economics and finance the twenty years would be divided somewhat differently. Again we should have three periods, with the last falling into two parts: about five years of 'doing without money' (1918–23), six years of stability and prosperity (1924–30), and nine

years of struggle with the general depression, of which the first four were a time of stern retrenchment, the last five years of slow but sure recovery. By 'doing without money' I mean patchwork in State budgeting, paying one's way with paper currency, and the inevitable inflation. The nightmare of those years will never be forgotten by those who went through them. Unfortunately, the recovery of the later half of the 'thirties did not reach everyone, and there were those who could rightly feel that they were 'forgotten men.'

With the purely economic side of things we are less concerned here. At the same time it is evident that paying one's way is a part of policy, and the resolve to do it an essential part of successful democracy. To the credit of the Poles it must be said that, after some burking at the start, they not only put fine brains to work on the whole issue, but accepted with the best possible grace the burdens laid upon them. This was particularly true of the middle class—the salaried people who were best off in good times, and hardest hit when times were bad. Not only did they respond to appeals for loans, but they submitted to extraordinary taxation to a degree almost unknown elsewhere in Europe—all as part of the price of their freedom.

I

The leaders of the Parties in the Diet in Warsaw had represented their people in alien legislatures, where the atmosphere was seldom friendly. They could not at once be expected to free themselves from the associations of the past, but tended to bring with them an instinctive reserve toward all executive authorities—even those they themselves set up. Other legislatures possessed common backgrounds in school and community experience, as well as the personal friendships of a more or less unified life. This was lacking in Warsaw; instead, there had been grievous barriers separating the nation for a century.

Nowhere in the world does one find enough people

able to think in terms of the good of all, while thrusting their own personal and group interests into the background. The surprising thing is that there were so many in the Poland of 1919–22 who did this, and the achievements of those early years are impressive. Certainly the threat of war from outside helped.

When the first Cabinet of the Left was formed in November 1918, Witos was invited to join it. He declined, on the ground that it did not contain leaders of the Parties proportionately to their numbers in the nation! This meant that the radical Liberation Group had its representative in the person of Thugutt, while the far larger Piast section remained a spectator. This was, to say the least, a misfortune.

Greater difficulties were caused by the animosities of other Parties, inherited from pre-war days. Apart from their opposition on principle to the upper-class doctrines and practice of National Democracy and to its traditional allegiance with the Church, the Labour-Socialist leaders had viewed with hostility the tactics followed by Dmowski in his collaboration with Tsarist Russia. With justice they could say that he was not sincerely pro-Russian: that he was playing a game in which the appearance and the reality were quite different: and that even now under the changed conditions neither he nor his associates were to be trusted. They disliked acting of any kind, calling it at the best opportunism, at the worst sham. That sort of thing did not seem to them to be the stuff on which to build a State.

Reversely, those of the Right—in particular those blessed (or burdened) with worldly property—repaid this dislike with interest. Convinced of the wisdom of 'conciliation,' they viewed all conspiracy and the use of violence as harmful or even destructive. The urge to direct action, as they had seen it operating in the last decade before the war, seemed to them simply a nuisance. In particular they hated Pilsudski and were resolved to prevent him from exerting undue influence in the new State, and from occupying any

post of high authority. The common people were thrilled by the guerrilla tactics of pre-war years and by the deeds of the Legions: the middle and upper classes had only maledictions for activities which seemed to them likely to bring down reprisals on one and all. Moreover, being the largest Polish party they felt that they were called by fate to rule the country.

Only so can one explain the concerted opposition directed against Pilsudski from the moment when he became Chief of the State. The leaders and the Press of the Right regarded him as an ambitious man, and a likely candidate for the presidency of the republic. For that reason they resisted every effort made by the Commission of the Diet so to shape the Constitution as to give any real power or influence to that high office. Apparently it never occurred to them that Pilsudski might have other things that interested him more than politics; than the clothing of an office that demanded of its holder no end of tedious formalities and ceremonies.

On the other hand, it may be said that Pilsudski, when the kind of Constitution had been accepted in which he had no faith, made a mistake in refusing to become the first President, even although the majority of the electors counted on his acceptance. This too was a breach of the rules of democracy. Free institutions mean the readiness of men to work with unsuitable and inexperienced people. Civilian councils are far harder to lead than brigades or divisions, requiring infinite patience and tact. Not to accept the challenge of such a task but to withdraw in favour of others is a confession of a certain weakness or even a counsel of despair.

The advocates of a liberal constitution got their way, but the politicians of the Right were not willing to live by the instrument they themselves had shaped. Universal manhood suffrage, in a country where three-tenths of the inhabitants were non-Poles, sent to the Diet in the elections of November 1922 Minority representatives numbering nearly one-fifth of the house. Among these the two largest

national groupings were the Jews and the Ukrainians. In view of the well-known anti-Semitic attitude of National Democracy, and of the hostility shown by Dmowski and his colleagues for nearly a generation to Ukrainian nationalism, it is not surprising that both of these groups should oppose any candidate of the Right for the presidency, and vote for that of the Left. The result was the election, by a considerable majority, of the well-known engineer, Gabriel Narutowicz, an event which the National Democratic Press greeted with something akin to fury. Taunts were openly made in the direction of the non-Polish deputies about 'their' president, and the deputies of the Right as a body boycotted the ceremony of oath-taking. The atmosphere of the capital was poisoned at a moment when the whole nation should have been rejoicing, and the assassination of the new president a few days later by a fanatical nationalist sobered everyone. The whole sequence of events looked to the disinterested observer to augur ill for the future of Polish democracy.

2

We turn now to the Constitution itself. Declaring that the Polish State is a republic, it went on to say that the sovereign power was vested in the nation. 'The organs of the nation in legislative matters are the Diet and the Senate, in the administration of justice the independent tribunals. Executive authority is exercised by the President of the Republic acting jointly with responsible Ministers.' Neither the President nor the Senate was given any power in the initiative of legislation. The former had no right of veto, nor could he dissolve the Diet unless by its own consent. The Cabinet was responsible to the Diet, which could at any time demand its resignation. On taking office, the Cabinet, through its Prime Minister, had to make a statement of policy before the House; and could only proceed with its work if a working majority of the deputies was assured. The President was to be chosen for seven years

by the two Houses in joint session, and his was the right to nominate the Prime Minister and his colleagues. The number of deputies was set at 444, that of senators at 111. The right to vote in elections to the lower House was given to all men and women over 21, in elections to the Senate to all over 30. The system of franchise was 'direct, equal, secret and proportional.'

In theory then, Poland was to enjoy ultra-democracy. The Diet possessed supreme authority, being free either to legislate at will, or not to legislate at all. It controlled the purse strings, regulated taxation and expenditure, and could demand of the various Ministers that they be prepared at any time to give an account of their stewardship. All citizens of the republic, irrespective of speech or creed or national affiliations, were declared to be equal before the law, and so not subject to any possible discrimination on any of those grounds.

Put simply, the system of government was modelled largely on that of France. The President was more or less of a figurehead. Authority was centred in the person of the Prime Minister, who was helpless unless he could command a majority in the House. This seemed to make impossible the necessary measure of competency for getting through the inordinate burden of work to be done in the new State. Very much of permanent value was done during the first seven years, but every single Prime Minister found himself hampered, often on trivial grounds, in carrying out vitally important public business by the caprice or obstruction tactics of the Parties.

The reasons are not far to seek. There were at least a score of political groupings in the House, or double that number if one counted the various sections from Left to Right of the Minority clubs. Most of these were left-overs from pre-war days, and led largely by older men. They did not always realise that both the privilege and responsibility were now wholly their own, and that the delaying of action could only bring harm to themselves. Among the younger men were some who were quite inexperienced, and were

at times guilty of 'rocking the boat' in irresponsible fashion. Too often, even inside the Parties, there were personal or other differences that blocked understanding. Not infrequently some minor issue or conflict, quite irrelevant to the matter in hand, frustrated the efforts of the executive to get things done. An older House like that of France, with a certain tradition behind it and with experience in recognising what was vital and what trivial, might have surmounted these difficulties. In itself the Constitution was almost ideal: the fault lay with the people who would not let it work. As a consequence, the Diet was a very live debating society, but by no stretch of the imagination an effective instrument of government.

Something has been said in the previous chapter about the work done. What the reader should realise is that the purely political side of things was of less importance to the common people than the cultural and economic achievements. Had the atmosphere of the first been sweeter, the general harvest would have been rich indeed. What the masses in town and country wanted was an end of the hated police régime, and in return for taxes paid and other services rendered a chance to tend their workshops, get on with their private affairs, till their fields, and see a reasonable reward for their toil. They also wanted even justice in the law-courts in case of need; and they sought for themselves and their children the advantages that should accrue from Church and school and other cultural agencies. The actual mechanism of administration interested them little, always provided that it worked for the good of all, and not for the few. In Poland, as elsewhere, too little rather than too much concern was to be found in the spirit and methods of government!

3

Actually, the masses were affected more by the local government agencies than by the central machine in Warsaw. Following more or less inherited lines, the

republic was divided up into provinces, these into districts, and these in turn into rural and urban communes or municipalities. The Governors of the provinces were appointed by the President, and they had advisory councils composed of delegates from the districts. At the head of each district was a paid official, a Prefect, appointed by the Home Office; and he was assisted by an elected council with executive powers in matters concerning the area involved. One province, Silesia, was for special reasons given a legislative chamber, with control of its own finances.

No uniform pattern of local administration was either possible or desirable in a country where such variety of background and temperament was to be found. The western provinces, long accustomed to dealing with their own affairs, presented no problem; and the central authorities left them for the most part to their tasks. A quite different condition of things was to be met with in the one-time Russian lands, particularly east of the Bug, where most districts had a non-Polish majority. Less favoured by nature, lagging far behind the west in regard to communications, economic organisation, and cultural amenities, they needed more attention just as they needed more help. Here especially, much depended on the type of official sent by the central authorities. Many of them were first-class administrators, others meant well but had not the capacity for the task; some at least were below the standard required in a modern age, and innocent of the personal qualities that would bring credit on their nation. In the bad years one and all found themselves asking more of their people than they had to offer in return. Not one but would have found things easier had he possessed the funds needed for more and better roads, for more and better schools, hospitals, public buildings, etc. Simple people think in terms of getting a direct return for taxes paid; and not always did they get it.

The special case of the towns would require more space than can be given it here. Where the population reached 20,000 they had their own municipal authorities similar to

those found all over Europe. In the local elections there was often enough a trial of strength between political ideologies, and here the Jewish population played a considerable role. But nearly every larger urban centre in Central and Southern Poland had so much to do in order to catch up with the requirements of modern society that few of them could manage without substantial help from outside. Credits were not enough. Hundreds of thousands of people were crowded together in out-of-date dwellings, quite innocent of central sewage, of water mains; and far from adequately provided with any of the cultural agencies of the 20th century. Where the Home Office felt that special help had to be given it usually put in a Commissioner as its steward. In the largest cities like Warsaw (which was a 'province' in its own right) or Lodzh, a sort of 'combined operations' plan was worked out; and anyone who compared either of these places in 1938 with what had been twenty years earlier would take off his hat to those who had worked such a transformation.

Local government was not everywhere a success. Neither at the start nor under the post-1926 régime were the right men always to be found—at once honest and competent for their tasks. Above all, the failure of the government to implement its plans for autonomy in the three south-eastern provinces, possessing a Ukrainian majority, brought a succession of anxieties. We shall return to this in the sequel, and see that the fault was not all on one side.

So much for the constitutional structure of the new State, and the bare machinery for its realisation. The second great task of the administration was to regulate and stabilise state finance. This problem presented two aspects, viz. the stabilising of a common currency, which could not be thought of until something like a favourable balance of trade with the outside world had been attained; and some kind of reasonable relation between income from taxation of all kinds and public expenditure. To a large extent the second was dependent on the first.

The war had stripped the country of all liquid resources (save for small amounts of gold coins or 'real' money hoarded by individuals), and the new State had nothing to go on with save large supplies of paper German marks and Austrian crowns. Having no 'cover,' these soon began to fall in value, and violently as soon as outside connections became established. Resort was made to the printing-press in order to keep up with the need, and this meant conscious inflation. There seemed, however, to be no other way. It was still too early to think of floating a loan; conditions were too uncertain. The masses had paid little or no taxes during the occupation—why, they asked, should they begin now? Many of the farmers had stores of paper money; but they were using it for rehabilitation as fast as things could be found to buy. The authorities felt that it was as well to have the money spent thus; the return in taxation would be the surer later on.

War conditions, still prevailing until the end of 1920, and the crippled state of all industry, made the volume of exports in the first years very slight. On the other hand, there was a dire need to get many things from abroad. Some credits, e.g. for food from the New World, were arranged, but they were far from adequate. In 1920 Poland exported only a quarter of a billion gold francs' worth of goods, while importing five times that value! By 1922 the situation had become vastly better, exports rising to 614,000,000, and imports falling to 801,000,000, but only in the following year was parity achieved. What helped to save the situation was the very large amount of American dollars sent or brought 'home' by one-time emigrants. In 1921 the total was over a hundred millions, or almost enough to restore the adverse balance of trade. Even so, in July of that year the dollar was valued at 2,000 Polish marks, and by New Year 1923 it was 20,000. The catastrophic slide began that spring, and in a few months it was worth nine millions.

This spelt ruin for trade and industry; but it was worst of all for the mentality of the worker—whether manual or

intellectual. For years everyone had to hurry off at once on receiving his wage, in order to buy what was needed before the money lost its value. Thrift, in the accepted form of savings, was soon recognised as the sheerest folly.[1] Most heads of families had so little of a margin that I have heard them rejoicing when February came with only twenty-eight days in the month; that would save food, and enable them to buy a pair of needed shoes! How little chance the tax-collector had under such circumstances can easily be imagined. Worst of all, the primary producer (of food and other things) had no interest in bringing things to market: he got paper money in exchange, but not enough to make it possible to buy what he needed.

The task of cleansing these Augean stables fell to Wladyslaw Grabski. Traditionally an adherent to National Democracy, he had never been an active politician, but had made himself into a very respected economist. Already in the critical summer days of 1920 he had gone at Pilsudski's request to Spa to lay Poland's case before the western Allies; only to meet with a reception that revealed the essential self-interest of State politics. From that time he became an advocate of self-help, much on the lines put so trenchantly by Lelewel ninety years before. He laid before the Diet a project for a compulsory loan, only to meet with a storm of opposition. Writing of this incident many years later he remarked how much the nation had improved in this respect; accepting in the 'thirties with alacrity the assigning of heavy taxation by the authorities when the crisis was far less evident than in 1920! All this was, in his opinion, evidence of the ripening of a sense of national responsibility in the minds of millions who had never known it before.

The gold value of the currency in circulation in December 1918 was about 670,000,000 gold francs: in 1923,

[1] The Boy Scouts of Cracow had collected by the outbreak of war 50,000 gold francs to build a Club-house. This money was banked until such time as something could be done with it. When taken out in 1921 it was worth half a guinea!

after much printing, it was one-eighth of that sum. Pauperisation stared everyone in the face. Efforts to meet this depreciation of values by a capital levy in 1922 had not succeeded. By the autumn of 1923 even the thick-skinned and confident reactionaries realised that something had to be done that would go to the root of the matter. Grabski was asked to form a government, and he accepted on the condition that he be given *ad hoc* dictatorial powers. These were at last given, and in a few months he had the situation in hand. He stopped all emission of currency, threw what gold the Treasury had on the market in order to scatter the speculators, and announced as the new unit of currency the zloty (whose value was to be one gold franc), for which the paper marks in circulation would be exchanged at a fixed rate. Finally, he founded the Bank of Poland. Turning to the State budget, he arranged to have it computed on a monthly basis, and was soon able to balance income and expenditure. The crisis was passed, confidence came back and the first stage of the struggle was over.

How much it cost, how many and diverse were the obstacles put in his way by individual and party interests, Grabski was to tell in a book published some years later. People wanted to travel, he said, using a metaphor, but they would not pay their way: compulsion had to be laid on all, and without leaving loop-holes of escape. Once this was done, the vast majority responded. Hoarders of dollars, Swiss francs, and other foreign money, had to surrender them, the interest of the nation triumphed over the selfishness of the few.

The victory was not yet certain. The zloty had been valued too highly for a country with cheap goods; it bought far more than the franc would buy in Switzerland. Before there had been too much money, now there was too little. The cost of producing goods went up, sales went down. Unemployment mounted, and a poor harvest in 1924 made the situation grave. The action of the Germans in 1925 in terminating the coal purchase agreement aggravated the whole. The balance of trade went wrong,

the zloty began to slip. Kemmerer of Princeton, when invited to make recommendations, found 'a crisis of confidence,' although the economic position was essentialy sound. The fault was to be sought rather in the wider sphere of politics; and by the spring of 1926 things had come to a head. Before discussing this, and the events of May, it need only be said that the real turn for the better came in the summer, when Poland got the northern European coal markets lost by the British during the General Strike. The realisation a year later of the Dillon Loan clinched things, making possible the stabilisation of the zloty at three fifths its gold value: a level it was to keep until the outbreak of war in 1939.

4

The spring of 1926 saw an attempt to come to grips with the constitutional issue. The men who carried out the *coup d'état* of 13th–15th May were by no means the only ones who knew that something had to be done. Every Prime Minister had found himself hampered in times of vital need by the unpredictable actions of the Parties, or their leaders; while Cabinet Ministers saw the work of their respective departments often no less obstructed. A striking example of this kind of thing had come in 1924, in the case of the radical Peasant leader, Stanislaw Thugutt. Offered the post of Foreign Minister by Premier Grabski, he was compelled by his Party (under pressure from Socialist members, who did not really belong there) to decline the task—for reasons that were far from convincing. Deeply hurt by this arbitrary action, Thugutt resigned his leadership of the party and published an open letter in which he told some plain truths out of his own experience about the way men, who should have known better, gloried in their opposition tactics, even when this meant sinning against the interests of the State. He went on to say that every Minister in office was hamstrung at times by fear of the Diet, of the Press, and of his own

subordinates. The result was that he was often unable to act with promptness and wisdom. The Diet had all the potentialities of a respectable legislature, but Party demands crippled its usefulness.

Scarcely less scathing criticism of the way the House was acting came from the other Peasant leader, Wincenty Witos, who had been twice Prime Minister. In the same year he published a pamphlet on State and social problems, in which he wrote:

> 'The Diet and the Parliament are a great conquest for democracy and for the people. In them are expressed the corporate will of the citizens, free and untrammelled. From the Diet should come law, government, dignity, weight, a good example for the country, and a high sense of responsibility. Unfortunately this does not happen. The Diet often forgets, and instead of harmony it fosters hatred, instead of working it wastes time in strife and quarrelling.'

Witos went on to say that the number of deputies was far too large. The diversity of parties, views and nationalities, the lack of experience, the flight from responsibility, the endless debate, the drawing of daily expense allowances whether work was on or not, the impossibility of dissolving the Houses without their permission, the complete subversion of any executive power, in particular of that of the President—all of these specific points were made in an indictment of the existing system that was based on direct experience with it. The way out, said the writer, was the strengthening of the powers of the President, in order that government might depend more upon him and less on the Diet. In addition Witos advocated electoral laws that would mean maturer members in the House, and fewer 'boys.'

He returned to this theme in another pamphlet, published in February 1926. Taking a critical view of the work of seven years in Parliament, he found that the House was not ripe for the kind of legislation, and the amount of it,

demanded by the new State. Moreover, the House was not consolidated, and it was badly led. The result was at times a sort of paralysis, at other times a readiness to take decisions that amounted almost to levity. At the end of his paper he put forward six points: The first of these called for a reinforcing of the presidential office, the third for a decreasing of the size of the House, the fifth for a strengthening of the powers of the Senate, and the sixth for a raising of the tone and competence of the civil service. He urged that the Diet take upon itself the effecting of these changes without delay, in any case before the time of its dissolution would come.

The early spring months of this year were an anxious time, as we have seen, because of the uncertain strength of the zloty, and the prospect of a deficit in the State budget. The atmosphere was somewhat relieved at the end of March by progress in the negotiations with Germany, and by the treaties concluded with Czechoslovakia a fortnight later. Then came, however, on the 24th April, the news of a German-Soviet Treaty signed in Berlin, calling up once more all the anxieties of Rappallo days. A joint note was addressed to the Powers by Beneš and Skrzynski, in which the prospect of Germany's coming into the League was noted with concern.

Skrzynski's coalition government was suddenly weakened by the desertion of the Labour-Socialist group; but in spite of this the budgets for May–June were accepted, and things looked more hopeful. True, the Prime Minister resigned on the 5th May, but he expressed the hope that another coalition would at once be formed. After five days of negotiation, Witos accepted the task of forming a government, to be supported by his own party as a sort of Centre, and by the Right. The Socialists demanded a dissolution and an appeal to the country.

The time had now come when Pilsudski, urged on by his former colleagues and resolved not to permit things to go on as they were, in a way he regarded as dangerous for the State, decided to act. He did not like Witos. The two

men were of totally different make-up: they came from wholly different backgrounds. Had they been able either earlier or even now to collaborate, the course of Polish history would have been different. Undoubtedly there was fault on both sides; and Pilsudski rebuffed Witos now, unable to forget and to forgive the alliance the latter had made in 1922–3 with National Democracy, which had forced his own withdrawal from public life.

We have seen already how much agreement there was between the Peasant leader and the former Socialist and military commander as to what needed to be done in the way of reforming the machinery of political life. They had the same love of their country, and both had similar long records of service in its interests. They could not agree as to the path to be taken to the goal. Witos was certainly optimistic in the proposal made in his pamphlet that the Diet (with its strong National Democratic wing) would reform itself in the direction of weakening its own powers. Pilsudski knew better. In his view little could be expected from the House as constituted. Something new would have to be created, if necessary by force!

The march on Warsaw followed. A few days of skirmishes and some bloodshed brought the resignation of the government and the President. The decisive part in the whole incident was played by the railway men, who showed their support of Pilsudski by allowing friendly troops to reach Warsaw, but stopping those coming to the support of the government. The Press had taken the usual line, the papers of the Right denouncing the sedition of the 'rebels,' while the Labour-Socialist daily welcomed the turnover, saying that now there would be 'a government of workers and peasants.' The Speaker of the Diet, M. Rataj of the Piast Party, who succeeded as acting president, conferred with Pilsudski, and a new Cabinet was soon formed with the Lwow professor, Casimir Bartel, as Prime Minister.

The National Assembly on meeting elected Pilsudski as President, but he declined the office. Thanking that body for 'the vote of confidence,' he said that he had no wish to

hold an office whose terms of reference were an absurdity. He asked for another election, and the result was the coming to the presidency of the distinguished professor of chemical engineering, Ignacy Moscicki. In a proclamation already issued, the nation was warned that law and order would be insisted on, and promised that a clearing up of the confusion in political life might be expected.

5

There is little doubt that Pilsudski could have assumed dictatorial powers had he so desired. In an interview given to Charles Sauerwein, however, he expressed his disbelief in absolutism. 'I cannot believe that Poland can be governed by the stick. . . . No, I am not in favour of a dictatorship in Poland.'

One thing was soon clear. Any of the existing Parties *plus* Pilsudski could command a majority support, whether in the House or in the country; on condition that the latter was willing to put the great authority of his person and prestige behind that particular Party and its 'idea' of Poland. This he was unwilling to do. During nine years he had matured into an exponent of the state-idea, which he conceived as something above Parties, or even without them, and he would not go back on this. His old colleagues of the Left had found that out in the very first weeks of independence; they learned it again now, and the Labour-Socialist Party, from supporting the May turnover, soon went again into opposition.

In his mistrust of the Parties and their intentions, Pilsudski had the sympathy of growing numbers in the nation. This fact gave him his chance. People trusted him, if they did at all, because they knew that with him words were followed by deeds. Nevertheless, he would have failed had the Parties been as strong as they pretended to be, or had they been able to act together. It soon became clear that adherents even of National Democracy wanted to see the new régime given a chance; while numbers of both

Socialist and Peasant groups announced their readiness to co-operate. As for the common man, in Poland as elsewhere he was more interested in having life made tolerable for him than in the question as to who was to do it. And the leaders of the new government were lucky. Already in June Poland doubled her coal export over the previous month, and the upward trend went on. The prophets of disaster, and there had been many both within and without the country (notably in Germany) were left gasping. The new State entered on four years of prosperity, of the sort no one could imagine at the time. His critics said that, once again, 'Pilsudski was lucky!'

But he had little—too little—interest in the economic side of affairs. He was dreaming of a political system in which not the left-overs of the pre-war Party groupings would be responsible for action; but something new—a Polish Party, composed if possible of people who had up till then kept out of the stream of controversy, and who would support him personally. On the 22nd of July an Enabling Bill was accepted by the House, which made possible the operation of the Budget after five months of debate, whether it was accepted by the House or not. The same Bill provided that the House could be dissolved by the President if he had the whole Cabinet behind him; and it gave the President the right to promulgate Decrees with the force of law during such times as the House was not in session. Always provided, of course, that they did not traverse the Constitution.

Not that the path was easy. The opposition of the Right was unbroken, and the Peasant fractions shared the sense of rebuff given their leader in May. At the end of September Pilsudski had himself to become Premier, and he succeeded in getting a Cabinet that could count on support in the House. It included Bartel, Zaleski, and the younger man, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, who had won a name as the creator of the new seaport of Gdynia. It also included a Labour man and two Conservatives—independents, of course; who felt that the efforts being made to improve the

political system deserved their support. This only made the attitude of the traditional Parties more irreconcilable, and led as we shall see to consolidation of their forces. Meanwhile Pilsudski pursued his long-range plans.

He himself went to Nieświez, the ancient home of the Radziwills, where he met a gathering of the nobility and discussed possibilities of collaboration. At his suggestion, Premier Bartel made a visit in Lodzh, in order to confer with the textile industrialists. Everyone, without regard to station or creed, was welcomed as a partner in the new venture. Only those were left alone, who held stubbornly to their Party allegiance. Disturbed at the way things were going, the National Democratic leaders got together and formed a 'Camp of Greater Poland.' The purpose was the saving of the nation, which, said their Press, was 'crumbling.'

As it turned out, nothing was crumbling. Though with much skirmishing, the business of the House was done, and the year 1927 gave a level of prosperity unknown heretofore. By the autumn the framework of a new Party had been effected. It was to be known as the Non-Party Bloc for Co-operation with the Government—B.B. for short. To it belonged people of Left, Centre and Right convictions, who had lost their faith in the historic Parties. They prepared their platform for impending elections; and their cause was materially helped in December by a Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Church, which urged on the faithful the need for unity, and advised against either boycotting elections or scattering their votes over many Party groupings.

The elections followed in March 1928, the first since November 1922. There was one main issue—for or against the new order of things. The Non-Party Bloc won 135 seats (nearly one-third of the House), chiefly at the expense of the Centre and the Right. On the other hand, the Labour-Socialists and the Liberation (radical Peasant) group gained forty mandates, and now had 105 seats. The Jews lost seats, but the Ukrainians doubled their representation. In the Senate elections, held a week later, the Non-Party

Bloc got 49 seats out of 111, while the Right and the Centre were almost wiped out. Out of 11,400,000 votes cast for the Diet, the Non-Party Bloc got 2,400,000; nearly twice as many as the Socialists and more than three times as many as the Witos Party.

The Socialist leader, Daszynski, was elected Speaker of the House, but the B.B. people got their candidate as Speaker in the Senate. The general policy of those seeking for change had been endorsed, but there was still no majority. Pilsudski resigned as Premier at the end of June, and used the occasion to castigate the methods of the House as not democracy but rather a travesty on it. Such sentiments were regarded by the Party leaders as a personal affront, and not even the kernel of truth in them was taken to heart. What mattered to the nation was that events were fighting for the Marshal. Both at home and abroad Poland's position had improved out of recognition since 1926—the strongest argument known to the common man. Once again it looked as though 'nothing succeeds like success,' but there were many who thought the price too great.

6

The end of the year was marked by a political event of no small importance: one which, had it been organic in its foundations, could have promised much for the future. Six Parties of the Centre and the Left, including the Peasant Groups, National Labour and the Socialists, decided on a merger in opposition to the Bloc, and tabled a motion of lack of confidence. When they got the support of the Right, and even the sympathy of the Minorities, the fate of the Cabinet was sealed. Bartel became Prime Minister for the fifth time; in the hopes that some sort of compromise might be possible, by which some of the Parties might be willing to collaborate in the work of revising the Constitution. The hope, however, was soon seen to be vain.

Some merger of the forces of the Centre and the Left had long been dictated by events, and great expectations

were attached to it. Everything that had gone wrong since May 1926 was to be put right. At that time the Liberation Group, hostile to the pact Witos had made years before with the National Democrats in order to get the Bill for Land Reform accepted, had been more than half way sympathetic with the action of Pilsudski. A number of men who had 'belonged' to this Group for a decade now went over openly to the Non-Party Bloc, some of them destined to play prominent parts in later events. We have seen above how the Labour-Socialist Party had welcomed the turnover, promising themselves at last what they had not achieved eight years earlier; and Daszynski published a booklet, *The Greatest Man in Poland*. Not for long, however. Within a year both Liberation and Socialist leaders had become disillusioned. Pilsudski had gone to Nieświeź. He had resolved not to make use of the support of any of the traditional Parties but rather to pass them by—a mark either of disapproval or of disregard. Such treatment could not be taken lying down; a worthy reply was necessary.

In company with those of the Piast Group, National Labour and Christian Democracy, the deputies of these two Groups met in the spring of 1930, and decided to call a Joint Congress for the month of June in Cracow, with the watchword, 'The Fight for Legality.' It was a historic meeting, in itself a proof that Poland was not totalitarian. Strong resolutions were passed, after much speaking, condemning the whole policy of the government, demanding the restoration of its due rights to parliament, and even asking for the resignation of the President! A resolution particularly disliked by the régime, and made the basis for punitive measures against those who supported it, was to the effect that no foreign loan incurred by the administration could count on being honoured when a truly democratic government was again in office. Called 'for the defence of law and liberty,' this Cracow Congress marked out the Centre-Left merger as the gathering point of opposition forces in case of a coming general election.

The House was dissolved in August. Those seeking

a revision of the Constitution realised that they were making no headway, so they resolved to appeal again to the nation. Elections were announced for November. There seemed to be only one issue—for or against the Marshal and his policies. When declared, the results of the ballot showed striking gains for the government: they had won 247 seats, an absolute majority in the House. The Centre and the Left had dropped from 166 mandates to 92. Out of 15,000,000 votes cast the Non-Party Bloc were said to have received 5,300,000, while the Centre-Left merger got under 2,000,000. (Charges of falsifying the returns were made openly, and they seem to have some truth in them; but the general trend was unmistakable.)

On the face of things the administration could regard this result as a resounding proof of the confidence of the country in its doings, even though the two-thirds majority necessary for the revision of the Constitution had not been realised. But the price paid for victory was serious. At high summer, ostensibly for the part they had taken in the Cracow Congress, and in general for the campaign they were carrying on, a number of Opposition leaders—including the former Premier Witos, were arrested, and without trial sent to the fortress of Brest Litowsk. Others followed, until nearly ninety people active in political work for the Parties had been deprived of their liberty. To make matters worse, they were subjected to various indignities while in prison—a thing unheard of in Polish public life until now. Among the victims were veteran fighters for liberation like the Silesian leader, Korfanty, and the Socialist advocate, Liebermann. Those who had declared their candidature in time were not prevented from standing for the House, and some of them won their seats; but they were effectively prevented from taking any part in the campaign. Later on, eleven of them were tried on various charges, and sentences of imprisonment were passed on the more eminent ones. Korfanty and Witos, while out on bail, escaped over the boundary, and spent the rest of the decade in exile in Czechoslovakia. They returned home just

after the seizure of Prague by the Nazis, and after temporary arrest were given their freedom.

It was notable that the great mass of the nation, in part owing to intimidation, received the news of these arrests without evincing much or any indignation; while the intelligentsia, in particular university circles, saw in them a betrayal of everything the constitution stood for. Firm protests were made, and of various kinds; but the government made light of them, proceeding with its work as usual. Such justification for the whole affair as could be had was found in the impatience of Pilsudski and his colleagues with those who spent their time picking roses (as the proverb has it), while the forests were on fire! Poland had been treated by German leaders to a series of provocative utterances: was the nation to take them lying down? Or was it to be made clear that the nation was solidly behind the régime, even though the latter was not perfect? What may now be suggested is that the Non-Party Bloc would probably have won a still bigger success had their opponents been left in peace. As it was, the majority was barely enough to ensure freedom of action in ordinary business. Such treatment of opponents in election time could only be construed as a sign of anxiety, or even of weakness.

These elections, says Buell, 'mark the end of the parliamentary régime in Poland, and the disappearance of an independent legislature. Pilsudski became absolute master of the country; and while the opposition Parties still had their representatives in the House, these were powerless.' This view is perhaps an extreme one, but no one can deny that the seeds were sown on this occasion that led to an undesirable harvest later. The first decade of political life in the new Poland ended with a move in the direction of consolidation of the executive power—that was good in itself: but it also ended with a gesture of contempt for things sanctified by the constitution, and that was not so good. Most people passed it by unconcerned, but the few who counted (because they saw underneath) began to be anxious for the future.

CHAPTER XI

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS—II

IT would be very convenient to divide the twenty years of independence into almost equal halves at the year 1930; saying 'Until now Poland was a democracy, but from now onward it was not!' Unfortunately, things are never so simple as that; least of all the complicated machinery of national structure and policy, in which outside forces play no small part. At most then, one can assert that the spirit and forms of parliamentary government were maintained until 1930 to an extent to which they did not prevail after that date, and when not even lip service was paid to them by those in authority. It is not true to say that everything was democratic for eleven years, but that afterwards everything was reversed.

I

Although enjoying on paper a generous, even extreme, measure of free institutions, the republic of Poland did not realise nearly all of them in practice. The chief reason for this lay in the fact that too many Poles regarded the commonwealth as a sort of Joint Stock Company, of which the majority of shares were in Polish hands. Many of them, however, were in non-Polish hands. All the shareholders profited from their dividends, but in the meetings that decided on plans and policy, only the Poles were to be allowed to play a deciding part! Put another way: the republic was a mansion, in which the Poles were owners and masters, the non-Poles on the other hand tenants, or paying guests. It has even been charged that not all of the tenants had equal rights: Germans and Ukrainians could do things that were not permitted to Jews!

Metaphors are never perfect, and they should be used with care; but, when rightly taken, they do help one to

understand situations. The process of ripening toward conditions in which democracy could be realised had gone far in Polish lands during the 19th century, but not far enough. Still too few people had been reached, and of those who were leading too many were at heart undemocratic. There were too many Catholics in Poland suspicious of all non-Catholics, and unwilling to concede the possibility that a non-Catholic might be elected President! The time had not yet come when Polish teams could plan 'internationals' with Ukrainian teams, and the crowd accept a defeat without worrying about 'the national honour.'[1]

As a corollary of this, though there were no doubt other considerations as well, the plans made and the promises given in 1922 in the matter of autonomy for the provinces whose majority was Ukrainian were never carried out. It was no doubt implied by the terms of the Constitution of 1921, but in the face of the attitude taken toward all non-Polish groups in the republic by the National Democratic element, no government was ever strong enough to put such a scheme into force. Not that the Ukrainians themselves were always helpful, or always reasonable; and much of the suspicion attached to them was the result of their own hostility to things Polish. Nor can it be said that they were as a group always treated badly, while Poles were treated well. But one thing is clear: the general situation was not ripe on either side for realising the highest and most difficult form of social control known to man.

But there were other ways in which not even the first decade of Polish independence was quite democratic. One of them was the inability, or unwillingness, of the Party leaders to work together for the common good: to arrive at the indispensable compromise in regard to secondary issues which are always necessary if primary issues are not to be disregarded—unless by a flight into some form of absolutism. As suggested elsewhere in these pages, demo-

[1] Notable, however, is the fact that this fine position was achieved in regard to Jewish teams, not to mention boxers and tennis players.

cratic government is a game, and one of the rules of games is that the rules must be kept. Otherwise there is no game. Democracy demands rule by the majority, but with the minority accepting that rule even though they may not like it. This means compromise, and often a good deal of waiting before evils are done away.

A third respect in which Poland failed to arrive at true democracy concerns local self-government. No adequate decentralisation of administrative duties was achieved, such as would lighten the burdens of the central Ministries, while putting responsibility for local matters where it should rest, i.e. on the shoulders of the local people. Only thus can the dangers of bureaucracy be avoided. Only thus can the people of a certain district be made to feel that they are partners in what is going on, and are not merely 'subjects.' Officials sent in from outside cannot be wholly dispensed with; but the less they are in evidence the better for the tone and temper of the nation.

On the other hand, it must be said that in a very large part of the republic this ideal was attained, and with admirable results. In other very considerable areas it was not even attempted. There were, of course, quite good reasons for this; but they were not good enough. To decentralise administration, placing more responsibility in the hands of local people would have meant taking risks, but not to do so involved worse things. Even if there were 'uncertain elements' in some parts of the country, the thing to do was to diagnose this evil and set about removing it. Some brave experiments were made in this direction, but not always by the right people. For their success more time was needed, and a better atmosphere in the whole of Europe.

Reversely, it will not do to say that there was nothing left of democracy in Poland after 1930. Undoubtedly there were those in official circles, some of them quite sincere men, who wanted to see an end of it; but they could not, and did not, get their way. Such a move would have meant the reversal of the national struggle for a hundred and fifty

years, and most of the Party leaders, whatever their differences on other points, were united in a resolve never to surrender on this point.

They could not, however, safely force the issue and seek a decision, in the way other nations in Europe might have done so, and for a two-fold reason. Early in the 'thirties the prospects of a Nazi-controlled Germany began to take shape, and the same years saw Poland, along with the rest of Europe, hit very hard by the economic depression. Either of these alone would have counselled temporising: the combination of the two compelled caution, and passive rather than active political resistance.

As will be said elsewhere, the Poles could not allow themselves at any time the risks of internal dissension, if only because they had neighbours waiting for the chance to profit from it. Support of the existing government, even if it was disliked, was therefore an imperative of the hour. In the same way, something like a united effort to battle with the depression was forced upon all, regardless of whether the policy of those in power was necessarily the best one or not. As can be seen to-day, the government was guilty of mistakes, both of commission and of omission: but it did have a policy, and tided the republic over a difficult time in a way that won the approval of competent outside observers.

As grounds for my statement that democracy did not disappear in Poland after 1930, I suggest the following:

(i) The fact that the forms of parliamentary usage were preserved, that there was thus provided a forum for the ventilation of grievances, that the Parties were not dissolved but continued (though under difficulties) to carry on their work, and that the Diet still exercised a large measure of control over the purse-strings of the nation. Where such conditions obtain, there can be no talk of totalitarianism.

(ii) The fact that the Press, including the Party organs, was allowed a great deal of freedom for the discussion of public issues, and that this was used—in some cases even abused—to the full. It is quite true that a Censorship did

exist, and that cases of unjust treatment increased as time went on: but it is also true that this Censorship was often stupid rather than stern, and that in the long run the daily and other papers did say what they wanted to say.

(iii) The readiness with which the masses responded to special appeals made by the authorities in time of crisis: of which the striking examples were the State Loans of 1933 and 1938. At such times the Parties lent their fullest support, regardless of constitutional issues; and without their help the results obtained would have been far less imposing.

(iv) The energy and skill with which both supporters and opponents of the government entered into 'combined operations' to deal with the economic crisis: supporting the plans for stern retrenchment in expenditure, for a cutting off of imports not only of luxury articles, but even of things that were needed, for the encouragement of thrift, and for heavier taxation. In all this again, while reserving their right of criticism, the Parties pulled their weight, and refrained from anything that would hamper the course of recovery.

(v) The fact that the Trades Unions were not interfered with, even those that were Socialist in sentiment: institutions that exercised a strong influence both in town and country, and were to a large extent opposed to the policy of those in power.

(vi) The fact that, in the same way, the Co-operatives continued to develop—all of them private enterprises, and to a large extent not in sympathy with the existing régime.

(vii) The fact that, notably in the western provinces, the local government authorities were rarely interfered with, even though they were in very large measure in the hands of people belonging to the National Democratic tradition, and rootedly opposed to the Pilsudski and post-Pilsudski administration.

To these points one could add the continued independence of the courts of law, the internal freedom of administration enjoyed by the various Churches—Catholic,

Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish—the right to strike enjoyed by workers, and used whenever they had a real grievance, and many other less general but scarcely less significant details. Grievances there were, stupid things were done, cases of injustice to individuals or groups were too common—let this be admitted. But they were the exception, not the rule. In the light of history, they will be judged of small importance, by comparison with what was going on in other countries not far away.

2

Thus it came about that, although, as we shall see, the Constitution of March 1935 was put through by a ruse, and was fiercely contested by the Opposition leaders, it was accepted by the nation more with a sense of relief than of resentment. Only the Franchise regulations that were added later were denounced as acceptable to no one. The antagonism was directed rather at those who sponsored the Constitution than at the document itself. This antagonism grew in proportion as it became clear that those in power were getting more and more out of touch with the electorate; and were not only indifferent to all criticism, but even resented it.

As the decade advanced the political atmosphere ceased to be one of goodwill, or even of respect towards 'His Majesty's loyal Opposition.' It became one of uncertainties, of fear, and of reprisals against those who did not conform. Seen in the rosiest of colours, the administration was one of paternalism. It was perhaps well-meaning, it was often disinterested, and in many respects it served the public interest: but it said, or at least implied, that the common people were still apprentices; that they needed still to learn what was good for them, whereas 'we know already.' Viewed more critically, it seemed to say that all who had tried to govern in the past had only bungled things: they had been guilty of serious sins both of commission and of omission: by their incapacity, or their caprices, they

were reducing the State, whose liberation had been so hardly won, to a condition of helplessness analagous to that of the 18th century. This judgment was, of course, too severe; and it was rendered dangerous by the compliment those in power were constantly paying themselves, viz. that *they* alone were competent to save and nurture the State. Only people who are actually supermen have the right to take this line.

Hence the errors of the 'thirties. They began with the incarceration of the Party leaders. Then came the 'pacification' of the provinces of the south-east, with their large Ukrainian majority; an action that may have seemed necessary, but which left behind it a long trail of resentment. Next must be mentioned the fact of the concentration camp at Bereza: a mild enough institution by comparison with those of Nazi or Fascist lands, but a blot on the scutcheon of Poland none the less. Of a different sort were the franchise laws added as a rider to the March Constitution of 1935, which deprived the Parties of the last shred of influence they possessed over legislature and executive. Finally, the symptoms of a police régime, cropping up at various places and times, which were as much disliked by most of those making use of it as by the victims. In spirit and method the Polish police had got clear away from the hated atmosphere of a *gendarmerie*; now, however, one noticed that in the place of obedience to the police as the guardian of public peace there crept in fear of him as the watch-dog of 'order.' Even when the administration was sincerely concerned to recover something of its contacts with the nation as a whole, its agencies were doing nearly everything possible to make that desired aim impossible.

It speaks much for the morale and optimism of the Poles that, in spite of the difficulties, they maintained unbounded loyalty toward the state, toward the army, and for the most part toward the foreign policy of the government. In a way this very fact was a trap; since the support given to those in power was often dictated by the international tension,

and the possible danger to the republic, far more than by any enthusiasm for internal policies or actions. When the danger became acute in 1938 there was no dissenting voice from the general resolve to bury the hatchet in regard to Party politics, and to rally to a man behind the government. With the exception of the Germans, even the Minorities associated themselves with this decision.

3

The Non-Party Bloc, on the strength of its success in the 1930 elections, addressed itself to the task of government in the conviction that it was 'called' to that work. The Opposition elements, notably the Centre-Left merger, settled down with no less firmly resolved convictions to a policy of obstruction and criticism. The former were faced with two main issues: the drafting and carrying through of a revision of the Constitution of 1921, and the weathering of the economic storm, known as the Great Depression. In both of these fields, it desired the collaboration of the Parties, but only in the second did it have even a passive type of assistance. The credit, or the blame, for both achievements must therefore go mainly to those who stood with the Pilsudski régime.

The Centre-Left merger stood stoutly by the principles declared in their April 1930 pronouncement. The Diet, they said, was no longer an open forum, but a closed assembly. Public opinion could no longer find expression there, so other ways and means had to be found. In any case, the time for standing idly by had passed. The 'dictatorship' must be done away with, and forms of government found that were in line with the constitution! Nevertheless, as time went on, the driving power of the merger faded out. The elections did not show any real confidence in it, even on the part of people who should normally have supported it. The differences that were traditional between the Socialist and the Peasant philosophies of life tended to grow rather than to dis-

appear. There was too little resolve on the part of the leaders to find a common ground. The Socialists were patriots, but they were not nationalist. Anxious for the separation of Church and State, they looked with mistrust on the religious attachments of most of the Peasant elements. They were the only Party which always viewed sympathetically the claims of the Minorities to full recognition as citizens: just as they were the only Party in whose ranks Jews felt really at home. On the other hand, the Peasant Party had almost nothing of class mentality in its make-up. Their radical wing had many things in common with Labour, but it was much younger and weaker in volume than the Piast group. The latter, as we have seen, was more than once found in alliance with the Nationalist Right, with consequent disaster (as many felt) to the real interests of the masses. Finally, nothing in the world could reconcile the Peasant masses to anything like a Marxist view of the world; while in one form or another this doctrine played a strong rôle in the programmes of the Left.

It need not surprise us then that while the Centre-Left merger went to pieces under the shock of the elections, something else was achieved, less ambitious, but more likely to be fruitful and permanent. At a joint Congress held in 1931 the three Peasant Groups decided to unite in a single Populist Party.

At the end of 1930 the deputies representing the three existing groups in the Diet met and formed a Joint Committee, which summoned a united convention for the following March. By a resolution that was carried unanimously, it was decided to effect a union of all the Peasant political forces in the country—something that was at least ten years overdue. The new organisation took the name *Ludowcy*, in literal English, 'Folk,' usually called 'Populist.'

The programme of the now united Populist Party was not conceived on any class lines, but was offered as a common platform for action by the whole nation. In

this it may have been too ambitious, but the approach was sound.

> 'The Populist Party places in the forefront the providing of solid foundations for our existence as a State, by ensuring not only Poland's security and power as a State, but also order and system at home.'

As means to the former were envisaged a strong army, alliances for defence, and co-operation with existing agencies for collective security, e.g. the League of Nations. As guarantees of the latter, the Convention demanded a democratic framework in which a strong executive could function, without, however, jeopardising the rights and liberties of the individual citizen. Not the use of force, but the reign of law, should be the criterion of all political action; with a Diet responsible to the people, and an administration deriving its powers from the Diet. Special reference was made to the need for improving the calibre and morale of the civil service, and for more effective local self-government. This programme was solemnly reaffirmed in the summer of 1935, and again at the mass gathering at Nowosielce in 1936.[1]

By way of reinforcing this action, a meeting was held in February 1936 at Morges, Paderewski's home in Switzerland, at which were present the host, Witos himself, General Sikorski, Korfanty, and General Haller. Out of this meeting came what was known as 'Front Morges,' which issued proclamations challenging the right of the 'successors' of Pilsudski to monopolise the power in Poland, and lead the country into byways, with obvious perils for all. Above all, it warned against any collusion in international affairs with Nazi Germany.

4

But we must return to the work of those in power in Warsaw after 1930, and their efforts to deal with the two

[1] This great demonstration, at which Marshal Smigly-Rydz was present, should have served the government as a warning, but it did not. The reasons for this are a long story.

main tasks mentioned above. In the struggle with the depression, the government had the support of everyone; not only because of self-interest in the material sphere, but also because of the series of anti-Polish demonstrations just staged by official German leaders on or near the frontier. After years of unofficial demands for 'revision,' Weimar Germany went over to something more direct. It all culminated in the declaration of the one-time Minister, Herr Treviranus, in the Reichstag, which was tantamount to an open demand for a return of the territories ceded to Poland in 1919.

The need for close attention to the menace of financial distress, and for a trimming of sails of the ship of state in the hope of riding out the storm was conceded by all. In the winter of 1930–1 the number of unemployed had risen to 380,000 (a figure that by no means included the undefined field of 'hidden' unemployment); and although it declined in the next year, it was still grave. Both general and local organisations were set on foot to alleviate the suffering; but no palliatives could really help. Action of another sort was necessary, and when taken it revealed a high sense of responsibility and wisdom on the part of those at the helm.

Realising that there were lean years ahead, the government put out a general call for 'austerity,' and itself set an example. In 1928–9 public revenue had passed the 3,000 million mark, while expenditure was some five per cent. less. By 1932–3 the revenue was down to 2,200 millions, and in the following year to 2,000 millions. In both these years, although cut sharply, expenditure was still ten per cent. above these amounts, and a growing deficit was the result. This deficit was met by certain reserves left over from the good years, in part by the issuing of Treasury Bills, and in part by a successful Internal Loan. But all this would have been ineffectual had not stern measures been taken to cut imports. People were told that they would be required to do without many things brought in from abroad, and make do with those grown at home. The

following table, especially the second column, shows the effects of this:

	Exports	*Imports*
	(*in millions of zlotys*)	
1929	2,813	3,111
1930	2,433	2,246
1931	1,879	1,468
1932	1,084	862
1933	960	827

Unable to sell abroad, the nation accepted with the best grace possible the fact that they could not buy abroad. Only from 1936 onwards did the figures rise again above 1,000 millions, but from then the improvement was unbroken.

This policy of retrenchment was not popular, and in certain respects it worked hardships. We may pass over the fact that it deprived many people of things they had come to look on as necessities of life; the grumbling that ensued mattered little. But the cutting of government expenditure, notably in a country where there was still much reconstruction work still unfinished, meant that much less money was available for needed public works, for what the Poles call 'investments.' (The total outlay of all kinds was well above 5,000 millions in the last of the good years: five years later it was barely 4,000 millions.) Looking back after ten years, one may criticise the administration for not having been bolder in the way of creating credits, and finding public employment on state enterprises for the idle. Actually, the ordeal was borne with very little resentment; the nation reacted very differently to the demands laid upon it from the line taken in 1920; even in the tightest times it proved its ability to practise thrift.

An example of this self-discipline, as well as of confidence in the régime, was the response made early in September 1933 to the challenge of a National Loan. It came just after M. Slawek, the leader of the Non-Party Bloc, had explained in public the nature of his plans for

revising the Constitution. It also came shortly after the Second Convention signed by Poland with the U.S.S.R. and their smaller neighbours, the Act defining an 'aggressor.' In view of this, the results of the subscription—nearly three times the 120,000,000 zlotys asked for—were taken by the government to mean that they had the backing of the rank and file in their work. True, there was some pressure put upon civil servants (an already formidable body of wage-earners), and upon industry. But even that was admitted to be better than the tottering of the public credit that might soon have come, had this fund not been available to meet the shortage of regular revenues.[1]

5

Meanwhile, the other and no less crucial task of the government had gone forward: the preparation of the revised Constitution. The years immediately following the 1930 elections saw little progress. Neither the Nationalists, nor the Peasant Party, nor the Labour-Socialist wing of the Opposition were willing to collaborate: the first because of their traditional unwillingness to assist in consolidating powers for people in any way associated with Pilsudski: the last because, having from the start objected to an upper House, they could not now share in work that was meant to strengthen the prerogatives of that Chamber. In consequence of this attitude, the Non-Party Bloc had to get on with the work themselves.

The end in view had been put by the Marshal in terms that tallied almost completely with those of M. Witos, as given above:

> 'When I look at the history of my country, I do not believe that it can be governed by coercion. I do not like coercion. Our generation is not perfect, but it has some

[1] A similarly encouraging result was achieved by the Air Defence loan five years later, though the Government was less popular than ever.

right to consideration. The next generation will be still better.

'Parliamentary chicanery only holds up the attaining of essential solutions. We are living in a legislative chaos. My country inherited the laws and regulations of three states, and still new ones have been added. This must all be simplified by giving the President full authority. I do not say that we must imitate the United States of America, where the great power of the central authority is balanced by the autonomy of the various states. But we must find something in this field that can be applied to Poland.'

On the 4th March 1931 the Diet considered the draft of a revised Constitution as presented by the Non-Party Bloc, but there was no prospect of getting a two-thirds majority. Before it came up again, Hitler had become master of Germany, and every neighbour knew that it must consider itself in 'a state of emergency' from now on. Early in August 1933 a fresh step was taken, when the Head of the Commission, M. Stanislaw Car (pron. Tsar) laid before the members of the Bloc from both Houses the fruits of his latest work. A few days later, the Head of the Non-Party Bloc, M. Slawek, made his since-famous speech to the ex-service men (the Legionaries); in which he reiterated the points made by the Marshal, and then went on to explain his ideas about a change in the manner of electing the Senate. In part it would be nominated by the President, in part elected by a chosen body of a few hundred thousand voters—a sort of élite of the nation. To this new body, which would be an aristocracy of brains and experience in public affairs, powers would be given that would place it on equality with the lower House.

Public opinion in the main was not hostile. Many people took the view, 'It's worth trying! Let's see how it will work!' But there was widespread feeling that everything would depend on what sort of an élite would emerge; and whether it would have the interests of the State and the

nation at heart, or those of only a part. In particular, would it be so shaped as to make it only a pillar of the existing order?

On the 20th December the revised plan was laid before the House, and debating began. A month later the Constitutional Commission adopted a draft of 63 articles, entitled 'Constitutional Theses,' but the House, knowing that the needed majority could not be obtained, refused to take it seriously. In a session on the 26th January, after M. Car had expounded the Theses in a long speech, the spokesman for the Nationalists announced rejection, and he with his supporters left the Chamber. Socialist criticisms followed, and the debate was wound up for the government by the well-known lawyer, Waclaw Makowski. His main contention was that, so far from wanting to establish a dictatorship, the wish of the sponsors was to make democratic institutions effective.

The sitting was suspended, but resumed a quarter of an hour later. M. Car rose, and said that the absence of the Opposition proved clearly their lack of interest in what was going on. He therefore proposed the adoption by the House of the Theses. The protests of Professor Stronski, who was in the Chamber, were overruled; and at the instance of the Speaker a standing vote was taken. It was almost unanimous. The Speaker then announced that, in conformity with Article 125 of the Constitution, the Bill was passed by the necessary majority. Second and third Readings followed forthwith, and the struggle was over. The Bill had still to go to the Senate, but in the Upper House the majority was assured. This vote was not taken until the following January (1935); and on coming back to the Diet for confirmation the revised Constitution was passed on the 23rd March by a vote of 260 to 139.

Speeches by Car and Slawek reviewed afresh the grounds for the revision, and the ends in view. The former made it clear that those responsible for the well-being of the republic had sought to steer a middle course between two extremes: the keeping of Parliamentary usages, even though

somewhat improved, and the sort of thing to be found in totalitarian countries. Only a government able to act with authority could hope to save the State under existing circumstances. The alternative was a lapsing into habits and methods that had been ruinous for Poland in the past.

> 'The new Constitution appears as an attempt to solve the problems of State structure by a method based on the conscious collaboration of the citizens, in accordance with the classic principle, *Salus reipublicæ suprema lex*!'

I have dwelt at some length on the sequence of events connected with this revision of the system of government, because they reveal the good and the bad features of public affairs in the last years of Pilsudski's life. They also show to what straits people are sometimes driven in order to get something important done. The Opposition had been tricked, but the procedure was not actually illegal. Their press was eloquent with indignation, but again the man in the street was glad rather than annoyed. The long struggle was over, and things that seemed more related to everyday life could now be taken in hand. There were of course those who made the mistake of saying, 'Any alteration is welcome, so long as we do not go on as before!'

But now people asked, 'Who are to be the executors of the New Deal?' In disinterested hands it was capable of much good; and did not in itself threaten any mischief. But in the hands of politicians, always subject to the likes and dislikes common to man, and in this case known to be disposed to divide the nation into 'our people' and 'their people,' it could work grave harm. In the Opposition view this was a foregone conclusion: the sequel was to show that in a large measure they were right.

They were right mostly because those in power (notably after the passing of Marshal Pilsudski in May 1935) became more and more concerned to remain there. Partly also, however, because the longer those in power remained, the more out of touch with the nation did they become. This was seen in the autumn elections carried out according to

the new Franchise Laws. By way of protesting against all that had happened, and in particular these laws, which excluded them from any voice in choosing candidates, the Parties announced a boycott. In consequence only 45 per cent. of those eligible went to the polls; while of those who did the vast majority supported the régime. The new House, numbering only 208 members instead of 444, contained no Opposition at all. The government regarded the outcome as a 'victory,' while the Party Press replied that those who abstained from voting thereby registered their disapproval. A large part of the government support came from the Minorities, who did not join the boycott.

The boycotting of elections is not a constructive way of building democracy. But even if one blames the Parties for their decision, the fact remains that the administration should have taken warning—which they did not. Everything went on as before, a good deal of constructive work being mixed up with measures that gave serious cause for concern. At the end of October 1936, M. Slawek announced the dissolution of the Non-Party Bloc, on the ground that since Party politics had been abandoned on principle its work was done. Neither he nor others realised, apparently, that by so doing he broke the last link that connected the government in any living way with the people. Before long this was realised, and efforts were made by others, of whom Slawek did not approve, to restore the loss by the forming of a National Unity Camp, more or less on the lines of the Bloc. They failed, partly owing to poor leadership, but chiefly because the figure of the Marshal was no longer there, and people were not attracted to the example being set by some of his successors. One wonders whether Slawek, one of the noblest of the older men associated with the Legions and their work, did not take his own life early in 1939 because he realised too late the unworthiness of those whom he himself had helped to entrust with such extended power and authority.

6

Reference has been made above (p. 155) to the way in which, based on the fame won by the Legions in wartime, and reinforced by the personality and prestige of 'the Commander' (as his followers always called the Marshal), a single group of men felt themselves called by destiny to play a part in the guiding of the nation that was in many ways notable and praiseworthy, but in others fraught with the gravest dangers. Reviving the old-time slogan of the gentry, '*Polska to my!*' (Poland—we are it!), these mostly younger men, coming in the main from the High Schools and Universities, but also from every kind of occupation, saw themselves linked together in a sort of brotherhood; and in time laid claim to rights and responsibilities to which they were not entitled. One should, nevertheless, seek to understand the spirit and purposes of these people. They saw how in 1914 many of their older contemporaries remained unenthused by the prospects of national liberation —in some cases even apathetic to them. They watched the ways in which many of those older people showed their open antipathy to all direct action taken by Poles for the recovery of independence. And they reacted in the way youth in wartime ought to react.

To the 'realists,' of whom not a few were what we should call to-day 'appeasers,' the fire and devotion of the Legionaries during the war years were as unpalatable as was their unrest and concern during the first period of liberation. The matter-of-fact way, not to mention the traditional lines, on which the Parties worked and debated in the early 'twenties was bitter to these men. They said in effect, 'This is not the Poland we shed our blood for!' and in so saying they had the sympathy of hundreds of thousands who had never carried a weapon. Some of them remained in the new Polish army, others entered one or another form of public service; while still others returned to private life; almost none, however, to business or industry. In time,

however, it was noted that many of them found secure and comfortable posts.

They shared Pilsudski's anxiety about the way things were going; not because they were militarily minded, for they were 'amateur' soldiers, but because they had learned that if you want to have omelettes you must break eggs. The reasons for this have been made clear to the reader already. What is more, in the welter of rather ill-defined political tensions, they as a group showed a resolution and a homogeneity of purposes that promised results, should they enter political life. Finally, by contrast with the existing Parties they had no pre-war past to hamper them. Of them at least it could be said that they knew only one Poland; the Partitions were dead and gone forever in their minds.

The decision of the 'Commander,' as Chief of State, to break with his former Party affiliations appealed to them. They watched with mounting resentment his being forced out of public life in 1923, and before long it became clear that some at least were urging him not to break with a prospect of return. They formed an inner circle of supporters; and they knew how many millions of the nation were waiting for someone to take charge in whom they could have confidence. That 'someone' could only be Pilsudski, who on the strength of his services to the national cause enjoyed a reputation that no Polish leader had enjoyed since Kosciuszko. He was known as a man who did not stop with words, but at once went over to deeds. To use the phrase of Wundt, for the Marshal 'an ounce of action was worth more than all theorising.'

Almost any group of seriously minded men and women, when combined with the prestige of the Marshal, could have taken any powers they desired in the spring of 1926. Older by a decade than they had been in the days of the Legions, these people had been through a stern schooling; and they were not prepared to see the treasure won so hardly thrown away by mismanagement. Idealism had sent them to fight ten years before; idealism, combined with

a large dose of realism, bade them now essay the field of politics. Success had attended their earlier efforts; it would not forsake them now! They proceeded to take advantage, as I have said before, of a sort of vacuum existing owing to the fact that the Parties would not work together, and from May 1926 they became the rulers of Poland.

A new type of intelligentsia was thus proclaiming itself, different in character and methods from those of pre-war days. Most of those belonging to it had come from the Left; but as time went on they gravitated rather in the direction of vested interests. Approaching middle age and the assurance of not badly paid posts did their work, modifying if not corrupting the radicalism of younger days. What is more, there soon gathered around them not only disinterested people, eager to serve the nation, but also men and women seeking careers, and mindful rather of their own fortunes than of those of the republic.

No one can deny that the best of them, those who really shared the Marshal's passion for his country, did homage to 'the state-idea of Poland,' as distinguished from any class or Party. What is more, some of them rendered unquestioned service in their respective fields, while preserving integrity of character as well. But they were playing with fire all the same, and that for a number of reasons.

Their almost mystical belief in their calling was itself a danger. It tended to make them unwilling to concede to others outside their circle the affection for and faith in their country which they possessed. Even the Marshal rebuffed people with whom he should have come to terms: his followers did little else but this. The net result was a dividing of the nation into 'our camp' and 'the rest,' which is inadmissible in modern society. From the time when this practice became general, no common ground for discussion was left: especially when those in power took the line in regard to their 'subjects'—'We don't want recognition from you!'

Further, the basing of patriotism on the state-idea is itself fraught with grave objections. It is likely to end in

a viewing of the State as an end in itself, rather than as an institution to serve all its members; and in making service of the State (as an official) a hall-mark of superiority over everyone else. The almost inevitable result is bureaucracy, and in one form or another the 'spoils' system; and as a corollary the claim to supervise the lives of the people with the help of an all-seeing *gendarmerie*. Finally, as history has shown, the doctrine usually emerges that the happiness, and even the security, of the public is to be found in willing conformity to the patterns of life and thought outlined by those who govern. Each of these claims, and in a growing measure, is a direct blow at the central principles of democracy.

Only angels, or supermen, with characters *sans peur et sans reproche*, should offer themselves as candidates for such responsible duties. Could they be had, they would with justice demand the right to govern. They would invariably know what is to be done, and always be able to accomplish it. This would enable them to snap their fingers at criticism or obstruction, confident that 'the healthy sense of the common people,' to borrow a Nazi phrase, would in the end support them. All save such, however, and this includes the successors of the Marshal, should think thrice before tempting High Heaven. Assuming virtues they do not possess, such men are forced to resort to one device or another to compel obedience, and even to stifle healthy criticism. Only thus can one explain the Franchise Laws of 1935, which were so framed as to prevent the Parties from having any say as to who should be a candidate for a seat in the Diet: or the new plan for electing the Senate by an élite composed of a few hundred thousand people, too many of whom would inevitably be attached in some way to the administration. It also explains the establishing of the concentration camp at Bereza Kartuska. Finally, it explains the growing watch kept over the press, and isolated measures taken to intimidate or render helpless outstanding political opponents.[1]

[1] See note at end of chapter, p. 206.

In a somewhat different way it explains the halting attitude of the government for years to deal firmly with the lawless doings of the student groups in the universities—mostly of the fanatical nationalist persuasion. Whether this was dictated by fear of complications, by lack of appreciation of what was going on, or by other motives, is hard to say. In any case the needed support was not given by the government to the university authorities, to whom the anti-Jewish excesses were a shame and a reproach; and the name and fame of Poland suffered abroad as a result.

Whatever the intentions of the government, it was unable to win the support of the nation for them. Irrespective of Party affiliations, more and more people came to show their dissatisfaction at the way things were going. There were serious riots in 1936 in some of the towns. The next year saw the Peasant Strike in southern Poland, which was announced in advance, and designed solely as a mark of protest. Many of the workers in the urban districts sympathised with the strike, although it was noted that the Socialist leaders mostly dissociated themselves from it. Some blood was shed, and even the members of the Cabinet realised that something had to be done.

Bowing to popular demands, the President announced that the Franchise Laws would be revoked, and called another general election for the autumn of 1938, with the alleged purpose of getting a new House to effect the changes. The Parties took the line that the revocation should take place before the elections, and declared another boycott unless this were done. When the votes were counted, it was seen that some two-thirds of those entitled had cast their votes—a much larger percentage than in 1935—virtually all of them of course for the candidates proposed by the government. The latter again saw in this a confirmation of their policy—and again wrongly. What had determined the vote was rather the darkening international horizon (Munich had intervened); which suggested that

the nation would do well not 'to swap horses in mid-stream.' Better bear the ills they had, than fly to others still unknown!

That the general election was far from being a true indication of popular sentiment was soon to be demonstrated. In the local government elections held a few weeks later, the government candidates suffered heavy defeats: not only in the larger towns, where significant victories were won by Labour-Socialist candidates, but also in the rural districts. The conviction grew that whenever and wherever freedom of decision was given to the electorate, sound democratic instincts were bound to emerge, and the true will of the people be shown. Clearly the nation was in no way disposed to resign its claim to a voice in public affairs and policy. The fact that someone was in office was not to be taken as a proof that he was there by right. Having freed itself from alien domination, the Polish people were not intending to become 'subjects' again.

This analysis amounts to a grave indictment of methods used by those in authority in Poland from 1935 onwards. It should be said that there are other and less objectionable elements in the total picture. Not everything done in those years was bad, nor can it be said that everyone who supported the régime was *ipso facto* a traitor to democracy. To balance the whole, the following points should be noted:

(i) The Cabinet was meant to be composed of men selected for their competence and experience in their respective fields—by no means wisely in some cases—and not because they were leaders of any Party: but among its members were men representing almost every type of political views from the Left to the extreme Right. Viewed with detachment, then, it could have been called a Coalition Cabinet, though not a Parliamentary one. Poland was not the only country in Europe possessing such a government. Some of the major criticisms levelled at the Polish Cabinet were put to us in London in the early summer of 1939 by a competent American observer—in respect to the Chamberlain government!

(ii) The Diet, now reduced to 208 members, and possessing no Opposition, was in no way representative of the traditional Parties—nor was it meant to be—but it did include men and women of most shades of opinion, and belonging to most of the major occupations in the country —farmers, industrial workers, professional men, and free lances. In no sense of the word was it restricted to any class. Moreover, the temper of its debates was worthy of the House, it still held the purse-strings, and it was not without a strong sense of its public responsibility. Its weakness lay in the fact that too many things had been taken out of its hands, so that ultimately it did not control policy, either home or foreign. It should not be forgotten, however, that by 1936 nobody in Poland could do much about policy. Things had got so far out of hand in the international sphere that outside factors were the compelling power even in internal affairs.

(iii) Much useful work was done for the nation in the last four pre-war years. Some of it lay in the completion of things set in motion years earlier. One might mention the important matters of the regularising of the status both of the Orthodox and of the Protestant Churches in the republic—affecting the lives of close on 5,000,000 people. There was further the completion of the arduous task of co-ordinating the various legal codes inherited by Polish lands from the past into a single and harmonised whole. From now on it would not longer be possible for people to be legally married in one part of the country, but not in another! Finally, there were the two big reforms still being carried out—the parcellation of the big estates and a better distribution of Polish heavy industry.

There were rooted objections taken by leaders of the Peasant Party to the lines on which the Minister of Agriculture was proceeding with land reform. Particular objection was raised to his twelve-acre farm scheme by those who felt that the ideal size of a farm was fifty acres, and that to go below a minimum of thirty was to court disaster. In theory this is true, but only if one is thinking

of agriculture alone, apart from the other inherent parts of the economic picture. As we have seen already, Poland had a serious rural over-population, and nowhere enough land to satisfy its needs. Poniatowski therefore took the line (*a*) that more people should be given a chance, even though the holdings were only half what they ought to be, and (*b*) that the reform should go hand in hand with an adjustment of industrial life making it possible for scores of thousands of holders to earn at least half the year in a nearby factory or plant. Not only has this kind of thing worked with success elsewhere, but samples of it could be studied in south-western Poland, where the combination has been in practical use for half-a-century. Certainly it was an experiment and in some cases it would probably fail; but it was worth trying.

We can now see the sense of the huge plan for creating in south-central Poland, roughly in and around the forking of the Vistula and the San rivers, a Central Industrial Region. Three separate gains would result for the whole nation and state. On the one hand rich natural resources could be developed, with the aid of still untouched water-power on the spot. On the other the densely populated area, the only one in Poland that did not produce enough food for local needs, would be given the means for raising the whole level of earning and living. Thirdly, Poland would have a nexus of heavy industry less exposed to possible attacks from any neighbour. Only those who knew the situation here a generation ago, when thousands of people were emigrating yearly to the New World—driven out by poverty—and who saw the work already being done before 1939, can appreciate what this was likely to mean in the course of another decade. What had been known to the economists as Poland C was well on the way to being redeemed from misery when war came in 1939.

Similar, though far less ambitious plans were under way in other parts of the country, all of them related to the general scheme for raising the standard of living and production both in agriculture proper and in the industries

related to it. In my judgment, Kwiatkowski and his advisers saw more truly the lines of advance that were necessary than did the critics of the Peasant Party. The truth is, of course, that here as always the tree is known by its fruits. For that reason, argument is not very helpful: one would have to wait and see what the future would bring.

(iv) One point on state finance is worth adding. In deciding not to join the Sterling Block early in the 'thirties, the Polish government took risks. It raised the level of the zloty in relation to the pound and the dollar, thereby making it harder for Poland to compete in the markets of the outside world. This was held by competent economists to be a mistake. The reply of those supporting the decision was twofold: (*a*) that this action reduced Poland's Foreign Debt, and the yearly sums due on it, by one-third. (The total in 1932 was 4,570 million zlotys, in 1936 it was 2,921 millions.) (*b*) That it had a valuable psychological effect on the masses of the nation in encouraging thrift. Nothing is so ruinous to public confidence as inflation, and Poland had seen enough of that ten years earlier. In any case savings mounted steadily right through the depression. In 1928 the total was 447 millions, in 1931 891 millions; by 1934 they had risen to 1,236, and by 1937 to 1,517 millions. These sums were not so impressive when set alongside the savings of Western Europe, but they meant a great deal for a poor country, and augured well for the future.

Further examples of continuing good work will be given in the next chapter. They should be taken into account when the balance is struck of lights and shadows in passing judgment on the government and the nation. The investigator will be forced to the conclusion that although much was wrong in the machinery at work, production did go on.

NOTE. The one concentration camp established in Poland for the detention and intimidation of political agitators was the work of the Kozlowski government, and seems to have

been consequent on the mild panic that followed the murder of the Minister of the Interior, M. Pieracki, in 1934. It was aimed chiefly at the young radicals of the Right, usually called the Naras (National Radicals); but in the camp were found Ukrainians, some Jews, and a sprinkling of members of the other Parties. Supervision of the camp was in the hands of the Governor in Bialystok, M. Kostek-Biernacki, who had been the Warden in Brest Litowsk in 1930. Those arrested, of course without a writ of *Habeas Corpus*, were detained mostly for periods of from three to six months. The conditions were severe, the prisoners were put to heavy and mostly quite unprofitable labour, and were subject to various kinds of intimidation and abuse. At least in some cases the obvious intention was 'to break their obstinacy.' When a man's health broke down, he was released, but on condition of signing a document binding him to conformity, and to refraining from all political activity. Absolute silence as to what he had experienced was enjoined, under threat of reincarceration under worse conditions. Some of those detained were sent up for trial. In case of condemnation for sedition, they were drafted to penal labour camps, where more or less chain-gang methods were the rule. Their number was not large, but the treatment meted out was unworthy of a civilised society. The responsibility for all this must rest with those at the top (including the Marshal himself); people who regarded themselves as called to rule, and as justified in breaking the law in order to enforce it! It was a clear departure from the accepted Polish tradition since the 15th century.

CHAPTER XII

ECONOMIC LIFE AND POLICY

We have followed in previous chapters the steps by which the masses of the Polish people in town and country succeeded in rising out of the mentality of dependence on the bounty and goodwill of their 'superiors' which was once the accepted fashion all over Europe. So long, however, as the class and police régimes of the Partitioning empires survived, the common man had little hope of asserting his rights, and even less power of winning them. With the recovery of independence everything was changed. The peasant and the factory-worker were no longer denied recognition as partners in the field of politics; and, possessing these, they were now in a position to realise their claim to at least a modest share in the national patrimony.

Poland is for the most part a land well-favoured by nature. In view of this, there was no justification in the world for the sort of thing the visitor would find as late as the beginning of this century in many parts of the country (it could be found in some places still in the 'thirties!)—wretchedly poor and woefully ignorant people in tens of thousands: with a bare subsistence diet, with housing unworthy of the name, and with nothing to relieve the dull monotony of life either for themselves or their children. A large portion of the blame can be laid on the policy of the imperial powers, each of which thought of Poland as being on the periphery of its dominions, and as a sort of colony to be exploited, but in no way to be helped to a higher plane of living. But there was still something wrong, both with the social order as such, and with the soul of the individual man.

The first business of any government is to maintain law and order, but woe betide any administration that stops there! Putting people into strait-jackets has been a favourite

device through the ages, but it does more harm than good. Enlightened despotism knows that, in the phrase of Socrates, the shepherd will have at heart the well-being of his sheep—in his own interest. Most despotisms have not been enlightened, and in any case they stop short of the true goal. Animals seek to live: human beings have the desire 'to live well.' Experience has shown that this is best realised when they share in government, at least in a modest way: and feel the responsibilities of government, as well as the privileges and the rights. Only then do they cease to be children, or, if one will, 'subjects,' and attain the status of citizens.

Governments levy taxes and other contributions on all members of the community. This is necessary. But in return for this inflow of values to the 'centre' there should be a corresponding outflow of services to one and all. Only that state will be prosperous and 'happy' in which there is two-way traffic in this regard. Here again Poland had been the victim of injustice right through the 19th century: with the winning of independence the conditions were realised in which this needed no longer to be the case.

It was natural, even inevitable, that the outstanding demands of the masses under the new conditions should be more or less the following:

(i) On the parts of the peasants, a thorough-going redistribution of the land, as being the supreme nurturer of the race, something the first claim to which seemed to them to be that of those who tilled it.

(ii) On the part of the worker in industry of all kinds better conditions of labour, fairer wages, the right to discuss all matters pertaining to his bread-winning with his employer and the state officials, and reasonable insurance against the ills that human flesh is heir to.

(iii) On the part of both these elements, a reorganisation (e.g. with the help of the Co-operative system) of the whole tissue of business life, in particular with the services of distribution of the daily necessities of living.

(iv) On the part of all those who had never enjoyed

them the assurance for their children of the advantages of education—both theoretical and practical—which would make it possible for them not only to hold their own in dealings with those who had always enjoyed these favours, but also themselves to reach a higher level of appreciation of what life gives, with wider horizons, attention to the things that are invisible, and some leisure to enjoy them.

It will be the aim of the following pages to show in what measure these *desiderata*, and many others akin to them, were realised in the restored Poland by millions who had never known them before: and how, with few exceptions, every responsible Minister holding a Cabinet Office during the twenty years made at least some contribution to this end. No one will deny that more should have been done; no one will deny that those working hardest for these ends were often hamstrung in their work by stubborn reaction: but the fact remains that things which had stood still for centuries were now set in motion, and with a fruitage that astonished observers who knew what things had been like a generation earlier.

The witness of a shrewd and by no means romantically minded student of these things, the Cracow economist, Professor Heydel, should suffice on this point. It was his habit to ride on horseback every summer through a sizeable portion of the country in order to see for himself what was going on. He was not, let it be added, in any way a supporter of the post-Pilsudski régime.

> 'No one who has seen in the villages of what used to be Russia the new schools, the co-operative stores, the fire-brigades, the newspapers, the radio-sets, the bicycles; no one who has listened to the singing of the youth—no matter of what political persuasion—and who will compare this with the dull and dead blankness of pre-1914 years, can fail to realise that at last history has begun to plough up that deadness!'

The last phrase is illuminating. It shows how cautious the author, since done to death by the Nazis, was. Knowing

something of the processes by which the human race goes forward, he did not look for a harvest all at once. Yet he could have been less modest in his appraisal, and given instance after instance of economic and social transformation not only of communities but even of whole districts. Like the other Central European peoples set free by the events of 1914–1920, the Poles were achieving things that deserved more attention, and were rather unjustly thrust into the shade by the revolutionary and world-startling things going on just to the east in the U.S.S.R.

I

First, then, the question of land reform.

Perhaps the favourite theme of writers and speakers anxious to prove that Poland is 'always the same,' that there was no democracy to be found there during the twenty years of liberation, has been the claptrap (there is no other word for it) about the country being owned and run by and for 'the landlords.' No one, who has any idea of the facts, takes these people seriously; but in the far-reaching ignorance of most of our people about continental countries in general, and Central Europe in particular, a lot of damage is done by such pleaders. Many of the latter are quite sincere, but this cannot be said of all.

Seeking to understand their position, one finds either that they are repeating facts completely out of date, or that they have been fed assiduously from sources unfriendly to Poland: or, finally, that they have strong political and social views of a particular brand, and they find in Poland useful data (mostly misleading) to illustrate their arguments. It should, however, be added that part of the blame must be laid on Poles themselves, who take a strong partisan view of certain issues, and air their grievances before outsiders when they would be better advised to keep quiet.

There was a time a century ago, when the influence of the landed nobility—the magnates and the lesser gentry—was almost paramount in the country; and when the voices

raised for justice in regard to the holding of land were branded as a betrayal of the national interest. That day is long past, and no one knows it better than the aristocracy itself. They did exercise a good deal of influence behind the scenes from 1919–1939; but they played a small part indeed in public life, and were never even in the way of creating a Party meant to defend their interests. It should be added that from among what would be called the 'gentry' came many of the men who pushed Poland forward markedly in the direction of free institutions. Those who clung to the traditional 'class' mentality were everywhere on the defensive.

The fact of land-hunger in Poland is one of long standing, as it is in every country east of the Rhine. Every nation set free in 1918 addressed itself forthwith to the issue of agrarian reform, if only as a defence measure against the extremes of action being put into effect in the new Russia. Some of them moved on more, others on less, radical lines. The Poles started with the former, but modified things in practice.

Within a few months of its constitution, the Diet passed a statute on the principle of Land Reform, in the teeth of considerable opposition from the Right. It was indeed only a programme, not yet a law; and it might have taken a long time to realise it in action, had not the threat of invasion in the summer of 1920 frightened the foes of reform and compelled action. With Witos as Premier the bill went through, providing for the parcelling-up of all the larger properties, with a minimum of compensation to the owners. Even farms of more than 150 acres in the west, or thrice that size in the east, were to be subject to reduction. In addition, all forest lands were to be nationalised.

Victory over the invaders and the inability of the Peasant and Labour-Socialist Groups to work closely together made it possible for those disapproving of such parcellation to get the whole matter shelved; and the ensuing crisis about state finance was sufficient ground for not adding another internal dispute to the brew. Only at the end of 1925 did

a fresh bill get through the House and become law, and it was much modified from its predecessor. Parcellation was to take place in instalments, over a period of years—so much per year (roughly half a million acres). The size of farms to be exempted was increased, and more compensation enacted. Critics said that the measure did too little to make sure that the land would go to those who really needed it.

Poland thus got to work rather late on an official Land Reform campaign, but this does not mean that much land had not changed hands already by private sale, almost invariably passing into the hands of people who would till it themselves. There were those who felt that the encouragement of this method, with the granting of long-term loans to deserving purchasers, would have solved the problem better than state interference. In point of fact, when the bad years came—and even earlier, very large areas had to be surrendered by the big landowners in lieu of unpaid taxes; and this of course was mostly passed on for distribution to waiting purchasers.

One type of property was regarded as worth exempting from parcellation, viz. the estate on which one or more types of industry related to agriculture had been successfully operating. Samples of this were breweries, distilleries, sugar-refineries, tanneries, sawmills, etc. More radical leaders regarded this as a loop-hole which made possible abuses and evasions of the law: just as they argued that the slowness with which the whole process was being carried on did little to meet the growing over-population menace. Certainly the whole measure failed in the execution during the depression years, and was only taken in hand again with zeal in 1935 by the much criticised progressive Minister for Agriculture, himself of land-owing parentage, Juliusz Poniatowski.

Agrarian reform was necessary in Poland not only because of the legacy of big land holdings from long ago, when a few vast and many smaller estates were owned by a few, while a great number of dwarf holdings existed in some

parts of the country, on which it was impossible for the family to survive. It was also necessary in another respect. The majority of the middle-range farms, in some provinces more than in others, were divided into a number of pieces or strips, often some distance from one another. Against every one of these conditions, inherited from the past, the gravest objections could be taken, both on social and on economic grounds. Where the owning of big estates was accompanied by absenteeism, the cup of injustice seemed to the reformers to be full.

On the other hand, the wildest of errors have been perpetuated by those who have talked optimistically about the breaking-up of the great holdings as the sure way to satisfy the 'land-hunger.' Such action would indeed mitigate the situation, but taken alone it would not go far toward solving the problem. There is simply not the land to go around. Two plans were mooted. The more radical, called Variant B by a recent writer, would have placed 11,000,000 acres at the disposal of the needy, and would have satisfied the immediate demand up to 60 per cent. If put into effect, however, it would have left no farms above 150 acres, which would have been economically a great mistake. For certain kinds of production, larger-scale farming is far more profitable for all concerned than small-scale.

What interests us here is rather what has been accomplished than what was proposed. In short, close on 8,000,000 acres have been transferred from estates to smaller holders during twenty years; so that by 1939 only one-seventh of the arable land in Poland was still in the hands of big landlords. Out of 629,000 purchasers of land two-thirds were small, i.e. dwarf holders, whose farms were thereby made viable; and one-third of the land transferred went to making such dwarf holdings into farms on which families could live.

Let us sum up the results another way. Out of just over 60,000,000 acres of tillable soil, over three-quarters were already by 1929 composed of farms of less than

120 acres; and by 1939 the fraction was six-sevenths. The lowest portion held by small farmers in the 'thirties was in the one-time Prussian provinces, where many estates were still owned by Germans, and the battle against parcellation involved political issues. Here, however, the number of farms on which useful industries had been developed was larger than in any other part of the republic. The shadow side of the picture even to the end was that, in spite of everything done, the number of landless was still high, and the number of holdings of under 12 acres was still greater than that of all others put together. Finally, the level of production per acre in the provinces east of the Vistula was uniformly only about half that of those to the west. This again was a legacy from the past, and a condition that legislation alone could do little to improve.

A special problem was to be faced in the south-central region, where the over-population was worst: where—alone of all Poland—the production of food was never sufficient for the local needs. Here, and in a few other districts, the privations consequent on the low prices to be had for farm produce during the bad years were extreme. Whatever could be sold had to go in order to meet taxes, or interest due on loans; malnutrition and its attendant evils were general. The peasant and his family were ill-fed, badly housed, idle a good part of the time, and without any prospect of a better future. Such a 'depressed area' was a reproach to the nation, and the authorities were slow about doing anything really to change things. We shall see below how, at long last, the whole matter was taken in hand after 1935.

One further point should be made. While the Peasant (Populist) Party leaders were far from endorsing the kind of parcellation being carried on by Poniatowski in the second half of the 'thirties, and criticism was keen, the main attention was being turned away from economic and centred on political issues. In particular, from the special matter of land-reform to the bigger question of economic policy in general, with which in modern times only

government can hope to deal.[1] It is by no means easy to say how large a part of the following these leaders had were men and women really concerned about government, really anxious for democratic institutions: and how many were less exercised by these matters, but thought more in terms of adequate fields to till, a chance to earn something extra in their spare time, and just prices for their produce. Critics of the Peasant Party have maintained that, as elsewhere in the world, the farmer is concerned first and foremost with getting a fair living, and that he tends to take up politics only when things do not go well. There is some truth in this view (and not only in Poland), but it will not do in consequence to deduce an argument for abandoning the plans of the Party leaders for educating the farmer into an enlightened citizen. In a land where two-thirds of the population live from the soil this kind of effort has great promise for the future. Not to proceed with it is a counsel of despair.

2

We turn now to the urban dwellers, the skilled and unskilled workers; employed in growing numbers in mill and factory, in mine and foundry, or engaged in smaller enterprises in arts and crafts. To the question, whether they found themselves in happier circumstances after 1920 than they were in before 1914, the answer is as clear as an answer can be. A detailed account of the ways this came about, and of the results obtained, would require a volume. Some day it will be written by an expert investigator, and the world will see how advanced social legislation was in the restored Poland, so that in some ways working conditions there could serve as a model for other countries. This is the more noteworthy, since the still primitive and

[1] As a sample of the anomalies let these figures serve: A pint of petrol cost two pints of milk in 1927–8, but three seven years later. A pair of shoes cost 46 pounds of pork in 1927–8 but 71 eight years later. A plough cost 221 pounds of rye in 1927–8 but 595 eight years later. No wonder the primary producer was at his wits' end!

uncoordinated conditions taken over from three empires in 1918 might well have been the despair of the would-be reformer.

Even in the same industry, e.g. the 'heavies,' there was a world of difference between the state of things obtaining in Silesia and that to be found a few miles away over the former Russian border in the Dombrova region. Again, the level of controls and discipline obtaining in the heavy industries was on a quite other plane from that to be found in textiles. Centred in and around Lodzh, and suffering for a century from a Tsarist police régime, these latter had been totally ruined by the war years, and required rebuilding from the very bottom.

What can be done here, and it suffices for our purpose, is to state the policy of successive Polish governments, and the means taken to implement this policy. It could not be made effective among unorganised labour, e.g. on the farms, to anything like the same extent as in the towns. Nor would anyone expect to find it realised to the same extent even in urban areas.

As a member of the League of Nations and of the International Labour Office, Poland made a point from the start of bringing her social legislation and its correlative, her social services, into line with the most advanced in Europe. The former included the regulation and inspection of conditions of labour in every form of industry, the controlling of female and juvenile employment, the establishing of hours and wage scales, and the enforcing of state intervention in case of disputes between employers and employees with a view to the avoidance of strikes and lockouts. The latter involved the encouraging of Trade Unions and Friendly Societies, provision for insurance against accident and unemployment, old age pensions for all, the maintenance of free labour bureaus, and the nurturing of a variety of agencies for vocational education. In more than one respect, the standard of social security aimed at, and more or less achieved in the good years, proved to be an impossible burden both for the industries concerned

and for the State when the depression laid everything on its back. But the trail had been blazed out, and not only as a set of paper measures but also in practice. There was probably no finer body of men and women at work in Europe than the inspectors of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Warsaw.

Trees are known by their fruits. No one will deny that from the point of view of technical equipment the Silesian heavy industries under German management up to 1918 were a credit to those who created them. Because of the thickness of the seams, the miner could even then 'raise' more coal than the British miner, and with less of back-breaking effort. But the economic system was *laisser faire* at its worst, with the miner (and still more the unskilled worker) totally at the mercy of the highly ambitious and often heartless employer. Ten years after the transfer to Polish hands the *per caput* production of the miner was even higher than it had ever been under German management, while the status of the worker, his sense of partnership in both his work and his citizenship, had improved out of knowledge. Thanks to this, the dense population of this area faced and survived the succeeding years of the depression in a way that would be a credit to any country in the world. In view of these facts, it is hard to-day to appreciate the open hostility shown by British Labour circles to the idea of transferring any part of Silesian industry to the new Poland. Not for the first time have well-meaning people backed the wrong horse because of no, or of false, information as to the true condition of things.

Or let us look for a moment at the huge, shapeless industrial slum known as the 'Manchester' of Poland—the half-a-million-strong textile city of central Poland: whose industries were mostly in the hands of men of ex-Saxon families, immigrating nearly a century ago into this wilderness; whose workers were almost entirely Poles and Jews; and whose government until 1915 was that of Tsarist Russia. A not unfair, though somewhat coloured,

picture of this place in the 'nineties can be read in Reymont's two-volume tale, *The Promised Land.*

I knew Lodzh in the trying days of 1919–20, when everything was as near destitution as it could be and live. The German army authorities had robbed the city and its industries, not only of all raw material and manufactured stocks, but also of everything appertaining to instalments and machinery that could be used for the war effort. For years no raw cotton and almost no wool could be brought in from abroad—everything was stranded. The city was a great cluster of mills, each with its own 'slum' gathered about it, stretched along a single main street, at one end of which a sort of special 'slum' had taken shape, fuller of Jews than the others. There were no parks, there was not one public monument.

During the year 1926–7 I lived in Lodzh, directing the work of the Polish Y.M.C.A. Already things had changed for the better. During the good years that followed work was begun on a modern sewage system, and on the building of reservoirs outside the town for an up-to-date water supply. When I got back ten years later part of the city was using the former, and the latter was soon to be opened. In the meantime the sluggish stream that used to wander through the place, collecting all the filth of industry and reeking to heaven, had been put underground; the course had been turned into a fine boulevard, and after being filtered the water was delivered into a small lake, which formed an attraction in one of the largest and finest city parks I have ever seen. What is more, throughout this period of 'storm and struggle,' both economic and cultural, by some miracle Lodzh never had an epidemic of typhus or any other dangerous disease; and the first elementary schools in Poland to be built and put in use on modern lines after the war (at least the first I know of) were in Lodzh!

All of this was the result, not of any 'good uncle,' or any benevolent satrap in Warsaw; but of the civic effort of men and women, sensing a new freedom and anxious to

exploit it. Help was given from outside, but never on a large scale. What happened here is the finest proof one could want of the essential democratic atmosphere and temper of Poland. I pass over the transformation of industry itself; only partial, it is true, since much was left undone. To appreciate why, one should know the details of the 'rationalisation' plans carried out with characteristic brutality by the Nazis in 1940–2. Poles are not capable of that sort of thing. As a result, they may not succeed in material ways as some others do; but they will keep a better conscience, and not have the blood of their fellow men crying out to them from the grave.

Conditions in the heavy industries, as in textiles, left much to be desired, but they were a marked improvement on what had prevailed twenty years before. In other branches, scattered and less tangible, some in one others in another stage of development, they were now better, now worse. Nothing could be expected like the co-ordination to be found in the Rhineland, or even in northern Italy. There were cases of singular hardship like the glass industry of Piotrkow; there were others of steady dignity like the age-old salt mines of Wieliczka. There was the slowly collapsing oil production of the eastern Carpathians, and the new rayon works of Tomaszow. To the tissue of things to be considered, there was added the steady appearance of the State as an owner of industrial plant, e.g. the nitrate works at Moscice; and the difficulties arising from the assurance of capital to state enterprises alongside the shortage of the same in private circles. There was also the fact that private firms had more and heavier dues to pay, and so could not compete with the State.

In all this, one point should be made: the State ranged itself for the most part on the side of the worker. He could no longer be exploited as before, he had no fear of starvation, he worked in far better conditions than his father did. There was one danger, nevertheless, and observers watched it grow. The rise of State enterprises, like the growth of a bureaucracy, increased the number of

people interested in the stability of the régime; and therefore not quite free to vote as they might like in election time. What is more, the very extent of the social services, e.g. the Sick Benefits, the wide variety of Health Services—for infants, for mothers, for the infirm, etc.—were all the outgrowth of state socialism, but they were in the hands of an administration that was mistrusted by the Socialists, and was itself unwilling to recognise their Party as a factor in politics. Hence the risk of a 'spoils system' of a special kind, which was a thorn in the side of those who believed in voluntary societies as the ideal agencies for handling many social problems.

3

Among the social institutions working in the interests of the common man, and in a truly democratic spirit—a creation of the last two generations—were the Co-operatives. First tried out in the provinces under Prussian rule, as an instrument of self-defence in the life-and-death struggle with a hostile government, the movement achieved a remarkable success. (Some of the facts connected with this achievement have been set out in a previous chapter.) It found its way over the border into the Central Provinces under Tsarist control about 1870. Here, under quite different conditions, it became in time an adjunct and support of the Labour-Socialist Party. Surviving all attempts of those in authority to stifle their work, the Co-operatives survived up to the war and the inflation—though not without serious losses—and under a friendlier sky became a power for social and economic well-being in the free commonwealth.

The beginnings in the Central Provinces were most modest. Little or no help was given by the upper classes, and little or no interest taken by the Church. When founded locally in Warsaw, and elsewhere, co-operative stores were simply a joint effort of self-help of the working people. Under the alien régime, nothing could be done to draw

them together for larger ends until after the revolution of 1905. Two men devoted their lives to this work, and laid the nation under a debt for all time: Stanislaw Wojciechowski and Romuald Mielczarski, of whom the former became at the end of 1922 President of the restored Poland. Thanks to their energy and skill, there was founded first an Information Bureau for Food-Supplying Agencies to the Co-operatives, and then in 1908 a Union of those Agencies, since known throughout the country as *Spolem*. By 1919 the number of societies affiliated was over 600, with a membership of 175,000.

Meanwhile, a kindred movement had been launched in the Austrian provinces, meant rather to assist the small-holding peasants of the south. The result was the founding in Lwow of the Central Savings and Loan Company, more or less on lines tested out in Poznania. Analogous steps to serve the farmers in the Central Provinces led to the creation of *Rolnik*: an enterprise planned to assist in the marketing of grain and other wares offered by the primary producer, as well as to make easier the purchasing of machinery, fertilisers, and other necessities. The shock of war, and still more the ruinous action of the post-war inflation, left these various agencies almost without either reserves of capital or the confidence of their clients. Only the vision of a few people availed to restore what had been wrecked, and to expand it to something vastly more imposing.

Existing co-operative units of all kinds were consolidated into three larger corporations: the Union of Food-Supplying Co-operatives, the Union of Agricultural Co-operatives, and the Union of Co-operative Societies. The first, of which we have heard already, was the oldest and most compact body, and included in its ranks the Civil Servants' Association. Its agents were soon installed in Danzig and in London for the purpose of organising import and export; among the articles brought in being staples like soda, tea, rice, dried fruits and herrings. In Poland itself it handled 10 per cent. of all the salt sold, and corresponding amounts of sugar and paraffin oil.

Its turnover was by 1924 some 3,000,000 zlotys monthly.

The Union of Agricultural Co-operatives was designed to bring together in a single whole the many Agricultural Societies operating in all parts of the country, and to organise for them both the selling of produce and the buying of necessities of all kinds. At the end of 1924 the number of local societies was nearly 2,400, and the membership nearly 700,000. It should be said, however, that three-quarters of these units were the Credit Banks of Galicia; and that as yet only the beginning had been made of co-ordinating the butter, cheese, and egg marketing task of the Central Provinces.

In the Union of Co-operative Societies were merged four existing bodies with headquarters in Poznan, Warsaw, Cracow and Lwow, with the first-named showing the way. Its bank became in time one of the best in Poland. The number of societies at the end of 1924 was 850, and of members 566,000. Like its sister societies, and perhaps more effectively, it sought to help the worker in industry and the peasant on his farm on the basis of mutual profit. Huge sums were saved every year that had previously gone into the hands of the ubiquitous middleman (mostly Jewish): and short- and long-term loans were made possible on reasonable terms to all deserving clients—thus saving them from losing their homes and farms to money-lenders, as so many of their fathers had lost them. In addition to this economic service, the Co-operatives did much in the educational field. A few statistics may help the reader to see how they grew.

In 1928 the total number of Co-operative stores and centres in the republic was over 10,000, in 1936 just over 12,000. Of this latter, just over 7,000 were Polish, while over 3,000 were Ukrainian.[1] The remainder were chiefly

[1] A special account ought to be given of the very efficient Ukrainian organisation, which sold dairy produce all over the country through its own shops. Seeking to do for its people much the same kind of things that had been done by the Polish Co-operatives in Prussia more than a generation earlier, the Ukrainian leaders came into conflict with the Polish authorities, and claimed that they suffered serious interference, even persecution.

Jewish and German. The total membership in 1928 was 2,475,000, in 1936 2,804,000. At the end of 1937 the figures for the whole of Poland were:

Consumers' Co-operatives	4,800, with	720,000	members
Credit Society units	5,500, ,,	1,500,000	,,
Agricultural units	1,800, ,,	700,000	,,
Other types	800, ,,	100,000	,,

There were in addition about 1,000 Co-operatives outside the Union, making the grand total nearly 14,000, with 3,140,000 members.

The value of goods sold by the Co-operatives in 1928 was 823,000,000 zlotys—almost the peak year: the total of credits granted was 1,310,000,000 zlotys. After the depression the former total was under 500 millions, the latter under 700 millions. Significant was the phenomenal rise in the supplying of milk: 451 million litres in 1928, 810 million in 1935, and over 1,000 million in 1936. Almost all the butter sold abroad came from Co-operative dairies.

The spirit animating the whole movement was well expressed by the veteran organiser, R. Mielczarski, just after the unification was achieved in 1925:

> 'We are all profoundly convinced that the capitalist system does not correspond with the aspirations of the great masses of workers, and does not meet the essential interests of the nation. Co-operation aims at realising a new social system, based on social justice and in keeping with the interests of the consumers. Whether co-operation is itself capable of creating this new system by itself, we shall not argue. We are satisfied with the joyous conviction that we are the creators of the great transformation which will put an economic democracy alongside political democracy.'

4

We turn now to something different, but no less beneficial and significant for the nation—the Trades Unions. These were able to exist in pre-1914 Prussia and Austria, but they were forbidden under the Tsarist régime. The total of organised workmen in Poland in 1914 was only 90,000. The reasons for this were manifold. In the Austrian provinces, for example, there was very little industry, and the forces of labour were completely dispersed. In Prussia, the great concentration centred in Silesia, but the Unions did not flourish. Every effort had been made for a generation to get the Polish workmen in mine and foundry to enter the ranks of the German organisations, but without success. On the one hand, the German unions were Marxian Socialist in temper, and the loyally Catholic Polish workman would have nothing to do with them. On the other, the language used everywhere was German, and the Pole did not like this any more than the other. The result was that nothing in the way of labour organisation was possible until, after the turn of the century, the Mutual Aid Society formed in Silesia in 1889 became affiliated with the Federation of Polish Trades Unions, whose Headquarters were in Westphalia—long since an important gathering-point of Polish *émigrés* from eastern Germany, and into which were garnered groups from all over the Reich. (It is worth mentioning that in this one respect the Polish workmen won the goodwill of the Kaiser—they declined to strengthen the ranks of his much-disliked Socialist subjects!)

By the decree of 8th February 1919, Trades Unions were recognised in the restored Poland, given the status of a legal person, and permitted to enter into collective agreements; with the result that they could sue or be sued in the courts. Already by 1922 it was estimated that the number of workers organised in unions, including intellectuals, was 1,404,000. According to occupations, they were divided as follows: 28 per cent. farm labourers,

15 per cent. post office hands, 13·5 per cent. textile workers, nearly 10 per cent. miners, and nearly 7 per cent. smelting and foundry workers. The rest were miscellaneous.

Three central organisations stood out as the chief bodies to which workers gravitated: the Federation of Trade Unions, the Polish Trades Federation, and the Christian Trades Federation. The first-named prevailed in the one-time Austrian and Russian provinces, and was socialist in its view of things. The Polish Federation was strongest in the formerly German (Prussian) areas, but also in the textile industries. The third was to be found wherever Catholic influences were strong enough to make common action under the ægis of the Church desirable.

All in all the total number of Unions in Poland in 1935 was given as 298, with 7,383 branches. The registered membership was not far short of a million, but only 618,000 paid their dues. Nearly one-half of these unions and branches belonged to the 'Wage-earners' Unions,' whose membership reached two-thirds of the total over-all. By this time labour in Poland had elected to diversify its organisations, so that twelve types of general consolidation were to be found. One of the strongest among them were the Unions of Government and Local Government employees, whose branches numbered one-third of the whole. From this one can see how active Labour was; but at the same time how far it was from having found common lines of co-operation in the defence of its rights.

CHAPTER XIII

EDUCATION

THAT Poland was essentially democratic is shown quite as much by her educational system as by her handling of social questions: above all by the elasticity of that system, by the wide variety of activities being carried on, and the heterogeneity of groups served and appealed to. Education does not of itself produce democracy, but popular education should serve the ends of democracy. An interest in it on the part of any government makes one suspect that there is here, at least, no tendency toward absolutism.[1] In other words, while the number of barracks, or police stations, or even of churches may not be an indication of popular intelligence, that of schools can hardly fail to be such.

One should remember that in their earlier stages all the schools of Poland were the fruitage of voluntary effort; this is particularly true of the great central area and the east, which were under Tsarist rule till 1915. Now societies created for the purpose of promoting education may not always be democratic in spirit, but in Poland beyond all doubt they were. Whether in the one-time Austrian provinces from 1890 to 1918, or in the Russian provinces during the three years of less harsh regulations (1905–07), above all in the time of the German occupation, 1915–18, the foundations laid for the national system of schools to emerge a few years later were heroic in spirit and sound in technique. Moreover, when the time came for the founding of a Ministry of Education, the men and women called to guide it were mostly those who had shown their courage and competence under the most difficult circumstances; and the work to which they were now called was for most of them rather a reward than a labour.

[1] Unless, of course, education becomes propaganda, in which case it no longer educates.

The task ahead of them was colossal, the means to work with pitifully slender. In the Prussian provinces the schools had been rigidly German, and there was a minimum of illiteracy. In the south they had been Polish (and Ukrainian), but, as we have seen before, far from adequate to the needs. Even here there was much illiteracy. In the former Russian provinces the percentage of illiteracy ran as high as 75, in places even higher. Thus, apart altogether from the task of serving the children of school age, there was a big work to be done for adults. To cope with all this there were not half enough schools, and most of the existing ones were out of date. There was an acute shortage of teachers, and an almost complete lack of anything to work with. Neither books, nor maps, nor school-room equipment of any kind was at hand. What little science apparatus had existed was long since destroyed.

Only faith, and a sense of humour, kept those brave people who belonged to the Ministry from throwing in their hand in the early years. The Budget for education in 1921 (the first year of peace) was only 40,000,000 zlotys. Four years later it was 348,000,000. In 1930–1 it reached an all-high—595,000,000 zlotys. Hit by the depression, education had to walk austerely from now onward, and in 1937–8 the total was only 438,700,000 zlotys. The 1925 sum represented 16 per cent. of the state Budget, twelve years later it was almost 20 per cent. Or, to view the whole matter from another angle: the number of children in elementary schools in the Central Provinces in 1910 had been 370,000: in 1923–24 it was 1,345,000. On the whole territory comprising Poland there were 18,400 elementary schools—including Ukrainian, Jewish and German—before 1914. Ten years later there were 27,400, with 62,000 teachers and over 3,200,000 pupils. The number of schools had not increased greatly by 1937–38, but the size and quality of the schools had improved so that there were now nearly 5,000,000 boys and girls in them. With regard to the vital matter of getting suitable teachers, it need only be said that, whereas in 1918 there were only

73 training colleges in the country, of which two-thirds were private, five years later the number was 182, of which only one-third were private; and there were by now in addition four higher Institutes of Pedagogy for special work. By 1931–2 the number of colleges had risen to 231; but from then onwards, in connection with important changes made in the whole system, it was reduced.

I

Of the spirit and methods of work done in these schools, it need only be said that it was true to the fundamental principles of freedom, equality, and fellowship. All schooling was free, it was mostly co-educational, it was open to all citizens on the same terms. In practice the Minorities, notably the Ukrainians in the south-eastern provinces, felt that they had a real grievance, in that the 'bi-lingual' schools set up in their districts were not in effect bi-lingual, but tended to relegate the mother-tongue of the child to a secondary place. In so far as this happened, it was a breach of the Constitution, and was unlawful.

Further, although controlled and supervised by a Board (Ministry) in the capital, popular education was a charge of the Provincial administration. In each province there was a Curatorium; which was a supervising and advisory body, but was also concerned with the expanding and improving of the whole work. The elementary school had seven classes, and from it pupils could go straight into the fourth grade of the secondary school, which they would then normally complete in five years. Many of the secondary schools duplicated the last three years of the primary school—as a means of helping out in the transition period. The atmosphere was 'secular' throughout, with religion taught weekly as a regular subject, usually by the local priest or pastor or rabbi. Strong efforts had been made at the start by clerically minded people to get the school system controlled by the Church, but they had no chance of success; just as, on the other hand, advocates

of schools without religion at all also failed. Manual work, both for boys and girls, as well as physical training and hygiene, were made a regular part of the weekly routine.

In the field of secondary schools progress was slower. Such as existed before 1918 followed the German-Austrian model, being divided into classical and scientific—the latter meaning modern studies. To bring these into line with a single standard, to make that standard effective when teachers and equipment were lacking, so that the certificate might admit to the university: above all to expand the secondary system to reach the growing number of eager youth, was a herculean task. By 1923–4, however, there were a quarter of a million pupils in secondary schools, more than one-third of them being girls. This number did not materially increase in succeeding years, partly owing to the emphasis which came to be laid (and with justice) on vocational, i.e. technical, training. Like other European countries Poland was threatened with a surplus of people with theoretical education, and a consequent shortage of competent technicians, mechanics, and foremen for industry. The professions tended to be overcrowded—though only in the towns!—while vitally important skilled help was lacking. It was a matter for satisfaction that the number of schools training boys and girls for practical walks in life—including agriculture, mounted steadily during the 'thirties: while the number attending them virtually doubled.[1]

A few sentences on higher education must suffice. Here too the atmosphere was free from any religious or ideological bias; the instruction was free (until the changes in the 'thirties), and the controls almost wholly in the hands of the teaching staff. As for the level of scientific work, it

[1] Space does not permit of a study of the changes effected in the school system in the early 'thirties, some of which were undoubtedly beneficial, others less so. In general the aims were to adjust the work done to the straitened public purse without losing on the side of efficiency, and to provide for more liberty of movement for the child in his early 'teens. The latter was meant to liberate the youth from the too rigid 'German' practice, and to bring it more into line with Anglo-Saxon methods.

was better in the older institutions than in the newly founded ones, though the latter made up the lag in very quick time. The number of students was approaching 30,000 by 1923–4, of whom nearly a third were women. By 1931–2 the total had reached nearly 50,000, but from now on it tended to decline. In every year students of all faiths and nationalities were enrolled, and it is notable that the number of Jews proportionate to their share of the population was twice as high as that of the Poles.

When one remembers that only a small part of this higher education structure existed before 1918, and that everything had to be created out of an embryo, one must rate very highly the achievement of those concerned with the task. Polish university men knew under what handicaps they were working throughout the 19th century. Having won back their independence they wanted the universities and other higher institutions not only to be a credit to the nation, but to fulfil their two vital tasks of teaching in general and of scientific and other research in particular. They knew full well to what an extent universities and colleges are training ground, not only for getting a living, but also for citizenship and national leadership. It cannot be said that university life in Poland was all that it should have been. The main fault was the resolve of many younger, and of some older people, to drag into the halls many things that did not belong there, e.g. party politics, or to make the university a battleground for settling issues that belonged elsewhere.[1]

This brief survey of the school system of Poland has been given only to show that not only in the minds of its founders but also in those of most of the men and women

[1] A charge against the Polish universities has been the introduction of the *numerus clausus* for Jewish students in some of the faculties. It has been said that this is unjust, undemocratic, and proof of favouritism. When examined the charges will be found to be without justification. The *numerus clausus*, which has been in existence for years at Harvard and McGill, was introduced in Poland for good reasons, and in the long run will be found beneficial. On the other hand, the disgrace of the campaign to introduce Ghetto benches in the classrooms, made chiefly by the Nationalist student faction, is completely without excuse.

who carried on this work during 20 years, both the spirit and the methods employed were meant to follow the first principles of republican democracy. No one who knew from experience the results attained, and who watched the teachers at work in any of the grades from lowest to highest, could fail to be impressed by their sincerity and their devotion. If anything, the spirit of the elementary schools in most of the country tended to be distinctly Leftist, or even Socialist, while that of the secondary schools was somewhat more Conservative. Efforts were certainly made in places to use the schools for political purposes, but without much success. The universities had only one end in view, viz. the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge; and their battle with the Government in the early 'thirties over the question of academic independence is a proof of the sound line on which they were conceived.

2

But the general school system of any country is not the best test if one is trying to discover whether government and people are actuated by democratic ideas and ideals, or the reverse. Something rather different may well be taken as a better indicator, viz. the plans made and the results obtained in the field of adult education. There are countries in which adult education is a luxury, following a somewhat narrow field of special interests, and calculated to make possible for those engaged an expansion and development of the mind and spirit only. In countries like Poland, however, where, as we have seen, illiteracy had continued to flourish unchecked, adult education which would begin with learning to read, write and cipher, was a vital part of the strengthening of the social and political order. Here too, as I said before, a volume would be necessary if the tale were to be told adequately, whereas a few paragraphs must suffice. At best they can indicate the scope of the work, the end in view, and the spirit of those doing it.

Few countries in Europe needed more the contribution

to be made by evening and other schools for adults than Poland. Whole provinces were faced with tens of thousands of grown-up or growing up men and women, who had never been in a classroom, and still more who could indeed read and write, but had never been given the rudiments of education. Both in town and country, notably since 1905, beginnings had been made to meet this need, and the response was gratifying. If people could not get teachers, they kept asking for books and periodicals, so that they could read at home. This explains why one of the first agencies helping in this field were the popular libraries and the central organisation for serving them.[1]

The pioneering work was done of course by voluntary groups of devoted people, and chiefly in the larger cities. It went forward in notable fashion under the German occupation, thanks in part to the stimulus of events. After 1918, however, everything took on a fresh complexion, having now the ready support of the Board of Education, instead of the open and covert opposition of an alien police. A special department was set up to assist in this great work. In general it may be said that four kinds of agencies collaborated during the years in providing a wide variety of educational facilities for younger and older adults. These were the state, the local authorities (provincial, municipal, etc.), the voluntary associations, and the universities. A mere enumeration of the kinds of work undertaken by these agencies would fill whole pages.

The Board of Education gave concrete assistance, chiefly in the way of helping to train teachers, and of organising conferences of all kinds. It was seconded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which provided many scholarships, by the Ministry of Agriculture, and by the School Section of the Ministry of War. Not many people

[1] A distinguished Polish leader has told how before the war broke out in 1914 he was piloting some young peasants from the Cassubian district near Gdynia (then under Prussian rule) around Warsaw. When he was saying 'Goodbye' he ventured to ask what had impressed them most. To his astonishment they replied, 'The bookshop of Gebethner and Wolff.' It seemed that they had no idea of the existence of so many Polish books in the whole world as they found there!

even in Poland realise the amount of educational work done during the 'twenties for the young recruits called to the army; and that not only in elementary but also in vocational education.

More specific, and also more diverse help was given to those engaged in the work of adult education by the provincial and local authorities. First in the form of grants to institutions, then in the provision of advisors, and finally by setting up their own evening schools and courses. The example of the larger cities leaps to the eye in this respect. Warsaw and Lodzh led the way, to be followed by the mining towns of the south-west. The response was immediate, and a great contribution made by various categories of lecturers, teachers, demonstrators, and technical helpers, in enriching the lives and raising the level of usefulness of scores of thousands of young men and women.

But even after 1918 it was on the voluntary (private) associations of all kinds that the main task still rested. Among these the following were perhaps best known: the Institute for Adult Education, the Union of Folk Theatres, the Polish Geographical Society, the Correspondence University, and the Union of Polish Librarians. Each of these was a widely extended organisation, with a G.H.Q. and a network of local centres; some of them combined the work of popular education with encouragement of various types of research. The journal of the Geographical Society, *Ziemia*, can take its place alongside the best of publications of this kind in Europe. As for the use of the drama and the stage, it has always been a passion of Slavonic peoples; and its educational value, not only for the individual but also for the community, has been long attested. The Folk Theatre had served useful ends in the older days, as a means for conserving the national speech and tradition. It was now used to promote community solidarity, and to nurture the elements of regional patriotism which can be of so much use in drawing often quite diverse folk traditions into understanding their relation to the nation and the State.

Along with these agencies worked, one in one, another in another part of the country, such well-known institutions as the following: The People's Libraries (found mostly in the western provinces), the People's School Association (founded in Cracow in 1891, and famed for its services in the one-time Austrian provinces), the Workers' Universities (strongly Socialist in outlook), and organisations of a professional character, such as the Association of Elementary Teachers, or the Railway Workers' Trade Union. Mention should also be made of the pioneer service in education done by the Co-operatives, through their Cultural Department, and of the growing significance of the Women's Clubs of various kinds, including those formed by and for younger women engaged in industry.

Finally, there was valuable work being done by the growing number of Folk Universities of the Danish type, some under Church, others under lay supervision; by the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in following up the careers of their ex-members, by the local churches of every denomination, and by the Young Men's Christian Association. One feature of the latter's work was the development on a hitherto unknown scale of Summer Camps, not only for growing youth, but also for adults.

Under less favourable circumstances, but in some cases with the material support of the authorities, the non-Polish Minorities carried on much the same kind of work, and with conspicuous success. An outstanding example of this was the activity of the Ukrainian society *Prosvita* (Enlightenment), whose evening courses reached tens of thousands, and whose libraries were to be found up and down south-eastern Poland. Research and publishing were the tasks of the Shevchenko Society, which possessed in Lwow a rich library dealing with Ukrainian matters of every kind. But the cultural services done by their agencies to the German minority, although smaller in dimensions, were richer and more varied than those enjoyed by even the majority of the Poles. In addition there were many Jewish organisations at work in the field of extra-mural

education; although a large fraction of that Minority belonged to the orthodox tradition of the Talmud, and was suspicious of all 'secular' studies. About each of these a chapter could be written, and it should be, for the western world knows nothing about the progress made in this field during a generation.

The most valuable auxiliary agency in the country, whether for education or for entertainment, was the wireless. There were in the 'thirties as many as ten sending stations in operation, and the system was being used in an increasing degree for educational purposes. In 1937 some 40,000 hours were offered, of which half were given to music, over one-tenth to talks and lectures, and one-seventh to literary diversions of one kind or another. In 1928 there were still only 100,000 receiving sets in Poland, but ten years later the number was 900,000. This is still small by comparison with western standards, but it was one-third that of France; and it should be borne in mind that thousands of these were in public places, e.g. community houses, and so served scores of people. One should add that growing use was being made of the film in the school-room, although film-production in Poland was in its infancy. There as elsewhere the cinema was in the hands of private enterprise, which thought rather of amusing the public, at times on rather low levels, than of doing much to enlighten it.

Adult education in Poland was neither adequate nor quite disinterested. Nor was it homogeneous in all parts of the country. In the western provinces teaching was demanded by adults of all ages in their mother-tongue. Though Poles, they had been compelled to attend only German schools when young, and had learned as little as possible. Now they had to learn to write their own tongue properly, and in many cases even to read it. In the one-time Russian provinces the same demand had to be met, but on a much larger scale. Here most of those attending classes could neither read nor write in any language—they began with the alphabet. In the industrial districts there was a call

for vocational courses on a huge scale—mechanical, technical, business (typing and book-keeping) as well as for guidance in management, or even commercial law. Nor were the fine arts neglected—music, painting, modelling, etc.

The variety of agencies meant to meet this need was too manifold until the depression compelled better co-ordination. More was planned than was achieved—a fact that workers in this field everywhere will understand at once. In the rural districts there was always a shortage of helpers; a fact that tended to throw a heavy burden on the local school-teachers. Many of the clergy, particularly the younger men, rendered useful help; in some small towns the whole professional class pooled its resources for this work. Even so, the results were not too satisfactory; and it is doubtful whether even in 1939 illiteracy had been wholly abolished. What one can say is that if anyone did not know how to read and write, it was his or her own fault, not that of the community.

A good deal of the work done by different bodies had ulterior motives. While helping the pupil on the road to learning it was designed to further the interests of a Party or a union, e.g. that of the Co-operatives. No one need condemn this kind of thing—far from it. One must only realise that the teachers or lecturers were doing a certain amount of indoctrination of ideas: they were serving the ends of a group as well as those of the nation and the State. One has the feeling that this was more justifiable before 1914 than after 1918.

Admitting these and other deficiencies, we may still take the view that the masses of the people in Poland felt the coming of a new era in their lives with the winning of independence in 1918. To the hand held out to them by those who could bring them a measure of book-learning, they made a general response. That in itself is no mean achievement.

3

Perhaps the supreme test of democratic atmosphere and principles in a civilised community is the amount of liberty given to the printed page in all its forms. The spoken word passes, it may inflame or it may not: what is written can reach more people, and it is meant to last. *Scripta manent!*

A proper survey of the Press and publishing activities in Poland (in several languages) would take a huge amount of time and space, although it would be immensely worth doing. It was far richer than most people from outside have any idea of: wide in scope and range of interest, and full of the traditional individualism of the Polish make-up. In Polish, Ukrainian, German, Yiddish, Hebrew, and White Russian—not to mention official papers published in either French or English—there were dailies, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies; some of them serious, others meant solely to amuse and entertain: some of them designed for particular groups or occupations, some of them written by and for women, some of them with a religious purpose, some of them virtually devoted to politics. Among these papers and journals every shade of opinion on social, economic, political, cultural and religious issues could be found. There were those which advocated mystical absolutism and those that hated everything supernatural; there was extreme pessimism about the capacity of men and women to manage their lives, and there was just as extreme optimism. There were papers urging that youth alone knew how to put the world to rights, and those which in effect poured scorn on such notions.

Precisely the same things could be said about the books, pamphlets and other matter (e.g. reviews) coming regularly from the publishing houses. Poland had a number of these, some of them with traditions going back nearly or quite a century. As one studies the obstacles with which they had to cope before 1914, one can appreciate the relief they felt when at last independence was given them. Hard hit

by the war, some of them took years to recover; and in general it must be said that the muses had to walk very austerely for a number of years. Things were just getting normal when the world crisis came along, and the setback was serious. At best the total number of readers of serious books in Poland was never as large as it should have been under better conditions. If one divides that number into several categories according to the field of interest, one is not surprised to learn that the average number of copies of a monograph or other serious study which a good publisher could expect to sell was estimated in 1931 at 940. This would apply to works in the field of history, literature, social science, philosophy, the exact sciences, and kindred subjects. As everywhere, only that author came off well whose book was accepted for school or university curricula. As elsewhere, again, there were cases in which authorities were suspected of favouring one author above another because of his political affiliations.

It would be greatly worth while to review the publishing activities of Polish firms over five years, in order to see how well the nation not only kept abreast of the currents of thought and controversy in Europe, but at times made original contributions. While in the U.S.S.R. a new approach to all social and cultural issues was being worked out, and long after the one-time boasted 'academic liberty' of the German scientific and literary world had ceased to exist, Poland preserved the atmosphere of disinterested pursuit of truth that she had learned as a member of the Latin Christian family. Not only in pure and applied science, but in pedagogy, sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy, æsthetics, the fine arts, etc., studies were appearing whose views were then watered down for the man in the street by journals, or even by the popularisers of knowledge in the daily papers. There was much chaff, but there was also wheat; and by contrast with half a century ago things were completely changed.

But it was the daily and weekly Press on which devolved most of the duties of shaping public opinion; and which in

consequence was most likely to be exposed to the rigours of any censorship. Most of it was inherited from the pre-1914 days. Even in Prussia the Polish Press was active; and it is astonishing to see how effective its work was. Here the main current of conviction was sympathetic toward National Democracy: the German world was regarded as the main threat to the restoration of Poland, and an agreement with Russia held to be a fundamental condition of survival. Right through the war of 1914–18 the *Poznan Courier* persisted in its detachment. Polish troops fought everywhere in the German armies, but the latter were never called 'Our' troops, but always 'the German' forces. Stern as was the treatment meted out by the Prussian official to the Poles, it was gentlemanly by comparison with that of the Nazis in our own day.

In the Russian provinces, as we have seen, the barometer of tolerance went up and down. A Polish Press did manage to exist, but it was allowed to say things in St. Petersburg that were forbidden in Warsaw. In the latter city the burgher daily, *The Warsaw Courier*, had deeply driven roots. Its circulation was never large, but nobody wanted it to be. Conservative, meant to deal with the things 'the best people' cared about, it was a power but in no sense an explosive power. The same could be said of the weeklies or other reading matter put out by the Church.

In Austria wider liberty was permitted to the Press, so that different political groups could possess their own organs. The oldest, and most respectable, among these was, of course, *The Times*, the organ of the Cracow Conservatives, of which the jest was in earlier years that you could buy it in at least two booths in the city, but with difficulty! The publishers seemed to pride themselves on its exclusiveness. But Cracow had its labour daily, *Forward*; and it had also a liberal journal—though it led a precarious existence. In Lwow, since the end of the century, was to be found the other centre—next to Poznan, of National Democratic doctrine. Here also appeared the Ukrainian journals.

All of these, together with other smaller provincial

dailies, carried on in the restored Poland. The western provinces had as well their German papers—in Katowice two of them—while in the capital and in Lwow there appeared dailies both in Yiddish and in Hebrew. The last-named revealed to what an extent every shade of political thinking was to be found among the Jews—all the way from orthodoxy, through liberalism, to a thorough-going nationalism of the Zionist type.

Only a brief review is possible here. In Warsaw *The Worker* became under the able guidance of the stalwart socialist and patriot, Niedzialkowski (done to death by the Nazis in 1940), the chief organ of the Left. In the same way, though not at once, *Piast*, published in Cracow, came to be the mouthpiece of the Peasant Party. One had the feeling, however, that neither of the two 'Popular' Parties was ever able to make its papers the power in public life they should have become. This was due in part to poverty. Papers cost money, and the workers of Poland were poor. It was also due, of course, to their unpopularity with the post-1926 régime. The Right attempted to found a new daily in the capital in 1922, *The Commonwealth*—said to have been financed by Paderewski. It did not long survive, however, partly because of the attachment of people to the *Courier*. In the *Polish Courier*, also appearing in Warsaw, the big interests had a useful organ, but its circulation was never large. That of the *Morning Courier*, which had virtually no political convictions, was larger. In the provinces there were a few live dailies, e.g. the Wilno *Word*, which maintained a course all its own, noted for its opposition to everything Soviet, and its tendency to welcome every *rapprochement* with the west. When later in the 'twenties, *The Times* moved from Cracow to Warsaw, it tended to become less exclusive: like the old grey mare, it was no longer 'what it used to be.' Alone of all the serious dailies, it proclaimed the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany as 'an alliance.'

One daily, the Cracow *Illustrated Courier*—known briefly as I.K.C.—embarked under an enterprising editor-in-chief

on a policy copied from Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* and certain American models. It sold more copies than several other dailies put together, and got them delivered in every corner of the country. It featured a colossal Sunday magazine number, which along with much that played down to the primitive interests of readers, offered a good measure of popularised knowledge from science, letters, and controversial fields. It exercised a big influence, by no means always constructive. In tone it tended to jingoism, and was usually to be found supporting the government. In 1929, by way of marking the completion of a decade of independence, the *Courier* published a huge quarto illustrated volume with a wealth of mostly useful materials on Poland, its progress and its prospects. Not everything in the volume can be taken as historically sound, but it is a work of reference that can be employed to advantage.

What about the freedom of this Press? Certainly there was a censorship, which grew in its vigilance from 1930 onwards. The chief thing to be said about it was that it was foolish rather than rigorous. At times it seemed to be directed against people rather than opinions. Operating on capricious rather than consistent lines, it was more of an annoyance than an obstacle to editors. Things forbidden one day, or in one place, were allowed to be said on another day, or in another place. In general it was the expression of a mentality, described above, which disliked criticism because it disliked not getting its own way. It had little in common with the thorough-going censorships of the imperial days, or of the still sterner totalitarian régimes of to-day. Often not even intelligent, it did not keep the Parties from saying what they wanted to say; nor did it ever succeed in throttling liberty of speech.[1]

[1] I was startled one morning, while sitting in a coffee-house in Katowice in 1933, to overhear two people next me discussing this very question. One of them was at home, the other was a visitor from abroad. The latter was expressing his astonishment at the latitude permitted to the Press in Poland. He was referring mostly to the German Press, of which he said that it seemed to be able to say 'what it liked.' Obviously he had heard elsewhere (in Vienna and Prague, to be exact) that in Poland no one dared to speak his mind.

No one will deny that from 1935 onwards the official censorship became more rigorous, and that the task of an editor became more exacting. Even so, the reader of the Polish Press in 1938 could find there the most outspoken views of many kinds as to the goings-on in Europe, and scarcely less outspoken views as to the situation at home. True, it seemed to at least one reader that 'the silly season' lasted longer than usual. One had the impression that the authorities welcomed almost any kind of 'tripe' dealing with things of no importance in order that people might not be given to thinking about matters 'in which they were incompetent.' Often enough the journalist must have been told to keep off things that were the preserve of specialists. But they did not keep off them; and even to the end the essential liberty of saying what should be said about issues affecting the nation and the State was not lost. Those who thought they could muzzle the mind of Poland fooled themselves.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSIONS

NINETEENTH-CENTURY Liberalism had very clear ideas as to the distinguishing features of democracy: above all as to its outstanding value by contrast with any other form of government. For the simon pure Liberal it was a dogma that self-government was to be preferred to good government. We are not all prepared to-day to accept this view as readily as fifty years ago.

Even those of us who were brought up in this lofty tradition see many things affecting the whole issue, which our fathers did not see. We are more disposed than they to accept the view that the good is the best possible under the circumstances, and to realise that there are approximations to the ideal, which should be appraised at their value in producing concrete results, rather than in terms of abstract principle. In the bitter school of experience the world has learned much, and is the more realist in consequence.

Judged by the liberal standards suggested above, there was hardly a democracy in Europe when the war broke out in 1939—the more's the pity. There was a varying degree of approximations, and there were a number of States which had eschewed democracy and all that it stood for. Poland belonged emphatically among the former, rather than among the latter. There was more of the theory and practice of democracy at work than appeared on the surface, and there was a horror of totalitarianism.

More perhaps than any other of the peoples liberated in 1918 the Poles were felt by outside observers to be on trial. It was as if a youth had inherited a valuable family property, and people said, 'We shall see what he makes of it!' This fact, added to Poland's precarious position on the map, made it a risky business for the nation to permit itself any

kind of experiment in the field of politics. One might even say that, more than any other people in Central Europe, the Poles had, laid upon them, the task of being almost perfect men and citizens—a task transcending human powers. Not to achieve the impossible would seem to promise catastrophe. It looked, nevertheless, as though there were no middle way.

A position of this sort is the most unenviable that can be imagined for man. It tempts the daring, the adventurer, while sobering or even discouraging the realist. This fact may help to account for the *coup d'état* of 1926, and for the concept of a government by an élite which emerged in the sequel. It cannot, however, serve as their justification; unless indeed the results obtained had been of such a nature as is rarely achieved in history.

I have suggested that, as time went on, the perpetuation of the régime established in 1926 was defended on the grounds of the impending crisis in Europe, and I have paid also a tribute to the Opposition forces for their restraint in not forcing on the nation a violent upheaval in order to overthrow that régime. To make this point clearer and to underline my view that internal issues could not in Poland be settled solely on their merits, I should like to use the analogy of Spain.

The civil war in the Iberian peninsula in 1936–7 laid the Spanish nation on its back, and left it almost exhausted. Had any of its neighbours—let us say France or Italy or Britain—fostered designs of a territorial or other nature, Spain would have been at their mercy, unless perchance, those neighbours happened to be at loggerheads with one another, in which case they would have and could have fought out their quarrel on Spanish soil, leaving it wasted and ruined. Nothing of this sort happened, although at times something very like it was in prospect. One may ask why. First because in the main those neighbours were 'good neighbours,' who exercised a fair measure of self-restraint in regard to other people's property. They did not think of the peninsula as Ahab did of Naboth's vine-

yard. Secondly, because Spain has almost perfectly defined frontiers, and her country is so mountainous as to be an extremely difficult world to carry on war in. These reasons alone sufficed to protect the Spanish people and permit them to wage war with one another at will. Such reasons have not existed in the case of Poland, and would not have applied in the event of civil strife in 1936–7. Hence, what in the Greek sense of the word may be called the 'tragedy' of that country.

Are we then driven to the conclusion that the only kind of Poland able to survive as a free and independent state in Europe, is one whose people are models of personal and civic virtues, whose leaders are very nearly supermen, and whose politics have reached a high level, judged even by western standards? In one sense, yes! Other peoples in Europe may permit themselves to make mistakes, but the Poles dare not.[1] Other peoples can allow large latitude to 'non-conformists' of various types, without running risk of dissolving the social order. The Poles cannot.

But a caveat must be added. There are people, among them even Poles, who hold the view that the catastrophe which overtook Poland in September 1939 was a consequence of the political blunders of that country during the preceding 20 years. Nothing could be further from the truth. It *was* a consequence of the political blunders of the whole of Europe, but nothing more can be said. Once the international scene had been set by the re-occupation of the Rhineland, the farce of non-intervention in Spain, the seizure of Austria, and 'Munich,' none of which had anything to do directly with Poland—the march on Prague, the seizing of Memel and the overwhelming of Poland were inevitable. Not even the most perfect government in Warsaw could have avoided the catastrophe. When the international system devised to maintain law and order had broken down, Europe had lapsed to the level

[1] Three months after writing this paragraph, my attention was drawn to a statement by Max Nordau, made half-a-century ago, that 'the Poles must either become a nation of heroes or perish'!

of the jungle, where it still is. On this level the biggest and strongest alone have some assurance of survival: the smaller and the weaker are at their mercy, and may survive or may not.

One final matter. The phrase 'public opinion' has scarcely appeared in these pages, if at all. Does this mean that there was no such thing in Poland? Is there anything of significance to be said on this point?

Put on the soberest plane, one can say at once that on certain great issues there was a strong and almost united public opinion, dictated for many, it is true, rather by their feelings than their intellect. On other scarcely less great issues there were directly conflicting opinions—in other words, public opinion was sharply divided. In consequence it would seem as though the opposing views and groups cancelled one another out, incapacitating one another, and at times the authorities from salutary and necessary action.

Debate and discussion are an essential feature of democratic institutions. The freer they are, the more of democracy is to be found. In Polish public life they tended at times to be considered as ends in themselves, rather than what they ought to be—the prologue to action. As a corollary to this they ended too often with each party to the discussion thinking what it thought before, perhaps more strongly than ever: when the sequel should have been the finding of a way to action in which the majority would concur.

But that is an aside. Public opinion is never simply the sum total of many individual opinions. It is something intangible—an imponderable: it is also a tremendous dynamic. In Poland it was all of these, only more so. As the expression of the views of a free people it was still immature. Being young it was often fickle, at times frivolous, and at times indolent. Too often it was ready to take the way of least resistance; but when a major crisis arose, affecting what men held dearest, it would harden into granite.

One may accept the view that in May 1926, for many reasons, the mass of public opinion was behind Marshal Pilsudski; that it became shaken in its allegiance in 1930, although preferring to leave things as they were; and it never stood behind his successors after his death in 1935, although it had not the driving power to force the issue in the face of threatening international chaos in Europe.

What has happened since 1939 has certainly pushed everything a good deal farther. Neither in the brief war, nor in the fearful ordeal of occupation, exploitation and extermination that has now lasted four and a half years, have the Poles faltered. The main outlines of the story are known to those who read the daily papers. One could sum it all up thus:

1. If any German doubted before whether the Poles knew their own minds, and were prepared to go through fire and water rather than betray their spiritual heritage, he has now had an answer. Someone offered to take any fortress, if he could drive an ass laden with gold up to the gate. The Polish fortress has not been taken, either by threats, by brutality, or by bribes. That is something Europe would do well to remember.

2. The peerless resistance to the invader has been chiefly the work of the common man. No distinction is made between the hand-worker and the man wearing a collar and tie. The heaviest blows have fallen purposely on the educated classes, but Poland stands because hundreds of thousands of nameless people, whose deeds will never be recorded, have refused to surrender.

3. The evidence that has come out to Britain, and it is very rich, bears witness to the sinking of differences that existed before between creeds, peoples, communities, or individuals. In the face of a common enemy, people who never spoke before have joined forces as one man—Catholics, Jews, Orthodox, Protestants; peasants with townsmen, the aristocrat with the crofter, the workman with his employer, the young with the old. Together they

have taken this gruelling experience, and together they will either survive it or perish.

At the middle of August 1943, after nearly four years of suffering unequalled in Europe, the spirit of the Polish nation was to this extent unbroken that a Joint Declaration, signed by those leading by 'underground' methods the four traditional Parties, was published in Warsaw for use at home and abroad. Copies of it were soon in London. Not only did it reveal complete agreement as to the ends in view, but it showed solid loyalty to the Polish Government in London, accepting its leadership not only for the duration of hostilities, but also during the interim period afterward, until elections can be held and a new administration set up. Nothing could be plainer than that.

The forces of democracy in Poland have matured greatly since 1918. Just as the peasant was the unmoved and immovable defender of the national patrimony in the 19th century, and as that factory and foundry worker was the first man to bring back at the end of the century the romantic temper of the Insurrections, so to-day: hand-in-hand with the black-coat worker, and not in collision with him, the common people see to it that there is no yielding to the enemy. Now as a century and a half ago the song can be sung, no longer by volunteers fighting in exile, but by the common people at home:

> Poland's soul has not departed
> While we live to love her!

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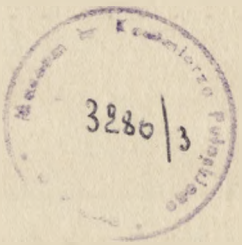
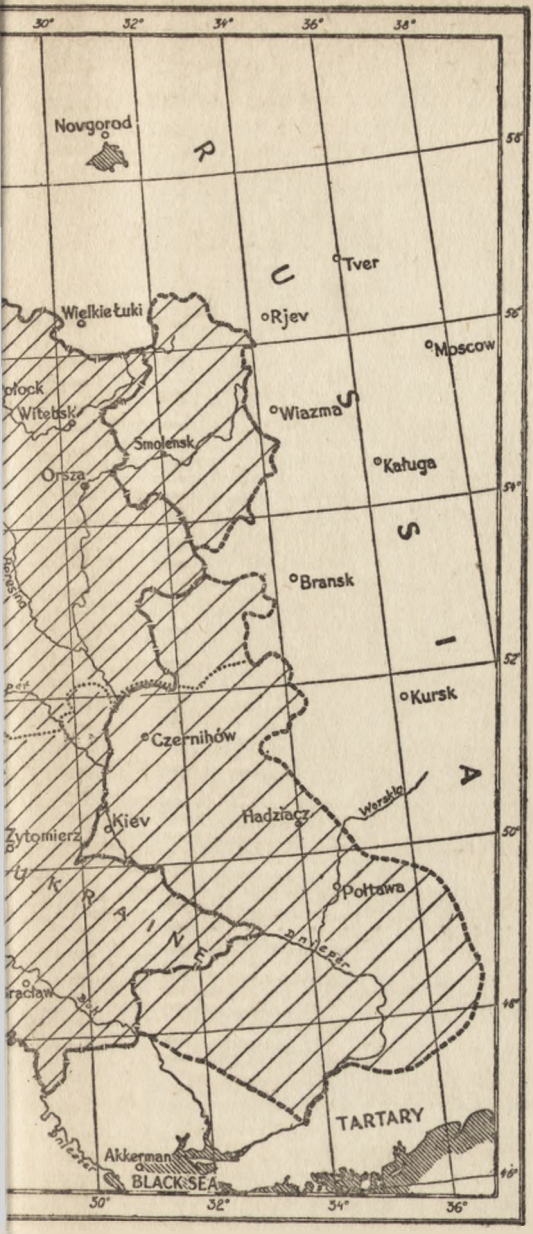



HISTORICAL
MAP
OF
POLAND
ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
WITH THE MODERN BOUNDARIES ADDED
BALTIC SEA
ESTONIA
Reval
Narv
Dorpat
Psk
LIVONIA
Riga
KURLAND
Telsze
Memel
LITHUANIA
Poniewiez
SAMOGITIA
Tilsit
Kowno
Wilno
Troki
Krewo
Rügen Island
Stupsk (Stolp)
Danzig
Gdansk
Königsberg
DUGAL
VARMIA
POMERANIA
PRUSSIA
Stettin
Marienburg
Chelmno
Torun
Grodno
Nowogródek
Minsk
BRANDENBURG
KUJAVIA
Gniezno
Poznan
GREAT POLAND
Dobrzyn
Plock
MASOVIA
Bialystok
PODLASIA
Warsaw
Leczyca
Lodzh
Kalisz
Sieradz
Piotrków
Brest-Litovsk
Pinsk
POLESIA
Głogow
(Glogau)
Wrocław (Breslau)
Lignica
LUSATIA
Lublin
Chelm
VOLHYNIA
Horodło
Łuck
Opole
Częstochowa
Sandomierz
BOHEMIA
Cracow
Tarnow
Biecz
MORAVIA
Przemysl
Lwow
Zbaraz
GALICIA
AUSTRIA
SLOVAKIA
PODOLIA
Bar
Kamieniec
Kolomyja
Chocim
BUKOVINA
Jassy
MOLDAVIA
TRANSYLVANIA
OTTOMAN EMPIRE



Frontier of Republic in 1660

Ducal Prussia as vassal duchy of Republic of Poland

Frontier of Republic in 1770 (before first partition)

Interior boundary between 'Crown' (Kingdom of Poland) and Grand Duchy of Lithuania

Territory belonging jointly to Crown and Grand Duchy

Frontiers of Poland, 1st Sept. 1939

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