

National Solidarity and Organic Work in Prussian Poland, 1815–1914

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Nineteenth-century Prussia was by no means a purely German state. On the contrary, between 1815 and 1918 the mother tongue of roughly every tenth Prussian subject was Polish. These “Prussian Poles” lived for the most part in the provinces of Poznań (Posen) and West Prussia, land acquired in the first and second partitions of Poland and retained by Prussia after 1815. Considerable Polish-speaking populations were also to be found, however, in Upper Silesia, Masuria, and, after the 1870s, in the Rhineland and Westphalia as well.

The main focus of the Polish question in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Prussia was increasingly upon the Polish-German nationality conflict, a struggle centered on the eastern provinces, or, as they were called by later nineteenth-century German nationalists, the “Eastern Marches.” The Prussian government played a vital role in that conflict. Indeed, one of its most fundamental aspects involved the government’s efforts, especially under Bismarck and his successors, to impose policies of Germanization on the land and people of the formerly Polish provinces. After 1871 the essential issue of the nationality conflict was whether the Poles in the eastern provinces would find methods of successfully resisting those policies, which grew both more all-encompassing and more popular in German nationalist circles with every passing year.

It is not the aim of the present essay to describe the stages and content of official Prussian Polish policies in the century after 1815.¹ Rather, the focus of the following pages will be upon the manner in

¹The most detailed and comprehensive account of nineteenth-century Prussian Polish policies is still to be found in Józef Buzek, *Historia polityki narodowościowej rządu pruskiego wobec Polaków: Od traktatów wiedeńskich do ustaw wyjątkowych r. 1908* (Lwów, 1909). A balanced German view is presented by Martin Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Munich, 1963). Hans-Ulrich Wehler summarizes the Polish policies of Bismarck and his successors in “Die Polenpolitik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1918,” in *Politische Ideologien und nationalstaatliche Ordnung: Festschrift für Theodor Schieder*, ed. K. Kluxen and W. J. Mommsen (Munich, 1968). Monographs of importance include Józef Feldman, *Bismarck a Polska* (Warsaw, 1966 [1st ed. 1937]); Lech Trzeciakowski, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających w Wielkopolsce w erze Capriviego 1890–1894* (Poznań, 1960), and *Walka o polskość miast poznańskiego na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Poznań, 1964); and Michał Pirko, *Bülow a sprawa polska* (Warsaw, 1963).

which Polish society in the heartland of Prussian Poland reacted to Prussian rule and, above all, upon the political and socioeconomic institutions the Prussian Poles evolved to maintain and strengthen their nationality in the face of Germanizing influences and pressures.

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It was the province of Poznań which was the center of Polish political life in Prussia and the main focus of the domestic Polish policies of the Prussian government throughout the nineteenth century. Only there, and in parts of the neighboring province of West Prussia, did the Prussian Poles possess a historic national political elite. Its social base was the estate-owning nobility—the well-to-do *szlachta*—and most of the political history of the Poles under Prussian rule centers on this class and the public activities it undertook or supported. In the course of the nineteenth century, the Polish elite broadened its active membership, particularly by gaining the Polish Catholic clergy and the *szlachta*-related, university-trained intelligentsia as allies. It also widened the range of its political action, from the narrowest court and local parliamentary politics to a program of organizing the entire Polish population politically, socially, and economically.

This Polish elite was not at any time homogeneous in its political philosophy, program, or immediate goals. Important differences of political orientation and style existed within it. Moreover, after 1870 a movement arose, based primarily outside the *szlachta*, to gain a share of control over the political institutions created by the traditional elite. Since, however, this “populist” movement accepted those institutions, its fundamental object was to join the ranks of the governing elite and redirect its policies rather than to abolish it altogether. Hence, even after 1870 the chief focus of Polish politics remained on the old elite and its efforts to maintain preeminence within Polish public life.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Prussian state's Polish policies (*Polenpolitik*) largely determined the political orientation of the Polish elite. Thus, in the years after 1815, the Poles had to adjust themselves to two basic policies of the Prussian government. The first of these was peasant emancipation, or “regulation” as it was officially called. Most members of the *szlachta* believed that peasant regulation threatened not only their material interests but also their traditional social and political control over the Polish peasants and rural workers. Certainly the government intended, by converting the larger (*spannfähig*) serfs' holdings into freeholds and by abolishing all compulsory labor dues, to win the gratitude of the peasants. But peasant regulation was also expected to eliminate the sources of possible

agrarian rioting or radicalism in the villages. This would have important political consequences for the *szlachta*. For since Kościuszko's rising against Russia and Prussia in 1794, radically minded Polish political leaders, as they sought means of restoring the Polish state, concluded that the Polish peasantry must be induced to take up arms in the national cause by the promise of receiving full ownership of the land they tilled as serfs. By seizing the initiative in the question of making free peasants of the former Polish serfs, the Prussian government had robbed the *szlachta* of the chance, had they wished to take it, of mobilizing the rural population with their own offers of "enfranchisement" (*uwłaszczenie*). It is true that, until 1848, the possibility of a revolutionary mobilization of small-holding former serfs existed, since before that time they were not granted free title to their lands and instead were in many cases reduced by their landlords to the status of cottagers. But the *szlachta*, who benefited by this decline in the small-holders' status and indeed depended on them for much of their labor, would not consider basing an insurrection on a policy of transforming small-holders into self-sufficient peasants.

Thus, the Prussian government's program of peasant regulation, though favorable to only a portion of the former serfs, nevertheless succeeded in its object of turning the peasantry away from political radicalism. "Regulated" peasants showed virtually no interest in 1830-31, 1846-48, or 1863 in the Polish elite's revolutionary efforts.²

If the *szlachta* reacted negatively to peasant regulation, it responded favorably to the political regime established in the province after 1815. Indeed, the Polish elite substantially accepted the terms of political life offered it by the Prussian government in the shape of the political and socioeconomic institutions of what was officially called the Grand Duchy of Poznań: a Polish *Statthalter* in Berlin, Polish domination of most of the province's county diets (*Kreistage*), a majority in the provincial diet, control of appointments of county executive officials (*Landräte*), continued seigneurial rights over the many private towns, participation in the state-funded provincial agricultural credit society for large landowners (*Landschaft*), and

²On peasant emancipation in Prussian Poland, see W. Rusiński, ed., *Dzieje wsi wielkopolskiej* (Poznań, 1959), pp. 141-66; J. Marchlewski, *Stosunki społecznoeconomiczne w ziemiach polskich zaboru pruskiego* (Lwów, 1903), reissued in Marchlewski, *Pisma Wybrane* (Warsaw, 1952), 1:248-75; S. Borowski, *Rozwarstwienie wsi wielkopolskiej w latach 1807-1914* (Poznań, 1962), pp. 66-74; and Stefan Kieniewicz, *The Emancipation of the Polish Peasantry* (Chicago, 1959), chap. 4. On the political importance of peasant emancipation in Polish history, see Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795-1918* (Warsaw, 1968), pp. 21 ff., 74-75, 548-53.

no less important than the foregoing, official recognition of the Polish nature of the Archbishopric of Poznań-Gniezno.³

Within the framework of the Grand Duchy, however, political differences soon arose among the members of the Polish elite. In the provincial diet, which first met in 1827, two loose groupings among the aristocratic Polish deputies appeared. The more conservative stressed chiefly the necessity of maintaining the Polish language in education and administrative usage. A more liberal group of deputies, however, petitioned the government to fulfill what they interpreted as its promises of 1815 by granting the Grand Duchy of Poznań a constitution comparable to that which existed under the Napoleonic Grand Duchy of Warsaw. This meant, in effect, that the province of Poznań should be only loosely attached, through a personal union with the monarch, to the Prussian state. In the province the Poles should have full control of the administration, a responsible ministry, and legislative organs independent of others within the state; that is, they should be empowered to make and administer their own laws, subject to some form of agreement with the Prussian king in his capacity as Grand Duke of Poznań.⁴

Thus, in the very first years of Prussian rule, a Polish conservative camp arose, with a strategy of maintaining good relations with the court and central administration and asking only that the Polish language, Polish religion and social customs, and the status of the Polish church and *szlachta* be respected within the confines of the Grand Duchy. On the other hand, the Polish liberals had already formulated their policy of legal opposition, based on their interpretation of the treaties and agreements of 1815, aiming at political autonomy for the Poles of the Grand Duchy.

³On the Grand Duchy of Poznań, see Buzek, pt. 2, chap. 2; Tadeusz Manteuffel, ed., *Historia Polski* (Warsaw, 1958-63), 2 (pt. 2): 342 ff.; Broszat, pp. 61 ff.; Manfred Laubert, *Die preussische Polenpolitik von 1772-1914* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 43-56; Józef Nowacki, *Archidiecezja poznańska w granicach historycznych i jej Ustrój* (Poznań, 1964), 2:115, 163; and H. Heffter, *Die deutsche Selbstverwaltung im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der Ideen und Institutionen* (Stuttgart, 1950), p. 223.

⁴The Polish conservatives depended to a great extent for the realization of their program on their influence on the government of the *Statthalter*, Antoni Radziwiłł, who was the husband of Frederick William III's sister, Princess Luise. Both Radziwiłł and the marshal of the provincial diet, Antoni Sułkowski, sat in the Prussian Staatsrat and were well connected in court and high administrative circles. The liberals were represented by J. Bojanowski and a deputy named Kossecki. Kossecki was the first Prussian Pole to call for "energetic, consistent, and legal opposition" to the government; he recommended that the Poles take the Irish leader O'Connell as a model of such opposition (see Witold Jakóbczyk, *Studia nad dziejami Wielkopolski w XIX w [dzieje pracy organicznej]*, vol. 1, 1815-1850 [Poznań, 1951], pp. 6, 20-21; on Radziwiłł, see Laubert, p. 47).

A third significant development within Polish society prior to 1830 was the emergence of what later became known as a program of "organic work." The proponents of organic work held that Polish political efforts and public activities should not be devoted exclusively to the restoration of a Polish state through armed insurrection. Nor should the Poles wait passively for a reestablishment of their state through the diplomatic actions of the great powers in the wake of a future European war. The former program, given the close diplomatic and military cooperation of the three partition powers vis-à-vis Poland, was—so this movement held—unrealizable, while the latter was entirely hypothetical and unworthy of the Polish elite. Rather, the Poles should take advantage both of the civil liberties, however narrow, offered them by the partition powers and the economic possibilities open to them to modernize the Polish nation socially and economically. This meant educating the Polish masses in their national language and history, improving both estate and peasant agriculture through technical education, and encouraging the rise of Polish industry and trade as well as arts and letters. In short, the school of organic work, which became systematized as a body of ideas only in the mid-nineteenth century, sought to overcome the traditional socioeconomic weaknesses of Polish society and to knit the loosely integrated nation of nobles and serfs, clergy and backward artisans into a modern society of progressive landlords, prosperous peasants, enterprising bourgeois, ambitious workers, and creative intellectuals. Whatever the future then might hold in store for the Poles, when the hour of national liberation came—as few nineteenth-century Polish nationalists, however conservative, doubted it ultimately would—Polish society would be prepared to play the role of a modern nation-state. Dr. Karol Marcinkowski, one of the most outstanding representatives of the school of organic work in Prussian Poland, expressed the spirit of this movement in the words: "Society aims to better each individual. That is our task, not revolution."⁵

The first initiative taken in the organic work movement in Prussian Poland came from a wealthy landowner, Count Tytus Działyński, and an economist, Antoni Kraszewski. Cooperating with the conservative leaders of Polish society, they drafted in 1828 the program for an organization they planned to call the Society for the Friends of Agriculture, Industry, and Learning. Its object would be to collect funds, promote agricultural and industrial progress through journals, competitions, and lectures, and distribute scholarships to Polish high

⁵Quoted by the Polish historian Wilhelm Feldman in his *Geschichte der politischen Ideen in Polen seit dessen Teilungen 1795-1914* (Munich, 1917), p. 132.

school and university students. However, partly because of the projected society's purely Polish character, to be maintained through the exclusive use of the Polish language and through the acceptance of new members only by majority vote of existing members, the government refused to permit its establishment.⁶ Nevertheless, this organizational effort signified the early interest on the part of the Polish elite, and indeed its most influential members, in organic work programs.

The revolutionary year 1830 marked a watershed in Prussian *Polenpolitik*, with the abolition of the office of *Statthalter*, the appointment of a bitter opponent of the Polish elite, Eduard Flottwell, as provincial president, and the subsequent reduction of Polish influence in the provincial administration.⁷ From this time onward, the Poles could no longer regard themselves as partners in the government of the province, but only as Prussian subjects. Their reaction to these changes in *Polenpolitik*, brought about by the Polish revolt of 1830–31 in Russian Poland, was affected by the influence exerted on all the Polish partition areas by the Polish émigrés in France and England. The leaders of the “great emigration” possessed much authority in formulating political strategies to be followed by the Polish leaders who had not been forced into exile. The fundamentally conservative and aristocratic character of Polish political life in Prussian Poland ensured that the moderate counsels of the émigrés grouped around Prince Adam Czartoryski in Paris would outweigh those of the Polish Democratic Society, whose Poitiers Manifesto in 1836 called for preparing a new insurrection against the Russian government. Czartoryski's followers cautioned Poles in the homeland to await the rebirth of a Polish state in a diplomatic settlement following a general European war, occupying themselves in the meantime with programs of organic work. In the province of Poznań, therefore, while the Flottwell regime drove the Poles further into opposition to the government, their interest in socioeconomic organization and modernization was heightened under the conservative émigrés' influence.⁸

In 1835, a group of liberally minded landowners succeeded in founding an association of Polish noblemen in the county of Gostyń, whence its name the “Gostyń Casino.” Sympathetic German land-

⁶Jakóbczyk, 1:22–23. The government's definitive refusal was given in February 1830.

⁷Buzek, p. 2, chap. 3; and Laubert, pp. 62–70.

⁸On the “great emigration,” see S. Kieniewicz, *Historia polski*, chap. 10; W. Feldman, chap. 4; M. Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity 1770–1861* (Princeton, N.J., 1955), chaps. 12–13; and A. Gieysztor et al., *History of Poland* (Warsaw, 1968), pp. 473–80.

owners were invited to join, thus depriving the government of the charge of Polish exclusivity as a pretext for disbanding it. Besides social and charitable activities, the Casino sponsored knowledge of modern agricultural techniques and began publishing, in 1836, a technical economic journal. Other smaller societies of a similar type sprang up during these years. It was, indeed, typical and symptomatic of Polish society that the first concrete achievements in the field of organic work should have been such locally based social and professional organizations of the Polish gentry.⁹

The accession of Frederick William IV to the throne led to a liberalization of Prussian *Polenpolitik* which allowed the organic work movement to assume significant dimensions. From the late 1830s until his death in 1846, Dr. Karol Marcinkowski made his reputation as the practical and intellectual father of this movement. He was a son of Poznań's petite bourgeoisie and had received his medical training in France, with the financial aid of the Czartoryski camp, as an émigré after 1831. Upon his return to Poznań, he catalyzed Polish interest around two institutions. Between 1838 and 1843, he organized the leading circles of the *szlachta* and the Polish bourgeoisie in Poznań in support of a joint-stock company, formed in 1843, known as the "Polish Bazaar" (Bazar Polski). This was a large building in Poznań which housed a hotel, conference halls, and shops. Among the holders of the Bazaar's initial share capital of 89,250 thalers, the large majority were estate owners. The Bazaar was to be, and in fact became, the social and political gathering point in the provincial capital for the Polish elite, both urban and rural. The shops were leased to Polish artisans, booksellers, and merchants. Moreover, part of the company's annual profits were to be employed by the directors in "the propagation and improvement of national industry, trade, and agriculture."¹⁰

Marcinkowski's second achievement was the establishment in 1841 of the Society for Academic Aid to the Youth of the Grand Duchy of Poznań (TNP). The inspiration for this organization came from the Poznańian educator and writer Karol Libelt, but it was Marcinkowski who united both conservative and liberal landowners and upper and lower clergy in its support. Archbishop Dunin recommended that the

⁹Jakóbczyk, 1:28–30. The chief promoters of the Gostyń Casino were Gustaw Potworowski and Walerian Rembowski. Like the drafters of the abortive 1828 society, their object was the spread of "industry and learning." Their method—mixing social occasions with practical education—was, incidentally, that also employed by their famous Hungarian counterpart and contemporary, István Széchenyi, in his efforts to modernize Magyar society.

¹⁰Jakóbczyk, 1:64–69.

clergy take an active role in its affairs, thus inaugurating the highly important role of Polish Catholic priests in Polish sociopolitical life. The society consisted of county committees, which raised money and together elected a central provincial committee which in turn distributed part of the funds in scholarships to Polish students. The remainder of the money was deposited in an "iron fund," the interest from which in the future would become the major source of scholarship money. Priests and landowners were the society's chief organizers and recruiters of applicants, while the *szlachta* provided the bulk of the funds. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance to Polish society of the TNP. By 1851 it had already enabled 455 students to complete their gymnasial or university training, at a cost of almost 300,000 marks.¹¹

The Bazar Polski and the TNP, together with new local agricultural societies among the *szlachta*, were the chief achievements of the organic work movement in the 1840s. But Polish society was also much occupied in these years with purely political questions. Frederick William IV's sympathy toward the high Polish nobility made it possible for some Polish magnates to resume their program of persuading the government from within court circles to moderate its *Polenpolitik*.¹² On the other hand, the relatively mild regime of the early 1840s allowed various radical groups to function in the province. Gradually, after 1840 members of all these groups came together in a plan, coordinated with the Democratic Society abroad and with the Galician revolutionaries Edward Dembowski and Henryk Kamiński, to launch a general Polish uprising early in 1846. The Polish large landowners in the province of Poznań got wind of these preparations, however, and betrayed the local revolutionaries and democrats to the Prussian police in February 1846.¹³

This incident reversed the government's liberal administration of its *Polenpolitik*. It also proved to be the only effort at insurrection

¹¹Ibid., 2:29. On the origins of the TPN, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, chap. 4. By 1912, the TPN's "iron funds" totaled 1,468,130 marks, enabling it to maintain 450-550 stipendiaries annually (*ibid.*, 3:35). Altogether between 1841 and 1914 the TPN financed the education of about 3,500 individuals, most of whom prepared themselves for one or another middle-class occupation, especially in the "free professions" but also in technical, industrial, or commercial fields. The stipendiaries' social origins were chiefly in the urban and rural petite bourgeoisie, the latter consisting chiefly of estate employees and schoolteachers. The TPN students were required to master literary Polish, and most studied as well Polish literature and history. They represented a vital contribution to the formation of a modern Polish middle class in the province's towns.

¹²W. Feldman, p. 131.

¹³On the radical movements in the province of Poznań in the early 1840s, see Kieniewicz, *Historia polski*, pp. 155-57, 161-63.

ever organized on Prussian soil by Polish activists. Its disappointing outcome (together with the effect of the Galician peasant revolt of 1846 on the Polish elite's political thinking), turned the liberal *szlachta* and most bourgeois democrats as well against the idea of a revolutionary war of liberation. Thus, the abortive rising of 1846 had the effect of strengthening the hand of proponents of legal opposition and organic work.

I. THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

The political leaders of the Prussian Poles did not attempt to stage an uprising against Prussian rule in 1848. Their minimal program sought restoration of the relatively mild regime of the Grand Duchy of Poznań. At the most, they hoped, together with many German democrats, for restoration of a Polish state as a concomitant of a German-Russian war whose chief object would have been the creation of a united Germany. Since the events of 1848-49 in the province of Poznań and the Polish question at Frankfurt are familiar to students of German and Polish history, they need not be recounted here. Suffice it to say that popular German nationalism, fanned by the revolution, rejected even the Poles' minimal program of provincial autonomy; so too did the Prussian government after the defeat of the revolution in Germany and the reestablishment of the Prussian monarchy's freedom of action. Thus, the Poles emerged from the revolution isolated and without allies in Prussian society.¹⁴

The coming of parliamentarism to Prussia after 1847 had an important effect on Polish society. From this time onward, the Polish delegations to the Prussian diet (and later to the Imperial Reichstag) played the very important role of synthesizing and embodying the political leadership of the Prussian Poles. From 1848 to 1914 their parliamentary activity, with very few exceptions, consisted only of oppositional protests, chiefly against official *Polenpolitik*. Nevertheless, parliamentary elections gave them the chance to politicize the Polish population and to form a kind of surrogate Polish government through the process of determining which members of the Polish elite should speak for them all.

In the course of the elections of 1848-49, the Poles organized their system of "electoral authorities" (*władze wyborcze*), which, though

¹⁴On 1848 see *ibid.*, pp. 176 ff.; Buzek, pp. 85-101; G. F. W. Hallgarten, *Studien über die deutsche Polenfreundschaft in der Periode der Märzrevolution* (Munich, 1928), chap. 4; and Lewis Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), pp. 58-112.

extended and reformed in subsequent years, remained essentially unchanged down to 1914. These authorities were represented in a hierarchy of committees, from the level of the smallest police district up to that of the province. These committees supervised meetings of Polish voters on the local, county, and electoral-district level. Such meetings were occasions for expressing Polish political demands and ideals and for strengthening in the population the feeling of "national solidarity." Moreover, they allowed the voters "democratically" to nominate their own parliamentary candidates and to elect the members of the various electoral committees. Final selection of candidates occurred at a provincial assembly of county delegates, who voted on the names submitted to them through the series of voters' assemblies in every electoral district. In fact, however, the system of electoral authorities was securely in the hands of the Polish elite of landowners, priests, and members of the urban intelligentsia. It was they who submitted the lists of candidates and committeemen to the voters for an approval which was almost automatic. Their interest in the system was above all centered on its capacity to politicize the Polish masses and to reinforce their own authority within Polish society. Whenever conflicts occurred within the system, they were reflections of differing orientations within the Polish elite itself.

The influence of the landowning *szlachta* and of the clergy is evident in the fact that in 1888, among 250 members of the province's forty electoral committees, only ten were peasant farmers and another dozen or so were members of the bourgeoisie, including the editors of journals financially backed by the *szlachta*. The remainder were large landowners and priests. The Provincial Electoral Committee itself was composed entirely of persons of *szlachta* origins. In 1912, estate owners and lessees held twenty-one of forty-two seats as county delegates in the provincial assembly which nominated parliamentary candidates. Another six seats were held by priests, nine by university-trained professionals, and six by merchants.¹⁵

Polish political activity thus emerged from the revolutionary years of 1848-50 in a highly organized and nationally inclusive form. The revolution had reinforced the Polish elite's interest in "national solidarity," and henceforth they made every effort to maintain this sol-

¹⁵Trzeciakowski, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających*, p. 21, and "Rola rzemieślników w życiu politycznym," in Z. Grot, ed., *Polityczna działalność rzemiosła wielkopolskiego w okresie zaborów* (Poznań, 1963), p. 202; Zygmunt Hemmerling, *Postawie polscy w parlamencie rzeszy niemieckiej i sejmie pruskim 1907-1914* (Warsaw, 1968), pp. 49-51; and K. Rzepecki, *Naprzód czy wstecz?* (Poznań, 1912), pp. 75-77.

idity vis-à-vis the German population. Factional and party differences were resolved within the system of “electoral authorities,” and the idea that it was every voter’s “holy obligation” to vote for the chosen candidate took deep root in the Polish population as a whole, thus greatly inhibiting the formation of separate Polish political parties. Indeed, with the exception of the miniature Polish Socialist party, organized in 1893 as a special division within the German Social Democratic party, no Polish parties emerged before 1909. Until then, the “electoral system” itself was the Poles’ single political organization.

The years 1848–49 also witnessed the Polish elite’s attempt to create an all-inclusive organization of organic work, known as the Polish League. The proposal to form such an organization was received enthusiastically by the *szlachta* and the archbishop, so that by the fall of 1848 a provisional leadership had been formed and local committees were being organized. In January 1849 its statutes and leadership were formally established. The League intended to realize the ideals of the organic work movement through the dissemination of Polish culture and technical education. It issued popular journals not only for the workers and peasants of the province of Poznań, but also for the Upper Silesian and Masurian Poles. Moreover, it sought to aid Polish industry financially and propagated, by word of mouth rather than through official pronouncement, a boycott of German and Jewish manufacturers and merchants. This action had an unfortunate result, since the province’s Jewish buyers of grain and other agricultural products in effect called a counterboycott, refusing to buy the Polish *szlachta*’s crops. After a few weeks, the *szlachta* had to admit defeat, and called off the Jewish boycott. Only then could they get their crops to market. In other respects, the boycott also failed, for Polish manufacturers and artisans could not yet supply all the goods offered by their German counterparts. This campaign, however, lingered in the minds of all the nationalities as a future possibility or threat. Later in the century a serious boycott movement reemerged on the Polish side.¹⁶

The League also planned to set up a system of Polish cooperative savings banks, but the Prussian government dissolved it in 1850, before a start could be made. At the end of 1849 the League had

¹⁶Moritz Jaffé, *Die Stadt Posen unter preussischer Herrschaft: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Ostens* (Leipzig, 1909), pp. 214–15. In 1848, the province’s large Jewish population, which since the 1830s had been slowly emerging from its traditional social and political isolation from both Polish and German society, committed itself through its leadership elite decisively to the German national cause.

succeeded in establishing 301 local groupings with a total of 36,973 members. Financially, however, it depended on the contribution of the *szlachta*. Nevertheless, the formation and activities of the League were of considerable importance in future years. The idea of far-ranging organic work programs, in the fulfillment of which the Polish *szlachta* and clergy cooperated with the nationally active bourgeoisie, as well as the idea of organizing Poles of all classes, including workers and peasants, under the banner of national solidarity "for fatherland and religion," became the fundamental objects of the Polish elite's future organizational efforts.¹⁷

II. THE INSTITUTIONS OF ORGANIC WORK, 1850-1914

The conservative reaction which reigned in Prussia from 1850 to 1858 prevented the Poles from establishing any centralized, multi-branched organization, so that during these years only individual agricultural and artisans' societies were founded. Enough progress had been made in setting up large landowners' associations, however, that soon after the ban on centralized societies was lifted, the Polish *szlachta* succeeded in consolidating the work of thirty years by the creation in 1861 of the Central Economic Society (CTG). A large number of the nationally minded *szlachta* played major roles in the CTG. Its purpose was to disseminate knowledge of rational economic methods among the Polish gentry through the publication of a technical journal and through the institution of an annual winter assembly of all CTG members in Poznań. Every county had its CTG branch, and the county presidents were usually men of social and political importance in Polish society.¹⁸

The CTG also intended to exercise a benevolent leadership over the landed Polish peasantry, and in this it succeeded, during the course of the following decades, to a remarkable degree. In the 1850s and 1860s, the idea of organizing the Polish peasants in cultural-economic societies was popular among both Polish liberals and conservatives. It was clear that unless the peasant farmers rationalized their methods, they would succumb to bankruptcy or be bought out by Germans. But the Polish elite was equally, if not more, interested in activating the peasants' sense of Polish nationality.¹⁹ Hence, in the early 1860s landowners, priests, and former 1848 democrats helped set up peasant societies on the village or parish

¹⁷On the Polish League, see Jakóbczyk, 1:101-84; and Manteuffel, pp. 252-57.

¹⁸Rusiński, p. 188.

¹⁹Jakóbczyk, 1:102-3.

level in which economic information was disseminated regarding finance and credit and conversion from the traditional two-crop-plus-fallow rotation to one of three full crops. Lectures on Polish history and literature and contemporary European events were also regularly offered to the peasantry. The turning point in this movement came with the appointment in 1873 of the landowner Maksymilian Jackowski as "patron" within the ranks of the CTG of the peasant societies, known generally as "agricultural circles." Jackowski had fought in the 1863–64 rising in Russian Poland and had subsequently been arrested and tried in the Berlin *Polenprozess* of 1864. He was acquitted, but returned to his estate wholly disillusioned with the insurrectionary idea. After the crushing *dénouement* of the Russian rising, a wave of antirevolutionary "positivism," or organic work sentiment, swept the Polish elite in all three partition areas, and Jackowski became one of the most effective of all proponents of this ideology. As patron, a position he held until his death in 1905, he consolidated the existing societies and organized over 200 new circles, attracting approximately 10,000 peasant-proprietor members. Each local society was supervised by a CTG member or the local priest, while one of the society's peasant members usually exercised the function of president. Annual meetings of the peasant society presidents and of local patrons in Poznań were occasions of national importance and pride, for these congregations of traditionally dressed Polish peasants, some of whom gave addresses in homespun Polish to the assembled *szlachta* activists, clergy, and newspapermen, seemed to demonstrate the peasantry's commitment to the Polish cause and to the idea of the national solidarity of all classes, even though the nominal subjects discussed at such conferences were nonpolitical questions of agricultural economy.²⁰

These agricultural circles embraced only part—roughly two-thirds—of the landowning peasantry. Their organization, however, was a signal achievement for the *szlachta*. Not only was an extremely important sector of Polish society nationally mobilized thereby, but the *szlachta*'s influence over the peasantry was also

²⁰See Jakóbczyk's essay "Maksymilian Jackowski," in *Wielkopolskie XIX wieku*, ed. W. Jakóbczyk, (Poznań, 1969), 2:88. Jackowski understood very well the political and national importance of the peasant societies. Not only did they teach the peasant farmers pride in their language and nationality, but they had the practical effect of strengthening the peasantry financially and of providing an organized context in which they could carry out schemes of parceling German land. One of the societies' most propagated ideas was that sale of a Polish farm to a German buyer was treason against the fatherland; but Jackowski and other organizers took care that the Prussian government could never charge them with specifically political activities, so that to 1918 the societies enjoyed the legal status of nonpolitical associations (*ibid.*, *passim*).

deepened through the CTG's patronage of the circles. Pointing to the peasant organizations, the Polish elite could refute Bismarck's charge that they were officers without soldiers; they could also rest assured that no independent and radical peasant-based political movement would arise in Prussian Poland to threaten the institutions of "national solidarity" of which they were the keepers and chief beneficiaries.²¹

Parallel to this organizational activity of the *szlachta* and clergy in the countryside, after 1848 "industrial societies" began arising among the Polish artisans and small businessmen of the towns. At that time, Polish democrats began propagating the idea of exclusively Polish artisanal and commercial societies, whose task would be technical education, the formation of savings and loan banks, and nominally nonpolitical national "enlightenment" through lectures, maintenance of Polish libraries, and the celebration of national holidays.

Though the societies made some gains in the 1850s and 1860s, it was only after the political shock of the *Kulturkampf* and Bismarck's anti-Polish Germanization laws that they began to proliferate. Their history was closely related to that of the urban, petit bourgeois populist political movement which arose in the 1870s. It was from among the widening circles of nationally aroused artisan masters and petty merchants, rather than from the clergy or *szlachta*, that the leadership of the new industrial societies was drawn. By 1914, 163 such societies had been formed, mainly in the province of Poznań, counting 10,900 members among them. Numerous organizations of merchants and commercial employees with functions similar to those of the industrial societies arose also in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²²

The strongest and most important socioeconomic institution which emerged from the organic work movement was the Polish system of cooperative savings and loan banks. They arose in connection, frequently direct, with the professional associations of large landowners, peasants, and urban businessmen. Again, their original inspiration dated from the 1840s, but it took the political crisis of the 1870s to spur Polish society into a large-scale cooperative movement.

By 1868, twenty-five credit cooperatives had been established, based on Schulze-Delitzsch's principles: unlimited liability, fusion of urban and rural membership, payment of functionaries, and the accumulation of large reserves and share capital. The chief organizers of these banks to that date had been members of the urban intelligentsia,

²¹On the system of agricultural circles (*kółka rolnicze*), see Jakóbczyk, *Studia*, vol. 2, chap. 3, and vol. 3, chap. 3; and Rusiński, pp. 187-91.

²²Jakóbczyk, *Studia*, 2:142 and 3:95, 114-19.

especially physicians and lawyers. In 1871, nineteen of these cooperatives joined together in a Union of the Cooperative Societies of the Grand Duchy of Poznań and of West Prussia. A "patron" was elected whose function was to supervise the formation of new societies and, ultimately, to organize a central bank which would pool the resources of the member societies. In 1873 Father Augustyn Szamarzewski became patron, a position he held until his death in 1891. Under his guidance, the Union succeeded in founding many new societies and overcoming the reluctance of the local banks to transfer a share of their reserves to a central Union bank. In 1885 this bank was finally established. Its subsequent record was quite impressive, as was that of the Union as a whole (see table 1).²³

TABLE 1

Year	Societies	Member- ship	Share Capital	Reserves	Deposits
1874.....	48	8,715	710,000	90,000	3,350,000
1890.....	71	26,553	2,700,000	1,180,000	12,530,000
1900.....	112	47,890	11,800,000	2,500,000	36,900,000
1905.....	141	71,222	14,600,000	4,260,000	81,800,000
1910.....	185	107,707	20,600,000	9,240,000	191,000,000
1914.....	208	129,448	26,250,000	15,200,000	271,000,000

The importance of this well-organized and capital-strong cooperative system to Polish society in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would be difficult to overestimate. It was the chief economic support of the modernization of the Polish peasant-farming population in these years, and contributed greatly also to the expansion of the Polish urban economy. The *szlachta*, too, took advantage of its financial resources and services. In 1914 there were sixty-one purchasing and marketing cooperatives, known as *rolniki*, which as commercial clearinghouses for the *szlachta*'s and wealthier

²³Stefan Zalewski, *La vie économique de la Pologne prussienne* (Fribourg, 1917). The figures in table 1 have been converted from Zalewski's quotations in francs to marks, at the rate of 1.23 prewar francs to the mark, as given by Zalewski, p. 25. Membership and financial figures are from pp. 174-75; on the Polish cooperative system generally, pp. 171-80. At no time did the societies' debts to banks outside their own system amount to any considerable sum. The Polish cooperative system, which was legally open to German members (though few Germans in fact joined it), was not the Poles' only source of loans or interest on savings. Both public and private German banks regularly did business with Poles; thus, they were by no means forced to create their cooperative banking system but, rather, did so chiefly out of national motives.

peasants' sales and purchases had undermined the traditional economic positions of the Jewish rural merchants and, conversely, strengthened the Polish commercial economy.²⁴ Altogether, the relative participation of the various Polish occupational groups in the Union of Cooperative Societies may be seen in these figures for 1914, which apply only to the savings and loan societies: of a total of 129,448 members, 1,775 (1.4 percent) were large landowners; 76,776 (59.2 percent) were peasants and small-holders; another 7,297 (9.1 percent) had other occupations in agriculture; 24,858 (19.2 percent) were engaged in artisanal or industrial trades; and 14,391 (11.1 percent) were engaged in other urban occupations.²⁵

The Polish Catholic clergy figured very prominently among the directors and functionaries of the Union cooperative societies. Father Szamarzewski's successor as patron of the Union, a position of the very highest social and national prestige, was another priest, Father Piotr Wawrzyniak, who in turn was followed in 1910 by Father Antoni Stychel. All these men were folk heroes to the Prussian Poles. Wawrzyniak, in particular, was the embodiment of the patriotic Polish priest and socioeconomic organizer. Son of a peasant small-holder, his first parish was in the small town of Śrem, near Poznań. Here he took over the preexisting savings and loan bank and industrial society and made of them models—the former, of financial success, and the latter, of practical educational effectiveness. Beyond this, he organized a Catholic journeymen's club and was president of a nearby peasant agricultural circle, founder of a privately funded Polish lending library, a leader of the town's Polish singing society, and a cautious participant in the politically tinged gymnastic organization (Sokół). After his election as the Union patron, he accepted a Landtag seat, supporting the conservative Polish deputies until his resignation in 1898. Thereafter, his political role was confined to membership on the Provincial Electoral Committee. From the 1890s he was also active in the leadership of the Polish Society of the Friends of Learning and the Polish Scholarship Fund (TPN).²⁶

Wawrzyniak's example, warmly approved by Archbishop Stablewski (1891–1907), was followed by many of the province's Polish priests. Thus, in 1906, among 175 savings and loan banks, priests and clergymen held the following positions: fifty-one were bank directors and another nine were members of the banks' directorates; thirty

²⁴Trzeciakowski, *Walka o polskość miast poznańskiego*, p. 120.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁶See Jakóbczyk's biographical essay "Ks. Piotr Wawrzyniak 1849–1910," in Jakóbczyk, *Wielkopolanie*, 2:379–400.

were chairman of the banks' boards of overseers and twenty-nine others were members of such boards. In 1908, in fifty-nine selected Polish banks, 217 clergymen held official positions.²⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear from these figures that the Polish clergy constituted only a large minority among the directors and overseers of the cooperative banks. Bernhard estimated that two-thirds of the roughly 2,000 overseers of all Polish banks were farmers (*Bauern*) while the rest were merchants, artisans, and professionals.²⁸

Polish Lending Libraries

In addition to the Polish Scholarship Fund (TPN), the organic work movement produced a major educational institution in the form of a network of popular lending libraries. The idea of such libraries arose among liberal and democratic circles in the 1840s. Not a great deal was accomplished, however, before the Germanization of education in the early 1870s raised the issue in a more critical form. For there was now a real need to distribute Polish primers and elementary readers which would enable parents and priests, who were responsible for Polish children's church education in their mother tongue, to tutor their charges. Hence, in 1872 the leaders of the liberal grouping within the *szlachta* and intelligentsia organized the Society for Popular Learning (TOL) to collect money and to purchase and distribute books to newly founded local lending libraries. By 1875, the TOL was supplying over 100 such libraries with several thousand books annually.²⁹

During the 1860s and 1870s the Polish elite, still primarily of *szlachta* origins, was sharply divided into two camps. On the Right stood the "ultramontane" clerical conservatives inclined to favor the Catholic church's and Vatican's interests above those of Polish nationalism. Opposed to them were the more secularly minded national liberals. The consequences of this doctrinal division within the elite was that the ultramontane archbishop, Mieczyslaw Ledóchowski (1866-86) refused in 1872 to permit the Polish clergy to take part in the Society for Popular Learning, since it would not limit its selection of books only to those with the archbishop's approval. Immediately thereafter, the Prussian government ordered all Polish schoolteachers to abstain from participation in any Polish social or economic so-

²⁷Ludwig Bernhard, *Die Polenfrage: das polnische Gemeinwesen im preussischen Staat*, 2d rev. ed. (Leipzig, 1910), pp. 373-74.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 390, 469.

²⁹Jakóbczyk, *Studia* 2:35-52. In 1866, before the TOL's formation, forty-three libraries were in existence.

cieties. Hence, the TOL could neither obtain the ultramontane *szlachta's* financial help nor the local clergy's or teachers' support of their work, without which most villages and towns were effectively closed to them.

As the *Kulturkampf* progressed, however, the Polish elite began to draw together. The liberals, in particular, found it difficult to combat the Polish church ideologically when its national image was growing in the popular mind as a result of its opposition to the government. Finally, in 1878, the TOL reorganized its leadership, giving half of the executive voices to "ultras."³⁰ Henceforth, the Polish elite substantially agreed on the goals of the society and the type of ideology to be purveyed: social conservatism, the identity of Catholicism with Polish nationality, and the gospel of organic work. The common people were to be exhorted to cling to their nationality and to "work and pray."

The 1880s saw a tremendous wave of library development, since the clergy was now promoting the movement actively. By 1890 almost 1,000 were in existence throughout the Polish-speaking areas of the Prussian east. Having changed its name to the Society of Popular Libraries (TCL), the organization continued its work successfully down to 1914. The importance of the clergy's role is seen in the fact that in 1914, thirty-three of the presidents of the province's forty-five TCL committees were priests.³¹ In 1914, the TCL was supporting 1,662 libraries, 1,032 of them in the province of Poznań; in the same year it distributed 43,507 new books, about 40 percent of them within the province. The typical town library had several thousand volumes and 500 or 600 borrowers.³² These libraries were undoubtedly highly effective in the Polish elite's campaign to develop a knowledge of literary Polish among the lower classes and deepen their sense of Polish nationality.

The Union of Catholic Polish Workers' Societies (ZKTRP)

The Catholic clergy's socioeconomic activity within Polish society was intensified as a result of Pope Leo XIII's call, contained in his encyclical of 1891, *Rerum Novarum*, for involvement of the church in social questions of the day. Accordingly, in 1892 Archbishop Stablewski instructed the clergy to organize Catholic workers' associations in their parishes. In 1893 the first of the Catholic Polish

³⁰Ibid., 2:54.

³¹Ibid., 3:68.

³²Ibid., 3:72.

Workers' Societies were formed, and seven years later a central union for them all was established.³³

These societies were not trade unions but social and cultural organizations with certain self-help adjuncts, such as burial funds, employment bureaus, and legal aid sections. They specifically disclaimed any intention of carrying on a struggle with employers for higher wages or better working conditions, since rural workers were their most numerous prospective members and the Prussian Rural Combinations Act of 1854 specifically proscribed such activity.

Each society was supervised by a priest, whose influence in the organization overshadowed that of the laymen presidents and officers. The growth of the Union's branches and membership was striking. In 1901 forty-seven locals existed with 7,704 members; by 1914 the number of societies had risen to 271 and the total membership to 31,140, thus making the ZKTRP the largest occupational association within Polish society. The majority of the Union's membership consisted of agricultural workers, but many peasant farmers and, in the towns, artisans and petty merchants took part as well.³⁴

Despite their cultural and religious purposes, realized mainly through lectures, reading of the Union's journal, the *Worker* [*Robotnik*], and social events, these societies accustomed many members of the Polish working classes to a participation in public life which, prior to the 1890s, had been entirely foreign to them. Many of them subsequently joined the Polish urban trade unions. The workers' exposure to Polish culture and a Catholic-hued Polish nationalism through these organizations earned them the solid support of all sectors of the Polish national elite.

Polish Trade Unions

The earliest effective trade union organization in the province was carried out by German Hirsch-Duncker liberals. This movement sought the support chiefly of skilled German workers but also readily accepted Polish members.³⁵ After 1890, the German Socialist Trade Unions extended their activity to the province of Poznań, though the

³³See M. Chełmkowski, *Związki zawodowe robotników polskich w Królestwie pruskim (1889-1918)* (Poznań, 1925), chap. 2, pt. 1, pp. 39-50, on the ZKTRP; also J. Staszewski, "Rola kleru katolickiego w ruchu robotniczym na terenie Wielkopolski i Pomorza (1891-1914)," *Zeszyty Naukowe* (Toruń: Uniwersytet M. Kopernika, 1957), pp. 123-69.

³⁴Chełmkowski, pp. 43-44, 50.

³⁵Tadeusz Filipiak, *Dzieje związków zawodowych w Wielkopolsce do roku 1919: studium proöwnawcze z historii gospodarczo-społecznej* (Poznań, 1965), pp. 26, 97-98, 101.

difficulties they encountered due to the extreme opposition of the German administration and police were very great, and indeed inhibited their growth effectively down to 1914. Thus, in 1896 socialist unions represented 823 workers and in 1902, 7,750; but in 1910 the figure stood at 7,494 and in 1912 it had dropped to around 6,000.³⁶

The appearance of socialist unions, in which many Poles initially participated, greatly alarmed the Polish political elite. Calls went out from the conservative and populist press alike for the organization of strictly Polish national and Catholic unions, and as a result, in 1902 the Poznań-based Polish Trade Union (PZZ) was founded. The prime movers in this action were Polish artisan masters and publicists and professional men associated with the populist political movement.³⁷

The PZZ developed relatively well, especially after it merged, largely for financial purposes, with the Polish unions in Upper Silesia and the Rhineland in 1908.³⁸ Whereas in 1905 the PZZ counted thirty-five locals with 2,150 members, by the end of 1912, 179 locals with a total membership of 14,329 had been founded.³⁹

Thus, the Polish urban working class, though only a minority had been organized in the PZZ, had nevertheless been effectively turned away from the socialist union movement. This was only one more example of the strength of national feeling within the Polish community and of the effect on the Polish workers of the ideology of “national solidarity” preached to them almost unceasingly by the conservative and populist political elites alike.

III. THE POLISH POLITICAL ELITE, 1850–1914

The reaction of the 1850s stifled Polish political life in the province of Poznań. The Polish political press was liquidated, while the government’s “electoral geometry” reduced the number of Polish Landtag seats from twenty-one in 1849 to thirteen in 1855.⁴⁰ In 1858, however, restrictions on the press and official influencing of elections ceased. The Poles took advantage of the “New Era” to establish a newspaper in 1859—the *Dziennik Poznański*—which immediately became the chief organ of the national-liberal Polish *szlachta* and intelligentsia. Its political program sought the restoration of the provincial regime of 1815 by parliamentary and all other legal actions, the

³⁶Ibid., pp. 139–44.

³⁷*Wydanie jubileuszowe Związku Robotniczo-Rzemieślniczego Z. Z. P. w Poznaniu 1902–1907* (Poznań, 1927), pp. 19–23.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 37–38; see also Filipiak, pp. 201–2, 218–20.

³⁹*Wydanie jubileuszowe*, pp. 34–35; and Filipiak, p. 236.

⁴⁰Manteuffel, pp. 368 ff.

democratization of the Prussian constitution, and the realization of programs of organic work within Polish society.⁴¹

In the 1860s the national liberals' clerical-conservative opponents gained powerful support in the figure of the Archbishop Count Ledóchowski.⁴² In 1872 they succeeded in establishing a newspaper, the *Kurjer Poznański*.⁴³ The political fortunes of this group and the influence of the *Kurjer* rose in the 1870s due to the *Kulturkampf*, which made the Polish Catholic church's cause at the same time a national one. But in these years of rising national feeling, the clerical conservatives gradually abandoned Ledóchowski's supranational political ultramontaniam, thus eliminating the chief cause of their alienation from the national-liberal camp. The national liberals had, however, at the same time suffered a loss in prestige from the complete failure of their parliamentary tactics—consisting chiefly of protests based on the treaties and promises of 1815—in the face of the Germanization programs of the government after 1871.⁴⁴

With Bismarck's retreat from the *Kulturkampf* in the late 1870s, the Polish clerical conservatives began to promote a program of parliamentary cooperation with the German Catholic Center party. It was hoped that the protection of this powerful group, together with the Polish deputies' willingness to support conservative legislation, including agricultural tariffs, antisocialist measures, and perhaps even military bills, would induce the government to ease its anti-Polish policies. Polish conservatives accordingly argued for an end to the doctrinaire oppositional policies of the national liberals. In fact, the 1880s witnessed the retirement or death of many leading national liberals. Leadership of the nonclerical wing of the *szlachta*-based elite passed into the hands of a new generation for whom 1863 was a less vivid memory and the idea of Polish independence more remote. From this time onward, therefore, the gap within the Polish elite between clerical conservatives and national liberals closed almost completely. The Polish *szlachta* and its allies in the clergy and urban professions drew together on a program of political opportunism, subsequently realized in the Polish Reichstag delegation's formal support of Chancellor Caprivi. Other elements of their program which remained unchanged down to 1914 were support for high agricultural

⁴¹Stanisław Karwowski, "Historia Dziennika Poznańskiego," in *Książka jubileuszowa Dziennika Poznańskiego 1859–1909* (Poznań, 1909), pp. 5, 23; see also Z. Grot, "Kazimierz Kantak 1824–1886," in Jakóbczyk, *Wielkopole*, 2:257–88, passim.

⁴²Nowacki, pp. 118–19.

⁴³Jerzy Marczewski, *Narodowa Democracja w Poznańskim 1900–1914* (Warsaw, 1967), p. 58.

⁴⁴W. Feldman, p. 209; Manteuffel, 2 (pt. 1): 257–69.

tariffs, strong opposition to socialism, and an equally strong support for Polish “national clericalism” – that is, an insistence on the leading role within Polish society of the Catholic clergy and church, whose actions, it was assumed, would not contradict Polish national interests.

Another important catalyst in this regrouping of the Polish elite was the rise, in the 1870s, of the “populist movement” (*ruch ludowy*). Until the mid-1890s, the most important figure in this movement, and indeed its only effective leader, was the newspaper editor Roman Szymański (1840–1908). In 1871, after completing his university studies, this son of a provincial cloth dyer was offered the editorship of a new journal “for the middle classes” projected by Jackowski and other national-liberal noblemen. Szymański accepted, and the newspaper – *Orędownik* [Advocate] – was duly established. However, since the editor immediately proclaimed the necessity of a greater role for the middle classes in the system of electoral authorities and a corresponding diminution within it of the *szlachta*’s numbers, he soon was quarreling with Jackowski, who had intended to use *Orędownik* to spread the existing elite’s influence, not to undermine it. Although Szymański did not dispute the *szlachta*’s and clergy’s leading positions in society, especially in view of what he regarded as the Polish bourgeoisie’s political immaturity, nevertheless the alliance with his *szlachta* financiers collapsed in 1873.

Szymański found new backers among the Polish commercial middle class. He then began to organize the Polish urban population politically. Town council elections, long neglected by the Poles, began to be earnestly contested. The events of the *Kulturkampf* occasioned large-scale public protest meetings, often addressed by Szymański himself. But because Szymański followed the political program of the clerical conservatives and conservative opportunists in the 1870s and 1880s, his movement lacked any really distinctive goals. He argued for bringing “new men” of bourgeois origins into the Polish elite, but not for a change in the institutional organization or ideology of that elite. Hence, his political following and influence were small until the early 1890s.⁴⁵

Initially, Szymański supported the Polish conservatives in their backing of Chancellor Caprivi. But gradually he saw that the conservatives’ new program of opportunistic loyalism was unpopular with large sections of the Polish population. He decided therefore to take advantage of this shift in public opinion and attack the con-

⁴⁵Lech Trzeciakowski, “Roman Szymański 1840–1908,” in Jakóbczyk, *Wielkopolska*, 2:341–61.

servatives politically, with the object of winning parliamentary seats for populist candidates. Thus, in 1893 Szymański stood as a “secession” candidate—without the endorsement of the Provincial Electoral Committee—against the official Polish candidate, the conservative-opportunist Stefan Cegielski, in the Reichstag electoral district of the city of Poznań. The results illustrated the weakness of the populists at that time even in the provincial capital: Szymański gained 1,863 votes to Cegielski’s 9,413. In the runoff election between Cegielski and the German candidate, the populists voted—according to the principle of “national solidarity”—for Cegielski, a further admission of their lack of political maneuverability. To make matters worse, Szymański’s efforts to obtain nominations of populist candidates at electoral meetings throughout the province in 1893 had antagonized the conservative *szlachta* and clergy. Jackowski demonstrated his grip on the landed peasants by organizing peasant meetings at which the populists were roundly condemned, sometimes as “socialists.” Similarly, the Catholic press attacked Szymański as an “anticalrical,” and his movement was denounced from many a provincial pulpit.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, the populists emerged from the Caprivi era with a considerably greater following than they had possessed before. More important, however, was the fact that Szymański now had a definite program: to unseat Polish “loyalists” and “compromisers” and replace them with tribunes of the people unwilling to collaborate with the government.

The Caprivi era had important repercussions within the *szlachta* elite itself. Especially the younger generation criticized the Polish loyalist deputies’ efforts for their meager results in concrete governmental concessions. “Compromise” with the government was not a practicable policy. For, although a majority coalition of Poles, Centrists, Progressives, and Socialists opposed official *Polenpolitik* in the Reichstag, it was powerless to reverse the Bismarckian Polish policies which had been forged in the Prussian Landtag with the support of an anti-Polish majority coalition of conservatives and national liberals which dominated the Prussian parliament from the late 1870s to 1918. Hence, efforts at “compromise” only lowered the national self-consciousness of the Prussian Poles and deceived them as to the dangers of the government’s *Polenpolitik*, which demanded a vigorous national self-defense from the Poles.

Thoughts such as these were expressed in the short-lived but

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 355–57; and Trzeciakowski, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających*, chap. 5, *passim*.

politically significant magazine for the Polish elite, *Przegląd Poznański*, which appeared between 1894 and 1896. Here university-educated sons of the *szlachta* and bourgeoisie criticized the conservative elite for its presumed indifference to the full-scale politicization of the Polish masses and for its insistence on its own monopoly of political and socioeconomic leadership within Polish society. In general, the *Przegląd Poznański* praised Szymański's movement, although it rejected any type of social radicalism. Above all, it adumbrated a political alliance between the "moderate" *szlachta* and clergy and the populists.⁴⁷

In Russian Poland and in Polish émigré circles in western Europe, the 1880s had seen a revival of the Polish democratic national independence movement, sharply opposed to the policies of "Tri-Loyalism" preached at that time by the conservatives in Kraków and Poznań as well as Warsaw. Its social base lay in the Polish bourgeoisie, especially its younger educated members, and in educated sons of the *déclassé* gentry. This movement found organizational expression in the secret Polish League, which arose in 1887, aimed specifically at a restoration of the Polish state through insurrection. In 1893, however, the League was reorganized by Roman Dmowski, Zygmunt Balicki, and Jan Popławski and, under the new name of the National League, became the precursor of the National Democratic movement. Cutting its ties with the western European émigrés, it ceased to emphasize the revolutionary idea and instead stressed the need for inculcating a radical nationalism in the Polish population, aimed especially against the partitioning nationalities and the Polish Jews. The strengthening of Polish industry and commerce, the private instruction of the masses in the Polish language, literature, and history, and sharp, but legal, protests against Germanization and Russification programs—these were the chief elements of early National Democratic ideology.⁴⁸

In 1897, a public National Democratic party (SND) was established, under League control, in Russian Poland. Dmowski was its leader, and its increasingly nationalistic, antisocialist, and anti-Semitic ideology was expressed above all in his *Przegląd wszechpolski* [Pan-Polish review], published in Lwów. But, more importantly, the National League sought to gain secret members in all three partition areas and, through their political activities, to coordinate a truly "pan-Polish" political movement. Already in 1896, Dmowski and Popławski traveled to Poznań to discuss the extension of the

⁴⁷Marczewski, pp. 84–86.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 87–91; and W. Feldman, chap. 9, *passim*.

League's membership in Prussia with the political writers gathered around the *Przegląd Poznański*. Between 1899 and 1901 the first National League members in Prussian Poland were formally registered.⁴⁹

Thus, the seeds of a National Democratic movement had been sown. In order to gain popular support, the National League members and their associates sought a political alliance with the populist movement. After initial hesitation, Szymański agreed, seeing in the League representatives a group of well-educated and energetic men who would be able to provide the populist movement with the leadership elite it had until then largely lacked. The first fruit of the alliance which was then formed between the National Democratic leader Bernhard Chrzanowski and Szymański was the former's election with populist support to the Reichstag from the Poznań electoral district in 1901.⁵⁰

Thereafter, the cooperation of the National Democratic elite and the populists deepened. In 1906, a new Polish publishing company was formed in which Szymański with his *Orędownik* joined with the newly established first official National Democratic press organ in Prussian Poland, *Kurjer Poznański*, under the chief editorship of Marjan Seyda.⁵¹ Henceforth, the two newspapers followed a coordinated editorial policy, *Orędownik* in a "popular" style, the *Kurjer* in a formal style aimed at the educated Polish elite. The shareholders in this new firm were also the political elite within the rapidly growing, though still formally unorganized, National Democratic movement, constituting an alliance of a small group representing the politically progressive landed *szlachta* with members of the long-established Polish commercial elite and the university-trained "intelligentsia," many of *szlachta* origins themselves.⁵² In 1909, after lengthy preparations, this group, with many new allies and a much enlarged press, constituted itself as a registered Polish political party, which became known as the National Democratic Society. In it, the pan-Polish "integral" nationalism characteristic of modern Polish National Democracy overshadowed fully Szymański's provincial populism.

In the measure that the National Democrats gained strength after 1894, the conservatives declined. Their prestige lowered by the disappointing outcome of the Caprivi era and their program of coopera-

⁴⁹Marczewski, pp. 106, 136; W. Jakóbczyk, "Bernard Chrzanowski," in Jakóbczyk, *Wielkopole*, 2:467-97.

⁵⁰Trzeciakowski, "Roman Szymański," p. 359.

⁵¹The old clerical-conservative *Kurjer Poznański* ceased publication in 1904, its adherents joining those of the *Dziennik Poznański*.

⁵²See list of shareholders in Marczewski, p. 173.

tion with moderate German forces rendered unrealizable by rising conservative German nationalism, they could react only defensively to the National Democrats. Indeed, given the steady intensification of official anti-Polish policies after 1894, many former conservatives found the populists' program of determined protest and nationalist indoctrination of the Polish lower classes the only possible course, and accordingly shifted their support to them. Thus by 1914, the Polish sociopolitical elite of estate owners, wealthier merchants and manufacturers, priests, and educated professionals was roughly evenly divided between supporters of the National Democrats' radical and separatistic pan-Polish nationalism and adherents of the nineteenth-century Polish agrarian elite's religiously colored and provincially oriented nationalism.

To the leaders of the Polish conservatives, and especially the wealthier landowners and higher clergymen, the formation of the National Democratic Society in 1909 had seemed to portend the disintegration of Polish society into warring ideological camps and hence the overthrow of the system of electoral authorities and the ideology of national solidarity. Indeed, during the first years of Bethmann Hollweg's chancellorship, the National Democrats struggled to attain electoral parity with the conservatives while both camps engaged in polemics over the meaning of the vaguely conciliatory Polish policies which Bethmann's government began to pursue openly in 1911. But because from the end of 1912 Bethmann gradually gave way to German nationalist pressures to sharpen his government's *Polenpolitik*, the Polish conservative nationalists and National Democrats began to seek, and finally found, a compromise by which the influence of both was preserved within Polish society, while a united front was once again shown to the Prussian government.

Such was the point the internal political development of Polish society had reached by the eve of World War I. Just as in the 1830s and during Bismarck's chancellorship, so also in the last prewar years intensified official anti-Polish policies heightened the Poles' commitment to political solidarity, counteracting the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the opposition of conservatives and National Democrats. Despite the formation of the National Democratic Society and other parties and partisan organizations after 1909, the Poles of the province of Poznań continued to recognize their traditional electoral system as the legitimate arena within which their differences should be resolved. Moreover, all active supporters of the Polish nationalist movement—that is, a majority of the Polish socioeconomic and cultural elite—were strongly united in their devotion to the ideology and

institutions of organic work. The web of Polish organic work organizations constituted not only the framework within which Polish society maintained its individuality vis-à-vis Prussian society and the German state; it also provided the means by which the masses of Polish peasants and urban and rural workers could be made actively aware of their Polish nationality and thus won for the political causes represented by the Polish elite, at least as long as independent class-based political movements did not arise among the Polish lower classes. The tasks of the organic work movement were by no means fully accomplished by 1914. Nevertheless, by following this political middle course between aristocratic accommodation to German rule and a revolutionary policy of national liberation, the Polish social and political elite in the province of Poznań had effectively promoted a far-ranging economic modernization and nationalist politicization of Polish society in the century after 1815.