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JAN LUDWIK POPLAWSKI'S FASCINATION WITH THE POLISH "COMMON PEOPLE"

Introduction

Jan Ludwik Popławski was the leading ideologist of the Polish National Democratic movement at the turning point of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. According to people who knew him in person he was a "border post" of the Polish historical life between the periods of the "nobilary romanticism" and the "peasant realism"¹. One of the most important topics of his journalism is the fascination with the common people, which fits in with the rather typical obsession of the European intelligentsia of the latter half of the nineteenth century with everything peasant. It is prudent to note that towards the tail end of the nineteenth century the majority of Polish society consisted of peasants and thus numerous patriotic intellectualists perceived them as the new heart of Polish character which was to replace the nobiliary "backwater". The resentment towards actions of the privileged nobility frequently went hand in hand with the fascination with the most impoverished strata of society. Therefore at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth century the intelligentsia devoted a significant part of its works to the subject of peasants and simple workers. It was followed by the conviction that the common people had to be engaged in the fight for the new social order and national liberation².

The issue of the common people in the works by Popławski has not been extensively described yet, although a short article by Rafał Łętocha is an exception³. The more than a half a century-old paper by Janina Żurawiecka touching upon the issue of the common people in the ideology of "Głos [The Voice]" magazine⁴, of which Popławski was a prominent member, is worth mentioning. And from the recent studies the book by Nikodem Bończa-Tomaszewski⁵, which includes a rather large number of accurate remarks concerning the issue of the common people in works by Popławski, should be mentioned. The biography of

¹ S. Kozicki, *Pamiętnik 1876-1939*, Słupsk 2009, p. 112.

² R. Wapiński, *Pokolenia Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Wrocław 1991, p. 67.

³ R. Łętocha, *Przez lud do narodu. Patriotyczne wizje Jana Ludwika Popławskiego*, „Obywatel”, 2010, no. 1.

⁴ J. Żurawicka, *Lud w ideologii „Głosu”*, in: *Studia z historii nowożytnej i najnowszej: w pięćdziesięciolecie pracy naukowej Natalii Gąsiorowskiej*, editor A. Gieysztor, Warszawa 1956, pp. 316-340.

⁵ N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, *Demokratyczna geneza nacjonalizmu. Intelktualne korzenie ruchu narodowo-demokratycznego*, Warszawa 2001.

Popławski written by Teresa Kulak⁶, in which the author presents Popławski's understanding of the common people in one of the sub-chapters, is also important in this context. T. Kulak is also an author of several articles on the subject of this early National Democracy ideologist and the most important researcher of his political views⁷. The object of this paper is to present the issue of the common people in Popławski's views and works, which could be described as fascination, slightly more extensively.

Our main sources will be collections of Popławski's works (two rather expansive volumes from 1910 and a selection of works published in 1998)⁸ as well as the archival copies of "Głos" and "Przegląd Wszepolski [All-Poland Review]" available on the microfilms maintained in the National Library of Poland. However, it must be emphasised that these sources constitute only a small fraction of his works. The ideologist of the early National Democracy frequently published his texts under aliases or did not sign them at all. It was obviously the result of the innate danger of contributing texts to publications illegal in the Russian Partition and thus the necessity for conspiracy forced Popławski to publish numerous articles anonymously. Therefore, let us focus on the texts which were definitely written by Popławski, although at times we will have to refer to our knowledge of his pseudonyms.

The outline of Jan Ludwik Popławski's circle

As the result of the defeat of the January Uprising the Polish intellectual elites changed their way of thinking. Embracing liberalism and inspired by the ideals of positivism, the new intellectual formation believed that the Polish people had to be freed from the "social retardation" in relation to the West. The attempts were made at challenging the nobiliary conservatism and the necessity to discontinue national uprisings was advocated. It was a rather common belief that in the political circumstances at that time in Europe only the "basic work at grassroots" could be salutary for the society⁹. The irreversibility of progress and the cult of individualism were a typical attitude presented by numerous members of the intelligentsia. It resulted in, for instance, intensification of irreligious sentiments or even the attitudes downright hostile towards religion¹⁰. However, the positivism craze passed away rather rapidly. It was significantly influenced by the repressiveness of the partitioning powers as well as the activity of the so called "disobedient generation". It was the name Bohdan Cywiński gave to the first generation of young Poles growing up after the January Uprising¹¹ who undertook actions in the name of the romantic ideals of freedom. This "disobedience"

⁶ T. Kulak, *Jan Ludwik Popławski – biografia polityczna*, Wrocław 1994.

⁷ See: Idem, *Jan Ludwik Popławski – twórca polskiej myśli zachodniej przełomu XIX i XX wieku. U źródeł „idei piastowskiej” Narodowej Demokracji*, „Sobótka”, 1995, no. 1; Idem, *Jan Ludwik Popławski – twórca i popularyzator polskiej myśli zachodniej XIX i XX wieku*, in: *Twórcy i popularyzatorzy polskiej myśli zachodniej*, editor W. Wrzesiński, Olsztyn 1996; Idem, *Kresy w myśli politycznej Jana Ludwika Popławskiego*, in: *Polska myśl polityczna XIX i XX wieku*, editor W. Wrzesiński, vol. 6, Wrocław 1988; Idem, *O wpływie poglądów polityczno-społecznych J.J. Kraszewskiego na kształtowanie się ideowych podstaw publicystyki J.L. Popławskiego*, in: *Studia z dziejów XIX i XX wieku*, editor W. Wrzesiński, Wrocław 1991.

⁸ *Pisma polityczne. Posthumous edition / Jan Ludwik Popławski* with a preface by Z. Wasilewski, vol. 1-2, Kraków 1910; *Wybór pism / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, compiled by Teresa Kulak, Wrocław 1998, pp. 19-20.

⁹ S. Grabski, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1989, p. 27.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 28.

¹¹ B. Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych*, Warszawa 2010.

was a common denominator between various student groups and young intellectualists. It is prudent to note that the circles of “the disobedient generation” gave birth to both socialists and the future members of the National Democracy. At that time they were bound by the common resentment towards the existing political and social order.

Popławski was born in Bystrzejowice near Lublin in 1854. He descended from a family of landed gentry which was driven to bankruptcy by the January Uprising¹². He became engaged with the independence movement during his legal studies at the University of Warsaw and in 1877 became a co-founder of youth organisation the name of which is not exactly known¹³. This student club was, however, quickly discovered. The arrests in the Spring of 1878 put an end to group’s activities and Popławski himself was imprisoned in Pavilion X of the Warsaw Citadel and later sentenced to the exile to Siberia for a period of 8 years, although he probably informed on his friends¹⁴. Ultimately he returned to Warsaw in 1883 after being pardoned. Not much can be said about his contemporary views but the exile most certainly bolstered his resentment towards the tsarist system. In 1883 he took the job in the editorial office of the progressive weekly magazine “Prawda [The Truth]” edited by Aleksander Świętochowski, one of the founders of the so called “Warsaw positivism”. The progressiveness of the weekly was supposed to incline Popławski to take the job with the editorial office¹⁵. “Prawda” gathered numerous radicals but lacked a coherent agenda and its community was dominated by two factions: socialists and the common people activists absorbed with problems of the common people. Popławski undoubtedly belonged to the latter group.

His animosity towards the socialists was the reason behind him leaving the editorial office a few years later. Along with Józef Potocki and Aleksander Więckowski he founded the “Głos” weekly magazine discussing political, social and cultural issues¹⁶. The magazine was a reaction to the non-political attitude of positivists and gathered people representing rather diverse views. Potocki became the executive editor but it was Popławski who played the most prominent role and was a person around whom young radicals gathered in great numbers. Surprisingly, after publication of first few issues, “Głos” was perceived as a revolutionary and socialist publication. Reading the magazine allowed readers to learn about numerous varieties of socialism at the end of the nineteenth century and to expand their knowledge of Marxism. The editorial office objected to these accusation in the “Nieporozumienie [A Misunderstanding]” article, probably authored by Popławski himself¹⁷. The author criticised positivism, liberalism, socialism, capitalism and progress as such. The author also claims that his community is “the vanguard” protecting the desires and needs of the people but he also emphasises that those very people *are not aware of our existence but we clearly recognise the sanctity and importance of the obligation we undertook*¹⁸. Fully defending Popławski’s thesis is difficult. It was more of an expression of his own convictions. “Głos” also published works of Ludwik Krzywicki, considered to be one of the founding fathers

¹² T. Kulak, op. cit., pp. 12-14.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 21-23.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 32-33.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 47.

¹⁶ N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

¹⁷ *Nieporozumienie*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 3, pp. 33-34.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 34.

of Polish Marxism, and a socialist author Aleksander Więckowski. We can, however, agree with Popławski claiming that the magazine did not try to “enforce” a particular doctrine and thus allowed authors to freely express their views¹⁹.

In 1894 the editorial office was dissolved by the authorities of the partitioners and Popławski escaped to Lviv and since 1896 had been leading the editorial office of “Przegląd Wszechpolski” which was a press organ of National League. The object of the magazine was to spread the national notions and to combat the efforts of the partitioning powers at Germanisation and Russification. The magazine touched upon the issues of national solidarity, relations between a nation and religion and negated socialist theories of class conflict. Publicists of this magazine considered themselves to be national democrats and attempted to demonstrate the combination of national and democratic notions in their agenda²⁰. The concepts of Popławski presented therein influenced the formation of Polish national idea. We could even claim that his conversion from a peculiar “peasant obsession” to nationalism can be observed. The rustic homeliness previously advocated by “Głos” was replaced with the idea of nationalism. “Przegląd Wszechpolski” ceased publication as early as in 1905 when the revolution in Russia broke out. Perceiving Russian revolution as a threat to the Polish cause Roman Dmowski, leader of the National Democracy, decided to focus the strength of his political camp on preventing the outbreak of revolution in the Russian partition. Publication of “Przegląd Wszechpolski” resumed only after the restoration of Polish liberty²¹. In 1906 Popławski reluctantly returned to Warsaw where he died in the winter of 1908 after becoming afflicted with serious disease.

Who are the common people?

Posing a question “Who were the common people according to Popławski?” seems prudent. Speaking frankly, the common people in Popławski’s opinion were *the aggregation of the working class*²². Under such understanding a landowner is a member of the common people just as much as a worker, a carpenter or a member of the intelligentsia because this social group consists of *representatives of all professions, also the so called “intelligent professions”, who earn their livelihood entirely or almost entirely through own work*²³. In essence, the nobility, not earning its own livelihood, or capitalists, both of which exploit the common people, are most certainly not its members. In turn, in the programme of the National-Democratic Party published in 1897, greatly influenced by Popławski, the following claim can be uncovered: *as the common people we understand all those circles of society which were removed from the conscious participation in national affairs because of their cultural impairment*²⁴. However, reading the works by Popławski suggests that in his understanding this term refers chiefly to peasants. According to him, the Polish past *completely separated the higher circles from the general population of the nation, almost all threads supporting*

¹⁹ J.L. Popławski, *W dobrej wierze*, „Głos”, 1888, no. 18, p. 205.

²⁰ [J.L. Popławski], *Nasz demokratyzm*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1900, no. 3, p. 129.

²¹ K. Kawalec, *Roman Dmowski: 1864-1939*, Wrocław 2002, p. 98.

²² J.L. Popławski, *Lud i Naród*, „Głos”, 1888, no. 19, p. 217.

²³ *Pisma polityczne. Posthumous edition / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

²⁴ *Program Stronnictwa Demokratyczno-Narodowego w zaborze rosyjskim*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1897, no. 11, p. 243.

*mutual coexistence and communication between those two worlds were broken. [...] Thinking that in our case this division is strictly social and economical in character is incorrect. [...] This division reaches deeper; on the one hand, we have the entirety of the privileged class, the entirety of nation's intelligence and, on the other, a uniformed mass of common people, bound solely by the unconscious feeling of tribal fellowship – the nation of lords and the nation of peasants*²⁵. The journalist was perfectly aware of the simple fact that the majority of the contemporary society inhabiting the territory of Poland consisted of peasants. Therefore he chiefly perceived the “common people” as peasants, which did not rule out the possibility to perceive the previously mentioned “aggregation of the working class” as the common people as well.

It must be emphasised that Popławski considered himself and other members of the intelligentsia as the common people. The intellectual work was just as important for the nation as physical work and thus in such understanding the common people were *the definitive majority of the society which produces material and spiritual wealth and multiplies our national and social achievements through physical or intellectual work*²⁶. He also implored members of the intelligentsia to sacrifice their individualism for the realisation of the desires and needs of the common people, an act which would be beneficial for the very intelligentsia itself²⁷. He was concurrently aware of the weak relations between simple workers (chiefly peasants) and the urban members of the intelligentsia living in completely different conditions: *the connection between members of the intelligentsia and the common people is so weak that barely a gust of wind can destroy it. What is considered a nation in our country is barely a fraction of a multi-million tribe which completely isolates itself from masses*²⁸.

According to Popławski, the common people were, undeniably, the core of the nation. If so, what was the nation? In Popławski's views the nation was *the aggregation of all social circles bound by mutual descent, historical traditions and political connections. However, this definition is not precise as the nation is a historical and political term inverse to the term “tribe” which is an ethnographic term*²⁹. In Popławski's opinion the nation is political in character, not ethnic. The descent does not determine the nationality of an individual: *Centuries of common political life, common spiritual and material culture, common interests etc., are hundredfold more important than common descent or even common language*³⁰. It may appear strange because for the nineteenth century nationalists the issue of common blood (lineage) was particularly important. Furthermore, Popławski set forth a thesis claiming that: *The notion of nationality emerged only after the masses of people freed from the oppression of elders stepped up onto the arena of life, [...] for several centuries we called a nation those circles of society which inhibited and had to hinder the development of nationality*³¹. In this manner the journalist clearly separated terms “nation” and “nationality”. According to such understanding, the Polish nation had existed since the middle ages but only the politically

²⁵ *Wybór pism / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 19-20.

²⁶ *Interesy ludu i polityka narodowa*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1897, no. 14, p. 309.

²⁷ *Wybór pism / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

²⁹ J.L. Popławski, *Lud i Naród*, „Głos”, 1888, no. 19, p. 217.

³⁰ *Idem*, *Partie i programy*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 24, p. 369.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

aware higher strata of society could be qualified as a nation. The nationality, which emerged recently and have been for years hindered and inhibited by the political "nation", was something different.

The common people as the guardians of homeland

According to Popławski, the passivity of higher social strata in the national fight pointed to their spiritual, material and political exhaustion. Moreover, the nobility was frequently completely indifferent to the threats posed by the partitioners and displayed indifference towards, for instance, the German colonisation and even flooded German colonisation commission with offers of selling their estates, the fact which *must have disappointed all those who wished to entrust the defence of homeland to those claiming the right to lead the country by birthright*³². Despite the fact that the nobility still claimed the right to represent the entirety of the nation³³. This is why the common people, idealised and elevated to the station of a vanguard, became the main addressee of the national ideals³⁴. The common people were able to successfully protect Polish assets through the population growth rate. Popławski noticed that despite the hostile policy of Prussian authorities, the percentage share of the Polish population in Greater Poland was increasing and attempted to prove it through specific demographic data³⁵.

In Popławski's deliberations the common people were supposed to be the highest political sovereign deciding the fate of the entire nation as its most important component. According to the journalist, the strata of society which retained their Polish character and affection towards the homeland – the commoners' masses – displayed the most noble qualities of mankind³⁶. They did not, however, possess the sense of distinctiveness from other nations: *our national awareness must search for grounds other than those charms which were supposed to "deliver us from evil" and grant us "eternal life". It understands that it must lean back on the sentiments of masses but those do not have any historical traditions because they do not have any history*³⁷. Therefore, reaching out to the common people by referring to the rich traditions of the nobility was pointless, instead the national community had to be remodelled. Popławski wrote: *its awareness should not be developed through advocating tradition as it will fall on deaf ears. Push it to think, train its strength, provide it with fruits of its labour and its main tool – the land, these are the goals of our intelligentsia. Only miracle-mongers and charlatans raise the dead but the human will, powerful in its awareness, can always create something new*³⁸.

According to Popławski, the common people held the right to fulfil their historic mission due to their moral supremacy over the greedy and thoughtless nobility: *thus it is not surprising that looking for a faithful keeper and a diligent caretaker they* [the nobility]

³² Idem, *Pomyślny zwrot*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 37, p. 577.

³³ J.L. Jastrzębiec [J.L. Popławski], *Z całej Polski*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1900, no. 5, p. 291.

³⁴ E. Maj, *O niektórych problemach ideologii narodowej Jana Ludwika Popławskiego*, „Kultura i Społeczeństwo”, 1987, no. 1, p. 225.

³⁵ J.L. Popławski, *Środki obrony*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 40, p. 622.

³⁶ E. Maj, op. cit., p. 223.

³⁷ *Wybór pism / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁸ Ibidem, p. 25.

*remind themselves of Matty whose thousand-year-long service they have forgotten. Working to exhaustion and in hardship he was guarding the land closely and diligently fulfilled his obligations*³⁹. This Matty is, obviously a simple Polish peasant. Additionally Popławski credits the common people with major contributions to the old glory of the Republic of Poland and participation in, for instance, protecting the Christianity: [the common people] *made it possible for lords to defend the European culture, protect Christianity and establish a name for themselves; unfortunately they later allowed them [the nobility] to bluster and to squander these achievements. But now Matty grew in wisdom and will not agree to serve for "a few pennies for a pint". Today he is a citizen holding equal rights and although not as smart he can distinguish with his common sense what will yield profit, what will cause harm, what to demand and what he can give in return*⁴⁰. Meanwhile the common people were facing an extraordinarily important challenge of protecting the Polish land threatened by the partitioners⁴¹. The nobility was unable to do so due to its indolence, passiveness and the exhaustion of spiritual fortitude and material assets. In consequence this historic mission became responsibility of the general population, peasants in particular. Therefore bringing the common people closer to the active political life could result in strengthening the Polish character, lead to healing the entirety of the national community "at the grassroots" and help with purging foreign influences from our native culture⁴².

The common people as the protectors of nationality

Popławski harshly criticised the nobility for squandering centuries-old national achievements and treating patriotism selectively. He contrasted the nobility with the common people who were serving as the protectors of nationality although they were not yet enlightened and educated enough. However, Popławski noted that: *although they did not quote historical laws or the stipulations of treaties to protect it the Polish common people, even devoid of tradition or culture, preserved their nationality more firmly and fully than the intelligentsia*⁴³. Thus we should pose a question concerning what was Popławski's understanding of nationality? He did not have in mind the national identification, which the contemporary common people were still lacking, but the love for homeland: *its public awareness is based on this separate character, not bestowed by any oral or written laws, which cannot be taken away by any Bismarck. It is a tribal feeling, the love for the land where we grew "like a forest, where oaks and pines grew together"*⁴⁴. At times Popławski considered the common people indispensable in the defence of Polish character and he presented the example of the Upper Silesia as well as criticised clergy at the same time: *Polish people in Silesia are the best example of strength and perseverance of Polish nation, they are the hope and pride of Poland. Silesian clergymen grew weak. The Polish nobility in Silesia, Germanised centuries ago, lost its ways, only farmers and workers retained their Polish nature*⁴⁵. According to Popławski, higher

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ J.L. Popławski, *Targowisko poznańskie*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 29, p. 449.

⁴² E. Maj, op. cit., p. 229.

⁴³ *Wybór pism / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ *O Śląsku czyli Staropolsce*, „Polak”, 1896, no. 1, p. 4.

strata of the Polish society displayed more similarities with the privileged circles in other countries than with the general Polish society and they were adopting western European models. Only the common masses were able to protect themselves from “foreign influence” and retained national purity.

In Popławski's opinion the nobility was intrinsically soaked in foreign influences and thus its world could have the Polish character only partially. This undoubtedly could influence Popławski's journalism and translate into his fascination with the common people and even into him suggesting the cultural hegemony of the common people⁴⁶. Thus the alternative to the nobiliary culture was propagating the peasant culture resistant to foreign influences. Furthermore, Popławski claimed that the culture of the common people was not an offshoot of the grand national culture but it was at its core from which other forms of culture branched out. Therefore, the common people were the core of the nation and the common people's culture constituted the core of the national culture⁴⁷. Was awakening the national identity of a peasant necessary? No, because a peasant displayed extraordinary attachment to land, patrimony, traditions, language, religion, etc. Yes, because a peasant was lacking in political culture and was bereft of the awareness that he is a part of the larger nation of Poles scattered across three partitions. Thus awakening full national awareness and engaging the common people in social and national affairs was to produce a guarantee of protecting the most crucial Polish interests. Accelerating this process was essential, if only to counteract hostile intentions of the Russian partitioner: *its policy must be opposed with the conscious resistance of people, aware of their national and social interest, as soon as possible*⁴⁸. Therefore it was an imperative to enlighten and educate the common people and concurrently to not alter their noble qualities inherited from the ancestors. The journalist anticipated that in the near future the common people would become politically active. It happened a few years later and Popławski himself appreciated it. He wrote the following about the peasant deputies participating in the Sejm of Galicia: *they are not numerous but it must be remembered that they think of themselves as the sole representatives of millions of simple folk and hold the right to represent them*⁴⁹.

Criticism of the common people

Despite the undeniable fascination with the simple Polish common people, Popławski was far from describing them solely in superlatives. In truth the common people mainly had two important functions: serving as protectors of homeland and defenders of the national character. Apart from these qualities, Popławski, particularly during his time with “Głos”, noticed a number of negative traits of the common people. Firstly, the common people displayed passiveness in public affairs (apart from certain exceptions, generally resulting from shortage of eatables). Thus only the intelligentsia could enable the awakening of the common people although the very common people were not aware of its existence. Secondly, the common people were capable of destructive actions, particularly aimed against nature,

⁴⁶ E. Maj, op. cit., p. 228-229.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 228.

⁴⁸ *Pisma polityczne. Posthumous edition / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁹ Jastrzębiec [J.L. Popławski], *Z całej Polski*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1896, no. 4, p. 81.

such as deforestation for instance, without respect for the consequences for general public. Furthermore, the common people were gullible and susceptible to religious degeneration. Popławski was already presenting an example of a certain village where *a woman was celebrating religious service and her daughter assured that she was receiving visions*⁵⁰ during his time with “Głos”. He criticised the common people for inclination towards incomprehensible superstitions and easily falling into “sectarianism”.

Popławski argued the necessity for democratisation of society but he agreed with concerns of his contemporaries who claimed that the nation could become flooded with “poorly cultured peasants” and that the needs, aspirations and tastes of society could become tainted. This was supposed to be the consequence of the common people, the future foundation of general public, lacking high culture traditions or good practices. Simplicity and sincerity of the common people usually went hand in hand with banality, triteness, vulgarity and cynicism⁵¹. For Popławski such a state of affairs was, however, an inevitable necessity on the path to democratisation and thus moralising peasant mentality would be pointless. In a democratic society transformation of “vulgar boors” into a society consisting of higher-cultured people possessing proper customs was possible. Popławski expected the establishment of a new world accomplished in the twentieth century. Through the expansion of the social awareness of the common people, the process of “awakening peasant intelligence”⁵² would occur and thus the old world order would be demolished and a new modern world, fully democratic modern system and new ethics would be established, which would eliminate the division into the higher and lower strata of society and result in the end of capitalistic exploitation. In consequence the majority of this society would chiefly consist of “the average” who would lack both the “refinement” of former elites and the “barbarism” of the former lower class.

The common people and the Church

On numerous occasions Popławski condemned the Church motivating his actions by claiming protection of the common people from designs of the partitioning powers and acting in national interest. His attack on the Church in the Prussian partition launched after the appointment of Juliusz Dinder, a German practising policy of germanisation, to the position of the archbishop of Gniezno in 1886 can serve as an example⁵³. However, he distinguished the high-ranking clergy and its interests from the lower ranked priests remaining close to the common people and participating in their nationalisation. Furthermore, he claimed that clergymen could utilise their position among the common people to carry out beneficial actions, i.e. promote personal hygiene or advise on the matters of combating infectious diseases. According to Popławski, numerous peasants hid their children away fearing medical practitioners travelling around villages and giving vaccinations⁵⁴. Instead those peasants preferred to visit various “folk healers” who were closer to the peasant mentality⁵⁵. In his defence of the lower rank clergy, Popławski also referred to the foreign examples, particularly

⁵⁰ J. Nieborski [J.L. Popławski], *Z kraju*, „Głos”, 1887, no. 22, p. 348.

⁵¹ J.L. Popławski, *Daremne żale*, „Głos”, 1890, no. 1, p. 2.

⁵² N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, op. cit., pp. 115.

⁵³ J.L. Popławski, *Znamienne objawy*, „Głos”, 1888, no. 9, p. 97.

⁵⁴ J. Nieborski [J.L. Popławski], *Z kraju*, „Głos”, 1887, no 7, p. 107.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

to Irish clergymen who *repeatedly proved that they can follow their people*⁵⁶. The Irish lower rank clergymen had to choose between the obligation to the Church hierarchy and the obligations of a citizen⁵⁷. Thus he clearly distinguished between the policy of the high-rank Church hierarchy and the attitudes of common priests. According to Popławski, “the parish clergy” was supposedly distinguished itself with *burning patriotism*⁵⁸.

The fact that Popławski's colleagues from “Głos” considered themselves to be “good Christians” is worth emphasising. According to their own opinion they were following teachings of Christ and even implemented them in their lives⁵⁹. According to them, their work was all about the liberation of the common people and the democratic ideals which they considered a fulfilment of teachings contained within the gospel. As a result of this approach, in “Głos” we can discover expressions of sympathy towards certain members of clergy, frequently expressed by Popławski himself. At times he even defended clergy from anticlericals. The increased awareness of the Polish common people and the emergence of the organised peasant parties resulted in, for instance, the aggravation of rivalry between gentry and peasants for representing Poland in the Austrian parliament and in the Sejm of Galicia. At a later date members of the National Democracy, wishing to curtail the domination of conservatives in this partition, actively attempted to support the common people movement⁶⁰, primarily because this movement was chiefly interested in the idea of liberating the common people and bringing society closer to democracy, the goals which members of the National Democracy actively supported at that time. Secondly, it was the sole substantial movement which could cause the abandonment of the loyalist policies promoted by the conservative circles.

The case of Fr. Stanisław Stojalowski was particularly interesting in this context. Popławski observed that fighting with clergymen brought more harm than good for the circles of gentry and high-rank clergy: *The authority of bishops and of the clergy in general did not come unscathed from the confrontation with Fr. Stojalkowski who, as an extraordinarily clever and eloquent dialectician, could always persuade readers that he was victorious and the judicial and ecclesiastical punishments placed upon him only gained him more popularity*⁶¹. Popławski believed that the actions of clergy resulted in the reluctance of the common people towards the clergy and that the opinion of the Church began to lose importance for the common people. The criticism of the Church and concurrent emphasis of the positive qualities of the lower-rank clergy as exceptionally important for forming national awareness of the common people led members of the National Democracy to making attempts at establishing a faction consisting of clergymen sympathetic to the ideology of the National Democracy. For it is difficult to popularise national ideals among the common people without the support of priests who remain in close relationship with the common folk.

⁵⁶ J.L.P. [J.L. Popławski], *Odpowiedź irlandzka*, „Głos”, 1888, no. 22., p. 253.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, p. 253-254.

⁵⁸ J.L. Jastrzębiec [J.L. Popławski], *Z całej Polski*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1896, no. 8, p. 178.

⁵⁹ N. Bończa-Tomaszewski, op. cit., pp. 158.

⁶⁰ K. Kawalec, op. cit., p. 45.

⁶¹ J.L. Jastrzębiec [J.L. Popławski], *Z całej Polski*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1896, no. 8, p. 179.

Conclusion

The lack of the Polish statehood aggravated conflicts between the social and national postulates⁶². However, since the partitioners' denationalisation policy was aimed against language and religion, the postulates of national solidarity, including fraternity between various strata of society, gained in popularity. Popławski observed that acting directly for the benefit of the common people indirectly influences advantageous development of the national cause. If the ideal of political activity is political independence then in the social activity the ideal should be based on prioritising the interests of the common people over the interests of other social circles. In Popławski's beliefs the development of the common people translated into bolstering the Polish nation. The consequence of such reasoning is the statement that *submitting the interests of other strata of society to the interests of the common people is not a demagogic slogan or a doctrine formula but a logical consequence of the fact that the strength of the nation grows through the strength of the common people*⁶³. Thus according to Popławski, remodelling society and rejection of nobiliary traditions was supposed to be the key to national liberation. His negation of the old order and criticism of the nobility certainly influenced the beliefs of Roman Dmowski, as can be observed in the later works of the leader of the National Democracy⁶⁴.

Popławski recognises the emergence of the organised common people movement in the territory of Poland as a sign of the change of the character of the Polish cause in which the common people, peasants in particular, will play an increasingly significant role. As a publicist of "Przegląd Wszechpolski" he devoted attention to the speeches of peasant deputies and gleefully claimed that their words indicated that the restoration of Poland *can begin with the common people*⁶⁵. In his opinion the contradistinctions between various circles of society should be gradually mitigated, ergo the society should be democratised. It could be achieved by developing national solidarity: *the national and political interests of the working class are usually common with the interests of other classes of society and thus classes should fight for them together*⁶⁶.

Jan Ludwik Popławski's fascination with the Polish 'Common People' Summary

Jan Ludwik Popławski (1854-1908) was one of the fathers of the Polish National Democratic ideology in the late 19th and early 20th century. He was particularly fascinated with matters pertaining to the common people, and especially Polish peasantry. He considered them to be the genuine Poles, free of foreign influences. It is worth pointing out that that he also served as an inspiration to Roman Dmowski, the founder of the National Democracy movement and one of the leaders whose efforts secured Polish independence. According to Popławski, the Polish gentry were servile to the powers occupying Poland. He therefore hoped that the common people would play a greater role in the political life of the nation.

⁶² E. Maj, op. cit., p. 223.

⁶³ [J.L. Popławski], *Interesy ludu i polityka narodowa*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1897, no. 14, p. 310.

⁶⁴ R. Dmowski, *Upadek myśli konserwatywnej w Polsce*, Warszawa 1914.

⁶⁵ Jastrzębiec [J.L. Popławski], *Z całej Polski*, „Przegląd Wszechpolski”, 1896, no. 4, p. 81.

⁶⁶ *Pisma polityczne. Posthumous edition / Jan Ludwik Popławski*, op. cit., p. 118.

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