

# Polish conceptions of the intelligentsia and its calling

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## 1. Introductory remarks

FOR A LONG TIME most scholars believed that the word 'intelligentsia' appeared for the first time—around 1860—in prerevolutionary Russia and described a peculiarly Russian phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> In his splendid essay 'The birth of the Russian intelligentsia' (1955) Isaiah Berlin expressed this view as follows:

'Intelligentsia' is a Russian word invented in the nineteenth century, that has since acquired worldwide significance. The phenomenon itself, with its historical and literally revolutionary consequences, is, I suppose, the largest single contribution to social change in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The association of the intelligentsia with nineteenth-century Russia is legitimate and convincing for at least two reasons. First, there is no doubt that in the English vocabulary the word 'intelligentsia' was a direct importation from the Russian; it was introduced in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* of 1920 and only afterwards became internationally acknowledged.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, it is true that prerevolutionary Russia created a peculiarly impressive and instructive model of the intelligentsia as a relatively autonomous group, united by common values and a sense of mission. Its specific contribution was the so-called 'normative' (or 'ethical') conception of the intelligentsia, as opposed to the descriptive, sociological definitions. According to this conception a necessary condition of membership in the intelligentsia was an ethical commitment to the struggle for progress, conceived as the liberation of the people from political and economic oppression. Thus, a half-

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<sup>1</sup> According to Martin Malia, '[t]he term intelligentsia was introduced into the Russian language in the 1860's by a minor novelist named Boborykin, and became current almost immediately' (M. Malia, 1960, What is the intelligentsia?, *Daedalus* 89,441-58, at 441).

<sup>2</sup> I. Berlin, 1979, *Russian Thinkers*, eds H. Hardy & A. Kelly, Harmondsworth, 116.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Pipes, 1971, 'Intelligentsia' from the German 'Intelligenz'? A note, *Slavic Review* 30:3,615-18.

learned student, or even a semi-literate peasant, could become a valued member of the intelligentsia through his participation in its liberating mission, whereas a conservative professor had to be excluded as a supporter of reactionary forces.<sup>4</sup> Even the liberal intellectuals could be denied the status of an 'intelligent', if they sided with the government against the opposition: such was the case of Boris Cičerín, the greatest liberal thinker in nineteenth-century Russia.

The importance of this Russian conception of the intelligentsia derived from the fact that it was not *exclusive* to Russia. Elements of a normative self-definition of the intelligentsia could be found in all countries which gave birth to the 'socially unattached intelligentsia' (Alfred Weber's 'freischwebende Intelligenz'),<sup>5</sup> an elite alienated from the ruling class and painfully aware of its inalienable responsibility for freedom and progress of 'the people'. Comparative studies in the field have shown that the intelligentsia in this sense is typical for the backward agrarian countries in the state of transition;<sup>6</sup> countries which face the difficult problems of modernization but cannot count on the leadership of an organic social class, vitally interested in the process of socioeconomic transformation; countries, be it added, which want to learn from the accumulated experience of more developed nations and thus set their hopes on the ability of the educated strata to assess this experience and to draw the proper conclusions.

It is quite obvious that in this category the most important country was Russia. Hence the universal significance of the Russian historical experience, including the specific, historically shaped fea-

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<sup>4</sup> See Ivanov-Razumnik's classical *История русской общественной мысли*<sup>2</sup> i (Санкт-Петербург, 1908), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. K. Mannheim, 1952, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, London, 137-8. Mannheim asserted that this 'socially unattached' (or 'free-floating') intelligentsia is 'relatively classless', but warned at the same time against seeing the intelligentsia as an 'exalted stratum above the classes', 'entirely free of class liaisons'. He claimed instead that the intelligentsia is 'an aggregation between, but not above, the classes' (see K. Mannheim, 1956, The problem of the intelligentsia, in: idem, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, London, 104-6).

<sup>6</sup> See A. Hertz, 1951, The case of an Eastern European intelligentsia, *Journal of Central European Affairs* 11:1, 10-26. (The fact that the phenomenon of the intelligentsia is typical for the backward countries, trying to join the family of advanced nation, was pointed out already by Ovsjaniko-Kulikovskij in his *История русской интеллигенции* (Д. Н. Овсянко-Куликовский, 1914, *Собрание сочинений*<sup>1</sup> 7, Санкт-Петербург, v-vii).

tures of the Russian intelligentsia. This is enough to justify the widespread Western practice of treating the case of the Russian intelligentsia as one of particular methodological importance.

Nevertheless, it is not true that Russia was the birthplace of the term 'intelligentsia' and of the social phenomenon described by it. Richard Pipes has pointed out, in 1971, that the word *Intelligenz* was used, in February 1849, in the debates of the Austrian and German revolutionary parliaments, denoting an educated, urban stratum which 'by virtue of its superior public spirit deserved heavier parliamentary representation'.<sup>7</sup> Even more substantial corrections to the Russo-centric views of the subject were provided by several Polish scholars who turned attention to the fact that the term 'intelligentsia' had been used for the first time in Poland—by Karol Libelt, a philosopher from Poznań, who in 1844 developed a coherent theory of the intelligentsia's role in national life.<sup>8</sup> Aleksander Geila added to this a suggestion that 'it is probable that the word is strictly Polish in origin because the suffix *-cja* (*tsia* in Russian), common in Polish, is less frequently encountered in Russian'.<sup>9</sup> The hypothesis about the Polish origin of the term was also endorsed in a recent article by Jerzy Jedlicki, who has studied the history of the Polish intelligentsia more scrupulously than anybody else.<sup>10</sup>

We shall see, nonetheless, that the word 'intelligentsia' did not acquire the same connotations in Poland and in Russia. In both countries membership in the intelligentsia had an ethical component, requiring conscious commitment to public welfare. In Poland, however, this commitment was identified, as a rule, with national patriotism, whereas in Russia it necessarily involved social radicalism and political opposition. The classical Russian intelligentsia—as described by Ivanov-Razumnik, who extolled its heroic tradi-

<sup>7</sup> See Pipes, 'Intelligentsia', 615-16, and idem, 1984, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, Harmondsworth, 251. Pipes has quoted in this connection Lewis Namier, 1971 [1946], *1848: the Revolution of the Intellectuals*, London, 22-3.

<sup>8</sup> It seems that I was the first to turn attention to this. See A. Walicki, Introduction to K. Libelt, 1967, *Samowładztwo rozumu i objawy filozofii słowiańskiej*, Warszawa, xvii-xviii. A few years later Libelt's priority in using the word 'intelligentsia' was stressed by Aleksander Geila's essay 'The life and death of the old Polish intelligentsia', *Slavic Review* 30:1, 4. See also A. Walicki, 1982, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism. The Case of Poland*, Oxford, 177.

<sup>9</sup> Gella, *The life and death*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> J. Jedlicki, 2002, *Autocréation de l'intelligentsia*, in: Ch. Delsol, M. Masłowski & J. Nowicki (eds), *Mythes et symboles politiques en Europe centrale*, Paris, 392. For an outline of the usages of the term 'intelligentsia' in Poland see also R. Czepulis-Rastenis, 1973, „*Klasa umysłowa*". *Inteligencja Królestwa Polskiego, 1832-1862*, Warszawa, 5-24.

tions,<sup>11</sup> or by the authors of *Landmarks* ( *Vechi*, 1909), who severely criticized these traditions from a liberal-conservative standpoint—had to be socially radical, totally alienated from the historical structures of society, and actively hostile to conservative and bourgeois values. This characterization does not apply to the Polish intelligentsia: a Polish 'intelligent' could be a moderate, or even a conservative, deeply religious, attached to national traditions and horrified by the manifestations of Russian 'nihilism'. The intellectual heritage of the Polish intelligentsia included chiliastic dreams and socialist utopianism, but on the whole, especially in comparison with the Russian tradition, it was remarkably free from dogmatic attitudes and sectarianism.

A typical, politically minded Russian 'intelligent' of the early twentieth century has been described as 'a militant monk of the religion of earthly salvation'.<sup>12</sup> It is arguable that this was not an entirely fair description (its author, Semen Frank, did not take into account that he himself was a member of the intelligentsia, representing the powerful religio-philosophic renaissance in the Russian culture). Nevertheless, the Russian intelligentsia of that time, or, at least, its left-wing majority, was incomparably closer to this image than its Polish counterpart.

## 2. The Romantic epoch

The first great debate about the Polish intelligentsia's mission to wake up the masses, to raise them to the level of self-consciousness, and to guide them in the struggle for liberation, took place after the defeat of the November uprising of 1830—especially among the exiles who felt the urgent need to settle accounts with the recent past and to define the conditions of Poland's 'resurrection' in the predictable future.

The main lesson which the former insurgents drew from their defeat was to see Poland as a 'revolutionary nation', struggling against the Holy Alliance of the three absolute monarchs, and having a natural ally in the revolutionary forces of Europe. Thus, the Polish national cause was made inseparable from the commitment to a revolutionary destruction of the corrupt 'old world', to be fol-

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<sup>11</sup> See above, fn 4.

<sup>12</sup> See *Landmarks: a Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia*, eds B. Shragin & A. Todd; transi M. Schwartz (New York, 1977), 179.

lowed by a universal regeneration. This diagnosis was shared by the Western revolutionaries, including Marx and Engels, in whose view Poland faced an inescapable choice: 'Either be revolutionary, or perish.'<sup>13</sup>

Another important conclusion, elaborated by the revolutionary exiles, was the view that bringing Poland to a new life required a deep agrarian revolution. The peasant question came to be seen, therefore, as the most important national and moral issue. To cope with this question, Polish democrats of the Romantic Epoch—first in the emigration, then also in the lands of partitioned Poland<sup>14</sup>—developed an impressive ideology of revolutionary populism, anticipating in many respects the ideas of the Russian *narodničestvo* of the second half of the century. Like the Russian *narodniki* of the 1870S, they spoke about the 'penitent gentry', the intelligentsia's indebtedness to the people, and of the necessity of a 'revolutionary apostolate' among the peasant masses. The revolutionary general, Ludwik Mierosławski, described the Polish democrats in exile as 'defeated gentry doing penance, redeemed by wounds of the soul and body'.<sup>15</sup> Zenon Świątosławski—the Utopian socialist who, together with Stanisław Worcell, founded in England the 'Communes of the Polish People' (1836)—was painfully aware of his 'debt to the people' and of the moral necessity of discharging this debt through revolutionary activity.<sup>16</sup> As we know, the recognition of the 'social guilt' of the educated minority became the cornerstone of the influential theory of Petr Lavrov, defining the intelligentsia as 'critically thinking individuals' who should devote their entire life to the repayment of their 'debt to the people'.<sup>17</sup> It is instructive to

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<sup>13</sup> K. Marx & F. Engels, 1956-, *Werke* XVIII, Berlin, 526. Marx's and Engels's views on the Polish question are discussed in detail in my *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism*, Part 4, ch 2 (pp. 358-91).

<sup>14</sup> The best embodiment of the idea of a revolutionary populist, preaching the socialist gospel among the peasantry, was the young Left-Hegelian philosopher, Edward Dembowski, one of the leaders of the Cracow uprising of 1846 (killed by the Austrian troops on 27 February 1846).

<sup>15</sup> L. Mierosławski, 1860, *Powstanie poznańskie w roku 1848*<sup>1</sup>, 39 (quoted in Namier, *1848: the Revolution*, 14). (The term 'penitent gentry' was introduced in Russia by the populist thinker, N. K. Michajlovskij, who divided the populist revolutionaries of the 1870s into the 'penitent nobles', tormented by a feeling of social guilt, and the realistically minded educated plebeians (the so-called *raznoancy*), motivated by a feeling of individual dignity).

<sup>16</sup> See P. Brock, 1954, Zeno Świątosławski, a Polish forerunner of the *narodniki*, *American Slavic and East European Review* 13:4,566-87.

<sup>17</sup> See A. Walicki, 1980, *JI History of Russian Thought From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, Oxford, 237-41.

remember that this populist theory proved to be irresistibly attractive to the Polish radicals of the postpositivist generation. Ludwik Kuzywicki, a leading Marxist and the translator of *Das Kapital*, repeated it verbatim in his passionate pamphlet *Sic itur ad virtutem*, written in the revolutionary year 1905.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, an important aspect of Polish radicalism of the years 1831-48 was a certain anti-Westernism—also similar in many respects to the ideas of the Russian populist intelligentsia of the 1870S. Most Polish democrats of the Romantic Epoch wanted to avoid the disappointing results of the French Revolution, claiming that Poland should choose a different, non-bourgeois way of social development. This option, it should be stressed, was well understood and fully supported by Western socialists who also felt deeply that the bourgeois order had to be replaced by a system embodying infinitely higher and truly moral values. Thus, the commitment to revolutionary struggle against bourgeois Europe could be seen as fully consonant with the ideas of the vanguard of European progress.

There is no doubt that the 'penitent gentry', trying to transcend class interests of the landlords for the sake of the suffering peasantry, provided a good example of the intelligentsia as a moral concept. Nevertheless, the first usage of the term 'intelligentsia' occurred in a different milieu. Karol Libelt, who used this term in his treatise *On the Love of the Fatherland* (1844), was an author of plebeian origin, capable of combining conspiratorial activities (under Mieroslawski's guidance) with the legal 'organic work' in the Prussian partition—educational and economic, helping Polish burghers and professionals to defend their interests against German competitors. At the same time, following the critique of Hegelian-ism in the works of August Cieszkowski and Bronisław Tren-towski, he set himself the ambitious aim of creating a distinctively 'national' philosophy, a 'philosophy of action', overcoming the contemplative character of German thought and opening a new epoch in universal intellectual history, an epoch in which philosophy would become 'practical', and social practice philosophical.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See L. Krzywicki, 1958, *Takimi będą drogi wasze (Sic itur ad virtutem)*, intr T. Kotarbiński, Warszawa, 81-3.

<sup>19</sup> See my *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism*, Part 2, chs 2-3 (pp. 176-86).

Libelt's definition of the 'national intelligentsia' comprised all people who, by virtue of their education, stand in the van of their nation and provide it with leadership as scholars, officials, teachers, priests, or industrialists. This narrow stratum is surrounded by the countless masses, immersed in darkness and, therefore, subject to social and moral enslavement. In this situation the mission of the intelligentsia had to be educational and patriotic; its ultimate task was to transform the unenlightened masses into conscious, active citizens, who might raise themselves to the true love of their fatherland.<sup>20</sup> Otherwise the intelligentsia could perform different social roles, including the roles of bourgeois professionals and entrepreneurs, so despicable in the eyes of socialists. But this did not justify the view that Libelt was in fact an ideologist of the middle class. On the contrary: he himself stressed that 'the middle class would not save the fatherland'; if left to itself, it 'could only generate plutocracy'.<sup>21</sup> This meant that the activities of the middle class should be subordinated to patriotic considerations, and not serve egoistic class interests. And the guardian of the true interests of the fatherland, representing autonomous judgment and a genuine understanding of the common good, was to be the intelligentsia—the brain, the moral conscience and the natural leader of the nation.

The idea of 'Polish national philosophy' was formulated for the first time by Bronisław Trentowski—a former insurgent, living in Germany, but regularly publishing his works in Poznań. He also saw himself as a representative of the Polish intelligentsia and used this term in his passionate polemic against Mickiewicz's messianism, professed in the poet's lectures at the College de France. He reacted with particular indignation to Mickiewicz's views that philosophical debates could not replace revelation, that truth could be attained only through suffering, never through rational discussions, and that national leadership should belong to the superior, divinely inspired spirits—including the prophetic poets.<sup>22</sup> Trentowski saw these views as an expression of a programmatic anti-rationalism, hostile to the very idea of rationally conceived action and, therefore, an attempt to prevent philosophers from seizing the

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<sup>20</sup> K. Libelt, O miłości ojczyzny, in: idem, *Samowładztwo rozumu*, 61-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed presentation of Trentowski's views on Mickiewicz and vice versa see my study 'Filozofia narodowa Bronisława Trentowskiego a mesjanizm Mickiewiczowski', in: A. Walicki, 1970, *Filozofia a mesjanizm. Studia z dziejów filozofii i myśli społeczno-religijnej romantyzmu polskiego*, Warszawa, 89-172.

'government of souls' in the nation. He described Mickiewicz as deeply afraid that rational philosophers like Cieszkowski and Tren-towski (described by Mickiewicz as 'denationalized Slavs, prisoners of German philosophical thought') might take the lead and deprive the romantic poets of their royal power over the Polish intelligentsia.<sup>23</sup>

Mickiewicz's attack on philosophers was a powerful expression of romantic anti-intellectualism, extolling the charismatic foundations of power and unrelentlessly critical of the 'bookish knowledge' of intellectuals. Mickiewicz combined this position with a commitment to a revolutionary war against the 'people of the past'—both ossified traditionalists and bourgeois rationalists. Tren-towski, however, was not attracted by messianic ideas of a new, spiritual aristocracy, or a 'new revelation'. Being deeply suspicious of uncontrolled manifestations of 'enthusiasm and exaltation', he wanted to establish the rule of intellectuals, headed by philosophers and based upon holistic knowledge. Hence he urged his compatriots not to wait for a messianic saviour, but to call into being an invisible 'moral government of the nation', composed of people who had distinguished themselves by their material wealth (thus being able to provide material means for patriotic activities), by their power of thought, or by their capacity for organized action. This informal, underground government should coordinate the activities of different Polish associations—educational, industrial, agricultural, and so forth, preserving thereby the unity of the partitioned nation and giving direction to the efforts directed towards its social, economic, and cultural regeneration.<sup>24</sup>

An ambitious realization of a similar project was the Polish League of Poznań, organized by Cieszkowski in collaboration with Libelt during the Springtime of the Peoples. Owing to the political liberalization caused by the revolution it could exist legally and achieved great organizational success: after one year it had almost 40,000 members and became *de facto* a second government of the province. In April 1850 it had to be dissolved, but the importance of its legacy was enormous: it was a good school of self-government for an entire generation of Polish patriots from Poznań,

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<sup>23</sup> See B. Trentowski, [1844], *Odpowiedź Mickiewiczowi, Teraźniejszość i przyszłość 1844* as reprinted in: idem, 1974, *Stosunek filozofii do cybernetyki*, Warszawa, 549.

<sup>24</sup> See B. Trentowski, [1845], *Rzecz o wyjarzmienu ojczyzny, Teraźniejszość i przyszłość 1845*, vol. i, no. 4 as reprinted in: A. Walicki (ed), 1977, *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1831-1864*, Warszawa, 261-9.

and thus laid down the foundations for the subsequent development of the 'organic work' in the Prussian partition. It also provided a model of a constructive collaboration between the urban intelligentsia, the patriotic landowners and the clergy.

It is worthwhile adding that Cieszkowski—in accordance with the intelligentsia's calling to see national affairs from a holistic and teleological perspective—did not allow the League to forget that its final aim was no less than the regaining of national independence.<sup>25</sup> And from the point of view of his religious philosophy of history, this was to be merely a step toward a universal reconciliation of all nations in the future kingdom of God on earth.

### 3. The period of Positivism

The activities of the Polish League, in which liberals (like Cieszkowski) could cooperate with former revolutionaries (like Libelt<sup>26</sup>) in a common effort to create a sort of home rule in the country, marked the culmination of the 'organic works' of the Romantic Epoch. In the second half of the century the organic work came to be associated with far more modest national programs, limited essentially to the struggle for economic and cultural survival. An exceptional case was Galicia, which, since 1860, had its own Sejm and developed, in exchange for political loyalty, in the direction of autonomy. But in the Russian and Prussian partitions the 'Polish question' was at the lowest ebb. After the disastrous defeat of the anti-Russian uprising of January 1863, the tsarist government adopted a policy of systematic destruction of the autonomous institutions of the Congress Kingdom and a thorough Russification of its school system; even the term 'Kingdom of Poland' was removed from the official language and replaced by the vague geographical designation 'the Vistula land'. The situation of the Polish provinces of the newly unified Germany was even worse. Bismarck's 'Kulturkampf, combined with the policy of brutal Germanization, reduced the Prussian Poles to the status of a persecuted minority in their own homeland. The Polish language was forbidden not only in school, but even at post offices and railroad stations.

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<sup>25</sup> See W. Jakóbczyk, 1948, Cieszkowski i Liga Polska, *Przegląd Historyczny* 38, 151; also A. Liebich, 1979, *Between Ideology and Utopia: the Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski*, Dordrecht • London, 255-63.

<sup>26</sup> For information on Libelt's revolutionary activities see Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism*, 174-5.

The intellectual leaders and actual organizers of the large-scale organic works in the Congress Kingdom at the beginning of the 1870S were the so-called 'Warsaw positivists'—young enthusiasts of a 'scientific' approach to social life, mostly former students of the Warsaw Central School (transformed in 1869 into a Russian Imperial University). They sharply criticized the romantic cult of insurrections for leading to national disasters, and set against it a sober programme of 'work at the foundations', implemented legally at the lowest levels of national organism—in rural communes and parishes. It consisted in the organization of Polish life through a network of non-governmental institutions—educational, social, and economic, aiming above all at the 'nationalization' of the newly enfranchised peasantry. In the realization of this programme the Warsaw positivists counted on the active cooperation of the educated gentry and the clergy, whom they called 'the rural intelligentsia'. They even agreed to assign to the gentry a major role in creating an integrated nation.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, this was very different from the ideas of the Galician conservatives who persisted in seeing the 'historical class' as the legitimate national elite and demanded only that it should co-opt the best members of the non-noble intelligentsia, including the Jewish converts.<sup>28</sup> In the eyes of the Warsaw positivists national leadership belonged to the intelligentsia; the patriotic gentry could join the intelligentsia, but not *vice versa*.

Very soon, however, when the Warsaw positivists concentrated attention on the urban areas, their programme of creating an integrated, cohesive nation was formulated more broadly: as the patriotic activization of all hitherto neglected 'national resources', i.e. not only peasants, but also the multiethnic bourgeoisie, Jews, and women. At this juncture the alliance with the progressive gentry became less important, whereas the ideological conflict with the gentry traditionalists came to the fore. Conservative newspapers started to attack the positivists as representatives of a Western-style, secular progressive movement, alien to the core values of the Catho-

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<sup>27</sup> See S. A. Blejwas, 1984, *Realism in Polish Politics: Warsaw Positivism and National Survival in Nineteenth Century Poland*, New Haven, 92-3.

<sup>28</sup> See J. Szujski, 1991 f i860], *Szlachta i inteligencja*, in: idem, *O fałszywej historii jako mistrzyni fałszywej polityki. Artykuły i rozprawy*, Warszawa, 67-78. f Szujski described the gentry as 'the alpha and omega of the nation' (ibid., 70). Two years later Ludwik Gumpłowicz, expressing the views of the educated stratum of the urban population, declared that the central role in national life (being 'the alpha and omega of the nation') belonged to the intelligentsia (see Jedlicki, *Autocréation de l'intelligentsia*, 388).

lic Polish nation, and the positivists took up the challenge. 'Aleksander Świętochowski did not hesitate to proclaim that 'civilized nations have history, but not tradition,' adding that 'the difference between these two concepts is as great as the difference between scientific truth and superstition'.<sup>29</sup>

The main difference, distinguishing the positivists from the romantic ideologists of organic work, was a programmatic marginalization of national independence and the political sphere as such. National life, they argued, depended above all on economic and intellectual development; lack of an independent state could even be seen as a sort of privilege, enabling the nation to avoid over-ambitious engagements and the unnecessary expenses bound up with them. A theoretical foundation for this view was discovered in the works of two British thinkers: Herbert Spencer, who presented capitalist societies as the highest form of organic development, and Henry Thomas Buckle, whose *History of Civilization in England* (translated into Polish in 1862) assigned the main role in history to the progress of science and, therefore, to the elites of knowledge. The Warsaw positivists were quick to interpret Buckle's theory of civilization as scientific proof that national leadership should belong to the intelligentsia.<sup>30</sup> No wonder that they subjected Spencer's economic liberalism to a reinterpretation which made it more consonant with the Weltanschauung of the intellectuals: brutal, aggressive aspects of free competition were pushed into the background, while the main emphasis was put on peaceful, constructive cooperation, typical of modern commercialism as opposed to feudal militarism. This was particularly characteristic of Bolesław Prus, who described modern capitalist society as a harmonious national organism, praising the industrial division of labour as the best principle of social cooperation and trade as the 'nourishment' of the nation. He derived from this a practical recommendation for the Polish intelligentsia: its members should abandon the search for ideological absolutes and the ambition to represent the 'social whole', and transform themselves into solid specialists (*fachowcy*), who cultivate their specific fields in the spirit of a friendly exchange of services and democratic compromise.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> See Świętochowski, 1872, Tradycja i historia wobec postępu, *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 1872:19 (cf. B. Porter, 2002, *When Nationalism Began to Hate. Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland*, New York • Oxford, 61 ).

<sup>30</sup> See Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> See A. Głowacki (B. Prus), 1883, *Szkic programu w warunkach obecnego rozwoju społeczeństwa*, Warszawa, 12-13, 77-78, 119.

A reinterpretation of Spencer's ideas in the spirit of national solidarity was also offered by Eliza Orzeszkowa in her *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism* (1881). However, she made more room for patriotism of a romantic type, stressing the importance of sacrifice and moral duty. The intelligentsia, in her view, had to lead the nation in the spirit of a truly modern, humanized patriotism, capable of reflexivity and thus sublimating the crude, explosive nationalism of the masses.<sup>32</sup>

The most elaborated vision of the noble calling of the intelligentsia was offered by Świątochowski, the recognized intellectual leader of the positivist camp. It had three, interrelated but different dimensions.

First, the intelligentsia was seen as bearers of national consciousness and as prime movers of national progress. Świątochowski applied the Cartesian maxim 'I think, therefore I am' to national affairs and gave it the meaning: 'Our nation has its own intelligentsia, therefore it exists.'<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, Świątochowski was preoccupied with the Promethean role of heroic intellectuals, who promote social and intellectual progress at the expense of great sufferings and personal tragedies. The leaders of the intelligentsia were presented thereby as exemplifying the tragic fate of great fighters for truth—misunderstood and isolated at their lifetime but absolutely necessary for the survival of the human species.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, Świątochowski passionately defended the rights of independent, critical judgment, boldly challenging the tyranny of public opinion. In doing this he referred to J. S. Mill (whom he saw as his great teacher) and to the Polish *liberum veto*—describing it as an important principle of individual freedom, deeply true in its moral essence although badly misinterpreted in social practice.<sup>35</sup> Thus, he became the first (and possibly the greatest) Polish advocate of the ideal of an independent 'clerk', for whom truth and moral freedom

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<sup>32</sup> E. Orzeszkowa, 1888, *Patriotyzm i kosmopolityzm*, in: eadem, *Pismaxbiii*, Warszawa, 163-4.

<sup>33</sup> A. Świątochowski, 1881, *Myślę, więc jestem*, *Prawda* 1 January/20 December 1881 (see Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*, 64).

<sup>34</sup> M. Zahorska, 1978, *Spór o inteligencję w polskiej myśli społecznej*, in: R. Czepulis-Rastenis (ed), *Inteligencja polska pod zaborami*, Warszawa, 196-7.

<sup>35</sup> See A. Świątochowski, 1976 [1881], *Liberum veto* 1, ed and intr S.Sandler, Warszawa, 171-3 (article 'm *Prawda* 1 January/20 December 1881).