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## THE “SCIENTIFIC VIEW” OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA: THE LITERARY ROOTS OF SCHOLARLY PUBLIC DEBATES IN POST-WAR POLAND (1946–1948)<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This paper addresses the public discussions among Polish scholars and social scientists which took place following the Second World War. The debate on the sociological and historical genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia started with the publication of a lecture given by the sociologist Józef Chałasiński. Covering this debate, the paper shows the way in which the literary and publicist stereotypes came to be a research question for the Social Sciences and Humanities.

**Key words:** Social Sciences, Polish Sociology, post-war Poland, intelligentsia, public debates, Józef Chałasiński, Stefan Kieniewicz, cultural journals, *Kuźnica*, Odrodzenie

### INTRODUCTION

“We are glad to greet you, gentlemen! Everyone will be praised in accordance with his contribution. Everything has been elaborated very well. There is just an absent guillotine for the bourgeoisie. Please accept our highest respects.”<sup>2</sup> With these words, the French revolutionaries Robespierre, Marat, Danton, and Desmoulins saluted the readers of the socio-cultural journal “Odrodzenie” (Revival) immediately following the Second World War. The author of this

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<sup>2</sup> J. Borejsza, *Rewolucja łagodna*, „Odrodzenie” 10–12, 1945, p. 1.

historical allusion, the communist functionary Jerzy Borejsza, presenting an attractive image of the “new Polish realities,” repeatedly referred to the French Revolution to illustrate the extent of intellectual “freedom” in Poland after the war. Promoting the *Soft Revolution* (Rewolucja łagodna) project,<sup>3</sup> Borejsza became one of the main designers of the post-war infrastructure for hosting the public discussions. The publishing cooperative *Czytelnik* (The Reader) that was created under his protection became a state-run institution aimed at producing a wide range of cultural, professional, children’s and other journals.<sup>4</sup>

This institutional body attracted many Polish writers, journalists and scholars to actively participate in the public debate under the new political conditions. Among other things, the honorarium that could be paid by *Czytelnik*,<sup>5</sup> against the backdrop of the post-war devastation was a good motivation for many scholars and writers to publish their material in the state-run journals. Meanwhile, working for the state-run press was not the only opportunity to participate in the public discussion beyond the party-biased press. Three most influential centres of the Catholic intelligentsia existed that emerged following the war and attracted many intellectuals. Two of these Catholic groups were financed from Church funds, the third one had to find financial resources on its own.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the editorial boards of these journals were also interested in attracting authoritative scholars and writers to publish in their journals. More importantly, even though all cultural journals in post-war Poland had to be permitted by the authorities to engage in public activity, the new post-war infrastructure of the cultural press was intended to recreate a habitual form of public intellectual activity.

There is another remark that should be made concerning the post-war public discussions. From my point of view, censorship was not the main factor which influenced the course of the public debate immediately following the war. The academic and political status of the main actors within the discussions, as well as the relatively high level of acceptable speech in the scholarly discourse up to so called “Stalinisation,” made censorship a secondary factor influencing this issue.<sup>7</sup> Even though the new political reality could not let the “limits of acceptable” in

<sup>3</sup> See more about the project: E. Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza: biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 2009, p. 111–119.

<sup>4</sup> G.P. Bąbiak, „Czytelnik” od Warszawy po Nowy Jork, in: *Na rogu Stalina i Trzech Krzyży. Listy do Jerzego Borejszy 1944–1952*, Warszawa 2014, p. 5–68.

<sup>5</sup> See Borejsza’s correspondence on this topic: *Na rogu Stalina i Trzech Krzyży. Listy do Jerzego Borejszy 1944–1952*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 69–547.

<sup>6</sup> The matter concerns the groups of *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Tygodnik Warszawski* and the group of Bolesław Piasecki that was allowed by the authorities to fund his organisation by an underground private transportation business, See: A. Friszke, *Między wojną a więzieniem. 1945–1953, Młoda inteligencja katolicka*, Warszawa 2015, p. 246, 261.

<sup>7</sup> See more about the censorship and Borejsza’s role in this: E. Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista. Jerzy Borejsza biografia polityczna*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 108–119.

the public discourse of the Polish state not affect<sup>8</sup>, the debates on cultural and academic issues enjoyed having a degree of autonomy.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, public activity itself was a moral issue for many of the scholars who accepted the new realities: the exiled intellectuals, as well as the people continuing to resist the new regime in underground units, were to some extent a part of the audience of these public discussions. The fact that people of the same generation and, sometimes, of the same political or intellectual milieu found themselves on opposite sides of the “iron curtain” after the war necessary influenced the authors that participated in the public debate in the socialist state.<sup>10</sup> For the reasons mentioned, the question of cultural continuity became not only a propaganda issue, but also an opportunity for many public intellectuals<sup>11</sup> to legitimise their chosen strategy. It is difficult to analyse both the private motives of the authors and their ideas within the same publication, but this context should be mentioned before I come to the main question of this article.

In this paper, I intend to examine the public debate on the cultural and social genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia that took place in the Polish Republic immediately following the Second World War. The paper will address the ideas coined by the sociologists, historians and philologists who participated in this dispute. Based on these sources, I will examine this issue within the context of the literary and publicist tradition of public debates the main participants of the discussion belonged to. To make my arguments more precise, in this paper I will concentrate on the examination of the most characteristic opinions published in the cultural press within this debate when referring to other relevant voices just occasionally. The key criteria for selecting the sources was the importance of these opinions for the further discussion and their chronology. This approach helps to follow the course of the discussion and to examine the responses of discussants to the opinions of their opponents.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the issues which influenced the public discourse in Poland immediately following the war have been discussed in the book: *Aparat represji wobec inteligencji w latach 1945–1956*, Rafał Habielski, Dominika Rafalska (ed.), Warszawa 2010.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: G.P. Bąbiak, „Odrodzenie” (1944–1950) — pierwszy powojenny tygodnik kultury Polskiej, in: *Bibliografia zawartości. „Odrodzenie” (1944–1950)*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 7–60; about the changes in the academic discourse, regarding historiography: M. Górny, *The Nation Should Come First. Marxism and Historiography in East Central Europe*, Frankfurt am Main 2013.

<sup>10</sup> The importance of this factor is noticeable when reading the response of the exiled intellectuals to the debate examined in this article: M. Świącicki, *Sąd i próba wyroku na inteligencję polską*, “Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza” 88, 1947; M. Kukiel, *J. Chalasińskiego „Społeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej”* [recenzja], “Teki Historyczne,” Londyn 1948, no. 1, pp. 54–57; Z. Jordan, *Społeczna funkcja inteligencji*, “Kultura” 7, 1948, pp. 31–38.

<sup>11</sup> In this article, I understand under the term “public intellectual” the people who decided to participate in the public discussions.

This debate has been already discussed in the historiography, though from another perspective.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, the discussion examined in this article had deeply influenced the agenda of historiography and social studies after the Second World War: the issue of the intelligentsia became one of the most debatable topics among academics, and much of the research dealing with this issue has been started with references to the debate I intend to refer to.<sup>13</sup> All this makes this public discussion a noteworthy source for analysing both the type of communication between scholars and wider society, as well as the special field of interdisciplinary discussion between academics. Beside this, I assume that the analysis of the literary and publicist tradition of the public debates could open a new perspective in researching the history of the social sciences and humanities.

#### JÓZEF CHAŁASIŃSKI AND “SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH” TO THE INTELLIGENTSIA

The issue of the intelligentsia and its responsibility has been one of the most important topics of Polish public debates since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> That is why the scientific discourse around this issue is of particular importance for analysing the state of the Polish social sciences and humanities, as well as for demonstrating the remarkable perspective of the development of Polish public discourse. The public debate I refer to was started

<sup>12</sup> See, for example the article: C. Lewandowski, *Dyskusja prasowa nad koncepcją inteligencji polskiej J. Chałasińskiego w latach 1946–1948*, “Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej”, 29/3–4, 1990, pp. 71–101. Lewandowski examines this issue in a broader context of the historiographical debates on the phenomenon of the intelligentsia. Even though the title of his article refers to the period between 1946 and 1948, the ideas of the disputants has been given in the publication in their later editions. My paper is not aimed at researching the historiography of the issue, therefore I will concentrate only on the statements which were historically relevant for the early post war period. See also a highly ideologised article: M. Kruszyński, *Wokół dyskusji o przedwojennej inteligencji, uniwersytetach i wreszcie robotnikach na uniwersytetach (1945–1956). Uwag kilka*, “RES HISTORICA” 43, 2017, pp. 207–232.

<sup>13</sup> It is important that the opinions coined in this debate remained relevant both for historians and sociologists dealing with this issue a long time after it took place. It is remarkable that the authors of the multivolume project of the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX wieku*. Studia 1–6. repeatedly referred to the approach of Józef Chałasiński and his opponents (see, for example, *Inteligencja polska pod zaborami*, Warszawa 1978, p. 13, 47, 170.). The debate also was relevant for sociologists writing about the intelligentsia (see, for example: J. Szczępański, *Inteligencja i społeczeństwo*, Warszawa 1957). Based on this debate, Józef Chałasiński also developed his arguments (J. Chałasiński, *Przechódź i przyszłość inteligenta polskiego*, Warszawa 1958).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example: M. Zahorska, *Spór o inteligencję w polskiej myśli społecznej do I wojny światowej*, in: *Inteligencja polska pod zaborami. Studia*, Warszawa 1978, pp. 180–216.

with the publication, in the cultural journal "Kuźnica", of the lecture given by Prof. Józef Chałasiński<sup>15</sup> at the newly established University of Łódź.<sup>16</sup> Greeting the students on the occasion of the beginning of the academic year in 1946, Chałasiński, one of the most well-known Polish sociologists and an active participant in post-war "cultural reforms", talked about the sociological approach to analysing the "genealogy" of the Polish intelligentsia.<sup>17</sup> Starting with an examination of the political aspect of the issue, the sociologist stressed that it was the intelligentsia which strove to adopt the role of a "moral authority for Polish people (*moralny rząd narodu polskiego*)" after the decline of the nobility (*szlachta*). According to this view, this attitude of the intelligentsia caused its pretension of being a "true representative" of Polish culture after the partitions of Poland by the great empires. The fact that the intelligentsia understood themselves as the bearer of the Polish cultural and intellectual tradition was itself, for Chałasiński, an essential issue for sociology.

In a very characteristic way, the sociologist regarded the intelligentsia to be not only a type of "political force (*siła polityczna*)", but also "a kind of social stratum (*swoista warstwa społeczna*)."<sup>18</sup> Based on this statement, Chałasiński started to examine the intelligentsia as an actor within the social and economic processes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Doing so, he remarked upon the fact that Poland was a marginal European country in terms of economic development. Moreover, in his view, this process took a different form in the Polish territories, and the nobility was rather in opposition to these economic changes. Arguing so, the sociologist regarded the intelligentsia to be a by-product (*uboczny produkt*) of capitalism's invasion of the nobility's economy. According to this view, the intelligentsia had become a "resident of foreign capitalism in Poland" without any participation in the economic processes taking place in the Polish territories. At the same time, in the author's view, the intelligentsia had inherited the nobility's haughty attitude towards the "common people" and were not able to

<sup>15</sup> Józef Chałasiński (1904–1979) comes from a peasant family, was the son of a rural gmina scribe, the pupil of the famous Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki. He participated in Polish–Soviet War (1919–1921) and was the director of the State Institute for Rural Sociology (1936–1939).

<sup>16</sup> See about his activity at the University of Łódź: J. Kita, P. Pytlaś, *Józef Chałasiński*, in: *W Służbie Nauki. Profesorowie Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego w latach 1945–2004*, Łódź 2005, pp. 31–34.

<sup>17</sup> It should be remarked that, in this article, I will refer, first of all, to the version of Chałasiński's approach that was published and discussed in the cultural press, even though the book produced after the public debate contains several essential changes and requires a special examination. See: J. Chałasiński, *Spoleczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej*, Warszawa 1946.

<sup>18</sup> "Nie kwestionując politycznej roli inteligencji polskiej, wyodrębniła się w społeczno-historycznym procesie jako swoista warstwa społeczna." (J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska w świecie swojej genealogii społecznej*, „Kuźnica” 4 (22), 1946, p. 1.)

change their life. Developing this argument, Chałasiński asserted: "...the resident [the intelligentsia] did not think anywhere in accordance with economic categories. The resident did not participate anywhere in creating the economic reality of the country and did not feel responsible — the economic issues were not the issues of their honour."<sup>19</sup>

All this led the author to the conclusion that there was no period in Polish history when the intelligentsia was working in conformity with the people's interests. Obviously referring to the previous publicist tradition of social criticism,<sup>20</sup> the sociologist formulated a very radical judgment: "The Polish intelligentsia, being closed in its socio-cultural ghetto, grew its culture not as a vanguard and an elite of the lowest stratum, but as the satellites of the ancestral aristocracy and landowners' nobility"<sup>21</sup> Aiming at describing the "social type" of an "*inteligent*",<sup>22</sup> Chałasiński highlighted two most essential aspects of this phenomenon: belonging to the upper stratum of society (*warstwa wyższa*), and representing "*amateurish* (emphasis mine — *A.L.*) but not professional"<sup>23</sup> intellectual culture. Chałasiński's idea of "*amateurish culture*" is a noteworthy concept: according to this view, the intelligentsia's culture was *amateurish* because it had been determined by the *old aristocratic style* but not by the *current social necessity* that should distinguish a *professional culture*. In such a way, the intelligentsia, in Chałasiński's view, acquired a special ethos, considering themselves to be "Polish Europeans — Polish Londoners and Parisians in the land of indigenous peasants"<sup>24</sup>.

The next point in Chałasiński's argument should be examined especially closely. Looking for sources to prove his point, the sociologist referred to literary fiction as a fount of relevant social types, from which he could draw the social type of the intelligentsia. According to him, the identity of the intelligentsia seeing themselves to be "civilisers" was very similar to the British

<sup>19</sup> "...rezydent nie myślał nigdy ekonomicznymi kategoriami. Rezydent nie brał nigdy udziału w tworzeniu gospodarczej rzeczywistości kraju i nie czuł się za nią odpowiedzialny — sprawy gospodarcze to nie były sprawy jego honoru." (J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska...*, p. 1.)

<sup>20</sup> The references to the writings of Stanisław Brzozowski testify to rightness of this statement. This fact has been remarked by Lewandowski, see: C. Lewandowski, *Dyskusja prasowa...*, p. 100–101.

<sup>21</sup> *Inteligencja polska*, zamknięta w swoim getto społeczno-kulturalnym, pelengowała swoją kulturę nie jako awangarda i elita warstw niższych, lecz jako satelita arystokracji rodowo-majątkowej i szlachty ziemiańskiej (J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska...*, *op. cit.*, p. 1, 2).

<sup>22</sup> I will use the word "*inteligent*" as derived from the word "*Inteligencja*" in its Polish spelling not to confuse with "intelligent" in English. The English translation "intellectual" does not transmit unrecoverable connotations.

<sup>23</sup> "amatorska, a nie zawodowa" (Chałasiński J., *Inteligencja polska...*, p. 1).

<sup>24</sup> J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska...*, p. 2.

colonialism shown in the books of Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. Additionally, the "gospel of the Trilogy"<sup>25</sup> and the "gospel of Prometheism"<sup>26</sup>, in Chałasiński's view, could testify to the rightness of his judgments. From his point of view, the literary tradition showed that the main task of the Polish intellectual elites was to defend the "*Polish spirit*" especially considering the danger of its collapse that had existed under the partitions. At the same time, the author asserted: "This defence was stigmatised with a social pathology and had been deeply influenced by the mentality of Polish captivity"<sup>27</sup>.

Having mentioned the critical writings of Stanisław Brzozowski, the sociologist argued that "Poland" became for "Polish Europeans" (i.e. for the intelligentsia) a kind of religious belief but not a real subject. The sociologist stressed that, for the intelligentsia, the "Polish interests" were situated *in the spiritual*, but *not in the material* plane, while "... the collective life of the people is neither a church service nor a theatrical performance ... it is not only the heart of a patriot and churches but also factories, mines, railways which are the people"<sup>28</sup>. Thus, according to Chałasiński, being involved in self-reflection and spiritual speculations, the "bearers of Polish culture" were "Europeans without Europe" and "Poles without any responsibility for the social fate of Poland"<sup>29</sup>.

#### THE "GENEALOGY OF THE INTELLIGENTSIA" UNDER DEBATE

This radical criticism against the Polish cultural tradition provoked an intensive debate in the pages of the cultural journals. In such a way, the philologist and literary critic Karol Wiktor Zawodziński published a long and sophisticated article examining Chałasiński's paper. From Zawodziński's perspective, there is one particular point in Chałasiński's argument that leads to his mistake. This point concerns the "myth" that the intelligentsia had originated from the nobility and that this origin determined its ethos as a social stratum. Writing so, Zawodziński argued the reason for this fallacy was the "the lack of source-based research" on this topic.<sup>30</sup> Zawodziński started with an examina-

<sup>25</sup> The Trilogy (Trylogia) was a series of three novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz (With Fire and Sword [1884], The Deluge [1886], Fire in the Steppe [1888]), which became the popular and influential narrative of Polish national idea.

<sup>26</sup> In this case, Chałasiński refers to the 'mentality of the intelligentsia' described in the book *Ludzie bezdomni* Stefan Żeromski, but not to a political project initiated by Józef Piłsudski.

<sup>27</sup> "Obrona ta nosila piętno społecznej patologii i sięgała głęboko w psycho-socjologię niewoli polskiej". (J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska...*, p. 2.)

<sup>28</sup> J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska...*, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii inteligencji polskiej*, „Kuznica” 12 (30), 1946, p. 3.

tion of “The Golden Age” of Polish literature, namely the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the “epoch of Jan Kochanowski”. Having analysed the biography of Kochanowski, one of the most significant Polish Renaissance poets, Zawodziński remarked upon the fact that his protagonist formally belonged to the nobility. Nevertheless, his education, travelling experience, and service at the king’s court did not permit him to be regarded in line with the land-owning aristocracy. The social milieu in which Kochanowski lived had nothing to do with the nobility’s domination Chałasiński was talking about. Developing his idea, Zawodziński argued that the nobility as a social stratum was not able to determine the intellectual activity of the educated people living in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The author stressed that everything said about Kochanowski could characterise all writers of “The Golden Age”, including Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski, Łukasz Górnicki, Sebastian Fabian Klonowic, Szymon Szymonowic, Piotr Skarga, and Fabian Birkowski. Arguing so, the philologist classified such intellectuals as the “*working intelligentsia (inteligencja pracująca)*” while concluding that this *social type* of intellectuals “as a living milieu, as a stratum, were independent from the land-owning nobility”.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note that Zawodziński, when analysing this issue in his essay, referred to the research and *fiction* of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, one of the most prolific writers, ethnologists, and literary critics of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Zawodziński’s view, the characters of Kraszewski’s stories, representing the people of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, could testify to the non-noble genealogy of the intelligentsia. According to Zawodziński, Kraszewski, “not without reason, makes the son of a peasant (*Sfinks*) or of a bourgeois (*Król i Bondarywna*) a representative of national painting in the epoch of Stanisław (Stanisław August Poniatowski — A.L.), and shows the unbelievable career of a scribbler who had risen from lower social strata to the nobility in the same epoch (*Kawał literata*)”.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Zawodziński understood the army as another source for “recruiting the intelligents (*rekrutacja inteligenta*)”. This remark helps to clarify, to some extent, that Zawodziński’s idea of the intelligentsia implies “not only physicians, teachers and bureaucrats, but also military officers.” The former legionary, Zawodziński, regarded officers to be the most important group within the intelligentsia, especially after the “Great Sejm Reforms” (Reformy Sejmu Wielkiego, 1788–1792) transformed the military system of the Polish state. Zawodziński argued: “One can be a pacifist and an

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> Nie bez racji czyni reprezentantem malarstwa rodzimego w epoce Stanisławowskiej syna chłopskiego (*Sfinks*), lub mieszczańskiego (*Król i Bondarywna*), oraz przedstawia niewiarogodną karierę grafomana, wznoszącego się w tej epoce z dołów społecznych aż do arystokracji (*Kawał literata*) (K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 3).

anti-militarist, but it is not possible to deny the fact that a professional officer is an *intelligent* earning money thanks to his *special education* (emphasis mine — A.L.)”<sup>33</sup>

Having clarified his idea of the intelligentsia, Zawodziński returned to Chałasiński's statement that the intelligentsia was a product of the nobility's "economic, social and political degradation." Referring to the given examples, the author emphasised that the independent intelligentsia existed a very long time before any evidence of the "nobility's degradation." Moreover, according to Zawodziński, becoming an "*intelligent*" was an increase in the social status of an individual, not a demotion. Therefore, he did not see a reason for speaking of a degradation of the nobility because of the intelligentsia's rise, when remarking upon "the inconsistency of using the term 'degradation' when describing the process of reinforcement of the intelligentsia with new elements".<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the rise of the "rural intelligentsia (*inteligencja wiejska*)" in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was also, in Zawodziński's view, a strong argument against Chałasiński's approach.

However, Zawodziński still argued there was an opposition between the culture of the nobility and the culture of the "rural intelligentsia". Contradicting to some extent his own previous arguments, Zawodziński wrote: "At the time, there were two strata of the intelligentsia, which existed, to some extent, independent from each other in their customs, and were different even in their language: the old one which possessed aristocratic pretensions when using the language based on the literature and continued the nobility's tradition; and the young one which rarely was the subject of research and the topic of novels of manners (excepting the works of Zegadłowicz<sup>35</sup>), and which shaped the soldier mass of the Polish Legions".<sup>36</sup> In such a way, Zawodziński returned to the distinction proposed by

<sup>33</sup> "Można być pacyfistą i antymilitarystą, a jednak nie sposób zaprzeczać, że oficer zawodowy jest inteligentem zarobkującym dzięki specjalnemu wykształceniu." (K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 3).

<sup>34</sup> "... niestosowność określenia 'degradacja' dla ujęcia procesu zasilania inteligencji nowymi elementami" (K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 4) the phrase seems a bit confusing, but Zawodziński attempted to prove that the intelligentsia became a meta-stratum including both the nobility and other social strata.

<sup>35</sup> Emil Zegadłowicz (1888–1941) was a Polish poet and writer; one of the originators of Polish expressionism.

<sup>36</sup> "Istniały tam więc wówczas niezależnie do pewnego stopnia i obyczajem, a nawet językiem odmienne, dwie warstwy inteligencji: starsza, o pretensjach arystokratycznych, o języku codziennym na literackim opartym i obyczajowości kontynuującej tradycje szlacheckie, oraz młodsze, która zbyt rzadko była przedmiotem obserwacji i tematem powieści obyczajowej (wyjątkiem jest np. powieściopisarstwo Zegadłowicza), a która stanowiła masę żołnierską Legionów." (K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 4). The matter concerns the "Polish Legions" of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Chłasiński but made the rural intelligentsia representative of the “rural culture.” Seeking for a solution to this contradiction, the author proposed reconsidering the nobility’s contribution to rural culture. Accepting the literary<sup>37</sup> and historical arguments of the “harsh critics of Sarmatian<sup>38</sup> Poland”, Zawodziński argued that the achievements of the nobility were not analysed at the correct level. This conviction led the author to formulate a task for the social sciences, while again confusing his terminology: “... the issue of the cultural merits of the nobility and its participation in the genesis of the Polish intelligentsia is still a broad research field for our sociologists and historians”.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, nor did Zawodziński stop here. The next essential point of his arguments was intended to situate the Polish intelligentsia within the European context. Again, breaking his internal logic, the author remarked upon the fact that the antagonism between the magnates and the old nobility could be efficiently examined within the European context of the competition between the new aristocracy and the old. Besides them, there was another social type of intelligentsia that was, in Zawodziński’s view, ignored by Chłasiński. The matter concerns the “self-made men,” the engineers who were deeply involved in the economic life of the Polish lands under the partitions. These men were the great capitalists who also were defended by Zawodziński in the face of Chłasiński’s criticism. According to the author, the business people were also concerned about the creation and development of educational, school and other cultural institutions in the Polish territories. All this, the philologist was convinced, could not be ignored when examining the cultural genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia.<sup>40</sup>

Concluding his essays, Zawodziński stressed the fact that any form of national exceptionalism was foreign to him, and he had not been intending to excuse the “sin of nobility” (*grzech szlachectwa*). Moreover, in a very atypical way for the time,<sup>41</sup> Zawodziński wrote about the Polish “national character”:

<sup>37</sup> The author quotes the phrase of Krasieński about the nobility as an example of the nobility’s arrogance: “tylko oni, tylko oni! (they, only they)” (he meant probably the phrase of Krasieński from the “Psalm Miłości”: “Oni tylko — dotąd oni, Z Polską w sercu — z mieczem w dłoni — Dniem i nocą bez pokoju!”) and traditionally mentioned the “Trylogia” of Sienkiewicz in this context.

<sup>38</sup> “Sarmatian Poland” is a reference to the myth about Sarmatian roots of Polish szlachta that distinguished them from the rural people.

<sup>39</sup> K. W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>41</sup> It was more common in the public discourse to criticise “the Polish national character” for “unreasonable heroism” and “excessive romanticism.” This attitude also was characteristic for the author of *Legendy Młodej Polski*, p. Brzozowski, but after the World War II, this opinion (latently referring to the Warsaw uprising) could be found not only in the writings of the people involved in the discourse of the social criticism in the interwar period as Chłasiński

“... I should state that practical worldly reason, even cunning, has got over artistic ability, the propensity to speculative thinking, and metaphysically-religious interests in our national character”.<sup>42</sup> Thus, not without contradictions, Zawodziński attempted to demonstrate that the “cultural tradition” criticised by Chałasiński did not represent the actual culture of the majority of Poles. In such a way, Zawodziński’s essay definitely gave a new perspective for the public debate on the topic.

It should be remarked that most of the scholars participating in the aforementioned discussion avoided using Marxist terminology in their essays. Even if the names of Marx, Engels, and Lenin were mentioned as relevant authors in the debate, the usage of the names did not constitute an argument in and of itself. The next author to whose essay I intend to refer was the communist historian Aleksander Litwin, who attempted to analyse the genealogy of the *intelligentsia* through the prism of Lenin’s idea of Prussian and American paths of capitalism.<sup>43</sup> Joining the criticism against Chałasiński’s attitude, Litwin argued that Poland, “unfortunately”, had chosen Prussian capitalism leading to the “Verjunkerung of the nation, its mentality, and thus its *intelligentsia*”.<sup>44</sup> From Litwin’s perspective, this statement testified to the fact that the Polish case represented not the “outskirts of capitalism” but one of the main paths toward capitalism.

Avoiding the examination of the specific features of Litwin’s interpretation of Lenin, I would just remark upon the author’s conviction that aforementioned path toward capitalism inevitably led to a compromise between the bourgeoisie (*mieszczanstwo*) and the nobility (*szlachta*)<sup>45</sup>. Thus, Litwin argued that Chałasiński’s argument was incorrect because it ignored these “objective” and “universal” processes. Besides this, having quoted Engels’s critical remarks on the German bourgeoisie,<sup>46</sup> Litwin followed Zawodziński in recognising

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(J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej*, “Kuźnica” 20 (38), 1946, p. 4), but also in the public discourse of former nationalists as the group of Bolesław Piasecki. (See: *Ogólne zasady światopoglądowe (deklaracja programowa)*, in: *idem, Kierunki 1945–1960*, Warszawa 1981, pp. 7–10.)

<sup>42</sup> “...muszę stwierdzić przeważającą w naszym charakterze narodowym cechę praktycznego „życiowego” rozumu, bodaj sprytu, ponad uzdolnieniami artystycznymi, skłonnościami do myślenia spekulatywnego i zainteresowaniami metafizyczno-religijnymi.” (K.W. Zawodziński, *W sprawie genealogii...*, p. 5.)

<sup>43</sup> See about the Prussian path: V.I. Lenin, *Agrarnaja programma S.-D. v Pervoj russskoj revoljucii*, in: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij*, Moskva 1973, t. 16, pp. 193–413, here p. 216; and about the American one: *ibidem*, p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> In the original: “‘zjunkeryzowanie’ narodu, jego psychiki, a więc i jego inteligencji.” See: A. Litwin, *O społecznej genealogii polskiej inteligencji*, “Kuźnica” 14. p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> The author used the word “kołtuneria” translating, to all appearances, the word “Spießbürgertum”.

the achievements of the Polish bourgeois in the cultural development of the Polish people. According to this view, the January Uprising (1863–1864) was a crucial moment in the history of the Polish intelligentsia. The social movement against czarism shaped the situation in which “the Polish bourgeoisie and its intelligentsia (*mieszczanstwo polskie i jego inteligencja*)”<sup>47</sup> shifted towards radicalism<sup>48</sup> and broke their ties with the nobility. According to Zawodziński, the bourgeoisie could play a “progressive role”, not only after it joined the national movement of “working people”, but also while collaborating with the magnates. Even though “liberal mimicry” was always a characteristic feature of this class, the common work of the bourgeoisie and the major capitalists, in his view, sometimes bore good fruit. Nevertheless, all this could not excuse, in the author’s eyes, the fact that the separatism of the mentioned classes was based on “nationalistic” and “anti-Russian” patriotism, which led the intelligentsia into “different kinds of obscurantism”.

Meanwhile, Litwin was not too strict about the intelligentsia, recognising that “... the main ... fractions of the intelligentsia started to tend towards progress”.<sup>49</sup> More importantly, Litwin found it impossible to break the continuity of the Polish historical and intellectual tradition as, in his view, Chałasinski had done. Arguing so, Litwin wrote: “... the Polish intelligentsia has grown in the soil of the previous history of the people and of the history of its classes and strata”.<sup>50</sup> According to the author, culture progress in the new Polish state should be reached “... not breaking with the history but just the opposite, *on the basis of the history of the nation, based on its best traditions* (my emphasis — A.L.)”.<sup>51</sup> In Litwin’s view, the bourgeois (*mieszczanski*) period of the intelligentsia’s history was just one of the stages in the “path toward progress”. Thus, the historian concluded that unity with the working people, which came to be possible under the new post-war conditions, was the main task of the intelligentsia in the new Polish state.

The next disputant whose opinion will be examined in this paper published his article in the pages of the Catholic weekly “Tygodnik Powszechny” (The

<sup>47</sup> There is nothing specific in the idea that each class has “its intelligentsia.” The more elaborated theory of this idea of intelligentsia, within the Marxist approach, can be found in the writings of Antonio Gramsci (see, for example: Ch. K u r z m a n, L. O w e n s, *The Sociology of Intellectuals*, “Annual Review of Sociology” 28, 2002, p. 64).

<sup>48</sup> Obviously, for the author, the word “radicalism” had a strong positive connotation.

<sup>49</sup> “... podstawowe [...] odłamy inteligencji coraz bardziej zaczęły się chylić w stronę obozu postępu” (A. L i t w i n, *O społecznej genealogii...*, p. 3).

<sup>50</sup> “... Inteligencja polska wyrosła na glebie dotychczasowej historii narodu i dziejów poszczególnych jego klas i warstw” (A. L i t w i n, *O społecznej genealogii...*, p. 3).

<sup>51</sup> “nie przez zerwanie z przeszłością, ale wprost przeciwnie — *na bazie dotychczasowej historii narodu w oparciu o najlepsze jego tradycji* (my emphasis — A.L.)” (A. L i t w i n, *O społecznej genealogii...*, p. 3).

Catholic Weekly). The fact that this essay was regarded by intellectuals publishing in the left-wing press as a worthwhile voice in the debate is just one more illustration of the personal and professional interactions between scholars associated with the different ideological “camps” following the war.<sup>52</sup> The historian and participant in the Warsaw Uprising, Stefan Kieniewicz, was the first to propose the clarification of the key concept of the discussion. Kieniewicz defined the intelligentsia in the following way: “1) the functionaries of the public services (officials, teachers and clergymen); 2) the technicians working in agriculture, industry, trade, communication, banking etc.; 3) the so-called liberal professions — meaning medicine, the legal profession, the press, science, art”.<sup>53</sup>

Kieniewicz also argued that there was no intelligentsia except for the clergy before the centralised state system had been created in Poland. Arguing so, the historian emphasised the fact that influential figures of the Polish Enlightenment, such as Ignacy Krasicki, Stanisław Staszic, Hugo Kołłątaj, and Franciszek Bohomolec all wore a soutane and took up significant positions in the Church hierarchy.<sup>54</sup> Developing this argument, Kieniewicz echoed Zawodziński in stressing the role of the army in the formation of the intelligentsia. It was the newly created officer corps, founded by Stanisław August, that became, according to this view, the bearer of the Polish national identity when the officers understood themselves to embody Poland (“jeszcze polska nie zginęła póki my żyjemy”). Meanwhile, it was the creation of Congress Poland (*Królestwo Polskie, Kongresówka*) in 1815 that principally changed, in the author’s view, the situation in this area. The historian argued that the new period in Polish history was characterised by constructing the great bureaucratic apparatus that

<sup>52</sup> Another opinion published in the Catholic press was the essay of the publicist Stefan Kisielewski (S. Kisielewski, *Inteligencja*, “Tygodnik Warszawski” 20, 1946). Nevertheless, his speech will not be especially examined in this article because his essay had less “scientific” pretention. Meanwhile, the participation of a publicist in the scholarly debate also is a noteworthy feature of this discussion. The references to the Catholic press can be also found in the book of Chałasiński (J. Chałasiński, *Społeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej*, Warszawa 1946), as well as in the sociological and historical periodic as *Przegląd Socjologiczny* (see, for example, the issues of *Przegląd Socjologiczny* for 1946 and 1947).

<sup>53</sup> “1) Funkcjonariuszy służby publicznej (urzędników, nauczycieli, duchowieństwo); 2) techników zatrudnionych w rolnictwie, przemyśle, handlu, komunikacji, bankowości itd.; 3) t. zw. wolne zawody — a więc medycyna, palestra, prasa, nauka, sztuka.” (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 15 (56), 1946, p. 1). Obviously, this approach was not Kieniewicz’s invention but represented the historiographical vision of the issue. See, the review of the Polish interwar historiography on this issue: *Inteligencja polska pod zaborami*, Warszawa 1978, p. 3–8.

<sup>54</sup> See about Kieniewicz’s approach to the history of the Church: M. Wolniewicz, *W stronę origines de la Pologne contemporaine – poszukiwania metodologiczne Stefana Kieniewicza w latach 1946–1948*, in: KLIO POLSKA, *Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Historiografii i Polskiej*, t. 9, 2017, p. 87–88.

needed to recruit educated people. This institutional approach led the author to assert that the educated people working for government institutions were potentially loyal to each regime established in the Polish territories<sup>55</sup>.

The development of industry became, from Kieniewicz's perspective, a reason for both the increase in the number of educated foreigners and for the increase in the educational standard of the Polish intellectuals. The newly established Warsaw University (1816) became a great and influential centre for the formation of the Polish intelligentsia, breaking the nobility's monopoly on education. At the same time, Kieniewicz formulated a very important argument concerning the concept of the intelligentsia: "We can find among the intelligentsia of the time the classics and romantics, progressives and obscurants, royalists and conspirators. *A social stratum is neither a political camp nor an ideological one* (emphasis mine — A.L)".<sup>56</sup> This statement seems to be an endorsement of the impossibility of examining the intelligentsia as an entity possessing a unified ideology. The historian also stressed the fact that the differences in the social and political conditions of the empires which owned the Polish territories inevitably influenced the different strategies undertaken by the intelligentsia: "... in each of the partitioned regions the development went in a different way. In the Kingdom [Russian Poland], the intelligentsia lost the government offices but gained a profitable field of work [in industry, building etc.] ...[and] were ready to collaborate with Russia... In Galicia, the intelligentsia kept the administration of the region ... the scholarly life flourished around the universities... at last, in Prussia, the intelligentsia was in the forefront of the struggle against the Germanisation..."<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, Kieniewicz argued that there was something in common between all groups of the Polish intelligentsia, namely "a sense of superiority to other social strata: to the rural people that did not reach the idea of Polishness and to the nobility that was not able to protect the people".<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Kieniewicz did not avoid making a judgement regarding the "ideology of the intelligentsia". Having analysed the statistical data, the historian launched

<sup>55</sup> S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> "Znajdziemy wśród inteligencji ówczesnej klasyków i romantyków, postępowców i obskurantów, rojalistów i konspiratorów. Warstwa społeczna nie jest bynajmniej obozem politycznym ani ideowym" (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1).

<sup>57</sup> "...w każdym zaborze rozwój ten idzie innymi drogami. W Królestwie inteligencja traci posady rządowe, zdobywa siebie zato dochodowe pole pracy ... jest... gotową do współpracy z Rosją... W Galicji obejmuje inteligencja administrację kraju... dokoła uniwersytetów rozkwita bujnie życie naukowe ... Wreszcie w zaborze pruskim stoi inteligencja w pierwszym szeregu walki z niemieczyzną" (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1).

<sup>58</sup> „poczucie własnej wyższości nad innymi warstwami społecznymi: nad ludem, który do polskości nie dorósł, i nad szlachtą, która nie umiała jej bronić" (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1).

a polemic against Chałasiński, showing that the intelligentsia about which Chałasiński spoke did not have so much to do with the nobility and “its ideology”. Kieniewicz argued: “the ideology of the intelligentsia was coined in the struggle against the primacy of the nobility. The intelligentsia wrote on its flags the mottos of equality, loyalty to the people and working for them”.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the historian drew up an idealised picture of an “*intelligent*” when writing: “the average *intelligent* formed his worldview, at least in theory, on the principles coined for him by Prus, Żeromski and Konopnicka”.<sup>60</sup>

#### RESPONDING TO THE CRITICISM: THE “SCIENTIFIC VIEW” OF THE INTELLIGENTIA

It is particularly noteworthy that Józef Chałasiński later published a lengthy article answering his opponent’s criticisms. This response demonstrates in a very characteristic way the difference between the categories of scientific research the different participants of the debate had been referring to. Chałasiński starts by quoting the well-known interwar Polish sociologist Stefan Czarnowski<sup>61</sup> commenting on a methodological book by the historian Marcei Handelsman<sup>62</sup>: “a historian is capable of recognising the facts of the general process as far as he can classify them as the changes of types... he should know the norm ... so, it is a necessary condition for him to carry out his tasks that he should be a sociologist”.<sup>63</sup> The ignorance of the sociological approach was, according to Chałasiński, the main reason for his opponent’s mistakes. He wrote: “History of Culture that is based just on individual facts but not on a sociological typology does not have a scientific basis for the systematisation of facts”.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> “Ideologia inteligencji kształtowała się właśnie w walce z przyrądem szlacheckim, wypisywała na swoich sztandarach hasła równości stanów, poświęcenia i pracy dla ludu.” (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 2).

<sup>60</sup> “... przeciętny inteligent budował — w teorii przynajmniej — swój światopogląd na zasadach wpajanych mu przez Prusa, Żeromskiego i Konopnicką.” (S. Kieniewicz, *Rodowód inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 2).

<sup>61</sup> Stefan Czarnowski (1879–1937) was a Polish sociologist and art historian. Many of Polish sociologists and historians such as Stanisław Arnold, Nina Assorodobraj-Kula, Henryk Jabłoński, and Irena Nowakowska were his pupils.

<sup>62</sup> M. Handelsman, *Historyka. Zasady metodologii i teorii poznania historycznego*, Warszawa 1928.

<sup>63</sup> Chałasiński referred to the book: P. Czarnowski, *Spoleczeństwo — Kultura*, Warszawa — Poznań 1939, p. 26–29. (“Historyk zdolny jest rozpoznać fakty poszczególnego przebiegu o ile można skwalifikować je jako odmiany typów ... Musi znać nomę ... Słowem warunkiem spełnienia zadania jest, że winien on być socjologiem.”)

<sup>64</sup> “Historia kultury operująca tylko jednostkowymi faktami, nie oparta o socjologiczną typologię nie ma naukowej podstawy do systematycznego podporządkowania faktów.” J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1.

For this reason, Chałasiński remarked upon the sociological inconsistency of the many points of Zawodziński's criticism. The sociologist argued: "... interpretation of the 'intelligentsia' of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a synonym for the intelligentsia of the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century leads to conceptual 'anarchy'," while arguing that "the interpretation of Jan Kochanowski as an *intelligent* is situated at the same level of sociological correctness as the interpretation of a lord's peasant as a synonym for a modern hired agricultural worker".<sup>65</sup> Chałasiński asserted that Kieniewicz's understanding of the intelligentsia is much closer to his own, since, in this version, the intelligentsia "is not eternal, neither in the time of the Piasts [9<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century — A.L.], nor in the time of the Jagiellons [14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> century — A.L.]" Chałasiński would agree with the statement that the intelligentsia emerged as "an independent social stratum" in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century if he was not interested in another aspect of this issue, namely in the "social type of an *intelligent* and the genesis of this type". Regarding military officers, in Chałasiński's view, Zawodziński did not understand that he spoke in fact of the *social type* of a military officer but not of an *intelligent* and thus confused sociological typology.

The necessity of sociological abstraction became the crucial point in Chałasiński's response to the criticism. The sociologist argued that "the belief in the exactness of individual facts in historical knowledge is a legend originating in methodological ignorance".<sup>66</sup> According to this view, the examination of "historical reality" requires creating "sociological constructions", otherwise these constructions would be adopted unconsciously and lead to misconceptions. Criticising Kieniewicz's factographical approach, Chałasiński asserted that no "exact fact" can explain "where its [intelligentsia's] sense of superiority, or the conviction that they represent the whole nation, or the myth about its noble origin come from".<sup>67</sup> The sociologist was convinced that the intelligentsia can be *scientifically researched* only as a "social institution" at the abstract sociological level. Arguing so, he wrote: "scientific knowledge of the social entity of the intelligentsia through the description of individuals is as impos-

<sup>65</sup> "...traktowanie „inteligencji” XVI w. jako synonimu inteligencji XIX czy XX wieku prowadzi do pojęciowej „anarchii”. Traktowanie Jana Kochanowskiego jako inteligenta znajduje się na tym samym poziomie socjologicznej poprawności, jakim byłoby traktowanie pańszczyźnianego chłopca jako synonimu współczesnego najemnego robotnika rolnego” (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 1).

<sup>66</sup> "Przekonanie o ścisłości faktów jednostkowych w poznaniu historycznym jest legendą zrodzoną z metodologicznej nieświadomości" (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 2).

<sup>67</sup> "skąd się wzięło jej poczucie wyższości lub przeświadczenie o reprezentowaniu całego narodu, lub mit szlacheckiego pochodzenia" (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 2).

sible as scientific knowledge of the socio-economic entity of a bank through being familiar with the individuals associated with the bank".<sup>68</sup>

More importantly, for Chałasiński, the intelligentsia was a contemporary social reality with its own history, but not something that had yet ceased to exist, since "it has the bitter smell of life".<sup>69</sup> Additionally, Chałasiński argued that the nobility's culture was not a "museum exhibit" that had no social influence among the Polish intelligentsia in the new reality. For this reason, Chałasiński insisted on the opinion that the intelligentsia continued to be a bearer of the "noble mentality". Moreover, in Chałasiński's view, his opponents had themselves broken the continuity when speaking of the "complete independence" of the intelligentsia from the nobility: "Had the *continuity* between the intelligentsia as a leading stratum of the people and the nobility been completely broken, we would not be a historical people, we would not be a people at all, because *the people exists only through its historical continuity*. This fact cannot be ignored by the *scientific analysis* (emphasis mine — A.L.)".<sup>70</sup>

It was important for the sociologist to question Litwin's argument that the intelligentsia acted as an analogue of the western bourgeoisie. For Chałasiński, the intelligentsia was a specific feature of the *Polish people and its history*. Arguing so, he wrote: "This is the heart of the matter that, in Poland, their nobility as a dominating stratum was replaced not by the bourgeoisie as it was in the West but by the intelligentsia — the social stratum derived from the nobility but not from the bourgeoisie".<sup>71</sup> In such a way, Chałasiński criticised how the "uncritical transfer of the generalisations of Western European history to Poland does not meet the Polish realities".<sup>72</sup> Concluding his essays, the sociologist stressed his conviction that the actual task in researching the genealogy of the intelligentsia is to understand "the essence and dimensions

<sup>68</sup> "Naukowe poznanie społecznej istoty inteligencji na drodze opisu poszczególnych jednostek, jest tak samo niemożliwe, jak naukowe poznanie społeczno-ekonomicznej istoty banku na podstawie znajomości jednostek związanych z bankiem." (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3).

<sup>69</sup> J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> "gdyby istotnie między inteligencją przodującą warstwą narodu a szlachtą została zerwana całkowicie ciągłość, nie byłibyśmy historycznym narodem, nie byłibyśmy w ogóle narodem, gdyż naród istnieje tylko przez swoją historyczną ciągłość. Tego faktu nie może przeoczyć naukowa analiza." (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3).

<sup>71</sup> "istota problemu polega na tym, że w Polsce miejsce szlachty jako warstwy dominującej i reprezentującej całość narodu zajęło nie mieszczaństwo jak na zachodzie, lecz właśnie inteligencja — warstwa pochodna szlachty a nie mieszczaństwa." (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3).

<sup>72</sup> "[Tymczasem teza ta (Litwin's argument about the western way of Poland — A.L.), wynikająca z] bezkrytycznego przeniesienia uogólnień historii zachodnio europejskiej na Polskę, nie odpowiada stosunkom polskim" (J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3).

of the historical process that is now underway”. Moreover, the intelligentsia, according to Chałasiński, “has a huge task in playing a new historical role” in the new reality, namely “being an intellectual elite of the peasants’ and working people” but not the “separate aristocratic social strata.”<sup>73</sup>

#### THE LITERARY AND PUBLICISTS ROOTS OF THE “SCIENTIFIC” DISCUSSION

An in-depth examination of the intellectual sources which influenced the arguments of the disputants would require a long excursion into the history of Polish sociology, historiography and literal studies. Nevertheless, taking into account the possible volume of this article, I would like to concentrate on the content of this dispute while referring to the external sources only occasionally to clarify my arguments. I am far from believing that this or that participant in this public discussion represented a whole scientific discipline, since sociology, historiography and philology are too complex as entities to be embodied in any one person.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, the interdisciplinary public debate examined in this article could testify to different approaches to understanding the very subject of the discussion. In addition, the fact that the ideas coined in this debate became later a significant fact of historiography and social sciences<sup>75</sup> illustrates its importance for a broader academic context of post-war Poland. The most essential questions that, I assume, should be asked when analysing this debate are: What kind of message did Chałasiński’s opponents read into his speech? What did different criticisms of his speech have in common? And, no less significant, what was ignored by all the critics?

It is obvious that Chałasiński coined his arguments from the presentist perspective. His speech was not just an analysis of a phenomenon taking place in the past but referred to the current “tasks” of the “Polish people”. The intention

<sup>73</sup> J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> So, for example, the historian Olgierd Górka regarded Chałasiński’s programme as an interesting perspective for historiography: O. Górka, *O nowe momenty dla genealogii polskiej inteligencji*, “Kuznica” 30, 1946, p. 8; while the sociologist and philosopher Maria Ossowska proposed a bit different sociological approach to the issue: M. Ossowska, *Inteligent polski na tle grupy towarzyskiej Europy Zachodniej*, “Myśl Współczesna” 5, 1947.

<sup>75</sup> It is remarkable that this discussion, including the opinions of publicists and the articles published in the exile were included in “historiography of the issue”. In addition to the research mentioned in the beginning of the article, I would refer to the book of Janina Leskiewiczowa who reviewed the whole publicist discussion in her monography on the intelligentsia of Warsaw: J. Leskiewiczowa, *Warszawa i jej inteligencja po powstaniu styczniowym 1864–1870*, Warszawa 1961, p. 13–32.

to resolve actually existing “social deviations”<sup>76</sup> was the starting point of his research programme.<sup>77</sup> The idea that the intelligentsia represented the “amateurish” but not “professional” culture is just one of the statements that testifies to his readiness to judge the “institution of intelligentsia” for its “incorrect” ideological attitude in the past. Chałasiński’s writing also demonstrates his view of the historical process as fixed with regard to social strata: answering the criticism concerning the continuity between the nobility and the intelligentsia, the sociologist made clear that degradation of one “leading stratum” necessarily leads to the adoption of a “leading role” by another “stratum.” The “leading role,” in this case, is nothing but a “sense of superiority” without any economic or even political capacities.

It is notable that all Chałasiński’s critics understood his paper as an attempt to question the whole Polish cultural tradition. Regardless of the discipline the disputants represented, they understood the message of the sociologist from the perspective of the Polish national tradition *they all belonged to*. At the same time, the language, categories, and conventions to which they referred were manifestly different. Zawodziński based some of his arguments on fiction testifying to the rural roots and people-oriented attitude of the Polish intelligentsia. Additionally, the intelligentsia for him manifested itself not so much as a social stratum, but as the bearers of Polish culture in a much broader sense. That is why, for him, there is no considerable difference between the Renaissance poet Kochanowski and a Polish writer or artist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kieniewicz’s speech, as clichéd as it may sound, is much more historical in terms of a “*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*” (the way it really was) approach. In my view, it is very telling that his educational and scholarly background led Kieniewicz to the necessity of clarifying the key concept of his examination. In addition, the historian was looking for “a truly existing” institution such as, in this case, *imperial bureaucracy*, to examine, and base his argument on. It is no less noteworthy that the highly cautious attempt of Litwin to refer to the “international” and “universal” reading of Marxism-Leninism (even in a highly specialised way) was not supported by the other disputants.<sup>78</sup> All other voices (and at times Litwin himself) portrayed a very holistic vision of the “people and its history”.

Another essential remark concerns the understanding of the essence of the “scientific character” of the debate around the issue. Chałasiński’s responses to

<sup>76</sup> He criticised Zawodziński for using an “unscientific word” as “sin” (“sin of nobility”) (see: J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3), but meant, in fact, something like that.

<sup>77</sup> Obviously, the engagement of Chałasiński in directing the cultural politics after the war made his theory to be intended for practical implementation.

<sup>78</sup> It is clear that the weakness of this kind of reading Marx can be proven on the basis of plenty of other sources of this period of time.

the criticisms did not imply that his opponents had another perspective of the same issue or were simply examining the question through the prism of another discipline's paradigm. According to his view, the disputants did not understand the abstract level of the sociological approach which was the only way to make the debate "scientific". Both Chałasiński and Zawodziński gave tasks for "our historians and sociologists" who were to complete this or that part of the common undertaking. It was not extraordinary for scholars of the time to see science (*nauka*) as an integral entity, while understanding individual disciplines as consisting of research groups, working on different parts of the same field. Additionally, the post-war pathos of "scientific service" of the people's aims made this idea more tangible.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that the obvious (from today's perspective) differences in approach when discussing the same issue was neither noticed nor thematised by the disputants.

I intentionally did not mention, until now, the problematic character of the key concept of the discussion. It is especially remarkable that no disputant thematised the obviously normative character of the issue that was broached by Chałasiński. Even Kieniewicz, whose historical perspective led him to mentioning the non-coherent character of the "stratum" of "educated people", did not avoid speaking of the "ideology of intelligentsia". There are no sources to prove the alleged "sense of superiority" or "self-perception as representatives of the whole nation",<sup>80</sup> of the intelligentsia, either as a "social entity", or as the totality of "educated people"; but this point was not part of the criticisms directed against Chałasiński. His opponents started to defend the intelligentsia, which, according to them, had "another ideology" in opposition to that of the nobility. It is very important that the only source that was used to find out the "ideal type" of *intelligent*, and to examine their "ideology", was *literature*, which can be defined as the totality of the texts written by "educated people". This fact encouraged a closed circle of literary stereotypes, which started to become axiomatic in the "scientific" discourse.

There is no place in this article to develop the idea of the intelligentsia as a topos of public discussions since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, considerable research exists that can testify to the fact that the intelligentsia as a *normative issue* was coined in the *public debates* among "*intelligents*" in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, *in the pages of the cultural jour-*

<sup>79</sup> Obviously, this idea was not absent in the discourse of the inter-war public debates between scholars, too.

<sup>80</sup> The usage of this terminology, see, for example: J. Chałasiński, *Socjologia i historia inteligencji polskiej...*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example: M. Zahorska, *Spór o inteligencję w polskiej myśli społecznej...*, pp. 188–190; about the Russian case, see: D.A. Sdvizhkov, *Ot obshchestva k intelligencii: istorija ponjatij kak istorija samosoznaniya*, in: *Ponjatija o Rossii*, vol. 1, Moskva 2012,

nals, the intellectuals blamed the intelligentsia for its carelessness and disregard towards the rural and common people.<sup>82</sup> In such a way, this issue became an act of *self-criticism* among the “educated-people” who promoted responsibility for the “people’s fate”.<sup>83</sup> In other words, it was *an emotion* made objective in the texts written by the intellectuals taking the part in the public discussion on this issue. The intelligentsia as a *literary reality* became a factor in the formation and development of an “ideal image” of “inteligent” and subscribed him “vices and virtues”. It is important to emphasise that the discussion examined in this article was, among other things, the debate between scholars educated *within this (widely understood) literary tradition* of responsibility for “national issues”. The public dispute in the cultural journals was not just a way to earn some money, but, more importantly, represented a familiar form of “public service” for intellectuals. In such a way, we can trace the “travelling” of the concept<sup>84</sup> (in this case, “the intelligentsia”) from the publicist and literary area to the social sciences and back, to the “scientific” public debates in the cultural journals targeting “educated people”.<sup>85</sup> Thus, the concept “returns” from the *academic circles* having gained “scientific” status *without losing its clearly normative connotations*. Obviously, the “travelling” and the “return” are just metaphors that should not give the impression that concepts are independent

pp. 382–427; N. Knight, *Was the Intelligentsia Part of the Nation? Visions of Society in Post-Emancipation Russia*, “Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History” 7, 4, Fall 2006 (New Series), pp. 733–758.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example: *Niemoc inteligencji*, “Niwa,” 1874, nr 37; the writings of A. Świętochowski as *Wywóz naszej inteligencji*, “Przegląd Tygodniowy” 34, 1874; In the interwar period, a similar debate was initiated by the publicist and poet Zdzisław Dębicki in his book “Kryzys inteligencji polskiej” (Z. Dębicki, *Kryzys inteligencji polskiej*, Warszawa 1918). See, also the case of Russian empire: the term *Otshchepenstvo* was used defining the intelligentsia by Peter Struve, see the famous discussion in the journal “Vekhi”: [http://www.lib.ru/POLITOLOG/XX/wehi.txt\\_with-big-pictures.html](http://www.lib.ru/POLITOLOG/XX/wehi.txt_with-big-pictures.html). Date of access: 23.03.2019.

<sup>83</sup> In his article, Lewandowski remarks upon the fact that the arguments of Chałasiński had been based on the tradition of social criticism in terms of Brzozowski’s writings (C. Lewandowski, *Dyskusja prasowa...*, *op. cit.*, p. 100–101.), I mean, in this case, the publicist and literary tradition of “responsibility” in much broader sense than a given ideological attitude.

<sup>84</sup> See about the “Travelling Concepts”: *Travelling Concepts for the Study of Culture*, ed. B. Neumann, A. Nünning, M. Horn, Berlin 2012. See also about the metaphor of “Nomadic concepts” concerning the adoption of concepts from the Natural sciences in the public and political discourse, see: J. Surman, P. Haslinger, K. Straner, *Concepts in Focus: Nomadic Concepts*, “Contributions to the History of Concepts” 9, 2, 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Chałasiński himself argued that the Polish sociology originated in the Polish critical publicist tradition, though wrote that sociology, after it had become an academic discipline, lost this publicist feature, see: Józef Chałasiński, *Trzydzieści lat socjologii Polskiej 1918–1947*, “Przegląd Socjologiczny” 1948, pp. 2–3, 16; See also: W. Lepenies, *Between literature and science: The rise of sociology*, New York 1988.

from people. The “scientific” status of the discussion on the issue was determined by the academic status of the disputants.

## CONCLUSION

The publicist and literary genealogy of the normative understanding of the intelligentsia, as well as the connection of this concept to the idea of the service of the people, shaped, in my view, a particular temporality for the debate examined in this publication. After the war, this public dispute was expected to become a new stage in the discussion which originated in Polish history and was intended for the “educated Polish people”. The institution of the cultural journals attracted intellectuals representing different fields of knowledge, and the participation in this discussion was, among other things, an act of inscribing the new reality into the course of Polish publicist and literary traditions, in terms of stereotypes shaping the “intellectual agenda” of the public discourse. The example examined in this article could demonstrate the way in which a concept coined by publicist and literary stereotypes became a commonplace in the “scientific” debate of scholars representing very different approaches to the debated issue. I assume that the literary and publicist tradition of the public debates could form a productive approach to analysing the history of the social sciences and humanities.

## Summary

This paper addresses the public discussions among Polish scholars and social scientists which took place following the Second World War. The debate on the sociological and historical genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia started with the publication, in the cultural journal “Kuznica”, of a lecture given by the sociologist Józef Chałasiński. In his speech, Chałasiński made the intelligentsia’s “sense of superiority” and its “self-perception as representatives of the whole nation” a sociological issue requiring “scientific research”. Through examining the critical voices against Chałasiński’s attitude, this paper shows that the normativity of the question broached by the sociologist was not the focal point in the discourse of his critics. The paper remarks upon the fact that the question of the intelligentsia started to be a normative issue in the public debates of the late 19th century when becoming an act of “self-criticism” of “educated people”. The post-war debate examined in this paper can testify to the “return” of the issue of the intelligentsia to public discourse. In this new context, it enjoyed a “scientific” status without losing its normative entity. This paper emphasises that many of the arguments the disputants referred to are rooted in the historical literary and publicist discourse. In such a way, the literary and publicist stereotypes came to be a research question for the Social Sciences and Humanities. In the conclusion of this paper, it is stressed that it is important to examine the influence of the literary and publicist tradition on the development of these fields of knowledge.

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