

TOWARDS A HISTORY OF ANARCHISM IN POLAND

THIS ARTICLE is intended to supplement Nagorski's History of the Anarchist Movement in Poland (published in Cienfuegos Press Review no. 2 1977) which covers the period 1905-1915, a period of intense anarchist activity. Together they remain incomplete, and before a full history of Polish anarchism is unearthed much more research needs to be undertaken. Please note that I have not really mentioned Jan Machajski, who is probably the most famous Polish anarchist, as Max Nomad's article and Paul Avrich's essay cover his work in more detail than I can here.

Anarchism in Poland grew out of the revolutionary fervour of the early and mid-nineteenth century struggle for national liberation, and as usual Bakunin was at hand (his coach fares must have been fantastic!) Poland was at this time divided between three oppressive powers: Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary, and a strong liberation movement sprang up in each sector. Warsaw, the capital, which was in the Russian sector, became the centre for a series of conspiracies intended to lead to insurrection. The conspirators were part of the National Central Committee (CNC) which was divided into two camps, the "whites" and the "reds" (- the latter working for social justice and not solely national independence). Many of the "reds" established contact with Russian revolutionaries, especially within the Russian troops garrisoned in Poland, and at the military academies within Russia. Walery Wroblewski, Jaroslaw Dombrowski and Zygmunt Padlewski made contact with Bakunin, seeking assistance from Zewla y wola for an uprising planned for 1863.

Although the uprising took place, it failed for three reasons: Zewla y wola did not have the resources or ability to help to extent that was necessary (although Bakunin did try to raise a brigade of volunteers in Finland to support the rising); the "white" faction took control of the CNC preventing any effective establishment of links between the predominantly military CNC and the artisans and workers of the large towns; and thirdly, although links had been established with the Russian revolutionaries, the Poles felt unwilling to wait for the outbreak of the social revolution in Russia before they made their move.

Dombrowski was arrested after the rising, but while being transported to Siberia escaped from a transit prison in Moscow, with the help of some Russians, before fleeing to Paris via

St. Petersburg. He was killed on the barricades of the Paris Commune.

Walery Wroblewski, another Communeard, survived, and like Dombrowski, was a member of the First International. Despite his early association with Bakunin he sided with Marx during the break-up of the International (to which he was at one time secretary). It is a little confusing, as both Wroblewski and Dombrowski are fairly common Polish names - there was an active anarchist in Cracow during the same period, and Dombrowski is often muddled, with (1) another J. Dombrowski, a general of a slightly older generation, (2) another J. Dombrowski, active within the Polish Communist Party, (3) Teofil Dombrowski, who also took part in the 1863 uprising, fought in the Paris Commune, escaped, coming to London in 1872. He took an active role in the First International, and was co-editor of a paper called Pravda until he mysteriously (?) disappeared in 1878.

Zygmunt Padlewski (son of Wladyslaw Padlewski; a leader of the 1830-31 Polish uprising) worked hardest at the alliance with Zewla y wola, becoming an organiser within the army. In January 1863 he took an active part in fighting around Plocku, but in April he went to Warsaw in an attempt to resolve the friction between "reds" and "whites" within the CNC. On his return to Plocku in May he was arrested by the Russians and shot.



E. J. Abramowski



Z. Padlewski

The first organised anarchist pressure was within the Second Proletariat. In 1884 the Russian authorities arrested many members of the socialist organisation Proletariat; although characterised as anarchists, the group had links with the Russian People's Will and with socialist Lavrov, and was not in fact anarchist, but the forerunner of modern Polish socialism.

At the initiative of anarchists Ludwik Kulczycki, who was in contact with a group called Class Fight and M. Kasprzak, who had broad contacts among the workers, the Second Proletariat was created in 1888. This group was predominantly, although not completely, anarchist, containing among its membership people such as Machajski, Abramowski, Adam Dombrowski, Stanislaw Padlewski. It was active in the organisation of the first May Day demonstrations in Poland in 1890.

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Solzhenitsyn

The very fact that the three chapters belong to different books gives Lenin in Zurich a disjointed form, and conviction is not increased by Solzhenitsyn's clumsy use of phantasmagoria devices to put Lenin in hallucinatory contact with some of his less reputable associates; Dostoevsky did that kind of thing so much more adeptly. Indeed, one is inclined to value the book less for the rough-hewn fiction it presents, or for the almost vindictively disparaging picture of Lenin that is painted, than for its historical insights, which Solzhenitsyn, like Tolstoy, is not in the least afraid to state explicitly.

Solzhenitsyn's attitude towards history appears to differ from Tolstoy's, in that War and Peace presents the great actors in world events as self-deceiving puppets of mass forces, while Solzhenitsyn tends to stress the role of individuals, even if they are often hidden movers, in determining the course of history. Indeed, one of his ways of belittling Lenin is to suggest how important other individuals - such as the historically obscure multiple agent Parvus - became in

determining the Russian revolution, and how much shrewder were their insights, so that in the end one feels that Lenin is the only real puppet in the whole situation, catapulted into power by events and people whom he almost alone does not understand, so immersed is he in the petty intrigues of the revolutionary expatriate's day-to-day existence. One gets no real sense of Lenin's cold ruthlessness which played so great a part in shaping his and Russia's destiny, and one has an uneasy feeling that Solzhenitsyn has little real conception of the psychology of power; an irritable revolutionary pedant of the kind he portrays during most of his narrative could hardly have succeeded in the appalling way that Lenin did.

Perhaps in the larger volumes to which they really belong these chapters will take on more meaning than they do now, arbitrarily picked out of context and joined together. As it is, the best parts of Lenin in Zurich are the two glossaries of names, prepared by the author and the translator respectively, which provide a fascinating gallery of Russian Marxist dissidents in 1914-17, a surprising number of whom vanished in 1936-7 when Stalin purged the Old Bolsheviks.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

Poland

In 1891 Stanislaw Padlewski went to Paris to attempt the assassination of a Russian general, Siliwiestrow. The attempt failed, and Padlewski left France for the USA where he committed suicide in San Antonio on October 28 1891. Stanislaw Padlewski was born near Kiev in December 1857, and became an active member of the workers' movement. At the age of 19 he took part in the fighting in Bosnia; by 1879 he was living in Cracow where he was arrested for his activities and deported over the Austro-Hungarian border. He went to Switzerland and made contact with Polish socialist exiles there. In 1882 the Geneva Socialist Centre sent him to Poznan to assist in its organisational activities, but he was imprisoned by the Prussian authorities until 1886, when he was released only to be imprisoned again - this time by the Russians. Padlewski's assassination attempt led to a split within Second Proletariat when the United Workers group was formed.

In August 1992 another member of the Second Proletariat attempted to assassinate the Russian Governor General of Warsaw, I.W. Hurko; this attempt (by Michael Zielinski, author of an 11-page pamphlet Katechizm rewolucjonisty) also failed.

Members of the Second Proletariat took part in the work of the First International and played an active role in the creation of a genuine socialist movement in Poland, until in 1893 it split into three groups, some members joining socialist (as opposed to anarchist) organisations, some members dropping out altogether, and a residue going on to take part in the formation of the Third Proletariat. This last group included Ludwik Kulczycki, activist founder of Second Proletariat and a psychologist. Kulczycki (often known as Mieczyslaw Mazowieki - most anarchists used more than one name because of the clandestine nature of their activities - S. Padlewski had at least four or five!) studied in Warsaw and Geneva, and first published his revolutionary propaganda in 1886. In 1895 he was imprisoned for his activities and sent to Siberia, but escaped in 1899, when he went to Lvov, where he began publishing his more academic work and founded Third Proletariat. After 1907 he played a less central role although during World War I he was a member of the organisation Activists. After 1920 his ideas moved closer to those of the National Party of Workers, although he remained an anarchist, a strong practical (?) streak led him to cooperate with people of other tendencies.

Between 1918 and 1932 he was a professor in a school for political studies and often lectured in the higher school for journalists in Warsaw. He died in August 1941, his main writings included:

Outline of Sociology (1900)
History of the Socialist Movement in the Russian Sector of Poland (1905)
Russian Revolution (4 vols) (1909-11)
Today's Anarchism (1902)
Rules of Sociology (1923)

Abramowski

EDWARD JOZEF Abramowski, community worker, philosopher, psychologist and creator of the Polish cooperative movement, was born on 17 August 1868 in Stefaninie (Ukraine). While still a youth he made contact with the First Proletariat and became an active member of the Second Proletariat, after returning to Poland from three years (1886-1889) of study in Geneva.

In 1891 he created the short-lived workers' party Unity and published his first writings, from a Marxist viewpoint

He attended a conference in Paris in 1892 and was elected to the Committee of the Society for Polish Socialists in Exile, an organisation which was the forerunner of the Polish Socialist Party. Between 1894 and 1897 his ideas evolved away from Marxism, and picked up influences of French syndicalism, cooperation, and Kropotkin's anarchism.

In 1900 he left Paris and went to Poland again and started his agitation, founding a number of ethical circles, and the beautifully named Commune for the Soul as well as societies for the propagation of cooperativism in 1906. During this period he was advocating a general strike against the government. Abramowski believed that social freedom would be won through an ethical movement - a moral revolution that began within the shell of capitalism and would lead to social revolution. The tools of the revolution were the unions, and the cooperative movement, both voluntary associations for mutual aid.

The last years of his life were devoted to sociological research, and lecturing in psychology in Warsaw (he was creator of the Warsaw Psychology Institute) where he died in 1918. His major works included:

Conspiracy against the Government (1905)
Social Ideas of Cooperation (1907)
What is Art? (1898)

After the Russian Revolution many anarchists went to live in Russia, fighting against the whites, and the Polish movement was further depleted with the growth of syndicalism, which attracted many militants. I know only a little of the history of Polish syndicalism, but that which I will relate here is of interest.

The Polish Syndicalist Movement was known until 1941 as Freedom and People, a clandestine organisation created in 1939 by a core of activists in the ZMP, an organisation formed from the Patriotic Workers' Party (remember that "patriotism" is something different in Poland) and the Institute for Culture and Learning in Galicia.

Its main aim was to fight the Germans and regain independence for Poland, but its programme outlined far-reaching social reforms and was based on worker self-government. The membership was composed predominantly of young workers, students and apprentices who formed themselves into "hundreds of youth." There were also groups of school students known as "poppies." In 1942 and 1944 its membership was increased by alliances with renegade groups from other political organisations. The movement took an active part in the Second World War, although it was opposed to the government in exile, and had its own armed resistance, which went by the initials ZET. ZET carried out at least 35 successful actions, undertaking sabotage acts in the "Third Reich" territories (i.e. those parts of Poland considered integral parts of Germany), and playing a major part in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. It also formed a working alliance with the underground "Country's Army" and "People's Army."

The movement, which ceased to exist in 1945, had several papers, Akcja, Sprawa, Czyu, Sorawa Chtopska and Mysl Mtodych. Prominent activists included Leon Bigosinski, S. Bukowiecki, Stanislaw Kapuscinski, Stefan Kapuscinski, Stefan Szewdowski, J. Szuriv, K. Zakrzewski and Jerzy Ztotowski.

There were, I know, other syndicalist organisations. Stefan Kapuscinski was a member of the Central Committee of the General Federation of Work (syndicalist trade union federation) between 1928 and 1930. Between 1930 and 1939 he was on the Central Committee for Trade Unions (like the TUC) and a member of the Silesian regional parliament, before reverting to syndicalism with the outbreak of World War II, when he became a member of the Central Committee of Polish Syndicalists and a general commandant (?) for action groups. He was arrested by the Nazis and shot on May 29, 1943 in Warsaw.

Zapatista