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(Transversal theme ; 1)



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# Citizenship in Galicia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century. The Tactic Game?

BARBARA KLICH-KLUCZEWSKA, EWELINA SZPAK

*Artykuł jest poświęcony problemowi funkcjonowania idei obywatela i obywatelstwa oraz wyobrażeniom na ten temat wśród polskich elit politycznych i intelektualnych Galicji na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Analizie poddano dyskurs społeczno-polityczny toczący się w momencie znaczących przemian tożsamościowych, które miały miejsce w kraju, będącym jednocześnie częścią Monarchii Habsburskiej i częścią podzielonej sto lat wcześniej Rzeczypospolitej. Autorki interesowało przede wszystkim co rozumieli pod pojęciem obywatela tzw. oświeceni mieszkańcy Galicji. Do jakich tradycji odwoływali się autorzy deklaracji i publicyści? Co oznaczało dla polskich elit politycznych i intelektualnych bycie obywatelem? Jak nabywa się prawo do nazywania się obywatelem? Czy w ogóle można mówić o dyskursie w momencie, gdy naród jest najistotniejszą kwestią? Czy znaczenie tego pojęcia się zmienia? Jak często i w jakim kontekście ten problem się pojawiał?*

*W tym celu poddano analizie teksty publicystyczne czołowych reprezentantów galicyjskiej sceny politycznej przetomu wieków, wśród których wyróżnić można trzy główne nurty w podejściu do problemu obywatelstwa: nurt konserwatywny, odwołujący się do polskich korzeni obywatelstwa, liberalny- pielęgnujący obywatelstwo jako zdobycz rewolucji francuskiej oraz nurt obecny wśród ludowców, pojmujących „obywatelskość” przede wszystkim w kategoriach społeczno – politycznej aktywności.*

Karl Stürghk, the Prime Minister of Austria, who had a reputation for malice, is supposed to have described Ignacy Daszyński – one of the leading Polish politicians at the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century – as a “slightly radical but brave Austrian”. Daszyński was one of the most outstanding social democrats in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, an excellent parliamentary speaker and at the same time a declared adherent of independent Poland. His character as sketched by Stürghk provided ammunition for his political opponents in Galicia for a long time.

This anecdote shows the complexity, the multidimensional character of the problem of citizenship in Galicia at this time. A representative of power and also an Austrian has an idea of the Polish activist’s identity, based on his conduct and parliamentary involvement, which was consistent with the concept of loyal Austrian citizen. On the other hand this idea was at odds with Polish public opinion about patriotism and citizenship. And there is a final complication, of course, relating to the self-identification of Ignacy Daszyński as an individual historical human being.

We would like to focus on how citizenship functioned as a notion and how ideas about the citizen spread among the intellectual and political Polish Galician elites at the end of 19th

and at the threshold of 20th century. This project can be useful and basic in the context of important social changes during a time of upheaval in Galician history. It was a time of multiple transformations. Previously stable, the political theatre dominated by conservatives was opened to new modern mass political parties, above all social democrats and peasant activists. Aggressive political conflict over universal suffrage took place in connection with the reform of elections to the State Council (*Rada Państwa*), introducing a fifth *curia*, for which all citizens, peasants and workers, could vote or stand. Ultimately the conservatives managed to defend the undemocratic curial system only in elections to the County Parliament (*Sejm Krajowy*).

A nationalist ideology appeared as an important element of public discourse, causing transformations in the national self-identity of the inhabitants of Galicia, above all the inhabitants of villages and towns, who were supposed to become conscious members of the Polish, Ukrainian or Jewish national community. During the 1880s and 90s it was already possible to discern the effects of the self-government reforms introduced in the 1860s, which were tremendously important for the problem of the citizenship on the district level. If earlier, according to Michał Bałucki (quoted by Andrzej Chwalba), “Accustomed to government of the CK county commissioners for years, honored citizens of the Podunk could not come to terms with the thought of thinking and debating on their own over their needs and beginning something without permission of the CK county office<sup>1</sup>”, at the end of century there was a clearly developing group of active participants in local issues and government in towns and cities. Despite improvement of the educational system, such processes were much slower in Galician villages, but a type of peasant activist who spoke on behalf of his community also emerged. During the period under discussion a Polish official class crystallised as an effect of the Polonization of the offices in autonomous Galicia. In spite of the internal diversity of this group, ranging from rich and influential Lvov public servants to poor provincial counsellors, its members shared one characteristic feature – loyalty towards Austria, called sometimes “black-yellow patriotism”.

The modern, ideal-typical definition of citizenship sees it as a kind of bond and contract: “a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of the person’s membership in an exclusive category, the native-born plus the naturalized and the agent’s relation to the state rather than any other authority the agent may enjoy”<sup>2</sup>.

I invoke this definition not in order to study the socio-political reality of transformation in the framework of this concept, but in order to show the specificity of the social and political imagination of the former Galician elites. How did so-called enlightened inhabitants understand this notion? What traditions of citizenship were authors of the declaration and columnists invoking? What did it mean to be citizen? How could this status be achieved? Is it possible to talk about any discourse on citizenship when in fact the nation was the most essential issue? Was the meaning of this idea changing? How often and in what context did this problem appear?

One of the most influential actors on the Galician political theatre, the professor and conservative politician and publicist Stanisław Tarnowski, when considering the crucial problem of Galicia at the beginning of the 1890s – the ‘country people’ – wrote:

(...) what is the nature of Polish peasant as a citizen? What is his, as it were, public character? (...) The peasant has the same attributes, the same likings, the same habits, the same kind of the mind, the same kind of the sense of humour as the nobleman; and has the same faults as we have, almost all, with one exception, he has strong feeling of the power which we have lost. Nobleman and peasant, they are land men, settled men, thoroughly rooted: both have the same basis of their existence (...) In the ancient noblemen's language, the notion of citizen means only possessionatus [having], landowner, and it has survived amongst the people through the centuries to this day. As the French legitimist regards the empire or republic as an existing fact but not as the legal state, the people treat a barrister, a professor or a doctor, who could be a Member of Parliament and could be appointed minister as a fact only, not as a correct principle. Only a peasant himself or nobleman can be the true, complete citizen<sup>3</sup>.

The opinion described by this member of the strongest party in Galicia is an example of traditional and quite archaic ideas about citizenship still functioning in the mentality of his contemporaries. What is characteristic is that Tarnowski was not talking directly about his beliefs or beliefs of the noble strata, but verbalizing his representation of Galician peasants opinions, put them into the frame of the socio-historical concepts of *Cracow conservatives*.

Conservatives, first of all Józef Szujski, effectively tried to break with the opinion that a nation means “we” and state “the others” [invaders], shaped in the Romantic epoch by the Polish patriots, which clashed with the concept of citizenship as a contribution to state power even if ‘civil society’ is functioning, as Hegel or Tocqueville wanted, on different level than the state itself. Despite this new attitude, the chance to deepen a reinterpretation of the notion of citizen was not taken, since it was undercut by faith in the crucial, historical role of the nobility. Tarnowski stressed that:

(...)the matter of the nation and its future absolutely needs the nobleman to become what the guard was in the Napoleon Great Army and the phalanx in the army of Alexander. It does not mean they have more rights than others (...), but possessing the lands and traditions of the nation in their blood, they are in the best position to act in this way for the nation.

Assuming that a man is entitled to citizenship by virtue of his property, by land ownership, the peasant should receive the rights and obligations of the citizen as a result of the process of granting property, but he lacks ‘the tradition of the nation’, transmitted as the legacy of noble blood. This conception recalled a crucial notion in the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: the notion of the citizen as a member of *the noblemen nation*. This latter concept remained very much alive during the period, as can be demonstrated by the notes from the contemporary Polish language dictionaries used at Galician schools and colleges.

According to the reference books *citizen* means first and foremost “an inhabitant of the city, the country, surroundings”, secondly “a member of the nation, societies, civilly and politically free man”. The true, good citizen of the country is a man who feels his responsibility for his country (“the son of the homeland, the patriot”). The Polish Language Dictionary published in 1902 evokes also the French Revolutionary context of citizenship, but rather superficially – as the way people were addressed during the Revolution. Finally, in common language *citizen* is an owner of fixed property. Yet dictionaries often quote also the old sentence by Joachim Lelewel, the leading Polish Romantic historiographer:

“Actually our laws understood only noblemen to be citizens, (...) whatever is said about laws, about freedoms, civil liberties, is closely related to noblemen”<sup>4</sup>.

*Obywatel*, the Polish equivalent of *citizen*, derives from the word *obywać*, that is *to live/ to reside*, representing the Latin notions of *incola* and *habitor*. In the course of time it gained a specialised significance referring to the landowner or settled burgher. During the 16th century *obywatel* became an issue in the fundamental ideological dispute about the subject’s entitlement to state protection and rights to hold offices. The opinion of Stanisław Orzechowski, who expelled peasants and burghers from the community of state’s citizens finally prevailed over the egalitarian conception proposed by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski. This view dominated the mentality of the noblemen for a few centuries<sup>5</sup>.

In spite of the general critical attitude towards the political activity of noblemen during the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth’s existence and accusations of noble responsibility for the collapse of the Polish State, Tarnowski was cultivating the tradition mentioned above and granting the exceptional role to the noblemen – the role of the group predestined to be citizens by virtue of the birth. One hundred years after the Partition of Poland, in the era of socialism and liberalism, the notions of ‘noblemen nation’ and a ‘citizen nobleman’ still had quite a strong position in Galicia. Although we have to remember that Galicia in relation to this problem was more the exception than a typical example of former Polish lands.

Nobility is treated as the *conditio sine qua non* of citizenship, but it is not enough. To be a citizen in the full sense of the word one should possess the important virtues that Tarnowski compares with Christian ones:

There are two very fine words, hard to pronounce without respect and emotions; two noble notions, which form and support the citizen’s character; two virtues, on which the value of communities, their health and power, depend: these are public spirit and public faith. This is the necessary foundation of the longevity and power of the community. They uphold national awareness and patriotism, internal order, safety and authority.

Public faith *is a kind of heartfelt confidence and the basis of justice*: It means that the citizen can safely trust the community, is not afraid of rape and harm and is confident of his rights and freedom. Treaties rest upon it, as does peace, safety, the prosperity of the people and the progress of their civilization.

Public spirit *is the basis of civil discipline and sacrifice*. It means that a man feels obliged to submit his will to the law, he considers negotiation with the enemy of the patria as a vile deed, and gives his life for the needs of the patria. As an egoist man would not have higher, either Christian or civil virtues, the community without public spirit would not have courage, perseverance, power or solid patriotism<sup>6</sup>.

Public spirit consists in always putting the public interest before the private one, whereas public faith is tantamount to giving up deceit. It is not without reason that the author mentions these two virtues as essential, for according to ‘Cracow conservatives’, the lack of these virtues was the cause of the final collapse of the Commonwealth at the end of 18th century.

The Demo-liberals opposed the conservatives in an ongoing dispute concerned mainly with the problem of civil rights and liberties. Unlike their permanent opponents, the ad-

herents of John Stuart Mill, brought up the issue of citizenship in the struggle for civil liberties guaranteed by the constitution and for universal suffrage. The absence of sufficient legal protection of civic liberties and of an institution to ensure that the constitution was observed were issues on the pages of “Nowa Reforma”. This debate had a very practical dimension and the *demo-liberals’* opinions was remote from the historiosophic, almost theological, views of Stanisław Tarnowski.

“Civil liberties are the natural right of every citizen”<sup>7</sup>, and freedom is the most important right to which a citizen is entitled. National freedom depends on individual freedom. These are the ideological fundamental assumptions of the *demo-liberals*, who naturally strongly emphasized the role of the French Revolution in the process of shaping citizenship. Fighting legally for civil liberties and universal suffrage at the turn of 19th and 20th century, liberals stressed the issues of extensive domestic taxation and the extent of military services exacted from the domestic population:

“For liberals”, Włodzimierz Bernacki has written, “freedom was not (...) a gift of the legislator that has been given once and for all – if citizens want to keep their freedom they must constantly seek to ensure it.. They must fight for its preservation, for the law-abiding state”<sup>8</sup>. One of the most important fields for improving citizen consciousness was activity on the community level. “I cannot understand the citizen of the country who is not the citizen of the municipal or parish community”, Tadeusz Romanowicz said, “Community citizenship constitutes the foundation of any citizenship to such an extent that according to all systems of law only the community citizen would become the citizen of the state”<sup>9</sup>.

Jakub Bojko, the peasant activist and the co-founder of the People’s Party (*Stronnictwo Ludowe*) gave the most universal meaning to the notion of citizenship. In his well-known text titled “Two Souls” (1904), in the chapter about teachers of peasant origins, he was writing (using language intelligible to the peasant reader or the listener):

However, if those people [teachers – B.K.], wiser than their brothers, act in a united, dignified way towards their superiors and the upper classes, and show the free, civil rather than old soul in school work and outside the school, they would not be regarded as servants, but citizens deserving the name. They would not only be held in true esteem and their justified demands were be considered but they would influence the opinion of the upper classes. And above all they would set an example to younger brothers so that they could get rid of the slave soul<sup>10</sup>.

Bojko raised the problem of lack of activity, the most essential issue from the point of view of the interest of the people. According to Bojko and many other peasant activists, e.g. Wincent Witos<sup>11</sup>, the transformation of legislation, while necessary, was not enough. Citizenship was a peculiar feature of the personality, which Bojko called ‘the soul’. In his opinion two souls are competing in the Polish Galician peasant, serf and civil, and the civil soul is still being defeated by ‘the slave soul’:

The soul of the old ugly woman called serfdom, who died in 1848, is still lingering on among us. She had held our rude tribe in terrible captivity for over 400 years and she killed the human nature in the peasant and turned him into a piece of junk, a machine (...).

This terror of serfdom went into the people’s blood so deeply that to this day it is still affecting our class, not only the common people, but t even those peasants’ sons who hold important offices thanks to schools. The spirit of the serfdom, the slave spirit, is stuck in all of us(...)<sup>12</sup>.

That enslaved soul is the reason for the passivity of peasant electors, their proven inclination to 'sell their vote for two heaps of wood', their lack of civil consciousness. The native born man as a free man in the constitutional state could be called a citizen when he is responsible, self-reliant and devoid of any fear. The ability to express one's own opinions regardless of others' views and possible consequences is particularly important<sup>13</sup>.

Like the liberals, the peasant activist treated citizenship as the foundation of a free nation: "After all, this serf soul in people must die, even if some people would go to any lengths to defend it. As other nations that were in captivity managed to get rid of this fatal cholera, thank God, today or tomorrow, our nation should also bury this serf soul if we wish to exist<sup>14</sup>.

In spite of the obvious and growing danger, from the conservative point of view, of the notion of national revival aspiring to separate statehood, the elites realized the enormous need for society to be prepared for such a possibility. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, thanks to civil liberties in the frame of a constitutional system, was supposed to be a school of citizenship. Was the attitude of the liberals to citizenship, and above all the attitude of the peasant activists and social democrats, a peculiar tactical game that they were playing with the monarchy?

Was what was being discussed a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy or only a citizen in the Monarchy?

Was Ignacy Daszyński really a loyal Austrian citizen?

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> M. Bałucki, *Pan burmistrz z Pipidówki*, Lvov 1887.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Tilly, *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, in Id. (ed.), *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, "International Review of Social History", 40, 1995, Supplement 3/, Cambridge 1995, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> S. Tarnowski, *Uspობიენი i skłonnosci polityczne*, in Id., *Z doświadczeń i rozmyślań*, Cracow 2002, pp. 189-190.

<sup>4</sup> J. Karłowicz - A. Kryński - W. Niedźwiedzki (eds.), *Słownik języka polskiego*, Warsaw 1902.

<sup>5</sup> S. Grodziski, *Obywatelstwo w szlacheckiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Cracow 1963.

<sup>6</sup> S. Tarnowski, *Niektóre złe zwyczaje*, in Id., *Z doświadczeń i rozmyślań*, Cracow 2002, p. 259-260.

<sup>7</sup> "Nowa Reforma", n. 217, 1893.

<sup>8</sup> W. Bernacki., *Jednostka, naród, niepodległość: myśl polityczna demoliberalistów galicyjskich (1882-1905)*, Cracow 1997, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> J. Bojko, *Dwie dusze*, in Id., *Gorące słowa. Wybór pism, wybór, wstęp, oprac. F. Ziejka*, Cracow 2003, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> W. Witos, *Obrazki ze wsi (15 V 1895)*, in *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 4: *Publicystyka*, Wybór, przedmowa i przypisy J. R. Szaflik, Warsaw 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Bojko, *Dwie dusze* cit., p. 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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