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Polish Rural Sociology, 1930-1965

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REFLECTIONS OF SOCIAL CHANGE
Polish Rural Sociology, 1930-1965

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Reflections of Social Change: Polish Rural Sociology, 1930-1965*

In what follows I would like to consider what might be learned about social change in Poland in the last century by looking at the work of Polish sociologists. The point is to grasp cultural dimensions of long-term historical processes that are not revealed by demographics: demographics that tell us, for instance, that some two and one-half million people migrated from village to city between 1944 and 1960.¹ To my knowledge few historians have inquired about change in Polish society over periods that transcend the typical caesurae in the century's political history. Unlike their colleagues studying earlier periods, Polish historians of the twentieth century have shied away from social history in general; if before 1989 the explanation for this was political, now it is economic. Sociologists, though they have studied situations in discrete decades have failed to ponder changes over generations. That is, they have not compared the results of their work from a putative beginning to a putative end.

Given the apparent depth of the ruptures that occurred along the caesurae of Poland's twentieth century, it might seem strange not only to wonder about historical continuity of Polish society, but also about the continued viability of Polish sociology.² My general proposition is that the work of Polish sociologists in the interwar years (1918-39), and then in the

* I am thankful to David McQuaid, whose own work on "The Life History Approach" of Polish sociologists introduced me to this topic.

¹ Michał Pohoski, Migracje ze wsi do miast. Studium wychodźstwa w latach 1945-1957 oparte na wynikach ankiety Instytutu Ekonomiki Rolnej (Warsaw, 1963), 53. Between 1931 and 1950 the percentage of rural inhabitants in Poland dropped from 72.6 to 51.7 percent. Krzysztof Zagorski, "Social Mobility in Poland," Stefan Nowak et al, eds., Polish Sociology: Selection of Papers from the Polish Sociological Bulletin (Wrocław, 1974), 149.

² Within the Soviet Bloc sociology as an independent academic field was liquidated in the Stalin period and began to recover only much later; in the Soviet Union not until the Gorbachev years. On the Soviet case see Dmitri N. Shalin, "Sociology for the Glasnost Era: Institutional and Substantive Changes in Recent Soviet Sociology," Social Forces 68:4 (June 1990), 1019-1039.

post-thaw period (1956-present), provides historians with a fabulous wealth of data and insight on the socio-cultural constitution of Polish society. The value of this tradition in the more recent period seems well established, if not fully understood. But what about the early years of this century? How might a poor country, created out of fragments of three defunct empires, have supported a modern sociological establishment? And if it did, can one connect the findings of the earlier generation to those of researchers in People's Poland? Does the sociology of capitalism speak to the sociology of socialism, and vice versa? In pursuing these questions, the following essay attempts to reveal the sorts of transformation in Polish society that social historians might study using the fruits of Polish sociology. Of particular interest is the fate of the Polish village, from which, in many ways, modern Poland, with its peculiarities of political culture, and its unevenness of development, has issued.

Early Polish Sociology

Nothing about the situation of Polish sociology before the World War I hinted at the later prominence of this field within Polish academia. At a time when this discipline was sinking roots throughout western and central Europe, it could not be practiced in any institutional setting in Poland. In both the Russian and Prussian partitions, this was due to the simple fact that Poles were denied higher education in their own language.³ Yet in the Austrian partition, where two universities functioned, sociology likewise could not become established. These rather conservative institutions,

located in Kraków and Lwów, denied chairs to early practitioners of sociology Ludwik Krzywicki and Ludwik Gumplowicz because of their reputations as men of the left. An especially negative role is attributed to Kraków historian Józef Szujski.⁴

Though Krzywicki and others managed to publish important work in partitioned Poland, a Polish school in sociology could not form until the 1920's, when Florian Znaniecki returned from Chicago to assume a chair in Poznań. His work went in two directions: philosophy of culture; and empirical field studies, the latter of which was inspired by the years spent in America. Znaniecki created both first systematic Polish work on sociology, Wstęp do socjologii (Introduction to Sociology, 1922), as well as a full university program in the subject of sociology.⁵ In the two conservative Galician milieus sociology was taught within other disciplines: In Lwów anthropology "annexed" sociology; in Kraków this was accomplished by the historical school. Warsaw University similarly resisted the new field, and for the first postwar decade sociology was taught only in the law department by Leon Petrażycki and Ludwik Krzywicki. The former's chair was not renewed when he died in 1931 -- supposedly for budgetary reasons -- and the latter's was converted into a chair of theology upon his retirement in 1935. The situation did, however improve somewhat with the appointing in 1934 of Stefan Czarnowski and Jan. St. Bystroń as professors of sociology in the humanities faculty. They supported the early work of two sociologists

³ One question that has not attracted research to my knowledge is whether the Russian University in Warsaw supported sociological research. What seems certain is that any work accomplished there -- the same is true of its historical work -- did not enter into the mainstream of Polish social science traditions.

⁴ Józef Chałasiński, "Trzydzieści lat socjologii polskiej, 1918 do 1947," Przegląd Socjologiczny 10 (1948), 4-5. Gumplowicz took a position at the University of Graz. Patrice M. Dabrowski, "What Kind of Modernity Did Poles Need? A Look at Nineteenth-Century Nation-Making," Nationalities Papers 29:3 (2001), 518.

who would become important in the postwar era, associate professors (docenci) Józef Chałasiński and Stanisław Ossowski.⁶

In the interwar period German sociology was known for its strong interest in theory and method, as well as speculative-philosophical matters, much in contrast to the American school, which was dominated by empiricists without deeper interests in theory. Polish sociology shared both tendencies, because its practitioners had been educated in both places.⁷ Yet arguably it was the latter that better survived the time of World War and stalinism, during which sociology was again denied institutional bases. Some of the most valuable work, for example by Stefan Czarnowski or Leon Petrażycki, has been lost almost entirely, "buried" to use an expression recently applied by Cynthia Ozick to the work of once influential literary critic Lionel Trilling.⁸ The relative success of the empirical, positivist tradition has to do in part with its relatively a-political nature -- it seemed like simple data-collection to the ideologically sensitive -- and in part with its focus on issues dear to the left, such as worker and peasant activism, and finally, with the longevity, industry, moral commitment, institutional savvy, and political flexibility of Józef Chałasiński, Znaniecki's leading student, one of stalinist Poland's wiliest practitioners of *Ketman*, and the sponsor of massive contests for "best life history" conducted among Polish villagers in the 1930s and the 1960s.⁹

⁵ This was approved by the Ministry of Culture in 1930. Chałasiński, "Trzydzieści lat," 7. On Znaniecki see Zygmunt Dulczewski, Florian Znaniecki życie i dzieło (Poznań, 1984);

⁶ Ibid. 8-9. Petrażycki died of his own hand, supposedly in part because of frustrations encountered among a conservative and nationalistic professoriate. Bystrzeński had been professor of ethnology in Kraków, and owed his position in Warsaw to the fact that he had been called to work there at the Ministry

⁷ Ibid. 21.

⁸ "The Buried Life," The New Yorker, 2 October, 2000.

⁹ "Ketman" is understood as a deeply internalized posture of conformity practiced with near-perfection in socialist states in order to allow pursuit of other, personal ends, for example nationalism or some aesthetic agenda. For full development of the term, see Czesław Miłosz, The Captive Mind (New York, 1953).

Rural life and sociology: the 1930's

Studies fostered in the interwar period by Chałasiński and others of peasants, village life, social mobility, and to a lesser degree, of workers and the life of the urban proletariat, drew upon an already rich heritage: Ludwik Krzywicki's studies of concentration in the agricultural economy, and Franciszek Bujak's socio-economic studies of several Polish villages, all from the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Most important, however, was the work produced in America by Florian Znaniecki in collaboration with W. I. Thomas, the five-volume The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, which also rates among the most original contributions of American sociology in this period.¹¹ They described life records as the "perfect type of sociological material":

if social science has to use other materials at all it is only because of the practical difficulty of obtaining at the moment a sufficient number of such records to cover the totality of sociological problems...if we are forced to use mass phenomena as material, or any kind of happenings taken without regard to the life histories of the individuals who participate in them, it is a defect, not an advantage, of our present sociological method.¹²

¹⁰ L. Krzywicki, Kwestia rolna (1903); F. Bujak, Maszkienice. Stosunki społeczne i gospodarcze (Kraków 1901), Limanowa, Stan społeczny i gospodarczy (Kraków, 1912). The former was interested in agriculture as part of the capitalist economy, the latter studied villages as economic units. Chałasiński, "Trzydziesci lat," 23. Further work in the economics of Polish agriculture was undertaken in the interwar period by Wincenty Styś and Wiktor Bronikowski.

¹¹ See the introduction to abridged version, William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America, edited and abridged by Eli Zaretsky (Urbana and Chicago, 1984).

¹² Thomas and Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant, 294.

This work, based on analyses of letters written by peasants in Europe and America, inspired a veritable industry of peasant life-stories and memoirs, elicited through several competitions for "peasant autobiographies" in the decade before W.W.II. These were organized by the Sociological Institute (in Poznań), the State Institute for the Study of Village Culture, and Institute for Social Economy (both in Warsaw).¹³

The best-known result of these labors was Chałasiński's own Młode pokolenie chłopów (Young Generation of Peasants, 1938), based on 1,544 entries in a competition for life-histories, and the unfinished project of Władysław Grabski, System socjologii wsi (Systematic Sociology of the Village).¹⁴ Traces of his mentor's social theory are easy to detect in Chałasiński's work, in particular the interactive conceptual pair "value" and "attitude," from which one could interpret a dialectic of social change. The former connotes "any datum having an empirical content accessible to the members of some social group and a meaning with regard to which it is or may be an object of activity." Examples include a foodstuff, an instrument, a piece of poetry, a university. By attitude was understood "a process of individual consciousness which determines real or possible activity of the individual in the social world. Thus hunger that compels the consumption of the foodstuff; the workman's decision to use the tool...the poet's feelings and ideas expressed in the poem and the reader's sympathy and admiration."¹⁵ While not neglecting the individual dimension, Chałasiński was concerned

¹³ For a highly informative history of the history of the Institute for Social Economy, see Tadeusz Szturm de Sztrem, Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego 1920-1944 (Warsaw, 1959).

¹⁴ Much of Grabski's work did, however, appear in the first three volumes of the series Roczniki Socjologii wsi. Especially influential was the third installment on the "Influence of the feudal agrarian system on the social life of the village." Chałasiński, "Trzydziestu lat," 23.

¹⁵ Thomas and Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant, 58-59.

above all with social groups: the nation and rural and urban communities. He viewed divisions between town and country as hindering the development of a strong national community in Poland.¹⁶ The problem was not so much one of national self-assertion as of integration of the peasant class into the nation, in part through socio-economic development, but more importantly through "cultural emancipation" -- a "formulation of its own vision of the desirable structure of the nation and its own place in it."¹⁷

Chałasiński embellished his volumes with rich, revealing commentary, permitting an unusually colorful depiction of the Polish village before the major transformation in Polish society of the last century: the migrations of the postwar era from traditional and rural to modern and urban. A historian might take the highly combustible, unstable, overpopulated Polish countryside he describes in the 1930s as a starting point for these changes. The life-stories collected and analyzed by Józef Chałasiński bespeak imminent dissolution, if not revolution.¹⁸ The age-old oppression by a small elite of the overwhelming majority had spawned a feverish hatred, driving especially young men to acts of lawlessness, such as the massive strikes, land-seizures, and road-blockages that visited the Polish countryside late in the decade. One young peasant, who had suffered arrests, unemployment, and police harassment for his political activism, expressed the sentiments of desperation that had gripped many in his generation: so great was his thirst to revenge "centuries of trampled dignity," that he felt

¹⁶ Another word applied by Znaniecki and Chałasiński for values shared by a social group is "culture." Jan Jerschina and Mariola Bocheńska-Seweryn, "Józef Chałasiński: History--Nation--Culture--Personality," in Piotr Sztompka, ed., Masters of Polish Sociology (Wrocław, 1984), 236-37.

¹⁷ Thus the formulation of Chałasiński's thought by Jerschina and Bocheńska-Seweryn in Ibid. 244.

¹⁸ These memoirs, with commentary, appeared as Młode pokolenie chłopów. Zagadnienie kształtowania się warstwy chłopskiej w Polsce (Warsaw, 1938). Unless otherwise noted, references below are to the edition abridged by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński and published in Rome in 1946. Herling-Grudziński (vol. 1, 14) wrote that Chałasiński's book was the most widely read among Polish rural youth.

capable of "murdering to the last generation these wild and blood-sucking beings [i.e. the Polish gentry]." He wrote "we are on the way to People's Poland," and cited as evidence the growth of the leftist peasant youth organization "Wici" in his county [powiat], from sixteen to sixty-six groups from 1932 to 1936.¹⁹ Whether the "People's Poland" that was indeed established in 1944 corresponded to his hopes is a question that I touch upon below.

Hatred was fueled above all by the fantastically inequitable distribution of land and wealth, but peasant activists also despised a system of justice that favored the interests of the land-owning class and a political system unresponsive to their votes or their needs.²⁰ Even the education system perpetuated inequality, by denying peasant children instruction from an early age -- even in methods of farming -- and ingraining in their lords a sense of superiority through the elite high schools -- gymnasia. These state-sponsored institutions attracted the particular censure of Chałasiński, for they also failed to connect the upper classes to the social, political, and economic realities of contemporary Poland. Such schools introduced young people to a "social vacuum, without real duties or real responsibility."²¹ This was the kind of irresponsibility that caused this caste to neglect the

¹⁹ Młode pokolenie, vol. 2, 100.

²⁰ In 1921, one third of all farms in Poland were smaller than 2 hectares, and another third measured between 2 and 5 hectares. The peasant stratum made up 72.3 percent of the population, but held 52.7 percent of Poland's acreage (areal). Large landholders held 35.5 percent of the land. Bohdan Cywiński, Potega jest -- i basta (Paris, 1983), 32-33.

²¹ Młode pokolenie, vol. 1, 24. By law, seven years schooling were compulsory in interwar Poland. Yet because of the heritage of illiteracy from the time of partitions, and the shortage of teachers and infrastructure, it proved difficult to implement the law, especially in rural areas of Central and Eastern Poland. In 1937, over three quarters of village schools offered only the first four classes, meaning that the "overwhelming majority of peasant children were condemned to attending schools that did not create realistic chances for further education in schools of a higher level." Ryszard Wroczyński, Marian Falski i reformy szkolne w Rzeczypospolitej (Warsaw, 1988), 162.

mechanization of agriculture, preferring instead to hire from the vast pool of landless rural laborers.

Tragically, high schools likewise corrupted the few peasants' children who attended them, hoping for social advancement: "Without exaggeration one may say that peasants' sons have contributed to the deterioration of peasants' political status and a return to past injustices. They themselves have passed to higher social spheres via school and university, seminary, army, and parliament and convinced that peasants do not need education, have worked by the sweat of their brow to ensure that only one chosen son might himself become lord."²²

In response peasants began creating their own networks of educational institutions, the "people's universities," which fostered broad preparation in subjects ranging from horticulture to history.²³ These reflected a more positive by-product of oppression than the hatred described above: a new collective consciousness among village youth. In Chałasiński's view, the assembled life-histories documented the formation of a "consciousness of common traditions and history, of common economic and socio-political interests...of a collective life of peasants."²⁴ Unlike the older generation, young villagers no longer focused political hopes upon central government, because they understood that once in Warsaw, peasant activists usually ceased to be their representatives. Instead, the young concentrated upon local issues, in order to "raise up" their own village. This meant "severing of village and peasant from standards of value introduced from without [...]" Only insofar as the peasant recognizes himself in his sensations of power

²² Młode pokolenie, vol. 1, 51-2. The percentage of peasants' and farmers' sons attending high schools dropped from 18.6 to 14.1 from 1921-22 to 1930-31. Ibid., 47.

²³ For description and references see Cywiński, Potęga.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

and meaning, and as his work attains a positive valence of beauty, will he free himself from a gentry system of values. [And only then will] the peasant cottage cease being a symbol of oppression, and become a symbol of moral strength and of character."²⁵ He ascertains a moral superiority at the core of peasant life. For example if young peasants were increasingly successful at giving "village life a new content" that was because of the "power of their innate incorruptibility [siła wewnętrznej niesprzedajności]."²⁶

Chałasiński derived his belief in the moral unity of peasants from his larger analysis. For him, the peasantry was neither a legal corporation nor a socio-economic class, but rather a "socio-cultural stratum": "The peasant stratum [warstwa chłopska] is not formed on the basis of peasants' common interests in the price of agricultural products. Rather, this social stratum consists of a certain formation of human life that connects sundry values in this life into one coherent whole...the socio-cultural essence of the peasant stratum lies in the union of these values: land, creative physical labor, and activity of the spirit [aktywności duchowej]...The socio-personal model of this peasant stratum is an individual freely working his own soil with his own hands, and understanding his land, his work on it, and himself the farmer [rolnik] as an integral part of the whole of human life, and therefore of national and human culture as a whole. This is the model of a peasant for the peasant stratum that is presently forming."²⁷

This decidedly non-materialist approach to peasant life would cause Chałasiński problems in Stalinist Poland, though he would credit People's Poland for finally making peasants part of the nation. Whether the once

²⁵ Ibid. 4, 52.

²⁶ Ibid. 45.

young generation of Polish peasants felt they helped realize the Free Poland Chałasiński once envisioned is another thing. He took for granted peasants' leading role in the Polish future, because of their intimate connections to "Polish soil."²⁸ Such fervent beliefs in the peasantry's historic mission may have derived from Chałasiński's own humble background; in effect he posed as prophet of his group. But it also left him blind to peasants' less admirable traits. He therefore left uncommented the occasional outbursts of anti-Semitism of his reporters, for example one young woman, daughter of landless peasants, who had attended only one year of school (at age 13) and wrote that

priests do not have the time to concern themselves with everything. The gentlemen teachers and other gentlemen [Panowie Nauczyciele i inne Pany] don't want to. The government should order teachers to concern themselves with the [Polish] cooperative movement [spółdzielniamy]. That would lift the spirits of the nation and drive the Jews from Poland...It is not necessary to beat the Jews. Rather, we should do as Father K. tells us: don't buy anything from them. And then they will close their stores and leave. In our town of Myszyniec people have stopped smashing the shop windows of Jewish shops. But they have also stopped buying from them, thanks to which eight Polish stores have opened up and are doing business.²⁹

²⁷ Józef Chałasiński, *Młode pokolenie chłopow*, vol. 4, cited in Andrzej Pilichowski, "Chłop-włoscianin i rolnik-przedsiębiorca. Józef Chałasiński o racjonalizacji i komercjalizacji gospodarstwa chłopskiego," in Andrzej Kaleta, ed., *Chałasiński dzisiaj* (Torun, 1996), 36-37.

²⁸ *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 1, 53.

²⁹ *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, 87. The abridgement is in the original.

Whether peasants obeyed the injunctions of religious leaders like Father K. requires further study. Attitudes toward the clergy expressed in peasant life-histories do, however, tend to support Chałasiński's vision of a "new consciousness." Chałasiński's peasant authors had ceased treating the clergy, a pillar of the existing order, as an institution meriting unquestioned respect, and increasingly noted the multiple hypocrisies of village priests, who acted like lords, and treated their parishoners as "cattle" while openly condemning the self-improvement of peasants via schooling. Memoir after memoir describes priests failing to take interest in the peasants' plight. Several writers recall priests demanding fees from the poor for church burial and for the sacraments, or refusing to yield church burial grounds to members of Wici and other organizations not controlled by the church.³⁰

In terms of Chałasiński's larger scheme, one might see the church of the 1930's as an institution opposing peasants' cultural emancipation. One prelate announced from the pulpit that "education is the way to hell for peasants."³¹ Priests kept peasants in the dark even about the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. In the words of Chałasiński "peasant Catholicism is based in intellectual passivity and submission to the clergy."³² American historian Katherine Jolluck later noted a gendered aspect to this policy: the church "valued" ignorance even more highly in women.³³ But fees and church attendance began to lag in certain parishes, and therefore a counter-movement set in within the church; the clergy became more sensitive to

³⁰ *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, 100-123.

³¹ *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, 94. For the view that clergy treated peasants like cattle, see *Ibid.* pp. 110, 118.

³² *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, 93. Several respondents describe priests' preferred method of maintaining order: frightening the congregation with the power of satan. Supposedly this tactic worked better with women.

³³ See a citation taken from M. Kolbe's *Rycerz Niepokalanej* (No. 1, January 1937) on the ideal mother: "She has no education, she has no idea at all about pedagogy, she had only faith in her soul and love in her

village youth's demands that Catholicism be deepened in "intellectual and social terms." This generation supposedly had a more profound religious life than previous generations, but, because it also dared to seek answers to "ethical religious problems," it was also more open to doubt.³⁴

The desires expressed here for cultural and educational improvement are a general theme in these life-histories, and reveal a sort of yearning not accounted for in traditional accounts of "land hunger." Frequently writers recall the sadness felt at having to abandon schooling -- usually at the insistence of their parents -- and the unsatiated desire for more books to read. Strongly worded but otherwise typical is the statement of one Catholic activist from the county of Ciechanow (b. 1908), son of a poor blacksmith. For him school days were the "most beautiful of his life: "

How I wanted to learn...beneath every student's cap I imagined a hidden genius, the epitome of virtue, love, and dignity. I felt myself a lowly worm next to these educated people of my own age.³⁵

Whether hunger for land and education always fit into Chałasiński's scheme of an independent, unsullied peasant stratum can be questioned; what seems indisputable is that it forms an important background to the momentous social changes introduced in postwar Poland, as well as to the resistance of Polish peasants to having their communities subverted by the forced collectivizations of the 1950s. These were mostly reversed in 1956, and the world of Polish peasants in many ways reverted to the undermechanized

heart." Katherine R. Jolluck, Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II (Pittsburgh, 2002), 52.

³⁴ Młode pokolenie, vol.2, 109-10.

³⁵ Młode pokolenie, vol. 2, 83.

cultivation of small plots by family farmers, themselves enmeshed in networks of influence that extended backwards by many generations. In other ways, the world of the peasant farm was transformed beyond recognition.³⁶

Ketman Practices Organic Work: Chałasiński's Sociology after the War

Like many Polish scholars, Józef Chałasiński disregarded prohibitions of scholarly research during Nazi occupation, and besides actively teaching in underground universities, found time to direct an underground Polish Institute of Sociology in Warsaw. We know little of the Institute's achievements because its papers were destroyed during the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Early the following year Chałasiński initiated what Polish sociologists' regard as "heroic" efforts to rebuild the infrastructure of his discipline. He became editor in chief of the Polish Sociological Review (*Przegląd Socjologiczny*), director of the Polish Institute of Sociology, and professor at the University in Łódź -- an institution that the Polish left hoped to establish as a recruiting base for a progressive intelligentsia. He also published a critique of the Polish intelligentsia whose edge had not been blunted in the intervening half-century.³⁷

Within an increasingly restricted political sphere, space remained for Chałasiński as a putative progressive bourgeois intellectual. In writings of the immediate postwar era, he recognized the contributions of Marxist scholarship, but also criticized dogmatism while maintaining his own intellectual positions. This situation began to change in 1948, when

³⁶ For discussion of state policy, see the study of Andrzej Korboński, Politics of Socialist Agriculture in Poland: 1945-1960 (New York and London, 1965).

Chałasiński suffered a withering attack from the pen of Politbureau member Stefan Jędrychowski. Chałasiński began practicing stalinist-era self-criticism, with such evident success that Party ideologue Adam Schaff described an essay by Chałasiński of 1951 as "without doubt the deepest article of self-criticism which has appeared in our postwar scholarly literature."³⁸ In it Chałasiński condemned the work he held dearest, The Young Generation of Peasants "as objectively a creation of a reactionary utopia, and an expression of kulak ideology."³⁹

In 1949, Chałasiński succeeded liberal philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbinski as rector of Łódź University, and could devote himself more fully to his old anti-elitist agenda. In a sense he refined his prewar anti-elitism in the service of new political realities, and soon his determination to impress the working class character of Łódź on its university earned him the reputation of a radical. Anxious not to alienate Łódź's professoriate, the Ministry of Education in Warsaw took pains to restrain Chałasiński's reformist zeal.⁴⁰

Though in many regards he "overtook the Party on the left," and often paid homage to Stalin in public statements, going so far as to attend the Soviet leader's 70th birthday celebration, Chałasiński's former students hesitate to describe their mentor as a stalinist. Despite great incentives, he never joined the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR), and though he knew

³⁷ Spółeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej [Social Origins of the Polish Intelligentsia] (Łódź, 1946).

³⁸ Stefan MękarSKI, "Myśl filozoficzna" Komunistów w Polsce (London, 1953), 19.

³⁹ "Z zagadnień metodologii badań społecznych," Myśl filozoficzna 1-2: 1 (1951), 90.

⁴⁰ At his inauguration in October 1949 Chałasiński proclaimed the need to make the "university a place of work, in which the same sort of discipline and responsibility must be in force as in a workshop." Officials at the Ministry of Education as well as local Party officials feared "complications" with the Łódź professorship from Chałasiński's boldness. Czesław Gryko, Józef Chałasiński. Socjologiczna teoria kultury (Lublin, 1989), p. 37. A note for a collegium of the Ministry of Higher Education meeting of 8 February 1952 confessed "We know that the direction of Łódź University excels in an analytical approach to teaching and research." Archiwum Akt Nowych (Warsaw), MSW 19/165.

of his students' often-derisive remarks about the new "official reality," he left these students in peace. Privately, he read and wrote on Polish culture, the intellectual's calling, and liberalism. Almost entirely absent from these pursuits was Marxism. He had acceded to the closing of sociology departments without public protest, but in the framework of lectures in "The history of pre-capitalist formations" he introduced students to texts of Malinowski, Locke, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and the declaration of the rights of man.⁴¹

More important and long lasting as far as sociology was concerned were institutions through which he attempted to salvage resources for research. He transformed Łódź's Institute of Sociology into an Institute for the History of Journalism in Poland, and The Sociological Review (Przegląd socjologiczny) became The Review of Historical and Social Sciences Przegląd nauk historycznych and społecznych (1950-1956). The new journal printed studies of the development of nationalism, the history of social movements and change in social structure. One of the members of the new institute, Antonina Kłoskowska, used this opportunity to make pioneering studies of the origins of sociology in Poland. In 1953, Łódź sociologist Jan Szczepański published detailed studies of the history of "bourgeois social doctrines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," a feat at the time unparalleled in Eastern Europe. Chałasiński also helped establish pedagogical social studies in Łódź, which permitted the continued employment of other sociologists. According to Pawel Korzec, Łódź's sociologists were protected from the "pressures and temptations of the

⁴¹ Antonina Kłoskowska, "Bunty i służebności uczonego," Bunty i służebności uczonego. Profesor Józef Chałasiński (Łódź, 1992), 14-15.

regime." The price was Chałasiński's continued disavowal of his past, and endorsement of the regime's science policies.⁴²

Both apologists of the regime as well as its critics in the West have seen Chałasiński as a man overeager to please, as a "collaborator." Chałasiński later explained his behavior in the stalinist period in terms strongly reminiscent of Czesław Miłosz's analysis in The Captive Mind: The sociologist "could not alter historical necessity. And unless he chose the homelessness of exile or spiritual isolation in his own country, he had to share the experience of the working class of his nation. Refusal to withdraw and isolate oneself -- this was not simply a methodological principle, but a question of the sense of life." This sort of basic attitude, and the pre-existing commitment to anti-elitist social policies continued through political thaw in Poland, for example in his active defense Poznań strikers in 1956.⁴³ In an article of 1957 Chałasiński criticized stalinist higher education policy in Poland, revealing that he and other highly regarded scholars had been used by Party middlemen who "needed the scholarly authority and competence of professors of 'alien' class origins" in order to make their own careers. Though Chałasiński condemned this symbiosis of scholar and bureaucrat as destructive to science, it had permitted the continued -- if restricted -- productivity of many sociologists, as well as the survival of the sociological institute he built in Łódź in the early postwar years.⁴⁴

⁴² Włodzimierz Winclawski, Wprowadzenie do Chałasińskiego: Przewodnik bio-bibliograficzny (Toruń, 1989), XXXVII-XXXIX.

⁴³ Kłoskowska, "Bunty," 18-19.

⁴⁴ "Drogi i bezdroża socjalizmu w nauce polskiej," Kultura i Społeczeństwo 1:1 (1957), 31.

Making Sense of Rural Transformation? Polish Sociology's Return to the Villages

Soon after 1956, when sociology was reestablished at Polish universities, Józef Chałasiński returned to his passion for life histories of rural dwellers, and brought with him larger teams of researchers than ever before. In the fall of 1961 these energies culminated in a major public contest for peasant memoirs, supported by the Polish Academy of Sciences, the ZWM, and a rural publishing house (Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza). Entries were submitted by 5,475 individuals, of whom 2,340 were still active in agriculture. Precisely 4,427 memoirists qualified as "village youth," that is, as young people originally from villages. The group was divided almost evenly into 2,746 males and 2,544 females; of these only 210 had started some form of higher education, whereas about half (2,492) had completed primary school, and a quarter (1,341) had at least begun high school. In all, the memoirs comprise over 100,000 pages.⁴⁵

These memoirs awaken contradictory impressions. On the one hand, they document unprecedented changes in demography, social mobility, mechanization, and application of science to the agricultural economy between 1944 and 1960, a time when millions of Poles moved from countryside to town, and numbers of tractors per hectare advanced from almost nothing to numbers that, while far behind western countries, at least bore international comparison. Yet on the other hand memoir writers left no doubt as to the persistence of outdated attitudes toward farming and family life -- despite the migrations to towns, the improvements in village

⁴⁵ Dyzma Gałaj, "Przedmowa," Barbara Weber, ed., *Nad pamiętnikami młodzieży wiejskiej* (Warsaw, 1965), 7; Eugenia Jagiełło-Lysiowa, "Od chłopca do rolnika," in Weber, *Nad pamiętnikami*, 36.

infrastructure (roads, tele-communications, education), a leveling of incomes between town and village, increasing availability of modern appliances in the village, and the removal of barriers to non-rural professions.

Researchers seemed confused by the unpredictable relationship between changes in the material world of the village and villagers' mental worlds. For instance, in some places a young man's status depended on owning a motorcycle, yet in many others motorcycles -- along with toys, television sets, bath soap, and candy -- were seen as a waste of money. One author was told by a neighbor that he was a "gentleman" [Pan], and unfit for village life. The reason? He had been seen brushing his teeth.⁴⁶

What can be said of Poland as a whole is that most people continued to look down upon agricultural work – and workers. At issue was not simply the location of farming near the bottom of the scale of social status among professions (as measured in public opinion data), but rather a pervasive view of peasants as an inferior group, in an almost racial sense. Despite the (Soviet-originated) propaganda of reduced differences between town and country, little pride attached to farming, and those respondents who had remained at the plow or in the barns of family plots often did so because they had no other choice -- having for example stayed with elderly parents after all the siblings had left. Such respondents dreaded trips to the city because they could not fully disguise their origins. One woman wrote:

You won't catch me going to Kraków wearing a kerchief and carrying a basket anymore. I've had enough of the jeering and people laughing at me. And there's so much talk of differences in lifestyle between

⁴⁶ Their fathers' status had depended on owning bicycles; grandfathers supposedly had been content to walk, for example to meet young women. *Ibid.* 53.

town and village disappearing under socialism...But nothing's stopping me from buying elegant coat and shoes, so even the old devil himself won't know where I'm from.

But city-dwellers -- themselves often not so distant in time and space from the countryside -- resented attempts of villagers to pass as one of them. They needed the "village" to maintain their own shaky sense of self. The same woman recalled sitting at a bus station with a washing machine she had just bought:

"My God" the other passengers sighed, "washing machines, motor cycles, television sets -- there's nothing peasants don't want to have. What's gotten into them? They used be content washing their clothes in the river. Soon, there'll be no way of telling them apart from us."⁴⁷

Report after report note similar attitudes toward villagers.⁴⁸ But was the urban-rural animosity something inherited from the past, or itself a reflection of change? Perhaps precisely the closing of certain gaps between town and country -- in education, social function, mobility, dress, language, and the like -- had first awakened concern about diminishing status among urban classes. Their fears were intensified by an important shift in attitude among villagers: if their forebears had more or less accepted their separate, inferior social status, the first and second generations of rural inhabitants in

⁴⁷ Respondent nr. 4,742, cited in Jagiełło-Łysiowa, "Od chłopca," 43.

⁴⁸ Kraków sociologist Kazimierz Dobrowolski noted that many peasants in Southern Poland had begun to feel "far better" than former lords; he does allow that these peasants carefully put on urban-style coats and furs when going to the city. See his "Przeobrażenia świadomości społecznej ludności chłopskiej w południowej Małopolsce po drugiej wojnie światowej," Adam Sarapata, ed., Przemiany społeczne w Polsce Ludowej (Warsaw, 1965), 390.

People's Poland -- who preferred to calling themselves farmer and not peasant⁴⁹ -- did not. Like the woman cited above, they became hyperaware of the condescension of supposed social betters. The precise reasons for this shift are a matter for speculation: was it due to increasingly frequent interactions with townspeople, to the destruction of the legal and economic power of the upper classes, to the regime's own rhetoric of equality, or to the rapid settlement of urban regions by villagers (who themselves may have hoped in vain to enjoy the prestige of town-dwellers)?

According to Stanisław Pigoń, an outstanding Polonist of Jagiellonian University and son of peasants from Eastern Poland, self-consciousness toward city-dwellers could be found in the prewar period, though perhaps not as extensively as later. Visiting his own village shortly before the outbreak of WWII, he noted a deep antipathy for traditional costumes, because of the derisive remarks they elicited from the city dwellers one met in public places like the post office or railway cars. Such a desire to dissociate oneself from the village did not surprise Pigoń, considering the "centuries of disrespect" to which peasants had been subjected. He faulted small-town dwellers in particular for their haughty attitudes, but was even more severe in criticizing the thousands of intelligenci who, like himself, had left the villages for cities, and carefully hid any traces of their past, going so far as to change their family names, not to more urban, but to more "lordly" versions. That perhaps was the height of irony but also betrayal: by laying aside their peasant dress and manners, they hoped to be addressed by

⁴⁹ Dyzma Gałaj, "Awans pokolenia," 272. One could argue that People's Poland did not create a context in which "farmers" could realize themselves, that is, the agricultural sector, which refused to become "socialist," was left in a limbo between socialism and capitalism, and never enjoyed the investments that were lavished upon "modern" industries. On the underprovisioning of the countryside (compared to the cities) in socialist Poland, see George Kolankiewicz and Paul G. Lewis, Poland: Politics, Economics and Society (London and New York, 1988), 36-37.

the conventional polite forms of Polish, as "lord" and "lady" [Pan and Pani]. Pigoń by contrast did not hide his background -- his popular autobiography is the best evidence of this -- and indeed recommended a sort of peasant "pride" reminiscent of that proposed by Chałasiński, though with an elitist thrust. He took for granted that the greatest achievements of society crystallized in the cities; the point was to acknowledge the contribution to this of the villages:

Peasants should know that the best of their number -- or least the most visible -- left the village as a result of their merit, gifts, and hard work and made it to the top, and are proud of their heritage. Only then will they begin to liberate themselves from their old inferiority complex; only then will they understand that there must be something of value, worthy of respect, in their peasant status. They will not attempt to escape their position, either in terms of feelings or behavior, but will begin to feel strength in their group dignity and the wealth of its native character, which has been formed over many centuries. They will be ashamed neither of their costumes nor customs, and won't part so easily with either.⁵⁰

Urban or Rural? Socialist or Capitalist?

Arguably this sort of attitude has never taken root in modern Poland. Instead, according to an important early article of Zygmunt Bauman, village and town intermingled beyond recognition in socialist Poland, and sociologists studied the peasantization of the town as much as the

urbanization of the village. If Pigoń's peasants cast aside costumes and names, they unwittingly brought much else with them to the city. At the same time processes of modernization had recast village life in Poland.⁵¹ The Polish countryside was engulfed by modern systems of communication, education, and commerce, and village dwellers no longer experience impenetrable boundaries separating them from the city, though some have argued that city and village are growing further apart in post-Communist Poland.⁵²

If one could not easily speak of urban and rural in People's Poland, it would seem that one might at least speak of the growing "socialization" of the village. The political system, after all, defined itself as socialist, and socialism was the officially proclaimed ideal of public policy. Oddly, one finds little attention to this variable in the work of Polish sociologists; indeed students of the village seem almost allergic to any discussion of socialism as such. There was an occasional reference to the "national" successes of People's Poland, for example in "finally" integrating peasants into the Polish nation. One of the younger researchers wrote that "for centuries peasants lived beyond the main currents of national life, and their struggle for full rights to fatherland and nation was crowned with success only in People's Poland."⁵³ Yet this success was by no means straightforward. Chałasiński agreed that peasants first "entered the nation" after World War II, but their integration was far from complete. Writing in 1965 he noted a striking

⁵⁰ *Z Komborni w świat. Wspomnienia młodości* (Kraków, 1957), 65-67.

⁵¹ For doubts on the possibility of separating the categories of town and village, see Zygmunt Bauman "W sprawie urbanizacji wsi" in *Kultura i społeczeństwo* 8:3 (1964), 51-70. For systematic consideration of the factors involved in "urbanization of culture" (including level of building, hygienic conditions and habits, social contacts, and technical objects) see Anna Pawelczyńska, "Cultural Changes in Rural Areas," in Nowak et al, eds., *Polish Sociology*, 244-53.

⁵² Tadeusz Samulak, "Młode pokolenie chłopów w 60 lat później -- problemy wciąż aktualne," in Andrzej Kaleta, ed., *Chałasiński dzisiaj* (Toruń, 1996), 55-57.

withdrawal of rural inhabitants from public life: among the participants in his 1936 memoir contest only 10 percent did not belong to some sort of political/social organization. Yet of those entering the 1961 competition, only one quarter belonged to one of the major political/social organizations of that time.⁵⁴

In effect Chałasiński was arguing -- in a text vetted by official censors -- that peasants were more politically alienated in People's Poland than they had been under Piłsudski's regime of the interwar period. The socialist state seemed congenitally unfit to build socialism. The one bright spot was perhaps education.⁵⁵ Proclaiming itself a state of workers and peasants, the regime had built schools in rural areas (especially in the 1950s), created financial incentives for rural dwellers to complete secondary and higher education (while, perhaps short-sightedly, reducing the salaries of the intelligentsia), and introduced textbooks which shattered myths of the gentry's natural propensity to lead. One imagines that some in the new generation of teachers may have found inspiration in the ideas of Chałasiński, or the peasants' movement of the 1930's, or the Polish left; like

⁵³ Dyzma Gałaj, "Awans pokolenia," in Weber, Nad pamiętnikami, 267.

⁵⁴ Of 5,475 entrants, 944 belonged to the Union of Village Youth (ZMW) and 374 to the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Józef Chałasiński, "Młode pokolenie wsi w procesach migracji i ruchliwości społeczno-kulturalnej," in Weber, Nad pamiętnikami, 33. This impression of political apathy and perceived disenfranchisement is echoed in the recollections of Waclaw Daruk, one of the young peasants who had produced a life history for Chałasiński in 1936. In 1994 he discussed his postwar experiences with sociologist Tadeusz Samulak: "In the first phase I succumbed to fascination. There was land for peasants as well as education, and work for everyone. Only later did I begin to realize that there was no room in all this for me. Only selected individuals were permitted to take part, and I was not one of them, perhaps because I had attended "people's universities" in the prewar period, or because I was too much of an individualist to be made to fit. I also witnessed the suppression of individualism and independent initiative...I was not able to take part in the work of local self-government [samorząd], because as a member of the Peasant Party I was placed on the fifth place on the election ticket. Supposedly I knew too much." Samulak, "Młode pokolenie." 52. Daruk perhaps exemplified the conflict of the self-assured, headstrong "young peasantry" of the 1930's with the new Communist regime: this was not the People's Poland that he, and doubtless many other activists, had imagined.

⁵⁵ For systematic consideration of the new educational world of socialist Poland, with copious references to studies of village and town life, see Włodzimierz Wińclawski, Typowe środowiska wychowawcze współczesnej Polski (Warsaw, 1976).

Chałasiński they might have seen themselves as promoting anti-elitism without fully condoning the Soviet-imposed regime in Poland [komuna].⁵⁶

By the 1960's a new attitude toward education had taken root in the villages of central Poland studied by sociologists: the school, only a generation earlier a "completely different world,"⁵⁷ now figured squarely in the aspirations of parents for their children, and of young people for themselves. It had been assimilated, or as Maria Trawińska-Kwaśniewska has written, "localized". Especially striking was the new attitude among village-dwellers toward the written word, and toward book-learning: something often viewed as threatening only a generation earlier now seemed an object almost of reverence. In one case a boy riding a cart with his father was observed to tip his cap when passing the school as one might when passing a church. Each village attempted to outdo the next in the "modern" appearance of school buildings, which were placed in some central location.⁵⁸

None of these changes are described in sociological literature as constituting an advance toward socialism, but at least they did not appear unsocialist. The same could not be said of state policies in the rural economy, which hardly contributed to the advancement of socialist relations of production or the emergence of a socialist mindset. As is well-known, the Polish state retreated from policies of collectivization after 1956, and left

⁵⁶ Chałasiński had already perceived the emergence of a new generation of teachers in villages of the 1930's, who, themselves of rural background, refused to perpetuate lies about the gentry's cultural superiority, adopted modern attitudes toward corporal punishment, and the like. *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, p. 143

⁵⁷ Chałasiński, *Młode pokolenie*, vol. 2, p. 142. For further studies of village and education see Władysław Grabski, *Kultura wsi polskiej i nauczanie powszechne*, (Warsaw, 1929); Jan Kuchta, *Psychologia dziecka wiejskiego a praca szkolna* (Warsaw, 1933); M. Falski, *Środowisko społeczne młodzieży a jej wykształcenie* (Warsaw, 1937); H. Radlińska, *Oświata i kultura wsi polskiej. Wybór pism*, (Warsaw, 1979).

⁵⁸ She writes that schools had gained "citizens' rights" in villages. Maria Trawińska-Kwaśniewska, "Zmiany społecznych funkcji szkoły w środowisku wiejskim," in Weber, *Nad pamiętnikami*, 107-112.

farmland, especially in central Poland, in the hands of peasants, many of whom then aspired to become modern businessmen. According to the work of sociologist Eugenia Jagiełło-Lysiowa, young people who stayed on the farm in the period under study often decided to become profit-making farmers, and focus on the success of their individual businesses. That required machinery and technical know-how as well as a break with outdated concerns for the interests of the entire village, which had often amounted to an extended family. Jagiełło-Lysiowa draws attention to the frequent use of the words "my experiences" in these memoirs, while the "village milieu [środowisko] recede[d] deep into the background, appearing only when needed to illustrate the experiences of the author as an individual."⁵⁹

Thus People's Poland, like a latter-day Stolypin, eroded the communitarian rural milieu that had existed from time immemorial, promoting in its stead a hyper-bourgeois village entrepreneurship permeated by notions of "enriches-vous." Just as the state abandoned collectivization, so did social scientists forsake the socialist realist narrative of the gradual victory of "socialist relations of production" in the countryside: reading the work of 1960s Polish sociology, one has the impression that "individual farms" were there to stay.⁶⁰ Borrowing the term applied by György Péteri to

⁵⁹ Jagiełło-Lysiowa, "Od chłopa," 46. Emphasis added.

⁶⁰ Studies conducted in the late 1960s of the youngest farmers revealed little anticipation of the "dominance of socialized forms of farming." It was as attached to land ownership as the previous generation. And though the ethos of getting ahead for one's own sake may have struck roots, this generation valued more strongly than its predecessor the connection of family farms with farming cooperatives. Władysław Adamski, "Processes of Rationalization of Social Attitudes of Polish Peasants," in Jan Turowski and Lili Maria Szwegrub, eds., Rural Social Change in Poland (Wrocław, 1976), 249. At this juncture, cooperative, multi-family farms comprised a rather small proportion of Polish farms, however, including only 26,000 families, in an agricultural population totaling 5,485,000. Paul Lewis, "The Peasantry," David Lane and George Kolankiewicz, eds., Social Groups in Polish Society (London and Basingstoke, 1973), 51; Ryszard Manteuffel, "Changes in Individual Farming During the 30 years of the Polish People's Republic," in Turowski and Szwegrub, Rural Social Change, 156. This preference may have been encouraged by policies attempting to create dependence upon state-operated services. In 1970, "agricultural circles and

Hungarian economics, one might describe the mindset of the sociological field workers as "objectivist," but it would be hasty to conclude the absence of any ideological parameters to their work. For one thing, the authors could not openly address the ironies they had uncovered. For another, when discussing the obstacles faced by young people in realizing their dreams, Polish sociologists tended to "leave the politics out."⁶¹ Difficulties in getting a farm business off the ground are ascribed to generational conflict rather than state policies that often taxed private enterprise to death; indeed, memoir after memoir chide the elder generation -- Chałasiński's young generation of the 1930's -- for resisting change to "outdated" methods. In one case a father refused to consult farming brochures because they were supposedly "Communist propaganda." Here, at least, anti-communism is made to combine with outmoded values to obstruct the construction of modernity.

Precisely what sort of modernity this was is a question not addressed squarely in the work of Polish sociologists. Indeed, one might question whether modernity is the right word to describe what was emerging in the Polish countryside. In effect the most effective policy for promoting socialism became the stifling of modernization: productive individual farmers were heavily taxed and denied credit. The situation might best be

hamlet machine centers" held two times as many tractors as individual farms. In 1960, the proportion had been the opposite: individually owned tractors were two times as plentiful as those held in "agricultural circles and hamlet machine centers." But in those ten years the total number of tractors increased from 20,200 to 135,600. Still, Polish farming remained undercapitalized, with one statistical tractor to 83 hectares on individual farms in 1971. Manteuffel, "Changes," 159-60.

⁶¹ This included a blind spot toward ethnic groups, study of whose existence or disappearance did not coincide with the regime's interests, for example Germans in Upper Silesia, or Jews throughout Poland, including small towns and villages. Particularly notable is the failure to thematize the absence of Jews, despite the impact that had had on the lives of Polish peasants. Perhaps the desire for revenge against the lords coincided with a quiet satisfaction at the sudden disappearance of so visible a force in local trade and commerce. Of course it is also possible that the editors of postwar collections themselves censored memoirs dealing with Jews.

described as a stalemate. On the one hand, entrepreneurship of a sort was indeed possible in the 1960s (actually, after 1956), but it could not lead to unfettered, capitalist, market operations. On the other, because of Polish peasants' tenacious attachment to private property – deeply embedded in semi-conspiratorial arrangements,⁶² the road to socialism also appeared to be blocked. Historians now more or less agree that regimes calling themselves liberal, fascist, communist, and socialist can realize varying forms of modernity; what of a regime that resists any of those labels?

Whatever their precise source, the obstacles to young farmers' hopes to become "self-made" appear tenacious and paradoxical in their unpredictability. We are left again with a sense of the unstructured unevenness of transformation. A number of case studies indeed ascertained the destruction of old networks of influence that had continued through the war and were dominated by the largest, most successful local farmers, who in another context might have been called "kulaks." The new regime had unwittingly provided this "class" with organizational means to perpetuate their powers: local agencies of the Communist Party (PZPR) or the officially sponsored Union of Polish Peasants (ZSL: *Zjednoczone stronnictwo ludowe*), which they colonized and used to foster their own interests in the distribution of credit, farm machinery and the access to state-held land. Only by the late 1950s did medium farmers gradually displace this group in the local organs of state power. But whether this was a victory for the central state apparatus, or the independent entrepreneur seeking his place in rationally managed agriculture, is another matter. It seemed that traditional

⁶² One index of the difficulty encountered by the state in regulating property ownership is the fact that only 39 percent of the land transactions made between 1957 and 1967 were legalized. Lewis, "The Peasantry," 75. In 1970 some 5,485,000 Poles were engaged in agriculture; of these 4,676,000 worked on individual farms. Manteuffel, "Changes," 156.

patron-client relations had simply been transferred onto new groups. In the words of British sociologist Paul Lewis

Electrification plus People's Councils has not meant communism for the Polish peasantry. It has led rather to the adaptation of the peasant economy and society to a set of conditions established, and frequently changed, by the State without injecting any dynamic likely to bring about the transformation of its basic structures. Polish agriculture remains a peasant economy, neither capitalist -- i.e. involving the extension of labor-hire and the free accumulation and disposal of capital -- nor socialist.⁶³

From the foregoing one might imagine that the generation gap provides a way of making sense of the confusing transformations in the Polish village in the 1960s. But the young generation was itself not so pure a force for progress as some of the memoirs might suggest. Eugenia Jagiełło-Łysiowa shrewdly notes the hidden bearers of the costs of modernization in the countryside, specifically of the transformation of peasant into rural entrepreneur: women. While their husbands felt free to slice physical and psychic ties that had connected them to family and extended family, women remained caught in the webs of premodern expectations about "proper" tasks for male and female. If anything "emancipation" made things worse, as it tended to extend the former to embrace the latter, but not the reverse. Thus one young girl complained of doing the same work in the fields all day as the men, but then being expected

⁶³ Lewis, "The Peasantry," 80.

to serve them at table.⁶⁴ Women's work included labor-intensive animal breeding, which ruled out all thought of holiday or vacation. Such work devoured woman-hours on the small farms that predominated in Poland: a 1 hectare farm occupied 9.5 women for each man, but those above 10 hectares, on more specialized farms, only 1 woman.⁶⁵

Women defended themselves by escaping the village, or failing that, trying to marry someone not responsible for a farm. According to numerous reports, the "better-looking" females usually succeeded. They had been warned by older women, who commented bitterly upon the regime's promises of "equal rights." A sort of gender gap opened in villages around the possession of land: unlike their grandmothers, women no longer chose men for the number of acres (*morgi*) they possessed. Yet for men, old attitudes toward land persisted: nothing mattered more than how much they could plow. The only limit to the value of land, Ryszard Manteuffel has argued, was the gradual disappearance from it of women, and the corresponding "prospect of a lonely life on the farm."⁶⁶ Women left villages, and men often followed them. Women might not be able to change power relations on the farm, but they could "structurally" reinforce movement from country to city which improved their position.

Manteuffel, a Professor of economics emeritus at the time of writing the cited piece, further opined that the "only proper escape from this situation in the near future is to change the organization of the individual farm in such a manner that the men work in production and the women limit

⁶⁴ Respondent nr. 5,060, cited in Jagiełło-Lysiowa, "Od chłopca," 51.

⁶⁵ Manteuffel, "Changes," 156

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 171. Based on studies from the early 1960s, Bolesław Gałęski argued that for peasants "land is no longer decisive. In their desire to increase their incomes farmers now give precedence to the intensification of agriculture rather than increasing the size of their farms." "From Peasant to Farmer," in Nowak et al, eds., *Polish Sociology*, 241.

themselves to the household and the care of the children."⁶⁷ Such was the view of the scion of an ancient Central European noble family, and a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He reminds us that the unevenness of modernization in Poland extended far beyond the village.

One final realm within which to consider the successes of "socialist" transformation of the village was religion. Here the leading expert of the period was the Catholic priest Władysław Piwowski, and characteristic of the time he found little straightforward correlation between state policies and the emergence of an ideologically correct countryside.⁶⁸ He did, however introduce an unusual category of analysis: the parish, understood as a cluster of villages. In the regions he studied to the northeast of Warsaw [initially the Puławy district, then Warmia], Piwowski divided parishes into four categories of "openness" to the surrounding world. As measurements he took distance to nearby towns, access to roads and railways, population density, mechanization of agriculture, population employed outside agriculture, electrification, television sets per capita, education, presence of reading material, distribution of agricultural produce. He then made correlations to changes in religiosity. Here one notes an important departure from the sociology of the "socialist camp": he adopted the categories refined by French sociologists, especially of the school G. Le Bras.⁶⁹

There was good reason for this: the changes he recorded had little to do with atheistic propaganda, and more with the general trends of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Władysław Piwowski, Religijność wiejska w warunkach urbanizacji. Studium socjologiczne (Warsaw: Biblioteka "Więzi," 1971)

⁶⁹ For example: G. Le Bras, Études de sociologie religieuse. De la morphologie à la typologie. vol. II (Paris, 1956), cited in Ibid. 90.

"secularization" observed throughout Europe.⁷⁰ What was surprising for readers at the time was how weakly rooted Catholicism seemed even in rural Poland; perhaps less surprising for social scientists was the rather straightforward correlation that Piwowarski found between urbanization (including increased social mobility and education) and adherence to church teachings. As a study of one aspect of social change, Piwowarski's work would therefore seem to confirm the usefulness of the disputed categories of "urban" and "secular."

Piwowarski's study also confirms the traditional hostility of the Polish church to religious enlightenment. In studies of the Warmia region, he found that only 66.6 percent of peasants could adequately identify the "Lord Jesus" in terms of Catholic teaching, and that only 48 percent knew who the Pope was. One in five did not know the number of commandments, let alone what they were. Some 72.4 percent of peasants hesitated to read scripture for themselves, in accordance with traditional church proscriptions of reading sacred texts. Villagers did reflexively indicate acceptance of basic dogmas however; for example almost all (97.4 percent) professed belief in the Holy Trinity. As one moved toward larger towns, adherence to the church's teachings on morality diminished. Whereas only one in four villagers questioned the church's condemnation of divorce, in Olszytn the figure was 37 percent. Almost half the city-dwellers did not believe in hell. Summarizing Piwowarski's findings about Polish Catholics, sociologist E. Ciupak was reminded of a pyramid: "the dogmas are most accepted by peasants, domestic help, and people without defined professions. The next

⁷⁰ On these phenomena see also: David Martin, "Europa und Amerika: Säkularisierung oder Vervielfältigung der Christenheit – Zwei Ausnahmen und keine Regel," in Otto Kallscheuer, ed., Das Europa der Religionen : ein Kontinent zwischen Säkularisierung und Fundamentalismus (Frankfurt am

layers are composed of unskilled workers, above them are skilled workers and tradesmen (rzemieślnicy), and the least likely to believe are state officials and intellectuals."⁷¹

To say the least, Piwowarski and other sociologists of religion did not discuss the growth of a socialist worldview, either in villages or elsewhere. As a conservative if scientifically "objective" Roman Catholic Priest, Piwowarski had other concerns. Unlike the socialist state, he did not imagine that undoing modernization would reverse the church's growing irrelevance in modern environments. Nor did he romanticize rural life. Rather, his correlations between personal morality and his four types of parishes made him optimistic for the future: rather than rely upon an ethos "grounded in local culture" and enforced by sanctions of the "local milieu," he imagined that "changes in the rural milieu would favor the growth of more authentic moral attitudes, dependent upon professed faith."⁷² He had found lower incidence of alcoholism and familial and neighborly strife among more urbanized parishes. At the same time these parishes had worse records in terms of accepted ritual: like adherence to fasting.⁷³

Conclusion

Ultimately binaries such as modern/traditional, institutions/culture, rural/urban, old/young, intelligentsia/people, and structure/attitude break apart and dissolve in the messy reality of the Polish countryside. But do they lack all usefulness for those trying to understand the transformations of

Main, 1996), 161-80; Paul Michael Zulehner, Säkularisierung von Gesellschaft, Person und Religion (Vienna, Freiburg, Basel, 1973).

⁷¹ Edward Ciupak, Katolicyzm ludowy w Polsce: Studia socjologiczne (Warsaw, 1973), 101-05.

⁷² Religijność wiejska, 249.

the Polish countryside in the last seventy-five years? I think not. As the foregoing summary has shown, they provide a basic vocabulary for narratives that project a dynamic view of village life. Whether or not they seem insufficiently sophisticated for post-modern social sciences, they will prove indispensable to historians attempting to describe and analyze change in Polish society.

I have tried to suggest the promise of reading several generations of Polish sociology in terms of these binaries -- with particular attention to points of intersection. Yet a social history that does no more remains flat -- despite its power to reveal unsuspected tensions and continuities. It may exhaust itself in precariously balancing features of life that seem "old" and "new." In order to make better sense of the confusing *mélange* of traditional and modern in the Polish countryside, I would recommend incorporating a third dimension to studies of this type: the geographical. Even today, despite the worst efforts of ethnic cleansers, ideologues, and geo-political strategists, Poland does not approximate a plane of uniform socio-economic or socio-cultural development. One need only look at a road or railway map to see the lasting influence of policies adopted one hundred and more years ago in three differing empires: towns of Western Poland are far better interconnected than those further East. Village life in western areas has differed in important ways from that of Central and Eastern Poland. Arguably the transformation from traditional to modern took place more gradually in the industrialized Silesian region, which "took off" in the mid-19th century, and already by W.W.I constituted a thickly populated agglomeration of city, town, and village, where rural dwellers often commuted from farmstead to factory. This was still the situation observed in

⁷³ Ibid. 248.

the 1960s, with men rising at 4 am for work in cities like Wrocław or Katowice, and returning home in the late afternoon. In some cases, they remained at their well-paying jobs all week long.⁷⁴

Whether this more gradual penetration by surrounding urban areas permitted villages to defend elements of their way of life, or rather, whether precisely the gradual nature of the process more efficiently rooted out vestiges of tradition, is a question for further study. In any case, the work of Władysław Piwowarski, which remains the cutting-edge in Poland, shows the potential gains of a structured, geographical approach to sociological data. These issues might be studied as elements of "resistance," once a popular mode of analysis in Soviet studies.⁷⁵ On top of consideration of industrialization or urbanization one would need to add differentiations of land and climate, so important to studies of rural life. The Polish sociologist Michał Pohoski developed his comparative study of peasant migration to towns around size of family plots and education.

One can of course extend one's view beyond Poland's boundaries, and imagine East Central Europe as a whole in terms of resource distribution, climate, legal and cultural inheritance of former empires. To return to my own favorite binary, the supposedly non-existent divide between village and city: work on educational culture in the Czech, Polish, and East German communist parties suggests to me the potential rewards of analyzing how the "village" (patterns of family life, technological level, rhythms of the workplace, access to professions, etc.) comes to approximate the "city," with

⁷⁴ On this see for example the fine study by Anna Olszewska, *Wieś uprzemysłowiona. Studium społeczności lokalnej w powiecie opolskim* (Wrocław, 1969).

⁷⁵ In general Polish sociologists note a resistance among village dwellers to imports from the city during the early stages of sustained contact between the two milieus. Such resistance was expressed for example in ridiculing the adoption by peasants of such elements of city dress as shoes and slippers. For thoughts in this direction, see Dobrowolski, "Przeobrażenia świadomości," 375.

or without physical displacement of village dwellers to urban locations. The expected model of West European development was of course precisely the migration of millions of rural inhabitants to industrializing cities; factories sucked them off the land. The Czech case, however, did not conform, as factories were emplaced in the countryside in order to attract labor, and a working-class emerged that was predominantly rural. Czech industrial workers became modern without leaving their traditional village and small town settings. The incompleteness of this "modernization" is reflected in the low esteem among Czech working class functionaries for higher forms of education which had no place in traditional settings: Czech workers, after all, had reached the pinnacle of their social ladders -- and excellent wages -- with vocational schooling at most. The East German worker functionary was more likely to have come from a city, and adapted urban standards of social prestige to political programs, for example by conquering such bastions of class privilege as museums, opera houses, theaters or universities.⁷⁶

What I would propose therefore is to read sociologists' work historically for the sake of more systematic understanding of uneven development across Poland and East Central Europe. Why did one rural region exhibit more, another less, positive responses to aspects of "modern" life? From several cases one might then begin to generalize. Fortunately social historians do not need to start from scratch in such labors, because Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Greek and other sociologists of the interwar period left a rich heritage of mainly empirical studies on such things as the village and peasant stratum, urban labor (unemployment,

⁷⁶ This finding, based on the work of Peter Heumos, is developed in my book Captive University (Chapel Hill, 2000), 271.

wages, inflation, living conditions, work hygiene, leisure), the city, education, social movements, and the idea of the nation.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ These are some of the studies carried out by the left-leaning Warsaw Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego (Institute for Social Economy) in the 1930's. For a copious bibliography of Polish interwar work see Roman Fraćkowski and Jan Malanowski, eds., Bibliografia publikacji z zakresu badań nad strukturą społeczną w Polsce. Wydawnictwa zwarte i ciągłe, 1918-1972, (Warsaw, 1976). From the Czech side see above all the fabulous study of the Prague region: Zdeněk Ullrich, ed. Soziologische Studien zur Verstädterung der Prager Umgebung (Prague, 1938).

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