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### THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF HISTORY

By the term Warsaw school of history we indicate a historiographic trend represented by a group of Warsaw scholars, linked with the current of Positivism in Polish historiography. The individual historians belonging to this school, embarked on their scholarly work in different years: Stosław Łaguna (1833 - 1900) — still before the January Insurrection (1863 - 1864); Adolf Pawiński (1840 - 1896) — in 1867; Tadeusz Korzon (1839 - 1918) — not until 1870 if we discount his Russian thesis on jurisprudence (1860) and a few minor efforts; Aleksander Rembowski (1846 - 1906) — in 1873; and Władysław Smoleński (1851 - 1926) — in 1876. Their emergence as a school, however, appeared not earlier than in the 'seventies and 'eighties, of the 19th century, while the peak of their activity was reached in the 'eighties and 'nineties.<sup>1</sup> It was at that time that almost all the most important works of the representatives of the Łaguna trend were written. Beginning with 1900, the activity of this school gradually declined.<sup>2</sup>

The Warsaw school of history developed its activity in the times of "the Russian revenge for the January Insurrection," a period of intensive Russification, creating extremely difficult conditions for the development of Polish national culture. "Catastrophe threatened all spheres of scientific work" — wrote Władysław Smoleński. "Harbinger of evil was the Russification of the law courts, introduced in 1876, and from 1895 the destructive efforts of the superintendent of the Warsaw school district, Apukhtin, who drove the remaining Polish teachers from the grammar schools, introduced Russian youth, mainly graduates of Orthodox seminaries, to the

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<sup>1</sup> M. H. Serejski, *Przeszłość a teraźniejszość. Szkice i studia historiograficzne* [*The Past and the Present. Historiographic Sketches and Studies*], Wrocław—Warszawa—Kraków 1965, pp. 144 - 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Historiografia polska w dobie pozytywizmu — 1865 - 1900* [*Polish Historiography in the Age of Positivism*]. A documentary compendium, edited by R. Przelaskowski, Warszawa 1968.

University, with Polish scholarships. Apukhtin was greatly assisted by the censorship, malignantly attacking the national tradition and whatever was Polish."<sup>1</sup> The Imperial University, established on the ruins of the Main Warsaw School, and seen as an instrument of the Tsarist Russification policy, had a bad name among the Polish intelligentsia. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, the number of Polish students attending that University fell short of the number at the Polish University, then in the process of liquidation. Censorship policy was directed against everything connected with the "disruptive" aims of socialists and all left-wing currents, as also against whatever might contribute to the spread and consolidation of Polish national feelings. By this the hardest hit were historians and other humanists, frequently compelled to publish their works outside the Russian partition. Even so, the authorities did permit the sale on Polish territory of certain publications which were under absolute ban inside the Russian Empire. The Danish writer Georg Brandes, who visited Warsaw in 1886, correctly observed: "various natural science writings by Darwin, Haeckel, and even translations of their works are permitted, but there are very few historical publications."<sup>4</sup> The authorities hoped that the controversy aroused by the new scientific trends, linked with the current of Positivism, would divert the attention of the population from interest in their own culture, tradition and history — all regarded as dangerous. That undoubtedly explains why they thought much of A. Świętochowski, leader of Warsaw Positivism, considering him as one "distinguished by correct social opinions and known in literary circles as a learned and talented individual."<sup>5</sup>

From the closing down of the Main School, the Polish humanities had no institutional basis in the Kingdom. It was only in 1881 that the Dr J. Mianowski Fund was established with a view to supporting Polish scientific work. The shrewdness brought to its administration saved the fund "from hazardous adventurism, enabled it to exist and develop during the period of the terrorism of Hurko and Apukhtin."<sup>1</sup> In these conditions,

<sup>1</sup> W. Smoleński, *Studia historyczne [Historical Studies]*, Warszawa 1925, p. 286; cf. E. Staszyński, *Polityka oświatowa caratu w Królestwie Polskim [Educational Policy of Tsarism in the Polish Kingdom]*, Warszawa 1968, p. 14ff; T. G. Snytko, *Russkoje narodničestvo i polskoje obščestviennoje dviženije 1865-1881 gg.*, Moskva 1969, p. 29ff.

<sup>4</sup> J. Brandes, *Polska [Poland]*, translated by Z. Poznański, 1898, p. 92; analogical judgement in: A. Zalewski, *Towarzystwo Warszawskie [Warsaw Society]*, vol. II, Kraków 1888, p. 182. On the censorship policy in Russia: L. M. Dobrowolskij, *Zaprieščonnaja kniga v Rossii*, Moskva 1962.

<sup>5</sup> T. G. Snytko, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>1</sup> W. Smoleński, *Studia... [Studies]*, p. 287.

writers and scientists were able to meet in literary and scientific salons. For scientific societies, non-existent, were substituted the editorial boards of magazines, such as "Biblioteka Warszawska" (Warsaw Library) — "rather a scientific institution than a periodical publication" — and "Ateneum," which was in a sense "the organ of the non-existing Polish University;"<sup>7</sup> at the end of the century this role was to be played by *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna ilustrowana* [*The Great Universal Illustrated Encyclopaedia*].

Historians, active in Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century originated mainly from the gentry, progressively *déclassé* and moving to the towns.<sup>8</sup> The overwhelming majority of those in Warsaw who concentrated on history were of gentry origin (29 out of 37), including, among those of the Warsaw school: Stosław Łaguna, Tadeusz Korzon, Aleksander Rembowski and Władysław Smoleński. The first of these came from the *déclassé* gentry and was the son of a judge of the commercial tribunal; Tadeusz Korzon, though "born a member of the gentry"<sup>9</sup> was of a family that had long lost its property; Władysław Smoleński belonged to the Masovian gentry.<sup>10</sup> The only exception was Rembowski, scion of a wealthy gentry family from the Kalisz region.<sup>11</sup> Among the historians active in Warsaw (A. Jabłonowski, J. T. Lubomirski and A. Przewdziecki) were few representatives of wealthy gentry and aristocracy. The middle-class was much better represented, and above all the Jewish middle-class, whose representatives underwent at that time a rapid Polonization process (M. Bersohn, J. G. Bloch, H. Nusbaum, A. Kraushar); Adolf Pawiński was of Polish middle-class origin. A striking feature is the complete lack of sons of peasants among the Warsaw historians of the epoch in general, and the representatives of the Warsaw school in particular; passage from the peasant

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<sup>7</sup> A. Zaleski, op. cit., vol. II, p. 151; Z. Rabska, *Moje życie z książką* [*My Life with the Book*], vol. I, Wrocław 1959, p. 102; J. Kulczycka-Saloni, *Życie literackie Warszawy w latach 1864 - 1892* [*The Literary Life of Warsaw in the Years 1864 - 1892*], Warszawa 1970, p. 90ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Leskiewicz, *Warszawa i jej inteligencja po powstaniu styczniowym* [*Warsaw and Her Intelligentsia after the January Insurrection*], Warszawa 1961; J. Żarnowski, *Struktura społeczna inteligencji w Polsce w latach 1918 - 1939* [*Social Structure of the Intelligentsia in Poland in the Years 1918 - 1939*], Warszawa 1964, p. 70ff.

<sup>9</sup> T. Korzon, *Mój pamiętnik przedhistoryczny* [*My Diary of Prehistory*], Kraków 1912, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> M. H. Serejski, *Introduction to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne w Polsce* [*Schools of History in Poland*], Wrocław 1952, p. 33 - 34.

<sup>11</sup> J. Danielewicz, *Spoleczno-polityczne poglądy Aleksandra Rembowskiego* [*The Socio-political Opinions of Aleksander Rembowski*], *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska*, vol. X, 5, Sectio F, Lublin 1958, p. 156.

class to the intelligentsia was in those times a rarity. Historians of the Warsaw school of history were thus a group of intellectuals with a characteristically gentry and middle-class background. They all came from other parts of Poland — not one of them was born in Warsaw.

The Warsaw school historians were born between 1833 and 1851, which means that during the period of the January Insurrection they were between 12 and 30 years old. A closer examination of their biographies, however, enables us to include them all in the generation of the Insurrection, which had on all of them a marked impact and to a considerable extent determined their path in life, their attitudes and opinions. Stosław Łaguna, who during the years 1859 - 1861 was lecturer in the Polish law department in St. Petersburg, later twice refused the Chair offered to him at the Main School and took an active part in the Insurrection alongside the Whites; for a short time, he was director of the National Government of the Interior; arrested in 1864, he returned from deportation only in 1875.<sup>12</sup> Tadeusz Korzon participated in patriotic demonstrations in 1861. Sentenced to deportation, he spent the years 1862 - 1867 in exile and afterwards managed (1869) to reach Warsaw *via* Piotrków.<sup>13</sup> The sixteen-year-old Rembowski interrupted his studies at Kielce grammar-school to take part in the Insurrection,<sup>14</sup> and even the 12-year-old Smoleński participated in patriotic demonstrations in the school at Mława (1861) and two years later, envious of his older friends, he was eager to join the insurgents.<sup>15</sup> Only Pawiński adopted a completely different attitude. When the Polish law department was closed down in St. Petersburg, he continued his studies in Dorpat. "We were both eye witnesses of this social epidemic, much more dangerous than typhus" — wrote Włodzimierz Spasowicz concerning the

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<sup>12</sup> O. A wej de, *Pokazania i spiski*, in: *Powstanie styczniowe* [The January Insurrection] "Materiały i dokumenty," Moskwa 1961, p. 119ff; J. Bieliński, *Introduction to: S. Łaguna, Pisma* [Writings], Warszawa 1915, p. VI; J. Bardach, *Nauka historii państwa i prawa w Królestwie Polskim doby Szkoły Głównej* [Teaching the History of the State and Law in the Polish Kingdom at the Time of the Main School] "Roczniki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego," 1964, vol. 5, pp. 126 - 128.

<sup>13</sup> T. Korzon, *Mój pamiętnik...* [My Diary...], p. 82ff.; J. Włodarczyk, *Tadeusz Korzon, Główne koncepcje historyczne i historiozoficzne* [Tadeusz Korzon. Main Conceptions Regarding History and the Philosophy of History], Łódź 1958, pp. 3 - 5.

<sup>14</sup> J. Danielewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> W. Smoleński, *Fragment pamiętnika* [Part of the Diary], in: *Montesqujusz w Polsce wieku XVIII* [Montesquieu in 18th-century Poland], Warszawa 1927, p. 2.

attitudes of Pawiński and himself — “which led to the catastrophe of 1863. I as already mature and Pawiński, maturing, observed this movement in its preparatory stage; we were both of the opinion that it was a great calamity and with all our hearts were on the side of the Margrave [Wielopolski].”<sup>16</sup> This attitude to the January Insurrection markedly influenced the later fate of the historians of the Warsaw school.

As regards political affiliation, the historians of the Warsaw school were not of one mind. Pawiński was a “realist” in favour of reaching agreement, an advocate of “organic work,” leader of the “Ateneum circle” which grouped people with similar opinions and he also maintained close relations with W. Spasowicz. Being an advocate of conciliation, and a loyalist, “he was a declared enemy of any disruptive activity or agitation as well as of noisy dissensions. He made no secret of belonging to that party which sought through peaceful, productive, organic work to obtain for the people a more bearable existence, through a rise in living standards, the dissemination of knowledge and guaranteed possibilities for coming generations to employ their potential in the country and for the country. Whatever could be obtained by legal means, in conditions not transcending the sphere of general politics, found in him an ardent promoter and sincere advocate.”<sup>17</sup> Similar opinions were held by Rembowski, known in Warsaw as a sober-minded person, of moderate opinions, a liberal, tending more and more distinctly towards the right wing, his eyes fixed on the English model of capitalism, a man who soon managed to get well in with Warsaw financiers and the aristocracy. Pawiński won over for the “Ateneum” Stosław Łaguna, who also after his return from deportation, had managed to keep at a certain distance as a result of his own experiences as an insurgent. However, Szymon Askenazy’s<sup>18</sup> testimony is convincing as to the fact that, though Łaguna was extremely cautious, he did not become a prey to pessimistic attitudes and resignation. Slightly different was the position adopted by Korzon and Smoleński. Certainly, neither of them belonged to social or political radical circles. They were moderate liberals and adherents of “organic work,” determinedly rejecting the abandonment of hope and resignation from the struggle for independence. When Aleksander Świętochowski published his *Wskazania politycz-*

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<sup>16</sup> W. Spasowicz, *Adolf Pawiński jako historyk sejmiku polskiego* [Adolf Pawiński as a Historian of the Polish Regional Council], “Kwartalnik Historyczny,” 1879, p. 485; J. Maternicki, *Warszawskie środowisko historyczne 1832 - 1869* [The Warsaw Historical Circle 1832 - 1869], Warszawa 1970, pp. 260 - 262.

<sup>17</sup> A. Kraushar, *Ze wspomnień osobistych o Adolfie Pawińskim* [From Personal Memories of Adolf Pawiński], “Kwartalnik Historyczny,” 1897, p. 525.

<sup>18</sup> S. Askenazy, *Wczasy historyczne* [Historical Holidays], 2nd ed., Warszawa 1902, pp. 390 - 391.

ne [Political Indications] — “Korzon opposed him as sharply as in those times was permitted by the censorship. The subject of discussion at clandestine meetings in which participated Stosław Łaguna, Henryk Wohl, Stanisław Krzemiński, and Władysław Smoleński, was Korzon’s proposal to set up a national government abroad. This was somewhat to the liking to the former insurgents, but it was no more than a belated echo of the romantic feelings prevalent in 1863.”<sup>10</sup> Gradually, with the passage of years, Korzon evolved towards the right, even his sharply antagonistic feelings as regards Russia losing their edge, and came closer to the National Democratic Party. Smoleński too, even in the time of 1905 revolution, began to move in the same political direction. During World War I, Korzon even enthusiastically welcomed the Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich’s manifesto (though later he actually admitted that he “had been taken for a ride”)<sup>10</sup>, Smoleński, in a pamphlet entitled *Niech żywi nie tracą nadziei* [While there is Life there is Hope] sharply opposed both the partitioning powers and refused to work at Warsaw University because it was opened with the blessing of the Prussian authorities. It seems that of all the historians of the Warsaw school, it was Smoleński who held the least conciliatory political opinions.

The Warsaw school of history did not embrace all the historians active in Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century. At that time the Warsaw historical circle included representatives of several generations. The oldest generation was comprised of those born before 1810: W. A. Maciejowski, F. Maciejowski, R. Hube, L. Rogalski, K. W. Wóycicki, all of gentry origin and in general possessing — with the exception of the last-named — a high level of scientific education. W. A. Maciejowski had studied at the universities of Cracow, Wrocław, Berlin and Göttingen; his nephew F. Maciejowski — in Cracow, Wrocław and Warsaw. R. Hube, also a lawyer, had like the previous two studied in Warsaw and Berlin, L. Rogalski was a graduate of Vilna University. Only K. W. Wóycicki had no academic degree. The successive generation of historians, born between 1810 and 1830, had no possibility to study in their own country, in view of the closing down, following the November Insurrection (1830 - 1831), of the universities in Warsaw and Vilna; this inevitably affected their education. As a rule, the historians of this generation studied less intensely than their predecessors; since there were no academic institutions in the country, would-be scholars went to Russia (Petersburg, Kiev), less frequently to

<sup>10</sup> W. Kamieniecki, *Historycy i politycy warszawscy 1900 - 1950* [Warsaw Historians and Politicians 1900 - 1950], Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences, III-109, p. 3, T. Korzon, p. 7v.

<sup>20</sup> B. Limanowski, *Pamiętniki* [Diaries], vol. III, Warszawa 1961. p. 334.

the West but no longer exclusively to Germany. It is characteristic of this generation that the social composition of the historians underwent a slight change: those of gentry origin, especially the *déclassé* gentry (Sobieszczański, Bartoszewicz) were joined by representatives of the aristocracy and the middle class. Those of the generation born between 1830 - 1850, including all representatives of the Warsaw school of history, had a much more thorough education: only 3 out of 21 had no academic degree. Also characteristic is the fact that the 1839 - 1849 age group studied either in the Warsaw Main School or abroad; Cracow University accounted for only one individual. As regards foreign universities, these were mainly Russian: Petersburg (Łaguna, Okolski, Pawiński) and Moscow (Korzon, Karłowicz, Okolski). As formerly, scholars on their way from Russia to the West sometimes paused to study further in Dorpat (Pawiński). They made their way above all to the German universities — in Berlin (Plebański, Dydyński, Karłowicz, Krzemiński, Rembowski), in Wrocław (Plebański, Dydyński), in Göttingen (Pawiński), Leipzig (Goldberg, Świętochowski), Jena (Okolski), Erlangen (Gajsler). Much more rarely they reached the universities in Paris (Krzemiński, Okolski, Karłowicz) and London (Okolski). Of the 19 historians having an academic degree, only 8 studied in a single institution of higher learning; in 5 cases this was the Main School, in two — the universities in Petersburg and Moscow, and in one — that in Warsaw. As many as 11 of the total of 19 studied at more than one institution of higher learning, 9 of them at German universities. By contrast with the previous generation, these were as a rule serious studies, duly completed. Some of these scholars who for a short or a longer period devoted themselves to history were satisfied with lesser degrees — granted on completion of studies or *magister* diplomas — but a considerable number sought higher degrees at Russian universities or wrote their doctoral theses at German universities. Those who, like the historian of law T. Dydyński or A. Pawiński, wished after 1863 to continue their scientific careers in Russian institutions of higher learning were compelled despite habilitation at the Main Warsaw School to repeat post-graduate studies. Though a doctor's degree, or other corresponding degree or scientific title, were in those times of no special significance as regards taking up scientific work in history, since such was not institutionalized in the conditions of the Russian partition and was a matter personal to each researcher, there was no doubt that those who had obtained doctors' degrees as a rule revealed a higher level in their scientific studies.

The number who studied law increased among Warsaw historians as compared with the previously mentioned generation. Of the 19 with higher studies 9 had studied law, 7 were historians and one of the latter (Pawiń-

ski) had first studied law. Almost all the most outstanding historians of this generation had studied law. Among the notable representatives of the historical sciences, actually only Plebański and Pawiński had studied history; in the next generation, they were joined by T. Wierzbowski. This is due to a number of factors, but above all to the conditions existing in the Polish Kingdom during Apukhtin's time. A Pole who chose the profession of jurist might still achieve a relatively independent position, while he had less and less access to the profession of teacher. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that for the generation which had placed the slogan "knowledge means power" on its banners and had started to work from scratch, law studies, arousing interest in new social and economic problems, were undoubtedly much more attractive than purely historical studies. No wonder therefore that the German universities with their *Staatswissenschaften*, modern economy and sociology were most attractive for these young Poles, too. Even so, some of them decided to study history. Some studied at home in the Main Warsaw School, where was lecturing Plebański, a historian with modern education, who had studied in Berlin under the great L. von Ranke, and Assistant Professor Pawiński, slightly younger than Plebański, who had not only studied under Ranke but had also been awarded his doctor's degree at the seminarium of G. Waitz in Göttingen. Such a doctor's degree was in those days highly valued in Europe, because studies at Waitz's seminarium were considered a true "scientific baptism."<sup>21</sup> J. Karłowicz, awarded a degree by Moscow University (1857), studied under the famous T. Granovskij, whose lectures were attended also by Korzon, during his law studies.

The youngest historians who started scientific activity in Warsaw in the second half of the 19th century, were representatives of the generation born between 1850 and 1870. We have already mentioned two of them: Smoleński, a graduate of the Law Department at Warsaw University (1874), and Wierzbowski who studied with Pawiński and two years later, in 1889 was awarded in Warsaw the degree of candidate of sciences in history, but wrote in Petersburg the doctor's thesis which opened up for him a university career in Warsaw.

In view of all this, what may be said to have been the intellectual structure of the historians representing the Warsaw school of history? It is difficult to speak of a uniform structure: it was a structure in accord with a general cross-section of the entire Warsaw environment. The school included more scientists who had studied law than was the case in general in Warsaw historical circles, since only one of the scholars had had a strictly

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. J. W. Thompson, *History of Historical Writing*, vol. II New York 1942, p. 200.



historical education, though he, too had for some time studied law. Despite the existing differentiation, the historians of the Warsaw school were a group representing the most modern scientific field in Warsaw.

Objective, unfavourable conditions for scientific work in the Polish Kingdom after 1863, together with the sociopolitical and also intellectual structure of the historians belonging to the Warsaw school, exerted a decisive influence on the careers of these scholars. Pawiński, who was connected with the Main Warsaw School, and later with the Imperial Warsaw University, and further also worked in the Archives had the easiest road. Laguna worked in the editorial board of the "Ateneum," which limited his possibilities as regards conducting scientific research. Much more fortunate was the wealthy Rembowski, who after a short period of work in the judiciary (1874 - 1876) was appointed director of the Krasieński Library, which gave him excellent conditions for work. Korzon arrived in Warsaw with nine roubles in his pocket, gave private lessons at the outset and kept a lodging house. He had a relatively calm post in the years 1875 - 1886 as lecturer at Leopold Kronenberg's Commercial School, but was removed for political reasons and deprived of the right to teach. He took a job with the railways and continued to give private lessons till 1897, when, appointed director of the Zamoycki Library, his financial troubles came to an end. W. Smoleński worked as legal assessor (1879) and later (1899) as councillor at the office of the State Treasury Attorney, simultaneously teaching the history of Poland in public boarding-schools and at clandestine courses, keeping out of sight of the police. In his diary, he mentioned the fact that from 1876 until Poland regained her independence, he lectured at 15 boarding-schools, in one of them for 30 and in another — from 1878 — for a full 40 years.<sup>12</sup> In independent Poland he was given a Chair at Warsaw University.

The Warsaw school of history is often, with complete justice, called Positivistic. As regards both the social attitudes and the scientific attitudes of its representatives, it neatly fits into the cultural trend known as Warsaw Positivism. From this point of view, it may be approached as a historical school of Warsaw Positivism. Like this entire movement, the school did not set out to construct any kind of philosophical system or any system concerning the philosophy of history. It concentrated its attention on "the fatal influence of romantic ideology on Poland's economic, political and cultural life. Simultaneously, certain assumptions and elements of the Positivistic philosophy were taken over. As a rule Polish historians adopted a very cautious, eclectic, indeterminate attitude and did not declare

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<sup>12</sup> W. Smoleński, *Fragment... [Part...]*, p. 25; *Studia... [Studies...]*, p. 288ff.

themselves as Positivists. They did not attempt to offer a theoretical justification for a kind of new system. They included nobody of the standing of Henry T. Buckle, Hippolyte Taine or Karl Lamprecht. Therefore, as regards the Positivistic historians in Poland, it should be borne in mind, that as a rule there were among them no consistent adherents of this trend; rather they were close to it and consciously or subconsciously to some extent made use of its philosophy."<sup>23</sup> It is exceptionally characteristic that the historians of the Warsaw school, like the entire Warsaw Positivistic trend, preferred English to French Positivistic scientific thought, of course indirectly, through the intermediary of west-European historiography. None of these historians was an adherent of any of the Positivistic philosophical systems.

In maintaining that the Warsaw school is Positivistic, we mean that it belongs to a broader cultural trend, called Warsaw Positivism; we do not imply an attitude towards the philosophy of positivism. But we may nevertheless speak of the Positivism in the trend of interest to us in a different sense — namely, as regards the conception of science it accepted. If we base ourselves on the fact that Positivism in science was characterized by acceptance of the cognitive attitude, requiring the interests of science to be limited to observation of "phenomena" and "scientific facts," rejecting speculation on or search for ultimate origins, then certainly all the historians of the Warsaw school entirely shared such opinions and gave effect to them in their own scientific work.<sup>24</sup> This was closely connected with the fight they waged against all kinds of romantic philosophy of history and against traditional providentialism and finally also against the custom of nonprofessional groups, friends of history, who in gathering material merely imitated philosophical trends already obsolete. Following west-European examples, the historians of the Warsaw school took up the fight for the modernization of history in Poland. "In the West," wrote W. Smoleński in a review of a certain non-professional historical pamphlet, "the reader seeks in a work for method, new material, precision of conclusions, etc., for things that convince him; in our country, it is not method and material, nor the precision of the reasoning or originality of opinions that hold the reader; what people seek in a book is above all humaneness."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> M. H. Serejski, *Introduction to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne... [Schools of History...]*, p. XXI.

<sup>24</sup> J. Skarbek, *Koncepcja nauki w pozytywizmie [The Conception of Science in Polish Positivism]*, Wrocław—Warszawa—Kraków 1968, p. 7ff.; A. F. Grabski, *Koncepcja nauki w historiografii polskiej doby pozytywizmu [The Conception of Science in the Polish Historiography of the Age of Positivism]*, "Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki," 1969, No. 4, pp. 637 - 640.

<sup>25</sup> "Prawda," 1882, pp. 284 - 285.

Though certain of the historians of the Warsaw school (Rembowski, Smoleński) had in their youth a period when they were captivated by H. T. Buckle,<sup>21</sup> just as were the young "Bucklists" from the Main School in the later 'sixties,<sup>22</sup> it is not in this current — as extreme as it was of short duration — that the roots of the historiographical trend that interests us should be sought. This school, after all, had its origins not in an amateurish fascination by scientific innovations; its aim was to overcome such fascination assisted by Positivistic moderation, an attitude which still in 1868 was represented by A. Pawiński in a lecture on Buckle which aroused indignation among young hot heads.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the Warsaw school of history had its forerunners in the Polish pre-Positivists, active in the period before the insurrections.

Acceptance of the Positivistic conception of science also involved the obligation to find explanations for historical facts and events. This, however, did not mean merely explanation of causal relations, but also aimed at the discovery of objective laws governing historical phenomena. Irrespective of their attitude towards the theory of historical laws in their various forms, proposed by contemporary scientific thought, the historians of the trend under discussion were adherents of the philosophical theory of determinism, accepting the view that all phenomena are the necessary outcome of previously existing conditions.<sup>24</sup> The Warsaw Positivists in general, and the historians of the Warsaw school in particular, readily accepted the statement that history "develops in accordance with unchanging laws," but they more and more frequently drew attention in this connection to the fact that "human history is the outcome of a variety of forces, or the result of many physical, moral and intellectual causes, that history develops with a specific energy, which arises from the energy of individuals, subject in their activity and behaviour to certain laws"<sup>25</sup> —

<sup>21</sup> A. Rembowski, *Adolf Pawiński*, "Tygodnik Ilustrowany," 1890, vol. I, No. 6, p. 82; by the same author, *Pisma [Writings]*, Warszawa 1901, p. 462; Smoleński's autobiography in Zieliński Library in Płock, quoted in: M. H. Serejski, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej [Outline History of Polish Historiography]*, vol. II, Łódź 1956, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> A. F. Grabski, *Warszawscy entuzjaści H. T. Buckle'a. Z dziejów warszawskiego pozytywizmu [Warsaw Enthusiasts of H. T. Buckle. From the History of Warsaw Positivism]*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny," 1969, No. 4, pp. 853 - 864.

<sup>23</sup> A. Pawiński, *H. T. Buckle*, "Biblioteka Warszawska," 1868, vol. IV, pp. 349 - 395; cf.: A. F. Grabski, *Warszawscy entuzjaści... [Warsaw Enthusiasts...]*, pp. 856, 860, 862; by the same author, *Polish Enthusiasts and Critics of Henry T. Buckle*, "Organon," vol. VII, 1970, pp. 268 - 269.

<sup>24</sup> More on this subject cf. M. H. Serejski, *Przeszłość... [The Past...]*, p. 151ff.; A. F. Grabski, *Koncepcja nauki... [The Conception of Scholarship...]*, p. 637ff.

<sup>25</sup> F. Krupiński, *Szkoła pozytywna [The Positive School]*, "Biblioteka Warszawska", 1868, Vol. III, pp. 443 - 444.

in brief, that the social process is extremely complicated and the discovery of the laws governing it is by no means simple, as is the case in the natural sciences, which so attracted people in those times. It should be admitted, however, that the historians of the trend of interest to us were characterized early on by considerable optimism as regards the possibilities of historical science as regards discovering the laws governing history — as witness many statements made by A. Pawiński, Rembowski, Korzon and Smoleński.<sup>41</sup> Only Łaguna, though he, too, like the rest, accepted determinism as concerning history, did not deny the existence of laws governing history, but sceptically emphasized that “the formulation of the laws of historical development are in the present state of science perhaps desirable, but still a somewhat remote postulate.”<sup>42</sup> However, in the practical historiographical work of all the scientists referred to, the problem of laws in history was as a rule considered of lesser importance, a feature arising out of an increasing scepticism as to the existing possibilities of historical science as regards the discovery of laws in history. Pawiński even expressed doubts as to the sensibility of establishing any “laws,” ever and above a normal examination of source material. A similar attitude was adopted by Rembowski, while Korzon and Smoleński later emphasized in their scientific work, that the discovery of laws tends to be a postulate for the future, “a question of belief” and the expression of “the unsatisfied aspirations” of historical science.<sup>43</sup> Thus there appear among the representatives of the trend under discussion characteristic divergences between the postulated conceptions of science and the implemented conceptions. In their practical work, they did not, as a rule, try to discover generally binding laws, limiting themselves to a reconstruction of the past and to

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<sup>41</sup> A. Pawiński, *H. T. Buckle*, pp. 358, 376; A. Rembowski, *Jan Ostroróg i jego Memorial o naprawie Rzeczypospolitej* [*Jan Ostroróg and His Memorial on the Improvement of the Republic*] Warszawa 1884, p. 3; by the same author, *Introduction to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne w Polsce* [*Schools of History in Poland*], Warszawa 1898, pp. 8-9; T. Korzon, *Listy otwarte, mowy, rozprawy, rozbiory* [*Open Letters, Speeches, Dissertations, Analyses*], vol. I, Warszawa 1915, pp. 123, 127; W. Smoleński, *Szkoły historyczne...* [*Schools of History...*] p. 144; cf. M. H. Serejski, *Introduction to W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne...* [*Schools of History...*], p. LXIV.

<sup>42</sup> S. Łaguna, *Pisma* [*Writings*], p. 328.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. Pawiński, *H. T. Buckle*, p. 379; by the same author, *O życiu i pismach Macaulay'a* [*Macaulay's Life and Writings*], in: T. B. Macaulay, *Dzieje Anglii* [*The History of England*], vol. I, Warszawa 1873, p. III; W. Smoleński, *Studia* [*Studies*], pp. 300-301; T. Korzon, *Listy* [*Letters*], vol. I, p. 127; M. H. Serejski, *Introduction to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne...* [*Schools of History*], pp. LXIV-LXV; A. F. Grabski, *Koncepcja* [*A Conception...*], pp. 639-640.

an explanation of causal relations, as also to the establishment of historical laws, sometimes only such as might be referred to laws formulated on the basis of other sciences.

Positivistic determinism directed historians towards what was then called "domestic history." The very little interest shown by scholars of the Warsaw school in political history is extremely characteristic; it was in fact only Korzon who did show some slight interest in it. As a school, these historians concentrated on socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural history. In their studies they (above all Pawiński and Rembowski) made ample use of the comparative method in writing history, being convinced that the correct characterization of the historical process enables the elements of one system to be used to reconstruct another. Ample use was made, also, of the method of historical retrogression.

However, quite far-reaching conclusions were sometimes drawn, arising out of the conviction that there was in history nothing accidental, nothing without causal relations. And thus Rembowski maintained that "historical necessity" sometimes makes its appearance in history. Discarding accidental and providential factors from the historical process he fought, on the basis of the conception of historical necessity, any speculation on the part of historians as to what might have been, and praised them when they avoided in their works "the tempting word 'if', which provides opportunities for futile pyrotechnics in the philosophy of history or politics."<sup>44</sup>

The attempt to impart to history a more scientific aspect was in the case of the Warsaw school of history connected with an attempt to present own, precisely defined scientific methods and endeavours with a view to maximum objectivity in historical research. The representatives of this trend accepted a typically objectivistic conception of science, based on the model of the exact and natural sciences. Consequently there arose differences in the evaluation of the function of history, expressed when discussing the known maxim of Cicero concerning history as the teacher of life. Rembowski held the opinion that it could function as *magistra vitae* subject to ridding itself of all prejudice, basing its judgements on truth, and he compared history to Themis, the goddess of law and justice, weighing opposing claims "*suum cuique*."<sup>45</sup> This objectivism led Smoleński to demand a break away from the Ciceronian definition of history and

<sup>44</sup> A. Rembowski, *Pisma [Writings]*, vol. III, Warszawa 1906, p. 665, cf. A. Rembowski, *Sejm Czteroletni Kalinki. Studium krytyczne [Kalinka's "Four-Year Sejm". A Critical Study]*, Kraków 1884, pp. 92-93; M. H. Serejski, *Przeszłość [The Past...]*, p. 151; J. Danielewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> A. Rembowski, *Preface to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne... [Schools of History...]*, p. 5, A. Rembowski, *Pisma [Writings]*, vol. III, pp. 324-326.

recognition of the fact that the teaching of history does not intrinsically involve educational or moralizing, but exclusively cognition.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the historians of the Warsaw school approached nearer and nearer to scientism, so well expressed by Leopold Ranke's famous formula. Smoleński wrote: "the problem as to whether it is one of the functions of history to serve practical matters, is solved by the general ideas about science, exclusively concerned with ascertaining and explaining phenomena. It is all one to a botanist whether plant properties which he discovers are to be used by medicine or for cooking; equally a historian has no responsibility to draw practical conclusions from the past."<sup>37</sup> A similar attitude was adopted by Korzon.<sup>38</sup> It should, however, be emphasized that even those who expressed such extreme opinions as those cited here were aware of the difficulties involved in the attempt to introduce complete objectivism into historical research and sometimes voiced doubts as to whether such is in any way possible. Hence the considerable attention paid to research methods designed to achieve greater scientific objectivity and also to the critical method which it was hoped would help the scientist to overcome subjectivism of all kinds. They drew a direct analogy in this connection between historical studies and the establishment in law courts of "material facts."

Though the achievements of the Warsaw school of history in the historiographical field found expression in a large number of works embracing a variety of "domestic" historical problems of Poland, from the early Middle Ages to the first half of the 19th century, it was not found possible to devise a new synthesis of the national history comparable with the syntheses of Joachim Lelewel or Michał Bobrzyński. Władysław Smoleński's synthetic outline was intended to serve mainly as a text-book.<sup>39</sup> It can scarcely be maintained that the Warsaw school as a whole represented a uniform and new approach to the history of Poland. Stosław Łaguna — in his capacity as analyst — made no statement whatsoever on this subject, while the opinions of other representatives of this trend were markedly differentiated. Most controversial was the attitude adopted by Adolf Pawiński of whom W. Zakrzewski wrote that "his historical judgement was extremely close to and almost identical with Józef Szujski's."

<sup>36</sup> W. Smoleński, *Szkoły historyczne...* [*Schools of History...*], pp. 143 - 144; W. Smoleński, *Pisma* [*Writings*], vol. III, Kraków 1901, p. 423.

<sup>37</sup> W. Smoleński, *Szkoły historyczne...* [*Schools of History...*], p. 143; M. H. Serejski, *Przeszłość...* [*The Past...*], p. 150; A. F. Grabski, *Koncepcja* [*The Conception...*], p. 639.

<sup>38</sup> T. Korzon, *Listy...*, [*Letters...*], vol. III, Warszawa 1916, p. 75.

<sup>39</sup> W. Smoleński (pseudonym: W Grabieński), *Dzieje narodu polskiego* [*The History of the Polish People*], parts 1 - 2, Kraków 1897 - 1898.

Tadeusz Korzon simply considered Pawiński a member of the Cracow school.<sup>40</sup> But Zakrzewski's statement has a profound implication since it is the defence of a historian charged with excessive loyalty to the partitioning power. Further, the statement does not seem to be accurate. Adolf Pawiński was certainly no extreme "optimist" in his approach to the national history. He studied the sources in the past that led at a later period to the decline of the state, etc., but even so, and although cautiously, he quite definitely opposed the pessimistic conception developed by the Cracow school. This he did in the review of the third volume of *Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta* [Poland's Domestic History During the Reign of Stanisław August] by Tadeusz Korzon, frankly declaring that the work of the Warsaw historian "will take the wind out of the sails of foreign publicists and historiographers, those who have picked on the fact that Polish authors have passed over in silence or dealt somewhat indulgently with certain aspects, presented exclusively the darkest features of the times, turning a blind eye to the bright aspects of a renaissance which illuminated the gloomy chapters of Poland's history during the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski." <sup>41</sup> Other representatives such as Aleksander Rembowski, Tadeusz Korzon and above all Władysław Smoleński <sup>42</sup> quite distinctly formulated "optimistic" opinions, which ran contrary to the opinions of historians of the Cracow school. The first of these engaged in polemics with Józef Szujski's conception as to the anomaly of Poland's development, pointing to the fact (and here he had Pawiński as his ally), that the institutions of the former Republic had their equivalents in the West. Emphasizing the significance of the reform movement in the days of Stanisław August, he opposed the theory that Poland was responsible for her own decline. This was done with even greater clarity by Korzon who in his important work *Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta* [Poland's Domestic History During the

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<sup>40</sup> W. Zakrzewski, *Adolf Pawiński*, Petersburg 1897, pp. 103-104; Korzon, *Listy...* [Letters...], vol. II, Warszawa 1916, pp. 114-115; after J. Maternicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-261.

<sup>41</sup> A. Pawiński, *Z piśmiennictwa historycznego* [Historical Writings]. "Kraj," literary supplement, 1885, No. 47, p. 26; J. Włodarczyk, *Tadeusza Korzona "Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski" w świetle krytyki współczesnej* [Tadeusz Korzon's "The Domestic History of Poland" in the Light of Contemporary Critical Reviews], "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego," Series I, No. 4, 1956, p. 150.

<sup>42</sup> Their opinions are reviewed by: M. H. Serejski, *Zarys...* [Outline...], vol. II, p. 75ff.; the same, *Introduction to: W. Smoleński, Szkoły historyczne...* [Schools of History...], p. Lff; the same author, *Przeszość...* [The Past...], p. 139ff.; J. Danielewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-194; J. Włodarczyk, *passim*; further biographies in: *Historiografia polska w dobie pozytywizmu* [Polish Historiography in the Age of Positivism], pp. 86, 114, 119.

*Reign of Stanisław August*], and in other works, drew attention to the mechanics of the internal process aimed at recovery, emphasized the role of the patriotic gentry and middle class in the struggle for "renaissance" and the salvation of the nation, and referred to the opinions voiced in the past by Tadeusz Kościuszko and Joachim Lelewel to the effect that Poland had collapsed precisely at the time when she had managed to elevate herself to "democratic levels of rule" and had revealed the greatest energy and the most profound patriotism. Smoleński completed this picture by indicating the beneficial results brought about by the Enlightenment in the matter of overcoming ignorance, backwardness, and the corruption of the times of the Saxon kings. All four of these researchers opposed, though in different ways and to a different degree, the pessimism of the Cracow trend which scouted any optimistic view of the national history.

The Warsaw school, developing its activity in the 'eighties and 'nineties of the 19th century, was comprised of historians who were contemporaries of the second generation of the Cracow historical school, represented by Michał Bobrzyński and Stanisław Smolka. The contention that the Warsaw current constituted an absolute refutation of the Cracow is an oversimplification. All the scholars of the Warsaw school undoubtedly represented theoretical opinions and logical methods different from those of Walerian Kalinka and Józef Szujski, who did not accept the Positivistic model of historical science; any more distinct concurrence will only appear in connection with the theoretical and methodological conceptions of Bobrzyński and Smolka, though here, too, it is difficult to speak about identical features. As regards the approach to the Polish historical process, the Warsaw school, with the exception of Łaguna, really did refute the Cracow conception. However, that critical attitude to the conception of national history, as developed by the first generations of scientists of the Cracow current, did not immediately make its appearance in the Warsaw school. That very same Władysław Smoleński who in 1886 had launched such sharp criticism against the historical pessimism of Walerian Kalinka, Józef Szujski and Michał Bobrzyński had, in fact, five years earlier shared Szujski's opinion as regards the history of Poland.<sup>4</sup> and a similar attitude was often reflected in the Warsaw press, linked with the Positivistic trend. The Warsaw Positivists were then very far from indicting the Cracow trend in such formulations as the one of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski who in the 'sixties and 'seventies charged Szujski with a desire

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<sup>4</sup> "Prawda," 1881, p. 629; cf.: the review by A. G. Bem, *ibidem*, 1881, pp. 104 - 106.



to be treated as pontifical and with groundless integral pessimism in the evaluation of the national history.<sup>44</sup>

The Warsaw school of history does not constitute an entirely cohesive unity. The novelties it introduced into Polish historiography were first the conception of historical scholarship — accepted by the representatives of the Warsaw school — and later the attitude to national history. The historical “optimists” of the Warsaw school, despite all their criticism of the tradition of Joachim Lelewel, based themselves on the optimistic historical conception of the greatest Polish historian of the epoch of Romanticism; what is more — they openly admitted their adherence to this tradition. Though the statement about the “Warsaw optimism” being the nucleus of the coming re-orientation of Polish historical science at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries is undoubtedly an exaggeration,<sup>45</sup> one should not underestimate the role played by the Warsaw school in preparing the later transformations of national historiography in Poland with a view to future revision of the synthetic opinions of the Cracow school and to preparing a new conception of national history, based on the aspiration to independence. In this sense, the Warsaw historiographical trend was the precursor — by no means the only one — of the great turning point in Polish historiography, executed by the following generations of historians.

*(Translated by Maria Paczyńska)*

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<sup>44</sup> J. I. Kraszewski, *Z roku 1866, Rachunki przez B. Bolesławitę* [From 1866. Calculations of B. Bolesławita], Poznań 1867, pp. 251 - 252.

<sup>45</sup> W. Sobieski, *Optymizm i pesymizm w historiografii polskiej* [Optimism and Pessimism in Polish Historiography], in: M. H. Serejski, (ed.) *Historycy o historii* [Historians on History], vol. I, Warszawa 1963, pp. 574 - 575.