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WORKERS AND URBAN REFORM IN THE KINGDOM  
OF POLAND 1905–1915<sup>1</sup>

**Zarys treści:** Artykuł stanowi próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, w jaki sposób kwestia robotnicza wpłynęła na kształt debaty o przyszłym samorządzie miejskim w Królestwie Polskim w trakcie i po rewolucji 1905 roku. Przy założeniu, że wydarzenia lat 1905–1907 stanowiły „rewolucję miejską”, zanalizowano prasę i publikacje fachowe z tego okresu. Szczegółowo omówiono wpływ kwestii robotniczej na wizje miejskiej nowoczesności oraz koncepcje „municipalnego socjalizmu” i „narodowego kapitalizmu”, które wyłoniły się w ramach toczonych wówczas debat i zdominowały oblicze polityki miejskiej w II Rzeczypospolitej.

**Content outline:** The article is an attempt to answer the question of how the working class impacted the shape of the debate about planned urban self-government in the Kingdom of Poland during and after the Revolution of 1905. Recognizing the fact that the events between 1905 and 1907 were an “urban revolution,” I analyze press articles and books on the subject published at that time. What follows is a detailed description of the impact of the working class on visions of urban modernity and concepts of “municipal socialism” and “national capitalism” which emerged during these debates and dominated urban politics in the Second Polish Republic.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rewolucja 1905 roku, Królestwo Polskie, klasa robotnicza, reforma miejska, samorząd miejski, socjalizm municypalny, narodowy kapitalizm

**Keywords:** Revolution of 1905, Russian Poland, working class, urban reform, urban self-government, municipal socialism, national capitalism

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## Introduction

Intensive industrialization and urbanization in nineteenth-century Europe changed entire societies in an irreversible way. Eric Hobsbawm pointed out that “industrial work itself, in its characteristic structure and setting, and urbanisation – life in the rapidly growing cities – were certainly the most dramatic forms of the new life; new because even the continuity of some local occupation or town concealed far-reaching changes.”<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth century was an epoch of a deep transition of European cities, which became the subject of numerous debates and reforms.<sup>3</sup> In this article I focus on the way in which the issue of the working class determined the debate about planned municipalities in the Kingdom of Poland and their desired scope of activity during the Revolution of 1905 and in the following years.<sup>4</sup> The announcement of the introduction of urban self-government (which eventually did not take place before the First World War) kickstarted an interesting discussion about the socio-economic, cultural and sanitary conditions in the Kingdom’s cities. The debate was held in all types of press publications as well as specialized books, brochures and drafts.<sup>5</sup>

As a highly significant phenomenon, the working masses were not only just a new social agent but also an important challenge for the public opinion, formed both by the old and the new economic and cultural elites. As Hobsbawm noted, “paradoxically, the more the middle class increased and flourished, diverting resources towards its own housing,

<sup>2</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848–1875*, London, 1977, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> F. Lenger, *European Cities in the Modern Era, 1850–1914*, Leiden and Boston, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> I have previously published several papers focused on different aspects of the topic. See: K. Śmiechowski, “Searching for the Better City: Urban Discourse during the Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, vol. 13, 2014, No. 3, pp. 71–96; id., “Hierarchia czy demokracja? Wizja stosunków społecznych w miastach Królestwa Polskiego (na przykładzie dyskusji o samorządzie miejskim w trakcie rewolucji 1905 roku),” *Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX wieku*, vol. 14, 2015, pp. 103–119; id., “Kwestia mieszkaniowa w dużych miastach Królestwa Polskiego na początku XX wieku jako zagadnienie polityczne,” in: *Architektura w mieście, architektura dla miasta. Społeczne i kulturowe aspekty funkcjonowania architektury na ziemiach polskich lat 1815–1914*, red. M. Getka-Kenig, A. Łupienko, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 13–28.

<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, this topic has not yet proved interesting enough for most Polish historians. The only in-depth analysis of the struggles to establish urban self-government in the Kingdom of Poland before the World War I was carried out by American author Theodore Weeks. See: Th.R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914*, DeKalb, 2008, pp. 152–171.

offices, the department stores which were so characteristic a development of the era, and its prestige buildings, the less went relatively to the working-class quarters, except in the most general form of social expenditure – streets, sanitation, lighting and public utilities.”<sup>6</sup>

The entrance of workers into the public sphere was a common experience for all European societies, both Western and Eastern. However, in East Central Europe it happened with delay and under some specific conditions resulting from the peripheral and underdeveloped status of this region. Nonetheless, the Russian, Austro-Hungarian or Polish struggles with industrialization and transformation of urban life were even farther-reaching than in the West. The rate of modernization in the Kingdom of Poland in the second half of the century led to a remodeling of the traditional social structure and enabled this agrarian country to embark on the path to a new capitalist order. After the collapse of the 1863 January Insurrection, political repressions in the Kingdom of Poland went together with processes of rapid socio-economical changes, the scale of which was so huge that they resulted in the emergence of industrial zones like Łódź or Dąbrowa Basin in the rural landscape of Russian Poland.<sup>7</sup> Warsaw, which started to develop rapidly in the same period of time, became one of the greatest cities in Europe in the year 1900. “Between 1865 and 1897, the urban population increased by 131.3% compared with a 77.2% demographic increase for the country as a whole. In 1865, one out of every five inhabitants of the Kingdom lived in a city or larger town; in 1897, one out of every four, in 1913, one out of every three,” Robert E. Blobaum noted.<sup>8</sup> If we also consider that the share of urban population in the Kingdom increased from 16.4% in 1872 to 23% in 1897 and 29% in 1913, we can see that the second half of the nineteenth century was a turning point in the social history of Poland.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, although this urbanization was indeed impressive, it did not change the agrarian character of the Kingdom. As Blobaum added, “similarly, urbanization, which proceeded quite dramatically in the country’s western provinces, had only minimal impact east of the Vistula.”<sup>10</sup> Except for Warsaw, new industrial centers and capitals of guberniyas, most towns in the Kingdom remained small, traditional *shtetls*,

<sup>6</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, op. cit., pp. 248–250.

<sup>7</sup> See: M. Nietyksza, *Rozwój miast i aglomeracji miejsko-przemysłowych w Królestwie Polskim: 1865–1914*, Warszawa, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> R.E. Blobaum, *Revolucja: Russian Poland 1904–1907*, Ithaca and London, 1995, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> M. Nietyksza, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> R.E. Blobaum, op. cit., p. 26.

dominated by Orthodox Jewry.<sup>11</sup> However, despite its limited scope, the social change triggered by urbanization was completely irreversible and much deeper than in Western provinces of Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, this huge transition took place despite the disastrous hygienic, infrastructural and cultural conditions in Polish cities and towns. Their poor situation was progressively exacerbating with the increase of population and became alarming at the turn of centuries. For Adolf Suligowski, a lawyer advocating for urban reform in the Kingdom of Poland, it was interesting that: “the last 30 years were an epoch of great development of Warsaw, taking place in accordance with the development of industries and trade in the same period. However, in terms of elementary education, positive results were not a characteristic feature of the last years. On the contrary, as we have seen above, this was a time of painful regress.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite the considerable cultural and civilizational underdevelopment of Polish urban settlements, the Russian administration was uninterested in making any improvements except basic administration. The towns were deprived of any form of municipal self-government. As a result, the conditions of urban life in the Kingdom were strongly criticized by the public opinion since the 1870s. As Theodore R. Weeks argued, “Russian administrators compared the Polish situation favorably with the conditions at home, in the central Russian provinces, while Poles compared the situation unfavorably with conditions in Vienna, Berlin or Paris.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the situation was much worse – Polish cities remained in a poor condition even in comparison with Russian provincial towns. Even big towns like Łódź, Lublin, Częstochowa, Radom, Sosnowiec, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Kielce, or Piotrków did not have water supply or a sewage system. There was an insufficient number of school buildings, administrative offices and hospitals. The condition of roads, streets and public squares left much to be desired. In 1911, there were just two school buildings in Warsaw, compared to 33 in Kraków and about 20 in Poznań and Lviv.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See: J. Szczepański, *Spoleczność żydowska Mazowsza w XIX–XX wieku*, Pułtusk, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> See: R. Edelman, *Proletarian Peasants. The Revolution of 1905 in Russia's Southwest*, Ithaca and London, 1987, p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> A. Suligowski, “Miasto analfabetów, czyli Warszawa i jej szkolnictwo początkowe,” in: *Pisma Adolfa Suligowskiego*, vol. 2: *Kwestie miejskie*, Warszawa, 1915, p. 123.

<sup>14</sup> Th.R. Weeks, “Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915,” *Russian History*, 1994, No. 1, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> E. Adamczyk, “Z dziejów skarbowości związków komunalnych. Skarbowość miast Polski w początkach odrodzonej państwowości (1919–1923),” *RDSG*, vol. 78, 2017, pp. 252–253.

### Newcomers on the street

Unlike members of the intelligentsia, who were generally well-adapted to the urban life, even if on the whole they regarded urbanism as overcritical, if not simply unfair, the working class, formed mostly by immigrants from the countryside, had to cope with the problem of feeling uprooted in the urban reality. Of course, this was characteristic for the whole region.<sup>16</sup> The press strongly criticized the ineptitude of workers in the urban life. For instance, a columnist from Łódź argued: “an impartial person who came to Łódź from abroad would undoubtedly argue that we cannot properly walk on pavements.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Polish elites were afraid that moving to “cosmopolitan” Łódź or Dąbrowa could deprive workers of their ethnic identity, as it had happened in Germany and the Habsburg Empire, for instance in Hungary.<sup>18</sup>

The newly-formed Polish working class was unstable and the process of forging its class identity was more intensive and more turbulent than in Western Europe and Russia. As Anna Żarnowska noted, “apart from their readiness to adopt some features of the urban way of life, [...] the newcomers from villages showed great resistance to the influence of urban culture in other spheres of life as well as in customs.”<sup>19</sup> The problem of workers’ identity as town dwellers should be connected, therefore, with the question of how the urban community was imagined in the early twentieth-century Kingdom of Poland. As Elizabeth Faue underlined, “in speaking of community in labour history, the question might well be ‘which community’? At the same time, as both place and feeling, ‘community’ becomes inseparable from the study of how working class men and women understood their lives, built loyalties, and expressed class identity.”<sup>20</sup> From this point of view, we need to recognize that many workers may have identified themselves as average people from Częstochowa or Żyrardów or different industrial centers, even if their style of living was very different from the one which was typically

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<sup>16</sup> See: V.E. Bonnell, “Urban Working Class Life in Early Twentieth Century Russia: Some Problems and Patterns,” *Russian History*, vol. 8, 1981, No. 3, pp. 360–378.

<sup>17</sup> “Z dnia na dzień,” *Goniec Łódzki*, 11 Nov 1899, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> See: J. Kende, P. Sipos, “Industrial Workers and Assimilation in Hungary 1870–1910,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 32, 1986, No. 1/2, pp. 51–68.

<sup>19</sup> A. Żarnowska, *Workers, Women and Social Change in Poland, 1870–1939*, Aldershot, 2004, pp. 296, 298.

<sup>20</sup> E. Faue, “Community, Class, and Comparison in Labour History and Local History,” *Labour History*, vol. 78, 2000, p. 159.

seen as “urban.” Moreover, the case of Russian proletarian writers in the 1920s clearly shows that the experience of urban life was extremely important and emancipatory for workers.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, public opinion did not consider workers as a typical “urban” group; therefore, due to the truly proletarian character of Łódź or Dąbrowa, where workers constituted the majority of the whole population, these cities were not regarded as “true” or “normal” cities at all. Disastrous living conditions connected with a high level of illiteracy and weakness of urban culture in comparison to the traditional rural lifestyle among this group were also regarded as “abnormal” by the press. In January 1905, *Zdrowie* – the official magazine of the Warsaw Hygienic Society – published an extensive study on hygienic conditions of urban settlements in the Kingdom of Poland. It was a comparative study which examined the structure of public expenditures in such fields as administration, schools, police and waste management. The rate of mortality in the Kingdom (27.2%) was confronted with the same indicator in Western Europe (16.3% in Sweden, 23% in Germany), showing that the situation in Russian Poland was much worse than in the West. The value of urban expenditures per capita in Warsaw in Łódź was compared against some of the biggest European metropolises. While in Paris it amounted to 123 French francs in 1902, in Berlin it was 116, in Moscow – 37.8, in Warsaw – 23, and in Łódź – only 5. As stated in the article: “As it transpires from the above, Warsaw, which is compromised in comparison mainly with Western cities with thriving culture, still remains in the same realm as those urban centers. Łódź, as we can see, [...] does not even remotely stand comparison with cultured cities.”<sup>22</sup>

For the Polish opinion leaders, a “normal” city was a city with self-government, elementary schools adequate to the number of children, an organized system of urban philanthropy and healthcare, cheap and clean houses for workers supported by the municipality, municipal gas network, electricity and waterworks, and many other institutions and infrastructure typical for Western urban societies. As Bronisław Bouffałł noted: “the lamentable condition of schools, public philanthropy as well as food security and healthcare among the Kingdom’s cities show us clearly that denying municipalities any form of active participation in matters which are vital to the public and depriving them of any

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<sup>21</sup> See: M.D. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, and the Sacred in Russia, 1910–1925*, Ithaca, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> “Najpierwsza sprawa w programie społecznym,” *Zdrowie*, 1905, No. 1, p. 11.

independence, even in economic matters, has had a negative impact on all aspects of urban administration.”<sup>23</sup>

What was important, the necessity of improving the living conditions and education level of the working class became an important task spanning beyond the narrowly perceived national point of view. It was also a measure necessary to make Polish cities, including Warsaw and industrial centers, “normal” in the way in which “proper” urban politics were understood in Western Europe at the time. As stated by Barry M. Doyle, European discourses of modernity in the nineteenth century were an immanent part of urban policies manifested in the expansion of control and restructuring activities.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, the first Polish projects of urban reform were very similar to the Western ones. Germany, France or Britain were the obvious point of reference. However, this inspiration consisted not only in the similarity of proposed solutions but also in the logic of thinking about the existing issues, e.g. housing problems. For instance, in Germany, “from the earliest days of considering the problem of housing, reformers attacked the conditions they saw around them, drawing a comparison between the existing buildings and what they felt would be an ideal form of housing.”<sup>25</sup> Also in all Central European countries there were “many ‘reform-minded’ thinkers [who] believed that bad living conditions posed a danger to society. The improvement of dwelling conditions, they argued, would strengthen the body and spirit of the worker, benefiting both the industrialist and the employee.”<sup>26</sup> As a result, throughout entire Europe, “by the end of the nineteenth century it was clear that private philanthropy could not solve the worsening housing crisis.”<sup>27</sup>

### The urban revolution

The growing awareness of the importance of problems caused by industrialization and urbanization coincided in time with the first urban

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<sup>23</sup> B. Bouffall, “Organizacja miast w Królestwie Polskim,” in: *W naszych sprawach. Szkice w kwestiach ekonomiczno-społecznych*, Warszawa, 1899, p. 189.

<sup>24</sup> B.M. Doyle, “Introduction,” in: *Urban Politics and Space in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Regional Perspectives*, Newcastle, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> N. Bullock, J. Read, *The Movement for Housing Reform in Germany and France, 1840–1914*, Cambridge and New York, 1985, p. 73.

<sup>26</sup> A. Moravanszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867–1918*, Cambridge (MA), 1998, p. 411.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

revolution in Central Europe. The 1905 Revolution initiated the era of modern political life in the history of Poland and brought about the entrance of the masses into politics, radicalization of ideological discourse and political culture and concentration of most political activities in the urban reality. Manifestations, barricades, editorial boards and political meetings – they all became the main arena of public life. The years 1905–1907 in the Kingdom of Poland, usually seen by Polish historians both as the first revolution and the fourth national uprising, were not only the symbolic beginning of political modernity in Poland, as argued by Robert E. Blobaum or Wiktor Marzec, but also of an urban revolution as described by Manuel Castells after Henri Lefebvre.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in 1905 the workers took only symbolic control over the cities by controlling the urban space. They gained a sense of being the hosts of Warsaw, Łódź or Sosnowiec, even if they did not stand any chance in the struggle against the Cossacks.

One of the greatest achievements of the revolution was the abolition of preventive censorship, which – despite repressions against the press during the martial law and the post-revolutionary reaction – enabled a remarkable development of Polish press. The number of titles legally published in the Kingdom increased from 191 in 1904 to 316 in 1907.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, it was the first time when workers became active readers of legal press, which started to be distributed in the streets. In fact, from the workers' point of view, reading press and illegal brochures of political parties was a means to overcoming their own illiteracy.<sup>30</sup> The scale of the education movement among workers, who were learning to write and read on their own or attending hundreds of courses organized by the intelligentsia during the 1905 Revolution and in the following years, was so huge that the rate of illiteracy in Łódź decreased from 49.5% in 1897 to 20% in 1921.<sup>31</sup>

Although the revolution brought such magnificent democratization, the urban intelligentsia, including even its most socially sensitive

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<sup>28</sup> See: M. Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983, pp. 24–25; H. Lefebvre, “The Right to the City,” in: *Writings on Cities*, Cambridge (MA), 1996, pp. 147–159. See also: *Urban Revolution Now. Henri Lefebvre in Social Research and Architecture*, ed. by Ł. Stanek, Ch. Schmid, A. Moravanszky, Farnham and Burlington, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Z. Kmieciak, *Prasa polska w rewolucji 1905–1907*, Warszawa, 1980, pp. 22–23.

<sup>30</sup> W. Marzec, K. Piskała, “Proletariacy czytelnicy – marksistowskie i socjalistyczne lektury we wczesnej proletariackiej sferze publicznej Królestwa Polskiego,” *Sensus Historiae*, vol. 12, 2013, pp. 83–103.

<sup>31</sup> J. Janczak, *Ludność Łodzi przemysłowej 1820–1914*, Łódź, 1982, pp. 177–185.

members, was fearful of the changes. The proletarian entry to mass politics proved very difficult to stomach to the middle classes.<sup>32</sup> In 1905, when workers decided that enough was enough and took to the streets to demand social justice, they did so in a way which was completely incongruent with the bourgeois imagination and institutions known from Western democracies, like parliaments, municipalities, legal associations or trade unions. The intensity of proletarian riots, often connected with violence and brutality, popular propaganda campaign and huge mass meetings – all these symptoms of revolution were considered chaotic and uncultured. As Grzegorz Krzywiec argued, “during its first months, the revolution showed and actualized perhaps the two most ominous phantasms of modernity imagined by the social establishment, middle classes, *bourgeoisie* and urbanites: uncontrollable masses in the streets as well as sudden and unexpected death, rape, terror and violence perpetrated by revolutionists.”<sup>33</sup>

Workers’ motivations and means of political expression stood against the bourgeois attachment to order and legalism as the only proper ways of solving any social problems, including economic exploitation, catastrophic working conditions, high death rate among children or the tragic condition of urban infrastructure. This situation led to the emergence of two important processes. The first was the growing fear of the masses and moral panic, which enabled the intelligentsia to distance itself from the demands and political practices of the revolting workers and finally to exclude this group from modern public discourse.<sup>34</sup> In an article which the author of the present work published several years ago with Wiktor Marzec, this process was referred to as the pathogenesis of the Polish public sphere. These sentiments were politically exploited by the National Democratic Party, which was able to transform them into the modern conservative movement. The logic of the process is thoroughly described by Wiktor Marzec and Grzegorz Krzywiec in their newest books on the Revolution of 1905 and the beginnings of right-wing political anti-Semitism in the Kingdom of Poland before 1914.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> W. Marzec, K. Śmiechowski, “Pathogenesis of the Polish Public Sphere. The Intelligentsia and Popular Unrest during and after the 1905 Revolution,” *Polish Sociological Review*, 2016, No. 4, pp. 444–453.

<sup>33</sup> G. Krzywiec, *Polska bez Żydów. Studia z dziejów idei, wyobrażeń i praktyk antysemitkich na ziemiach polskich początku XX wieku*, Warszawa, 2017, pp. 24–25.

<sup>34</sup> W. Marzec, K. Śmiechowski, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> W. Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne*, Łódź and Kraków, 2016; G. Krzywiec, op. cit.

The second process led to the appreciation of the urban question as an important political issue. If before the revolution urbanization was considered by positivists to be the desired goal of the modernization of the Polish society, the public opinion was in fact still convinced that the rural character of the Kingdom of Poland would persevere for many years. Of course, it was aware of the huge cultural and civilizational underdevelopment of Polish cities. But it was not aware of how significant the results of modernization could be. This explains why the rebellion of workers was so shocking for journalists and commentators. In 1905, it became clear for the first time that the improvement of the living conditions of workers was a burning need which could not wait for a better future. The connection between revolution and urban problems was obvious for most commentators. The conservative newspaper *Słowo* argued:

Moreover, the new huge and extremely important issue of workers has emerged among the society. In particular it is the issue of the improvement of workers' living conditions. In fact, this issue has existed since the earliest times and the individuals who have permanent contact with workers or who are studying the most important problems of our social life could not have forgotten about it.

However, the latest events around the world have prompted the workers to forcefully make this problem a part of the daily agenda.<sup>36</sup>

Prominent Polish liberal novelist and columnist Bolesław Prus was convinced that the proletarian rebellion should be considered a result of the disastrous situation of Polish towns. He argued: "Please remind yourself of our huts, not much better than cowsheds, our Warsaw's tenements with lounges, but without bathrooms or separate rooms for maids, please add the lack of school buildings, hospitals, asylums, and you will understand that our social construction is fragile and suffers from a disability which in the human organism is known as rickets."<sup>37</sup> As it was explained in the country's biggest popular magazine:

The idea that our society is facing constantly is to prevent social unrest by a large-scale campaign intended to improve the livelihood of excluded classes. The program of social reform should be implemented by the institutions of urban self-government. Due to their very nature they will be predestined to consolidate different social powers which are now divided into a plethora

<sup>36</sup> "Najpilniejsze zadania," *Słowo*, 3 Jul 1905, No. 162.

<sup>37</sup> B. Prus, "Bezrobocie i środki zaradcze," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1905, No. 13, pp. 223–224.

of atoms and as a result are easily swayed by dangerous ideas. This danger can be prevented only through active social work, searching for a common ground with the lower classes, working for the improvement of their life conditions. To put it shortly, what we need is wide-ranging social work. The more active the municipalities, the stronger social cohesion will be and the more common resistance against unhealthy propaganda will become.<sup>38</sup>

The effort to “reduce bad influences” was also identified as an important objective of urban reform by Adolf Suligowski, who prepared the first draft of a new bill concerning the issue, which was eventually rejected by the Russian authorities in favor of the project prepared by the government. During the last months of the revolution, he issued the following warning:

While talking about the miseries of the urban population, we definitely have to underline one more consequence of the existing system. Life in bigger cities reflects the contrasts and differences of the society at large in their entirety and creates ground for disagreements. On the other hand, efforts to satisfy the needs of the poor and the support which they can receive from social institutions seeking to improve the fate of the non-possessing classes reduces the inequalities, calms down emotions and brings peace into interpersonal relations.

However, if nothing is done to this effect, if there is no help or adequate organization, the unfavorable social instincts can easily spread without any necessary counterweight.

This is happening in the country’s biggest cities, especially in Warsaw and Łódź. On the one hand, the higher classes are expanding their knowledge, developing their intellectual and moral powers. On the other, no equivalent progress is taking place among the poorest. [...] Inequalities are not diminishing but rather exacerbating together with social contrasts, and eventually internal peace and social harmony are disturbed. The last two years are a meaningful evidence of this trend.<sup>39</sup>

The liberalization of public life after the Revolution of 1905 was a landmark which enabled the creation of the first complete programs of urban reform set to be introduced by the planned self-government. However, if before 1905 the projects and demands of urban self-government were mostly economical, now the urban question in the Kingdom of Poland became a political issue, and the imagined leading position of

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<sup>38</sup> “Samorząd miejski,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1905, No. 43, p. 794.

<sup>39</sup> A. Suligowski, “System dotychczasowego gospodarstwa miejskiego w Królestwie Polskim i jego wyniki,” in: *Pisma Adolfa Suligowskiego*, vol. 1: *Potrzeba samorządu*, Warszawa, 1915, p. 51.

the planned self-government changed from “rational” management into policy-making.<sup>40</sup> The public opinion was aware that the scope of activities of the future municipalities had to be very wide.

### **Building schools and planting gardens**

One of the most obvious duties of the planned self-government was managing public education. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Warsaw was called “the city of illiterates,” a borrowing from the title of one of Suligowski’s brochures.<sup>41</sup> Aleksander Rembowski, who wrote the review of the brochure for *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, commented that: “very rapid growth of the number of inhabitants caused difficulties and obstacles in meeting all needs of elementary education in our city. Even a municipality carefully and zealously taking care of its duties would be in real trouble in view of such a huge increase of youngsters who need education. Meanwhile, in the time of increasing demand for public education, we do not have any municipal institutions working for the benefit of Warsaw.”<sup>42</sup> A local newspaper from Łódź, where the number of elementary schools was so small that merely a half of children in the town could attend them, complained that “Łódź has enough resources to organize elementary education, but the local administration is not interested in addressing the issue and meeting the educational needs of the inhabitants.”<sup>43</sup>

The issue of education was far more than just an obvious duty of the planned municipalities. The enormous scale of illiteracy was considered a shameful blot on the escutcheon by all spheres of the society – from devout Catholics to Marxist agitators. But it was also a domain which was largely determined by the fear of the masses in a way which made the influence easy to track. In Łódź, where over 60% of the population was illiterate, the local press published the manifesto of a group of local intelligentsia who wanted to combat ignorance among the working classes:

The main point of reference was nothing else but anarchy and disorder. Social life had to be rethought anew because “new foundations for social and state life were emerging.” When the “wheel of history turned

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<sup>40</sup> See: K. Śmiechowski, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> A. Suligowski, “Miasto...”

<sup>42</sup> “Miasto analfabetów,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1905, No. 28, p. 570.

<sup>43</sup> “Brak szkół początkowych,” *Kurier Łódzki*, 3 Jan 1908, No. 4.

exceptionally fast,” “the broad masses of the people” would “retake the helm of social leadership.” At least so believed the intelligentsia, not without fear for the future, which could be dominated by “the frightening power of illiterates.” Thus “everybody who was able to read and write” had a “magnificent and sacred obligation” to become a teacher of the people. Disorder had to be avoided and there was a strong feeling of obligation to stand and face up to a modern challenge.

If in the eyes of local journalists moral and cultural rules were disappearing into thin air, converting reality into Sodom and Gomorrah, the solution could be found only in regaining the sense of good and evil clearly provided by universal humanitarian values. They could be re-established solely – still in the positivist spirit – through education.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, the education of workers could have two possible outcomes. It could strengthen their class identity and transform them into supporters of the socialist movement, but it could also develop their national consciousness towards nationalism. The latter was the desirable course of action for National Democracy, which managed to gain considerable influence among workers, especially in Łódź. “There was a moment when we were all convinced that our proletariat was all against the national issue and related only to the ideas of the class conflict. Fortunately, we had to change our opinion due to the development of the workers’ national movement and the cultural progress among an important part of the working masses,” declared one of the leaders of the National Democratic movement.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from elementary education, the other “obvious” fields of municipal activity were connected with housing and hygiene. As its transpires from the research carried out by Aleksander Łupienko, the hygienic movement played the role of the leading opinion-maker in the discourse on hygienic and housing conditions in the Kingdom’s towns and proposals of necessary reforms.<sup>46</sup> According to the editorial board of *Zdrowie*, an urban reform was “the most important issue in the social program.” Józef Polak, head of the Warsaw Hygienic Association, tried to instill a sense of shame in the readers when describing the lamentable condition of Polish cities. In his opinion, “if an Englishman, German,

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<sup>44</sup> A. Zysiak et al., *From Cotton and Smoke. Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994*, Łódź and Kraków, 2018, pp. 82–83.

<sup>45</sup> “Przyczynki do bilansu sił narodowych w Królestwie,” *Przegląd Narodowy*, 1908, No. 1, pp. 75–76.

<sup>46</sup> A. Łupienko, “Some Remarks on the Birth of Modern City Planning in the Polish Territories (1850–1914): The Impact of the Hygienic Movement,” *Mesto a Dejiny*, 2016, No. 2, pp. 18–34.

Dutchman or Swede visits Warsaw, he can find many painful shortcomings in health and culture. It would seem to him that the nation inhabiting these parts knows civilization and is slowly following the general progress of humanity. However, were the same Englishman, German, Dutchman or Swede to venture outside the town or settlement, he definitely would notice that the sloppiness of Poles lowers us to the level of the less civilized nations."<sup>47</sup> A number of authors, especially Władysław Dobrzyński, pioneered the adoption of the concept of garden-cities in Eastern Europe. In many of his articles, later assembled into books, the secretary of the Warsaw Hygienic Society promoted this utopian vision of future cities, which had become very popular in Western Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century and, all in all, also comprised a proposal of social reform.<sup>48</sup>

In one of his statements, Dobrzyński underlined the connection between preventive healthcare and modern urbanity. In his opinion, the housing reform was a kind of national duty:

In my opinion, the cooperation of wide spheres of society independently of the state – autonomous institutions, self-government and philanthropic societies – is needed for a successful fight against unhealthy dwellings. To achieve good results we need to pull weeds and sow a healthy seed together. On the one hand, we need to improve the condition of the existing dwellings inhabited by the poor to the fullest extent possible. On the other hand, it is indispensable that we think about establishing new housing conditions for the existing and the future population, based on modern science and its evidence.<sup>49</sup>

Thanks to Dobrzyński's output, the concept of the garden city became the most popular vision of future cities in the Kingdom of Poland. The main weakness of the idea of garden cities, intended as a remedy for the catastrophic living conditions of workers, was that they eventually came to represent comfortable middle-class residential areas. This disparity was noticed by Zdzisław Dębicki in his article published in *Głos Warszawski*, a newspaper associated with National Democracy:

The idea of building a new district, completely different from the existing ones including the city center, with a lot of space, light, air and greenery is becoming more and more essential and urgent.

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<sup>47</sup> "Najpierwsza sprawa w programie społecznym," *Zdrowie*, 1905, No. 1, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> H. Meller, *Towns, Plans and Society in Modern Britain*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 35–40.

<sup>49</sup> W. Dobrzyński, "Nowoczesne poglądy na sprawę mieszkań warstw niezamożnych," *Zdrowie*, 1908, No. 9, p. 554.

*District of villas* – this is a dream of the richer inhabitants, who imagine themselves strolling through their own gardens where roses are blooming on neat flower-beds.

*District of houses for workers* – timidly whisper the poor, who live in tight, messy, four-story tenement houses, where the long, dark hallway is always stuffy and filled with kitchen smells.

They are both aspiring to the same ideal and want small but independent or, if possible, their *own* houses.<sup>50</sup>

Nonetheless, Dębicki was convinced that reshaping Warsaw and its vicinities into a garden city would be more beneficial for the workers than for any other social strata:

It is a significant fact that the opposition against contemporary forms of urban living has escalated and now extends not only to the intelligentsia, but also to groups which are still not prepared to tackle this problem from the perspective of hygienic science.

“Garden city” – this is the program of the hygienist. A piece of your own land with a small house, vegetable garden, elderberry blooming in the spring, green trees in front of the windows – this is the dream of the proletarian, whose dwelling is falling apart and whose face is blackened from the factory smoke.

Neither of these dreams is pure fantasy. The struggle against capitalist speculation and excessive increases of rent, the fight against the city monster destroying people’s health has been ongoing for over a decade in whole Europe, but mostly in England and Northern America.<sup>51</sup>

The concept of the garden city gained immense popularity in urban discourse after the 1905 Revolution because it referred to the traditional social imaginary of “a small white house among greenery” – the fantasy of lost rural Arcadia which could counterbalance the evil city, extremely popular in Western societies during the industrial era.<sup>52</sup> However, it was also believed to be a feasible undertaking, especially taking into consideration how it was implemented in the West. *Kurier Warszawski* argued:

Are all these dreams unreal? Not at all! Hundreds if not thousands of houses like that can be seen and enjoyed in every German, English or Dutch city. And these are not necessarily the residences of rich people.

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<sup>50</sup> “Walka z wielkim miastem,” *Głos Warszawski*, 20 Jun 1909, No. 167.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> J. Jedlicki, “Proces przeciwko miastu,” in: *Świat zwyrodniał. Lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności*, Warszawa, 2000, pp. 83–113.

Families with moderate means are also enjoying them and can maintain them perfectly fine.

We are approaching a moment when even Warsaw will be able to build similar districts and the first example will give way to more to come.<sup>53</sup>

Housing, as well as healthcare and education, were the spheres of urban reality which needed fast improvements. Public opinion believed that new schools available to the working masses and new hospitals, nurseries or asylums should be created as soon as possible. In contrast to the issue of schooling, the construction of garden cities was seen rather as a project for the future; it was also understood as an obvious duty of the municipality, which should take it upon itself to prepare the ground for new green districts in the expanded area of Warsaw, Łódź and other towns.<sup>54</sup> Obviously, the scope of the activity of local governments was a political issue in itself, understood differently by authors representing various political worldviews, from the socialist left to the right.<sup>55</sup>

### What kind of municipality do we need?

While everyone from the right to the left was fascinated by the idea of garden cities, the issue of the scope of municipal activity was still under discussion. “Progressive” newspapers, for example *Ludzkość*, expected much more than just good governance from the planned self-government structures. As it was argued: “the development of workers’ associations and permanent unrest in some cities or whole regions has forced first the state and then the municipalities to work on the standardization of minimum wage and maximum working time.”<sup>56</sup> Municipal administration in Strasbourg, Wiesbaden and Mulhouse was suggested as the model for the future Polish urban self-government.<sup>57</sup>

Municipalities of industrial towns in particular were predestined to negotiate between the interests of the capitalists and the workers. An interesting press article on the subject argues that in towns like Manchester, Lille, Krefeld or Łódź “many laws or provisions made by the state could be modified by the municipalities or would even become a fully local issue. For these reasons the institution of local

<sup>53</sup> “Miasto w ogrodzie,” *Głos Warszawski*, 23 Nov 1911, No. 324.

<sup>54</sup> “Wielka Warszawa,” *Kurier Warszawski*, 13 Oct 1911, No. 283.

<sup>55</sup> K. Śmiechowski, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> “Miasto a płaca robotników,” *Ludzkość*, 18 Sep 1906, No. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

government is the best intermediary between the state or country and its social politics.”<sup>58</sup>

Aleksander Lednicki, leading Polish-Russian politician and lawyer based in St. Petersburg, divided the responsibilities of municipalities into three groups: economic, educational and social. In his opinion: “when institutions of self-government will be established in the Kingdom of Poland, our society will gain access to the wide field of work for the common good which has hitherto been closed for us. Cities, being huge collectivities comprising the most vigorous and productive people, will have to take the lead in this collective work and head in a new direction, similar to the West.”<sup>59</sup> He explained that the tasks of the municipality are “much wider and more profound” than building the sewage and water-supply system. Western cities, he added, “not only have a strict control over the goods delivered from the countryside, but also decide to produce necessities on their own to avoid the falsification of milk, regulate prices, prevent speculation and provide the most destitute with everyday goods, including bread.”<sup>60</sup> Lednicki noted that “foreign municipalities hold the right to pull down unhealthy dwellings and demolish infectious houses or even whole districts to replace them with green areas or parks and expand ‘the green lungs of the city,’ as such sites are called in London.”<sup>61</sup> Finally, he defined social tasks of the municipality as “creating such working conditions where all conflicts would be resolved and the working class would economically and morally flourish and be protected from the loss of income.”<sup>62</sup>

While Lednicki, a member of the liberal Russian Constitutional Democratic Party, expressed an opinion which could be regarded as ambitious, *Wiedza*, the unofficial magazine of the Polish Socialist Party published in Vilnius, had the courage to promote a much more radical vision of urban policy. According to the publication, “municipality, like any form of social organization, exists in order to make life easier for everyone by expanding wealth and developing civilization. In our contemporary world, the development of industry and trade is connected with the existence of working masses who produce the necessary resources. The municipality has an obligation to improve the living conditions of workers.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Miasto a kwestia robotnicza,” *Kurier Warszawski*, 7 Jan 1911, No. 7.

<sup>59</sup> A. Lednicki, “O zagadnieniach społecznych wielkich miast,” *Ludzkość*, 17 Dec 1906, No. 153.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> “Gospodarka miejska,” *Wiedza*, 1906, No. 5, pp. 135–136.

However, it was necessary to define the exact scope of competences of the municipality. Tadeusz Rechniewski, the author of the article cited above, listed the typical fields of activities of self-governments around Western Europe – housing, education and social hygiene. But it was not everything; as Rechniewski argued, “a characteristic feature of the contemporary municipal social policy is the effort of certain urban governments to regulate labor relations in the area under their jurisdiction.”<sup>64</sup> The catalogue of potential initiatives of the municipality was quite broad, from managing public works during economic crises to placement services, job loss insurance and inclusion of social clauses in the services commissioned by local government. Moreover, as it was stressed:

Municipalities aim to take over the monopoly of companies which are often a tool of social exploitation in the hands of private entrepreneurs. What we are referring to are gas works, trams, local railways, pawnbrokers etc. After their municipalization all these companies operate to a greater benefit of the society and provide the city with considerable income. This allows to reduce municipal indirect taxes, which are so burdensome for the poor inhabitants.

The scope of activity of the municipality in big cities is constantly expanding. This may serve as an important indication for the working class to look towards the municipality as a lever of social development able to even slightly alleviate the destruction caused by the current economic order.<sup>65</sup>

Ideas supported by Rechniewski were at that time known as “municipal socialism” and consisted in a vision of the municipality’s economic activity extending into spheres which were traditionally reserved for private capital. In the last decades of the *Belle Époque*, the idea of municipalizing power plants, gas works or water supply systems, establishing municipal companies and organizing job-searching systems appealed to the imagination of reformist city mayors throughout Europe.<sup>66</sup> Several years after the revolution, the vision of “municipal socialism” became popularized in Polish social sciences. In 1915, economist Edward Strasburger published a short book titled *Wielkomięjska polityka społeczno-gospodarcza* (“Metropolitan social-economic policy”), in which he argued:

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> See: U. Köhl, *Der Munizipalsozialismus in Europa. Le socialisme municipal en Europe*, München, 2001.

The activity of the municipality in its entirety is worth being called social, in that its goal is to cater to the needs of all inhabitants. In particular, I call “social” those activities of the municipality which focus on decreasing and mitigating social inequality [...] caused by the contemporary individualistic economic system. In a strict sense, the social tasks of municipality are fulfilled by taking particular care of poorer groups of inhabitants to improve their level of culture and welfare.<sup>67</sup>

For Strasburger, the main reason why the municipalities should take control over public services was also social:

Supporters of “municipal socialism” believe that the municipality can fulfill people’s needs more effectively than private initiatives. This is the strongest argument for municipalization. Companies supplying water, electricity, or cheap and fast transportation have a direct connection to the living conditions, health and economic development of the town dwellers. These matters are too important to cede them to private capitalists, interested only in personal profits. Personal profit is often difficult to reconcile with the public interest. [...] The society does not benefit from a small group of shareholders in a municipal company becoming even richer after collecting their dividend. On the other hand, when the material powers of the worse-off social strata are maximized, the entire social property grows in value. The distribution of goods between different social classes becomes more appropriate.<sup>68</sup>

It can easily be noticed that the concept of “municipal socialism” was closely related to the workers’ movement. Despite being promoted by prominent economists like Edward Strasburger, it could only effectively be put into practice by a progressive municipality, the creation of which would be impossible under the Tsarist regime. Of course, despite these limitations, many cities around Europe introduced some aspects of “municipal socialism” into their governance and decided to communalize their properties. For instance, in England “significant communalization had taken place long before the debate over municipal socialism intensified in the 25 years before the Great War.”<sup>69</sup> Without any doubt, the popularity of this concept in the West proved calming to many municipal opinion-makers in the East. In Lenger’s opinion, “thus the fear of socialism did not keep most Russian cities from following

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<sup>67</sup> E. Strasburger, *Wielkomijska polityka społeczno-gospodarcza. Ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem miast w Anglii i Niemczech*, Warszawa, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>69</sup> F. Lenger, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

the Western approach more closely.”<sup>70</sup> *Kurier Warszawski*, the biggest Polish newspaper, known for its moderate course, openly justified the need for “communal politics.” Although the newspaper believed that “private businesses will be able to build enough number of cheap and small flats if the municipality is willing to help them a little,”<sup>71</sup> it definitely demanded municipal intervention in urban planning. As it was stated, “the city authorities need to take action or we will be helpless to the construction of high-rise buildings on narrow streets, where one neighbor will take the other’s fresh air and sun.”<sup>72</sup>

The conservative *Słowo* was aware that the planned municipality would be forced to be politically active. The question was: where is the limit for “municipal socialism” in the urban policy of the Kingdom of Poland? The answer given by Antoni Donimirski was surprisingly reasonable:

The difficulties with which our municipalities will have to cope will be unprecedented, because the situation of a country with an urban population of 3 million and cities with 350,000 and 750,000 inhabitants where all municipal matters are managed by the bureaucracy is also unprecedented. Public security and order, schools, hospitals, assistance for the poor, the elderly, the mentally ill, building regulations, transportation etc. – all these issues still need real solutions.

[...] The answer to the question of what can be done in a proper way by the industrial competition will be completely different here than in Germany, France or England. [...] The city will have to take over a lot of companies in order to avoid giving all control into the hands of foreigners, which is unwelcome.

[...] Will our municipalities be able to guarantee that they fulfill all social responsibilities to the workers better than private capitalists?

This is one of the questions which we need to answer before making the choice between municipal and private enterprises.<sup>73</sup>

Paradoxically, the fear of socialism was weaker than the fear of foreign capital. The logic demonstrated by Donimirski constituted a bridge between “municipal socialism” and the concept of national capitalism developed by National Democracy. It is unsurprising that the political movement led by Roman Dmowski generally distanced itself from the social aspects of municipalities as it regarded the planned urban

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>71</sup> “Polityka komunalna,” *Kurier Warszawski*, 20 Oct 1910, No. 290.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> “Przedsiębiorstwa miejskie,” *Słowo*, 28 Dec 1910, No. 587.

self-governments as national institutions which could help fulfil one of the most important political dreams of National Democracy – the creation of a truly Polish bourgeoisie, standing in opposition to the Jewish and German financial elites of Warsaw or Łódź.<sup>74</sup> This vision was openly described in *Przegląd Narodowy*, the press organ of National Democracy: “One of the main reasons for the fall of Poland was the lack of the Polish Third Estate. This fact, whose consequences had previously been ignored, now has become the signpost for the future, which brings with itself irresistible, resolute and indomitable obligations. This fact, not theoretical but practical, is now becoming the national duty and requires us to prompt collective action, which will enable us to give a positive answer to the historical question of ‘to be or not to be.’”<sup>75</sup>

For the leader of National Democracy, the issue of urban reform in the Kingdom of Poland basically boiled down to the Jewish question. On the one hand, political anti-Semitism allowed the nationalists to diminish the importance of the social background of the urban question, which had been so evident during the Revolution of 1905. On the other, this strategy, relying on playing on the emotions of the public opinion, was also very useful as a tool of political mobilization. The newspapers connected with the party – *Głos Warszawski*, *Gazeta Warszawska* and *Gazeta Poranna z Grosze* – were therefore fixated on the conflict with Jews and their alleged negative impact on the municipal economy, working class and Polish culture.<sup>76</sup> “The combination of emotive and economic factors poisoned Polish-Jewish relations in the post-1905 era to an unprecedented extent,” Theodore Weeks argued.<sup>77</sup>

While the urban program of National Democrats was intended to reinforce the Polish character of cities in the Kingdom of Poland by fueling anti-Semitism, the nationalist movement was also aware that the local municipalities would be social institutions, even if they understood their mission differently than the supporters of “social municipalism.” In fact, the National Democratic newspapers were deeply invested in municipal economy and all serious problems caused by the underdevelopment of

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<sup>74</sup> K. Śmiechowski, “Endeckie postrzeganie miasta. Ewolucja tematyki miejskiej na łamach ‘Przeglądu Wszepolskiego’ i ‘Przeglądu Narodowego,’” *Studia Podlaskie*, vol. 26, 2018, pp. 7–26.

<sup>75</sup> “Akcja uzdrowienia narodowego,” *Przegląd Narodowy*, 1913, No. 1, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> Th.R. Weeks, “Fanning the Flames: Jews in the Warsaw Press 1905–1912,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 28, 1998, No. 2, pp. 63–81; G. Krzywiec, op. cit., pp. 383–394.

<sup>77</sup> Th.R. Weeks, *Nation and State...*, p. 168.

Polish cities. For instance, *Gazeta Warszawska* published a comprehensive study on Warsaw's suburbia.<sup>78</sup> The ideal of urban politics presented by the Polish right was aptly described by Kamil Piskała as "national capitalism." In his opinion, "national capitalism" was an amalgam of ideas rather than one comprehensive program, in which the idea of a national community was put forward as an alternative both to the liberal interpretation of capitalism with its free market competition and to socialist doctrines.<sup>79</sup> In practice, there was no big difference between socialists and nationalists in their vision of necessary urban improvements. Both of these groups wanted common education, cultural development of cities and better infrastructure. However, their reasons for supporting urban reforms were completely disparate. "National capitalism" and "municipal socialism" eventually became two antagonistic visions of urban politics in the Second Polish Republic.

## Conclusions

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Poland experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization. In fact, the impressive growth of Warsaw and Łódź was possible due to industrial development and created the basis for the Revolution of 1905 – the first urban revolution in Eastern Europe. Indeed, "the cities were at the center of the revolutionary conflicts of the early twentieth century" and "the urban transformation of the late nineteenth century profoundly altered the potential for collective action."<sup>80</sup> Importantly, the rebellion of workers irreversibly changed the way of describing the Polish urban question. During the Revolution of 1905, problems like housing, education or social duties of the municipalities became important as independent issues, although all of them had been known for many years. It became clear that the urban reform was a necessity and an urgent need. The fear of another revolution was too real to ignore it. The question was, however, how broad the competences of the planned municipalities should be.

A characteristic feature of urban discourse in the Kingdom of Poland after 1905 was the discussion of urban topics with a *sui generis*

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<sup>78</sup> "Rozwój Warszawy a jej przedmieścia," *Gazeta Warszawska*, 1911, No. 312 to 318.

<sup>79</sup> A. Zysiak et al., op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>80</sup> D.R. Brower, "Urban Revolution in the Late Russian Empire," in: *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. by M.F. Hamm, Bloomington, 1986, p. 344.

missionary zeal towards the lower classes, especially workers. The approaches of many erstwhile authors were “Western” in that they were proposing to remedy problems resulting from rapid urbanization with the best known solutions originally introduced in England, France or Germany, and they strongly believed that most of them could be successfully implemented in the Polish reality. The weakest spot of their reasoning was their underestimation of the scale of structural problems – mainly of economic nature – between Poland and Western Europe. This led them to engage in a blame-game of sorts, the goal of which was to reductively describe all existing problems as the result of archaic forms of urban administration under the Tsarist regime; concomitantly, they placed too many hopes for better future of the Kingdom’s cities in the planned self-government. Their debates enabled the development of two divergent visions of urban reform – “municipal socialism” and “national capitalism.” The former consisted in the concept of socially engaged municipality carrying out its duties in the name of the working class. The latter was a nationalist idea of making Polish cities “truly Polish.” Although urban self-governments in the Kingdom of Poland were not introduced until the First World War, both of these very different visions eventually came to compete against one another in independent Poland.

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Workers and urban reform in the Kingdom of Poland 1905–1915  
(Summary)

The article is an attempt to answer the question of how the working class influenced the shape of the debate about the planned urban self-government in the Kingdom of Poland during and after the Revolution of 1905. The fast growth of cities became the subject of heated debates and intensive reforms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Kingdom of Poland, too, experienced rapid urbanization and social-economical changes after 1863 – this happened despite the disastrous hygienic, infrastructural and cultural conditions in Polish cities and towns, which were deprived of any form of municipal self-government.

In the article I put forward the thesis that the awareness of the importance of problems caused by industrialization and urbanization coincided in time with

the first urban revolution in Central Europe. During the 1905 Revolution the urban question became a political issue. Problems like housing, education or social duties of municipalities had a strong presence in the public discourse. It became clear that urban reform was necessary and urgently needed.

The working class itself and the fear of a popular rebellion played an important role in the debate about the modernization of cities and the urban self-government. Two dominant but antagonistic visions, “municipal socialism” and “national capitalism,” were developed in response to the ongoing urban crisis. The former was a vision of a socially engaged municipality, carrying out its duties in the name of the working class. The latter was a nationalist idea of making Polish cities “truly Polish.” While the former of these two concepts was intended to be a solution to class conflicts, the latter turned the issue into an ethnic one.

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