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The role of religious congregations in the development of press in Poland in the pre-partitioning times

STRESZCZENIE:

W NINIEJSZYM ARTYKULE AUTOR CHCE UKAZAĆ ROLE I WPŁYW ZGROMADZEŃ ZAKONNYCH NA ROZWÓJ CZASOPISMIENICTWA W POLSCE PRZEDROZBIOROWEJ.

PUBLIKACJA JEST ANALITYCZNĄ PRÓBĄ ZEBRANIA I PRZEDSTAWIENIA ÓWCZESNYCH UWARUNKOWAŃ W JAKICH ROZWIJAŁA SIĘ PRASA. AUTOR WSKAZUJE NA BLISKIE POWIĄZANIA ZGROMADZEŃ ZAKONNYCH Z DWOREM KRÓLEWSKIM, A TYM SAMYM ICH WPŁYW NA UKAZUJĄCE SIĘ W PRASIE TREŚCI.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:

PRASA, POLSKA, ZAKONY, CZASOPISMIENICTWO, PRZYWILEJE

ABSTRACT:

THE ARTICLE SHOWS THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESS IN POLAND IN THE PRE-PARTITIONING TIMES. THE AUTHOR OUTLINES A RANGE OF ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE FORM OF THE PRESS OF THAT TIME WAS BEING SHAPED. FURTHERMORE, WHAT IS WORTH POINTING OUT IS THE CLOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS AND THE COURT, WHICH HAD A CLEAR IMPACT ON THE PUBLISHED CONTENT.

KEYWORDS:

PRESS, POLAND, CONGREGATIONS, NEWSPAPERS, PRIVILEGES

As the beginning of the Polish press may be assumed the year 1661. In 1661 the first periodic appeared on the Polish press market titled “Merkuriusz Polski” (“Polish Mercuriusz”). Earlier there had been only so-called ephemeral prints published on various occasions, for instance, battles which had been won¹. According to Jerzy Łojek, the oldest known Polish print of that kind is dated to 1513, when the tsar Wasyl III sieged Smoleńsk and Połock - *Neue Zeitung auf Litten von den Moscovitern*. Receipients of that print were mainly magnates, wealthy nobles and inhabitants of bigger cities. In general, periodicals were published under four most frequent names: *Awizy* (“Letters of advice”), *Nowiny* (“Tidings”), *Relacje* (“Reports”) or *Listy* (“Letters”)²All of them were in German or Latin. The most rapidly developing center of press was Kraków, with Gdańsk on the second place. In both cities the majority of local community were affluent merchants.

The main objective of this work is to prove the importance of religious congregations in the development of Polish press in the pre-partitioning times. The article serves as a synthetic account of the available source. Examining that issue one must not prescind the contribution of Jerzy Łojek in the examination of the period of Stanisław August’s reigns, as well as earlier years. Both, the work of Grzegorz Smólski “*O polskim czasopiśmiennictwie*” (“About Polish Press” from 1928 and of Jan Lankau “*Prasa staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie*”, were also valuable assistance for the author. Since today there have been many publications about religious congregations that have shown their publishing activity as one of the mentioned issues, but literature lacks a comprehensible research paper which would focus only on the role of religious congregations in the context of press development.

The analysis will involve the examination of two, at that time feuding, congregations: the Piarist and the Jesuits. This feud between orders had its source in the monopoly issued by king for publishing informative newspapers, which at first was given to the Piarist, then passed to the Jesuits. A breakthrough in the development of Polish press seems to happen during the time when the Piarist held the monopoly for the newspaper. They not only started publishing the newspaper in Polish language, but also changed the style and the form so deeply that this was decidedly ahead of its time. Jan Lankau emphasizes the fact that all what happened while the “*Kurier Polski*” was being published in the Piarist printing house was crucial for the whole history of Polish periodicals³. Since that moment there has not been any longer period without informative newspapers on the Polish press market. Even though the style was based mainly on raw news, without further comments, gradually the importance of press as an opinion-forming medium started being noticed. What is worth mentioning at that stage is the power struggle between both religious congregations. The Jesuits from the very beginning of the appearance on the Polish territory of the Piarist Order, on the

¹ J.Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.11.

² G. Smólski, *O Polskim czasopiśmiennictwie najstarszej doby*, Warsaw 1910, p. 2.

³ J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie: 1513-1729*, Cracow 1960, p.231.

command of king Władysław IV in 1642, fought of the influences on the Polish court. It was obvious that this congregation which was currently in king's grace had access to numerous privileges. At first, competition took place in the area of education and schooling, but over time it was spread to the area of press. A catholic priest, Łukasz Łuski, played a major role in the extension of the competition as for some years he himself published "Gazeta Warszawska". That time of the monopolization of Polish press market either by the Piarist or Jesuits Orders, without any doubts, contributed to the development of reading throughout whole Polish society. However, the biggest center in which the press was created and then published was Warsaw. The rest of the country gradually was being included into the system of distribution - mainly delivered by the post. The crucial newspaper of Enlightenment "Monitor" was created with the help of Jesuit monk Franciszek Bohomolec.

The Piarist Press

The Piarists came to Poland in 1642 on request of king Władysław IV. They founded schools in which the emphasis was on development of practical knowledge⁴. Contrary to Jesuits, Piarist did focus neither on logic, nor practicing Latin by rote learning, rather on natural sciences or literature⁵. The Piarists' methods were those that found greater endorsement in the circle of supporters of Enlightenment. Thus, at the beginning of 18th century the Piarist Order was given the monopoly privilege for publishing newspapers in Poland. In Lithuania the situation was opposite - the monopoly for newspapers was in the hands of the Jesuit Academy of Vilnius⁶. The Piarists entrusted supervising their newspaper to a geographer and historian Jan Naumański, the author of the book "Geografia novissima". The first issue of "Nowiny Polskie" was published on 4th January, 1729. The newspaper was released once a week and had a half-sheet size. Four days later a new title appeared - "Relatia Referro". Both newspapers completed themselves: the first one contained news from across the nation, the second title referred to news from abroad. According to Jan Lankau, currently only one issue of "Nowiny Polskie" was preserved and is stored in the Jagiellonian Library. "Relatia referro" consisted of four pages each issue and contained Roman numerals. The content was based on news and dispatches from abroad. After release of 47 issues of "Nowiny Polskie", the title of the newspaper was changed for "Kurier Polski" ('Kuryer Polski') and "Relatia Referro" were exchanged for "Uprzywilejowane wiadomości z cudzych krajów"⁷. The "Kuryer" was a phenomenon worldwide. Each week issue presented broad reports from the country. This new way of presenting information differed completely from the previous one. The vast majority of newspapers of that time did not

⁴ Ibidem, p.233

⁵ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.20

⁶ Ibidem, p.21

⁷ J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie: 1513-1729*, PWN 1960, s. 230



The “Kuryer” was a phenomenon worldwide. Each week issue presented broad reports from the country. This new way of presenting information differed completely from the previous one. The vast majority of newspapers of that time did not touch any national issues, referring mainly to those from abroad.

touch any national issues, referring mainly to those from abroad⁸. Usually, it was possible to get deeper knowledge about events from inside the country reading foreign periodicals. The “Kuryer” was printed in double column style, but news were not separated even with a single indentation, which created an impression of one long text. Taking into consideration the fact that reports published in the periodical were quite various one may assume that there was a broad network of correspondents across the Rzeczpospolita. However, there is not sufficient knowledge whether those were permanent co-workers or just spread throughout Poland confreres. The fact that the newspaper contained national information placed the periodical on the special position till the end of the Enlightenment. The content was based on reports about regional councils, banquets, funerals - everything that could have been gather under the contemporary “gossip column”. In case of any delay in reporting, Naumański informed the readers promising further details in the following issue⁹. Even though the “Kuryer” was printed in the Warsaw printing house, it was available in the whole country due to distribution. The next aspect emphasizing the role of the Piarist periodical was the language in which it was being published. The fact that the newspaper was whole written in Polish extended the group of potential readers to those less educated nobles and burghers. The Naumański’s idea of publishing newspaper in the national language was highly risky. At that time, Polish was the language of the mob. At the royal court ruled German and French, across the nobility the popularity of Latin still exceeded, but gradually appeared fascination with French. As Jerzy Łojek points out that it is almost impossible to assess the accurate circulation of the Piarist periodical. The estimated number might be around 1,000 for both: the “Kuryer” and “Uprzywilejowane Wiadomości”, which was quite high at that historical moment¹⁰. At first, the Piarists did not face any competition, the problem started when the Jesuits founded their printing house in Warsaw’s Old Town. Then, many conflicts arose changed into legal trials, from

⁸ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.22

⁹ Ibidem, p.24.

¹⁰ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.23

which one touched the Holy See¹¹. The privilege *cum iure exclusivo*, which put monopoly in the hands of Piarists was taken back in 1736 and gave to the greatest opponents – the Jesuits. The reason for that was an error in printing in one of the issues of the “Kuryer” in the report about the birth of the queen Marie Josephine. In the Polish word “królowa”(the queen) someone skipped the middle syllable “-lo-” getting “krowa” (the cow)¹². Jan Lankau in his work presents the report from that event: “ *when in the reports about the happy event of the birth of princess Kunigunde, by mistake or, as it was currently presupposed, insidiously, a typesetter disastrously erred, the Jesuits leaped at the opportunity and by presenting to the court how inattentively the Piarists had published the newspaper, clawed the privilege back and since that moment they published the newspapers under the same names*” [transl.- the author]¹³. The privilege taken over by the Jesuits stopped the Piarists publications in Polish, but they still could publish in French or German and did so. In 1758 the Piarists started publishing “Gazette de Varsovie” (1758-1764) and in 1759 “ Warschauer Zaitung”¹⁴. Both turned out to be extremely important on the Polish press market as the first one found readers across the baronage and the very well-educated nobility, while the second one across the nobility and burghers in the north part of the country.

1.1 The Jesuits Press

Just after taking over the “Kuryer” by the Jesuits the quality of the periodical dropped visibly. Even though for the next thirty years the Jesuits controlled all the Warsaw press, the tradition and concept for the newspaper remained the same as Naumański had introduced that. The worse were: the quality of the type, composition and the national section. The numbering of periodicals was also changed. At the Piarists’ period, Jan Naumański had used roman numerals up to almost 500, at the Jesuits’ leading time the numbering started once again¹⁵. Michał Łowisz became an editor responsible for all the periodicals. Foreign news started appearing more and more often in the newspaper. Thus, the “Kuryer” became published twice a week under two different names: the “Kuryer” and “Wiadomości z Cudzych Krajów”(“The News from Other’s Countries”), but without clear division of topics¹⁶. In both newspapers as well reports from the country as from abroad were published. The main group of news covered reports about various arrivals of important figures, parties and meetings. Around 1760 a Jesuits priest Franciszek Bohomolec obtained control over the publishing house. Since the beginning of 1761, each Saturday, the new periodical started being published – “Kurier

¹¹ J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska na tle rozwoju prasy w Europie: 1513-1729*, PWN 1960, p. 299

¹² J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p. 23

¹³ J. Lankau, *Prasa staropolska* 1960 p. 300

¹⁴ G. Smólski, *O Polskiem czasopiśmiennictwie najstarszej doby: (od jego zaczątku do okresu stanisławowskiego t.j. do 1764)*, 1910, p. 18

¹⁵ J. Łojek, *Dziennikarze i prasa w Warszawie w XVIII wieku*, Warsaw 1960, p.35

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 36

Warszawski” (“The Warsaw Kuryer”) and on Wednesdays was published “Wiadomości Uprzywilejowane Warszawskie” (“The Warsaw Privileged News”). Two years later the second title vanished and remained only “The Warsaw Kuryer” released twice a week as there was no point in keeping two, almost the same, newspapers under two different names.

The initiatives concerning founding new newspapers appeared also in Lithuania. On 18th April, 1760 the Vilnius Jesuits began publishing an informative periodical called “Kurier Litewski” (“The Lithuanian Kuryer”). The newspaper was published once per week. Just after that, the second title appeared - “Wiadomości Literackie” (“The Literary News”), which contained scientific, literary and technical information¹⁷. As on the territory of Lithuania was no monopoly privilege in 1761 the Vilnius Academy, lead by a priest and professor Marcin Poczobut, forged a new weekly “Gazety Wileńskie” (“Vilnius Newspapers”).

Grzegorz Smólski highlights the fact that along with the seizure of privilege by the Jesuits there was a kind of stagnation on the Polish press market of that time. Since 1740, for the next 15 years, there was no new title across the country. The Jesuits were against the spirit of Enlightenment, neither in sense nor in nature¹⁸. The huge role in the development of the Polish press in the following years played a confrere of Franciszek Bohomolec - a priest Stefan Łuski.

1.2 Łuski's “Gazeta Warszawska” (“Warsaw Newspaper”)

Stefan Łuski was born in the Vitebsk region on 17th December, 1725. On 4th September 1742 he joined the Society of Jesus. From the very beginning he presented outstanding skills in the field of science, especially in astronomy. He wished to continue studying abroad, but due to insufficient budget he stayed in Lithuania. Around 1750, after the death of his parent, he sold his family estate and spent a part of the money for his studies abroad. For one year he moved to Wien and studied math and physics. Then, he travelled to Rome and stayed there for the next four years to study theology¹⁹. In 1757 he went to France to the court of exiled king Stanisław Leszczyński. Several years later he became Leszczyński's confessor. While coming back to the country he was gradually climbing up the ladder of the congregation's hierarchy and then started collaborating with Franciszek Bohomolec in publishing “The Warsaw Kuryer”. Quite suddenly, in 1773, came the information about the dissolution of the Jesuits Order. Łuski did not want to leave the newspaper with which he had already cooperated. So that, he requested the king to transfer the privilege of publishing newspapers to himself, which turned out to be possible. On 9th November, 1773 Łuski was given the monopoly²⁰.

¹⁷ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p. 24

¹⁸ G. Smólski, *O Polskim czasopiśmiennictwie najstarszej doby: (od jego początku do okresu stanisławowskiego t.j. do 1764)*, 1910, p. 31

¹⁹ J. Łojek, *„Gazeta Warszawska” księdza Łuskiny (1774-1793)*, Warsaw 1959, p.11

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 18

Since 5th January, 1774 Łuskina published his own periodical under the name “Gazeta Warszawska” (“Warsaw Newspaper”). However, it was not his only responsibility. The former Jesuit bought a wine cellar in the underground of the old Jesuits’ collegium in the Warsaw Old Town. He started selling French and Hungarian wines²¹. The personality and opinions of the priest were highly visible in the content of the newspaper. Stefan Łuskina was sympathizing with the conservative and the circle of the czarina Catherine II, whom fan he was²². Without any doubts, his political views did not influence positively the spirit of the royal reforms. “Gazeta Warszawska” consisted of two parts: the main one started with a short report from the country and the rest concerned news from abroad; special supplement to the newspaper was quite chaotic and contained the latest news and payed announcements²³. Łuskina knew pretty well foreign press and used quotations from German, Italian and French newspapers. The way in which news were grouped in the periodical did not depend on the importance or the chronology of events, but was rather based on the author’s concept. Sometimes information published in the newspaper was dated half year ago. The circulation of the paper oscillate between 500 and 1500 issues in different years. The newspaper was available not only in Warsaw, but as well as a subscription. Annual subscription with the postal delivery cost four red złotych. One issue cost 12 groszy. Łuskina was accused of making money out of publishing the newspaper, but not many knew that he had signed up a special contract IOU which stated that income above 7,000 złotych per year came directly to the royal treasury. The Jesuit was attacked by the more progressive fraction of the public, and frequently pursued legal action against those who put his position at risk²⁴. One of his major opponents was Piotr Świtkowski, an editor of “*Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny*” (The Historic Political Diary”. The conflict between those two arose when Łuskina published the French Declaration (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen), which mentioned the freedom of the press adding his own comments strongly in favor of the censorship. Świtkowski argued with that statement, claiming that the seizure of books would not work as there is a great wave of anti-religious literature coming from abroad.

The figure of Piotr Świtkowski may be classified as groundbreaking in the development of Polish press. The decision about the dissolution of the Jesuits Order coincided with the moment when Świtkowski was at the second year of his studies in the college in Poznań preparing himself for entering a religious order. The fact that he could not become a Jesuit did not influence his decision and he became a priest in 1775, finishing his theological studies. *Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny ustaw, osób, miejsc i pism wiek nasz szczególnie interesujący* („The Historic Political Diary of acts, people, places and papers which might be of special concern of our century”) – in that way in

²¹ Ibidem, p. 21

²² J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, PWN 1976, p. 26

²³ J. Łojek, „*Gazeta Warszawska*” księdza Łuskiny (1774-1793), Warsaw 1959, p.24

²⁴ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p. 28



Undoubtedly, the greatest and the most known periodical in the pre-partition period was “Monitor” (“The Monitor”).

Among his founders were: the already mentioned Jesuit’s priest Franciszek Bohomolec, a bishop of Warmia Ignacy Krasiński and the prince Adam Czartoryski.

1782 in the “Warsaw Newspaper” was published an announcement of the founding of the new periodical edited by Świtkowski²⁵. “The Diary” was a monthly magazine printed at the very beginning in the royal printing house of Gröll. The magazine contained 80 pages each and cost 2 złote or with the delivery 3 złote. The distribution of the newspaper was pretty well organized – there were sales points in Poznań, Kraków, Vilno, Leszno, Kalisz and Grodno. The circulation was not bigger than 500 issues. Probably “The Diary” was solely financed by the owner and the editorial team. This fact was commented by Świtkowski himself: “ “The Diary” is our own invention...our only wealth...to which nobody add even a penny” [transl. – the author] . Świtkowski created the first periodical in Poland with a visible ideological overtone. Irena Homola Dzikowska claims in her work that the way in which the priest functioned was not typical for that time as Świtkowski lived off “writing newspapers” itself. Taking into account this fact one can assume that Świtkowski was one of the firsts, if not the first one editor in Poland. The style and form of the periodical was quite simple. The opening part consisted of an article containing a report from a journey or some date about a country. Single articles were not longer than 20 pages. Świtkowski’s style was close to the modern way of writing causeries²⁶. This trend laid against the leading one which praised dry news without any comments or showing any subjective emotions of the author. Some accused “The Diary” of being a blend of different newspapers as the magazine contained various written forms: geographical descriptions, letters from journeys and reprints from foreign newspapers. Frequently the paper mentioned ambitious and nontrivial topics in a spirit of reformation. The critical part concerned the baronial reforms, especially those traumatizing peasantry. There was a deep analysis of the tax reforms in Prussia and Russia. Some articles touched topics such as mining, transport or banks. The bias of the magazine was shown in the number of Polish thinkers, which thoughts were often published in a spirit of Enlightenment. With

²⁵ Ibidem, p.25

²⁶ I. Dzikowska Homola , *Pamiętnik Historyczno-Polityczny Piotra Świtkowskiego: 1782-1792*, PWN 1960, p. 142.

time, the periodical seemed to be more and more political paper. Much attention was paid to agriculture, agricultural holdings and other branches of economy, showing that not only agriculture is the source of the wealth of the country. The priest Świtkowski till the last moment of his life was devoted to developing his publishing activity. His ideas were brutally stopped by unexpected disease and his death in 1793.

1.3 “The Monitor”

Undoubtedly, the greatest and the most known periodical of the pre-partition period was “Monitor” (“The Monitor”). Among his founders were: the already mentioned Jesuit’s priest Franciszek Bohomolec, a bishop of Warmia Ignacy Krasiński and the prince Adam Czartoryski. “The Monitor” was being published for almost 21 years, from 1765 till 1785. Usually it contained eight pages²⁷. The periodical was supposed to be moralistic from the very beginning. It derided noblemen’s shortcomings and behaviors and showed social problems of that time. The role model for this paper was British “The Spectator”. Since the very first moment, the newspaper became popular in the circle of the reformatory elite of Enlightenment. Among the publishers were: Adam Naruszewicz, Karol Wyriwcz and many others including clergymen, especially the Jesuits as with them the king Stanisław August sympathized. The figure that is worth giving slightly broader description at this point is Franciszek Bohomolec – one of the most talented proponent of introducing reforms in Enlightenment Poland. Before the foundation of “The Monitor”, Bohomolec had written comedies: “Zabawki poetyckie” (“Literary plays”) and “Rozrywki ucieszne”²⁸ (“Joyful Thrills”). As Jerzy Łojek emphasizes in his work, the periodical could not play a huge role in the current propaganda as the forms published in the newspaper were new and not fully comprehensible for the readers²⁹. The paper started losing its popularity after the death of Bohomolec in 1778. In the 80s the way in which the periodical was conducted by the next editors was very little attractive as much content was reprinted and the same topics were discussed all over again. The newspaper ceased to exist at the end of 1785.

Conclusions

Taking everything into consideration, this work has shown the groundbreaking role of religious congregations in the development of press in the pre-partition Poland. The huge role was played by the Piarists Order, which carried out the country from the time of occasional periodicals to the time of regularly published newspapers. Furthermore, the circle of readers was significantly extended by the use of Polish language and pretty simple, understandable style of writing. Since that moment the recipients of the press has

²⁷ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.47.

²⁸ R. Kaleta, *Prekursorzy Oświecenia: Monitor z roku 1763 na tle swoich czasów: Mitzler de Kolof, redaktor i wydawca*, Wrocław 1953, p.49.

²⁹ J. Łojek, *Prasa Polska 1661-1894*, Warsaw 1976, p.49

not been limited to the most wealthy and best educated part of Polish society. Newspapers stopped being published only in the capital city, but due to the distribution, they were available across the country. Additionally, different types of papers could be distinguished regarding to the frequency of its publication and topics which were mentioned. Not only the Piarists influenced Polish press market, but also the Jesuits Order played quite great role in the process of development, in which were figures such as: Franciszek Bohomolec or the priest Łuskina. Both religious congregations changed the style of writing information. Gradually, not only the dry news was presented, but also a pinch of humor or a short comment was added. One may assume that that was the moment in which journalism was born. Finally, the work of orders built fundamentals for the new profession to which as an exemplar may serve priest Świtkowski – a journalist. ■

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