

*Czesław Domański\**

## STANISŁAW STASZIC – A SYMPATHIZER OF ŁÓDŹ (1755–1862)



Stanisław Staszic was born on 6 November, 1755 in Piła a to a wealthy middle class family. Having completed his education in Poznan he was ordained in 1779. He continued his higher education at universities of Leipzig, Gent and Paris in the years 1779–1781. On his arrival to Poland in 1781 Staszic took up duties of a secretary of Andrzej Zamoyski. In the following year he was awarded with a degree of doctor of laws. In the years 1788–1791 he was the parish – priest in Turobin as well as a tutor and mentor of sons of the ex-chancellor Andrzej Zamoyski. He travelled across the country to satisfy his scientific interests and conduct geological studies. Staszic performed numerous public and social functions. As a political activist he became a leading representative of the reform movement of the King Stanislaus Era – an outspoken advocate of the interests of the middle class and peasants. In the period of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1812) he was a member of the Education Chamber and a referendary of the State Council. Since the year 1815, when the Congress Kingdom of Poland was established, he held the post of the state councilor, the member of the Commission for Faith and Public Enlightenment. Starting from 1824 he became the minister of state and was in charge of organizing vocational education in the Congress Kingdom.

From 1808 onwards Staszic was the chairman of the Society of the Friends of Sciences, whose seat in Warsaw was founded by him. He also made his name as one of the co- founders of the Warsaw University (1816) and the Academy of Mining in Kielce. He discovered deposits of coal and initiated erecting a coal mine in Dąbrowa Górnicza.

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Staszic played an important role in the development of Polish industry, working at the same time as a geologist and studying nature (in 1825 he published information about the Izerskie and Karkonosze Mountains). In the years 1816–1824 he held the post of the director general of Department of Industry and Crafts of the Congress Kingdom. At that time he devised a plan for redevelopment of the Industrial Region of Old Poland and, after he had founded in 1816 the Hrubieszow Agricultural Society, he became one of the pioneers of the peasant cooperative movement. He resumed exploitation of coal from the Reden deposit located in the present day Dąbrowa Górnicza. On his initiative a lot of industrial buildings were erected e.g. the first tin smelting works in the Kingdom of Poland (4 smelting works under one name of “Konstanty” – 1816–1822) and iron ore metallurgy centres. He also wrote a poem entitled “The Human Race 1919–1920”.

When he was holding the post of the director of the Department of Industry and Crafts he supported opinions on favorable hydrographic conditions of Łódź. In 1825 he provided a post – inspection description of the vicinity of the town. He gave an appraisal of the area of Łódź in which he judged the its fitness for textile manufacturing. His positive opinions and support helped to redevelop the industry of Łódź and implement the state program. Moreover, Staszic devised a curriculum for Sunday Craft Schools turning them into centers educating highly qualified workers who could easily adapt to changing production processes and new technologies.

Locating the textile industry in Łódź – a small settlement at the time – can be put to the merit of Stanisław Staszic. In the year 1825, in his capacity as a the minister of state, he was visiting roads, rivers and factories of the Kingdom of Poland. At the time, the state was involved in the process of cleaning the waterways to make them navigable, the process of road modernization and constructing industrial plants. The state protectionism was supported by Staszic, who was a man of great social vision. The itinerary included visiting: Zgierz, Aleksandrów, Konstantynów, Łódź, Pabianice, Sieradz. In his report of September 1825 he observed that Łódź, situated over numerous small rivers and streams, was a good place for developing textile industry (water is needed for textiles finishing). The ideas of Staszic were transformed into actions, which eventually led into establishing textile plants and so Łódź became the main centre of the Polish textile industry.

Staszic published numerous studies in the field of natural sciences, philosophy and statistics e.g.: “Remarks on the life of Jan Zamoyski” (1787), “Admonitions for Poland” (1790), “On statistics of Poland” (1807), “On yielding crops in the Carpathians” (1815) accompanied by a geological map of Poland and the neighbouring countries (one of the first maps of this type in the world). The work of Staszic was the first ever attempt to present a synthetic view

of geology of Poland. His interest in geology had also a more practical aspect when he organized geological expeditions in the Tatra Mountains and is, therefore considered a pioneer of mountaineering in Poland.

Statistics became a matter of interest for Staszic in his early study titled “Remarks on the life of Jan Zamoyski” where he expresses his criticism on the feudal system and proposes a program of social and economic reforms and while doing it he uses statistical calculations and analyses. Staszic pointed out that in order to conduct political activity and govern the country it is essential to have information on fundamental social and economic phenomena. He fully voiced this opinion in his study entitled “On Statistics of Poland. A short outline of information useful for those who wish to free this country and those who wish to rule it”. As it can be seen in the subtitle he defines the tasks of statistics as “outline of information useful for those who wish to free this country and those who wish to rule it”. This work marks the beginning of publishing studies in the field of socio-economic statistics. “On Statistics of Poland” was published anonymously in 1807 which was the time of animated debate on aims, tasks and limits of statistics and was the first ever printed study in this field. The study provides a description of Poland and includes frequent use of statistical data. It mostly consists of an analysis of internal and external situation of Poland and an assessment of reforms which were conducted by the Prussian and Austrian governments and, finally it shows some ways which, according to Staszic, should be taken to enable the country’s development.

The study includes the following sections:

- Expanse. Polish lands topographically considered
- Departments in plain areas and remote countries
- Departments in mountainous areas
- Navigable rivers in Poland
- Amount of land occupied by cities, roads, swamp, forests, plough land and meadows
- How much grain leaves Poland
- What condition cities are in
- What the whole population of Poland is
- What size of army Poland can raise and support
- What taxes Poland can put up now
- What political relations Poland and France have
- Trade relations of Poland and France

Let us consider the data provided by Staszic in “Expanse of Poland topographically considered”: Poland together with Lithuania in its expanse of the year 1772 is situated between 35 and 50 degree of longitude; and between 48 and 56 degree of latitude. The area of the country takes about 21 thousand of square miles i.e. 120 million of morgs (5600sq m), counting 20 miles per a degree,

and 171 Włok Chełmińskich, one Włoka equals 33 Morgs, and one morg is 300 perches; one perch is equal to 6 Paris feet.

Winter commonly takes 5 months, summer, spring and autumn the rest of the year. In coldest winters temperatures range from minus 16 to minus 24 degrees, in average winters from minus 10 to 16 degrees. In summer time the highest temperatures reach 26 degrees.

The country borders are natural: from the west a mountain range starting in the Carpathians and stretching to Silesia: from the south an enormous ridge of the Carpathians going down to the Black Sea; from the north – the Baltic Sea, and between this sea and the Black Sea the Dnieper River and the swamps of Polesie which have to be strengthened with fortresses or field trenches.

According to the present day Vivodships the land can be divided into 32 Departments (I follow here the thought of the scholar Czacki): Poznań, Kalisz, Gniezno departments take up 875 miles; Sieradz together with Wieluń lands – 400; Łęczyca 75; Rawa 180; Brześć – Kujawski 135; Inowrocław and Dobrzyń land – 175; Płock 120; Masovia – 760; Malbork – 120; Pomerania – 330; Cracow together with Oświęcim and Zator – 650; Sandomierz and Radom – 950; Lublin – 455; Podlasie Region – 250; Chełmno land – 250; Russia – 1125; Bełz – 200; Podolia – 528; Volhynia – 1296; Braclawice – 900; Kijew – 1500; Vilnius – 1350; Troki – 1050; Żmudź – 700; Novogrod – 900; Brzeg Lithuanian together with Pińsk – 1300; Minsk together with z Rzeczyce and Mozyr – 1950; Mścisław – 750; Vitebsk – 750; Połock – 1000; Inflanty – 240; Kurlandia Duchy.

It seems worth quoting some of the information included in the study on the grains exports: „When studying tariffs of various grains exported via the Gdansk port in the years 1549 to 1800, one can observe that since 1649 until 1662 on average 953850 bushels were exported annually (1 bushel – around 98 kg); and since 1790 till 1800, the average annual exports were equal to about 10 million bushels. Thus Poland sold 10 times more grain in the period of 130 years. Also the growth in agriculture can be gathered on the basis of multiplied wheat sowing. Around the year 1655 on average 6917 łaszt of wheat were exported. Towards the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century 9,000 łaszt were exported (60 bushels – one Gdansk łaszt); at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century an average year sent over 20,000 łaszt of wheat to Gdansk. This amount was reached despite the increased home consumption caused by 200,000 army stationing in the country at the time. When we observe the development of the country's agriculture it is easy to see a tendency to multiply the amount of wheat and decrease the amount of rye. In one century wheat production multiplied at the ratio: 1, 2, 3, 3 1/2, 4; and rye production decreased at the ratio: 19, 18, 17, 16, 16 1/2.”

This publication included materials of informative and statistical character and some figures mainly on agriculture and population (e.g. population growth over a period of 50 years), Polish cities, grain exports, prices and payments etc.

Some of the calculations provided by Staszic (e. g. when he uses estimation) were clearly misleading which was pointed out by his contemporary economists. The study also lacks information on the sources he used, which is a serious drawback. Despite these shortcomings the study “On statistics of Poland” played a great role not only in the public sphere of life but also in science, as it initiated a new field of research. Another of his merits is the fact that by publishing his study Staszic for the first time provided to the general public information on socio-economic problems on the macro scale. For that reason Stanisław Staszic is widely acclaimed as the precursor of the Polish statistical thought although he was not a statistician in the strict sense of the word but rather an activist and a political writer.

Finally, let us go back to the work titled “Remarks on the life of Jan Zamoyski” where he wrote “The happiness of the majority of citizens is the public good. The will of a greater part of the nation is the universal will. The majority of votes in the Sejm should pass the law”. He went on to say “these truths should be the principle of universal law. This measure should be the creator of human dignity”.

Further on Staszic wrote that if the voice of one individual shouting “Liberum veto” is to outweigh the voice of one million of citizens then it has nothing to do with freedom and “it results in a piece of foolery which is this” I do not allow “making one equal to a million: 1=1000000”.

Staszic was a great thinker, intellectual and politician who had an enormous influence on the development of political and statistical thought. He died in Warsaw in January 1826.

In 1951 in Piła – the birth place of Stanisław Staszic – a biographical museum of His name was established in the very house where he was born.