Summary

“To destroy all states”

Ludwik Królikowski’s wandering ideas (1799–1879)

The main aim of this book is to investigate Ludwik Królikowski’s wandering ideas. It is thus not a classical biography, as particular attention is paid to the aspect of the international circulation and evolution of his ideas, in constant touch with both French and Polish audiences. Indeed, in this sense and for numerous reasons, Królikowski’s case opens up space not only for empirical research, but also for some methodological reflections. Born in 1799, Królikowski was one of few active in Polish politics at that time who had peasant origins. Even if this aspect cannot be neglected, I do not share the opinion presented by certain authors (notably Jan Turowski) that this fact fully explains the subsequent political decisions taken by Królikowski. Rather, I contend that a far greater influence was exerted on him by the entire process of his education, primarily his studies at the University of Warsaw, and the journey to Paris with his closest friends. In 1828, finding himself in the French capital, he stumbled upon the flourishing ideas of Saint-Simonianism, which visibly fascinated him. However, his first sojourn in Paris was relatively short: in November 1830, the Polish, anti-Russian November Uprising broke out, and the following year Królikowski hastily returned to Warsaw, where he threw himself into the ongoing political fray.

In 1831, for the first time he published a cycle of articles in “Gazeta Polska” (The Polish Gazette), in which he applied Saint-Simonian concepts to his political reflections. Therefore, it is likely that such concepts as nauka towarzyska (*social science*) or idling class appeared for the first time in Polish debates, and the figure of Jesus, extensively applied by early socialists in political reflections, served here as a rhetorical device that could enhance Królikowski’s reflections. When the Russian troops swept through the country, and the insurgency seemed to lose its momentum, Królikowski, along with his wife, moved to Cracow, where he remained in touch with the Polish political circles that after 1831 would emerge in exile, notably in France. During his stay in the city, he supported clandestine organizations, and, as a result, the authorities forced him to leave Cracow in 1839, after which he arrived once again in Paris.

Back in the French capital city, Królikowski hastily acquainted himself with the most recent output of the early French socialists and radicals, reading extensively the works by writers such as Étienne Cabet, Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, or Eliphas Lévi. In 1842, he began to publish his own journal, "Polska Chrystusowa" (Christ's Poland), presenting highly original ideas in it. His articles were densely imbued with religious metaphors, and divided the world into the spheres of good and evil. Nevertheless, Królikowski remained a political thinker, and not a religious one, as he repeatedly explained such metaphors as prayer or holy communion in a clearly political way.

In 1842 Królikowski began to publish articles in French as well. In this period, he became involved in contacts with Cabet and the Icarian movement, gradually becoming a more and more important figure within French communism. Following Cabet's departure for the USA in 1848, from 1849–1851 Królikowski acted as editor-in-chief of the main Icarian journal, "Le Populaire". Undoubtedly, it was the peak of his political career, and a period in which he corresponded with, Moses Hess, Jean-Pierre Beluze, and others. However, in 1852 Cabet jettisoned Królikowski, blaming him for presenting in Icarian journals ideas that were at odds with the Icarian doctrine, primarily the harsh criticism of the constitution or political authority. Cabet emphasized that these elements were at the core of the Icarian programme.

After the quarrel with Cabet, in the 1850s and 1860s, Królikowski searched for new hopes, making an effort to create a synthesis of the affirmation of primaeval Christian communities with the vision of ancient Slavonic society as rooted in direct democracy and communism. Indeed, in his works published in the 1860s and 1870s, Królikowski depicted the ideal of Slavdom regenerated thanks to the ideas of a new Christianity. Using this, he combined different rhetorical devices, such as religious metaphors with symbols derived from nature.

In 1877 he departed for New York, where he quickly established relations with such figures as Jules Leroux and Charles Fauvety. In the short period before his death, he threw himself anew in political debates, publishing new appeals and explaining the communist essence of Christianity. Królikowski died on May 5, 1879.

What makes him unusual is the way in which he participated in two national contexts and linguistic communities. As a part of his intellectual activities, new motifs and arguments emerged in the Polish political discourse, for instance, the concept of social science (*nauka towarzyska*) or the vision of society divided into an industrial class and an idling one. What's more, he also hinted at progressive taxation. In turn, in his French works, he defined himself as a communist, as well as exerting a tangible impact on Cabet, who ultimately evolved into the doctrine of "True Christianity" and openly acknowledged the Polish communist's impact on him.

There was also a number of differences between Królikowski's French and Polish output. His French articles were more precise, whereas when writing in Polish, he used a higher number of dense metaphors, which placed them beyond the

ongoing political debates. Moreover, in his Polish works, Królikowski had a visible propensity to use the metaphor of nature or natural disasters that, in his visions, were to participate directly in the revolutionary movement. In his French texts, in turn, he referred to issues that he left almost completely untouched in his Polish output, such as the proletariat, unemployment, or political sovereignty. Interestingly enough, in the period 1849–1851 he became involved in the French debates on the sovereignty, but expounded the necessity of abolishing any political power and domination, and called for 'direct sovereignty' beyond any institutional order.

Finally, the criticism towards the very essence of political power (and not a particular ruler or system) constitutes the core of his ideas, and makes him, to some extent, a forerunner of Polish anarchism.