Article Title: The Reformation and the Development of Polish Literature and Polish Printing

Article Author: Buchwald Pelcowa, Paulina, and Janusz Pelc

Journal Title: Polata Knigopisnaia

Issue Date: August 1987

Publisher: William R. Veder, Vakgroep Slavistiek, Katholieke Universiteit, Postbus 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen (Holland)


Appears in:

Community: Hilandar Research Library

Sub-Community: Polata Knigopisnaia

Collection: Polata Knigopisnaia: Volume 16 (August 1987)
The great Reformation in the domain of religion and religious life became fully apparent in the 16th Century and embraced many countries mainly of Central, Northern and Western Europe. It also affected Poland. However, in discussing the role which the Reformation played in the history of the Polish literature and printing, we cannot pass over in silence some pronouncements of its forerunners. This is all the more necessary on this occasion because the first voices in Polish literature announcing the Reformation are at the same time evidence of early connections between Polish and English ideas on this matter.

About 1449 in Cracow, the first work of JĘDRZEJ GAŁKA OF DOBCZYNO to be written in Polish, "Song of Wiklef" appeared. JĘDRZEJ GAŁKA OF DOBCZYNO, Master of Arts of the Cracow Academy, like the great Bohemian reformer JOHN HUS, and like MARTIN LUTHER later, was referring to the views of the English theologian and religious thinker of the 14th Century, JOHN WYCLIFFE, an adversary of the hierarchical structure of the Church and the Papacy, who recognized the Scriptures, which he had translated into English, as the only source of Revelation. In his "Song of Wiklef" Master JĘDRZEJ GAŁKA, who had links with the Bohemian Hussites, strongly criticized the Pope of Rome and the clergy who instead of "Christ's truth" praised the "Antichrist's untruth", that is the lie based on a wrong interpretation of the Scriptures.

Because of the closeness of Bohemia, Hussite ideas leading up to the Reformation had penetrated into Poland already in the 15th Century. In fact, the ideas of various 'heretics' and early protagonists of the reform of Christianity penetrated into Poland either directly or indirectly from different countries. Although the Hussite movement, as a religious movement, did not gain many followers in Poland and most of these were in Wielkopolska, it influenced, along with other new currents, the develop-
ment of the ideas of some intellectuals and Polish writers as early as the late Middle Ages and the early era of Humanism and Renaissance. This prepared the ground for new ideas leading towards a general reform of Christianity.

Already in the 15th Century in Polish literature we notice sympathy for early manifestations of the pre-Reformation ideas, and also a somewhat different trend, a critical attitude towards medieval papal universalism. This trend is represented clearly in the works of JAN OSTROROG, a follower and supporter of the policies of the king, Kazimierz Jagiellonczyk, which were often contrary to the intentions of the Papal State. The Latin prose of OSTROROG, in particular, perhaps, his famous speech in 1467 to Pope Paul II, stressed the independence of Poland and of her ruler of any universal claims of the Papacy. Of course, OSTROROG was not yet a Reformation or even pre-Reformation writer. However, his criticism of the Papacy was an expression not only of the stirring of a national consciousness in Poland, but also the beginnings of that Polish social and political literature which developed later, at the time of the great Reformation, and particularly in the second half of the 16th Century.

BIERNAT OF LUBLIN, the author of Polish translations of Aesop's "Fables" and Aesop's "Life", published about 1522 in Cracow, and of an earlier "Paradise of the Soul" (1513), was a follower of the Reform. BIERNAT'S works, written in Polish, were printed in the years when Humanism and the Renaissance had already triumphed in poetry and prose in Poland. This poetry and prose was created by such illustrious writers as ANDRZEJ KRZYCKI and JAN DANTYSZEK highly esteemed by ERASMUS of Rotterdam and by the author of "Carmen de Bisonte", MIKOLAJ OF HUSSOW, and by CLEMENS IANICIUS, an excellent lyrical poet, who obtained the title of 'poeta laureatus' in Padua. However, they were writing in Latin. BIERNAT OF LUBLIN was writing in Polish. His works were designed for a wider circle of readers. Other writers of Cracow University circles, such as JAN OF KOSZYCKI, author of the "Talks of Solomon with Marcholt", were proceeding in a similar way, following in the footsteps of Czech authors.

KRZYCKI and DANTYSZEK were enthusiasts of the ideas of ERASMUS. They were, however, critical of LUTHER although they corresponded with MELANCHTON. On the other hand, DANTYSZEK had a great sympathy for the then Biblical philology which grew up to a large extent from the activi-
ties of ERASMUS. Therefore, he not only supported the works of the Flemish philologist JAN CAMPONSIS of Louvain but also obtained for him the protection of PIOTR TOMICKI, vice-chancellor of Poland under Sigismund the Old.

Sympathy for the Reformation was apparent already in the first half of the 16th Century among the circle of ANDRZEJ TRZECIESKI THE ELDER in Cracow where intellectuals of all ages as well as writers came together. Among others, ANDRZEJ FRYCZ MODRZEWSKI and MIKOLAJ REJ were gaining experience in the discussions of this group. Even earlier among the followers and protagonists of ERASMUS' ideas an Englishman, LEONARD COXE, distinguished himself in Cracow. Young Frycz, at the court of the Primate, Jan Łaski, became friendly with the nephews of his protector, one of whom was JAN LASKI THE YOUNGER, renowned later as JOHN A LASCO for his Reform activity in England. These two-way interactions of Polish and English intellectuals in the period of the Renaissance and great Reformation should be remembered.

In Poland, the Reformation became fully evident after the death in 1548 of king Sigismund the Old who had been opposed to it. He was succeeded by his son, Sigismund Augustus, whose attitude was tolerant, even favourable. But already in the last years of the reign of Sigismund the Old, sympathies towards a wide-ranging reform of Christianity, and the real aims of the reformers, as well as criticism of the shortcomings of the Church officials and the unnaturalness of monastic life were expounded in the early works of FRYCZ MODRZEWSKI and REJ. Frycz was writing in Latin and, like ERASMUS, was addressing his works to a wide circle of readers of all European countries, although some of his works were really addressed only to Poles. Despite the fragmentation of Christianity, becoming apparent also in Poland, the aim of Frycz was mainly to restore the true principles of faith and unity. REJ, already in his early dialogues, among others in the "Short dissertation...", strongly criticized the social activities and behaviour of the Catholic clergy. Later, especially in works printed after 1549, criticism of the clergy and of the Roman Catholic Church as an institution becomes more sharp and takes on a clearly Reform character. Like BIERNAT OF LUBLIN, REJ wrote his works only in Polish. It was all part of his sympathy, at first somewhat hidden and then quite clear, towards the Reformation, a follower of which he had become already in the forties of the 16th Century.
Just as in other European countries, the Reformation played a very important role in the development of various important sections of literature in the Polish language. The most important thing was the preparation of the translations of the Bible although this task was difficult and was only implemented in stages. Of similar importance, however, were attempts to write the songs which were to serve the people in the service of the new Christian religions. Last but not least were the many polemical works, echoing the discussions of those who were fighting against the defendants of the Catholic church and the Papacy; these were written mainly in the form of dialogues and treatises, deliberations, orations, etc. In Poland, in order to oppose the supporters of the Reformation, the supporters of the Roman Catholic church also began to write in Polish. However, in this struggle, polemic and exegetic works were not enough. The reply to the Reformed translations of the Bible into Polish was the preparation of Polish Catholic translations. As more and more Evangelical psalm-books and hymnals began to appear, so also Polish Catholic psalm-and-hymn books became more and more popular. Collections of sermons written by the followers of Lutheranism, Calvinism, Antitrinitarism were opposed by collections of sermons created by Catholic authors. The followers of both sides engaged in polemics both in prose and in verse. On the side of the Reformation, the works of MIKOLAJ REJ, written in verse and in prose, took the form of a dialogue and even a drama, describing the positive and negative aspects of man's behaviour. Of course, REJ in his great didactic works, not only presents the vision of a Reform writer, but the general problems of a 16th Century Polish nobleman, aiming at reforming 16th Century social life, not just religious life, were familiar to him. His aim of implementing through literature his ideal of a "good, honest man", was close not only to the principles of the Reformation but equally to the 'humane' pattern of "hominis honesti". "człowieka poczciwego".

The first chronicle was written in Polish by MARCIN BIELSKI, a Reform writer, and also the author of satires written in verse and of a drama. Another Reform writer, JAN MĄCZYŃSKI, prepared and edited in 1564 in Królewiec a great Latin-Polish dictionary. Young STANISŁAW ORZECHOWSKI, author of the much discussed "Repudium Romae", wrote works strongly supporting the Reformation, although in later years he became an equally strong supporter of the Catholic Church. In the 16th Century, such meta-
morphoses could be noted in Poland as in other countries. It is a
characteristic feature of writing and intellectual life of the time.

The speed of the cultural processes, the liveliness of the polemics,
the possibility of reaching a wide audience with all kinds of writing was
made easier by that great achievement of the 15th Century — the discovery
of print. In the 16th Century printing in Europe grew apace aided by the
intellectual needs of the Humanists and Reformers, and also by the needs
of religious propaganda of sects fighting one another. The development
of the Reformation and Reform writing, or writing inspired by the Reforma-
tion, also had its influence on the development of printing in Poland,
although, of course, in Poland too printing can be seen earlier than the
Reformation.

From a general European point of view the influence of the Reforma-
tion on the development of printing is undisputed, particularly for Ger-
man where, beginning with LUTHER'S first printed texts, publications
spreading the new school of thought began to come out in a large number
of editions, often reprinted very frequently and in a large number of
copies. In Germany a special type of pamphlet appeared, conveying ideas
which were up-to-date and of the greatest interest to wide sections of
society. Apart from works popularizing the new religious doctrines and
combating the 'Pope-followers', there were many books serving the Cult
such as psalters and hymnals, prayer books and homilies, as well as trans-
lations of the Bible, particularly of the New Testament (85 such works
between 1522 and 1534).

In Poland, the development of the Reformation, its expansion and
regression and its influence on printing took a quite different course.
It was dependent, to a large degree, on other social, political and also
economic factors. Printing had come relatively early, in 1473, that is
earlier than in many other European countries (after Germany, Italy,
Switzerland, France and Hungary, almost simultaneously with the Nether-
lands — excluding the legendary Coster — and Spain, but before England,
Bohemia, Austria, Denmark and Sweden. However, for a long time it devel-
oped very slowly and with large gaps. In the 15th Century, there were
six printing presses. Two of them were in Cracow where an anonymous
printer, most probably Kasper Straube, printed a calendar for 1474 and
three other works in Latin; Szwajpolt Fiol printed several works, for the
first time, in the Cyrillic alphabet, designed for the Orthodox Church.
In Wrocław Canon Elyan of Głogów printed, among other things, the Wrocław Statutes with prayers for the first time in Polish. The printing houses in Gdańsk and Malbork were rather more ephemeral. The "hidden" printing house of the "printer of the sermons of Pope Leon", probably in Chelmno in Pomerania, organized possibly by the Brothers of the Common Life from the Netherlands was active longer (probably during the period 1473-1476)\(^8\)

At present, we know only 32 *incomabulae*\(^9\) from the 15th Century; there must have been a much greater number which were lost for, with the exception of the Cracow calendar, these were large volume runs. They were used mainly by the Catholic church, or by the Orthodox Church, in the case of Fiol; some had a Humanistic character. Only in 1503 did printing become a permanent craft on the banks of Vistula. For many years Cracow, then the capital of Poland, monopolized printing; until the 18th Century, it was the main centre of Polish printing. The new religious trends also arrived early in Cracow - the political, cultural and scientific capital of the country, the seat of the University, an important centre of the Catholic church. Following the influence of Hussitism (Fiol, for instance, was accused of pro-Hussite sympathies, although it was something else that caused the repressions and censorship which ended the activities of his printing house) there was growing religious agitation in Cracow and nearby and also in other parts of the country, particularly in Wielkopolska, Pomerania and Lithuania. It is, however, characteristic that for a long time no printed work with clear Reform sympathies was published in Poland. The King's edicts and later the decisions of the Synods, forbidding the appearance of Reform books, point to the fact that the role of these books was early appreciated in Poland.

Already in July 1520 (in June of that year the edict of Pope Leo X, condemning LUTHER'S theses, had appeared) King Sigismund the Old issued an edict against the new doctrine, concerning only books: the importation, sale and purchase of LUTHER'S works. The King issued further edicts increasing the penalties for the propagation of LUTHER'S books, but only in the fourth edict, dated August 1523, were printers warned as well as the booksellers. For the first half of the 16th Century, no printed work of a clearly Reform character, designed for Poles, appeared in Cracow\(^10\). There were no translations of LUTHER'S works, or theological or devotional works of foreign or Polish participants of the Reformed Church. Although there appeared a book by MELANCHTON, it had nothing to
do with the doctrine in which he believed, it concerned grammar ("Syntax-is"). Also the works of MIKOLAJ REJ, who was closely connected with the Reformation, were printed in Cracow until 1550; despite the criticisms they contain, they show no clear signs of the author speaking for the Reformation. Even Hieronim Wietor who had played a very important role in Polish printing in the first half of the 16th Century and who had clear Humanistic and Reform sympathies he had printed the works of ERASMUS, brought in foreign heretical books, for which he had been imprisoned in 1536, had printed works of Hungarian authors connected with the Reformation even he, when it came to printing works intended for Poland restrained himself from printing books of too patent a Reform character. Such books came to Poland from abroad.

On the other hand, there developed in Cracow the printing of books concerned in some way with the Reformation, particularly of an anti-Reformation character. Already in 1521 Jan Haller printed "Edictum contra Lutherum" by the king Sigismund the Old, and then several publications of this type including the ironical Encomia Lutheri by KRZYCKI (which subsequently was on the "Index" of the Catholic Church because of its misleading title). In Cracow, many works of an adversary of LUTHER, JOANNES ECKIUS, appeared, as well as ERASMUS' "Hyperaspistes diatribae adversus servum arbitrium Martini Lutheri" (1526), published by Wietor who also, in 1526, printed "Epistola Martini Lutheri ad Henricum VIII et responsio" published by the English humanist, LEONARD COXE. In 1540, two publishing houses edited POLITIUS' "Speculum haereticorum". and we find other works combating Lutheranism as well as many highly orthodox Catholic, theological and devotional books. However, there also appeared works the authors of which had trouble with their printing, such as CAMPENSIS' translation of the Psalms which was rather unfavourably looked upon by the Louvain theologists. An interesting thing is a print of "Das neue Testament" translated by LUTHER and made in Cracow in 1540 by Pawel Helicz with Hebrew type. Also the Prayer to the Holy Trinity against the adversaries of the Church printed in 1549 by Wietor and included in the composite Pulawy psalter and hymnal consisting mainly of printings by Lazarz Andrysowic, who took over Wietor's printing house, from about 1556, for collective services, is also allegedly translated from LUTHER'S works.

The first printed works in the Polish language, clearly serving the
cause of the Reformation and its followers, appeared in Królewiec, the
seat of Duke Albrecht, a vassal of the Polish king and at the same time
the nephew of Sigismund the Old. There, SEKLUCJAN was very active: before
the religious repressions he left Poznań; so was his adversary JAN MALECKI
OF SĄCZ, the former collaborator of Cracow printers and the bishop's
printer in Pultusk. Thanks to them and a very able young advocate of
the Reformation, JAN MURZYNOWSKI not only were books favourable to the
Reformation printed in Polish, but the language was being improved. With
the first printed Polish translation of the New Testament, made by
MURZYNOWSKI and published by Seklucjan in the printing house of the Bohem­
ian Augezdecki, a religious refugee who had been brought to Królewiec to
print Polish books, there came out the innovatory Polish spelling book
Orthographia polska by MURZYNOWSKI. Also in Królewiec, the first
Postilla (Homilies) in the Polish language as well as the Great Prayer
Book appeared. Serious polemics, the first literary polemics in Poland,
took place between SEKLUCJAN and MALECKI concerning the translation of the
New Testament. From Królewiec, books were taken to all places in Poland,
carriages loaded with them went not only to Poznań (HIERONIM MALECKI took
500 copies of the Small catechism by LUTHER) but also to the vicinity of
Wawel.

In 1553 in Brześć Litowsk under the auspices of MIKOLAJ RADZIWILL
CZARNY a printing house directed by B. Wojewodka started to operate.
Wojewodka soon died, transporting books (he was drowned). In 1557 the
Diet guaranteed freedom of worship. In the same year one of our best
printers, Maciej Wirzbieta, clearly connected with the Reformation, a mem­
er of a Calvinist community, started his activity in Cracow. He pub­
lished many works of REJ, of a clearly Reform leaning (including Postilla
(1557) with four reprints, Hoseas the prophet of Dietrich-Luther). New
printing houses came into being outside Cracow. The printing house in
Brześć was revived, a new one came into being in Pinczów, Augezdecki
moved from Królewiec to Wielkopolska (Szamotuly), Reform books very of­
ten polemic were printed in Łosk, Nieśwież, Lustawice, Wekrów and Gord­
zisk. Mostly, the life of these printing houses was a short one, as they
were operating thanks to the patronage of the magnates (the RADZIWILLS,
KISZKA, GOPKA, SIENIENSKI). The printing house in Brześć is famous be­
cause of the Brześć Bible, known also as the Radziwill Bible, the product
of intensive work by a number of translators with great theological and
philological knowledge. In these provincial printing houses, serving the Reformation, the printing was done mainly in Polish (90 works out of a total of 130). In Nieśwież, they undertook to print the Lutheran catechism and the works of Szymon Budny in Cyrillic in order to propagate the Evangelical religion among the Russian population.

At the same time in Cracow there appeared many prints connected with the Reformation, first Wirzbieta's, then Rodecki's working for the most radical wing of the Polish reformation, the Polish Brethren called the Arians. Others were printing books both for the Catholics and for the Protestants, such as tazarz Andryssowic (from whom, in 1551, a part of the work of Andreas Frycz Modrzejowski, "Commentarii de republica emendanda libri quinque" - the books about the Church and the School were confiscated) and Matusz Siebeneich, whose products included the so-called Zamoyski 'Hymnal'.

After 1580, the small provincial Reform printing houses die out, though Reform books are still printed by Wirzbieta, Rodecki and later his son-in-law Sternacki. In Gdańsk and Toruń, mostly books for the Wielkopolska and Pomeranian Lutherans, for the Bohemian Brethren and for Calvinists are printed (the famous Gdańsk Bible from 1632, and hymnals), in Lubcz on Nieman, for the Lithuanian Calvinists, and in Rakow where, at the end of the 16th Century, the Arian printing house of Rodecki and Sternacki moved. However, the activity of these most famous Polish printing houses was terminated by an edict of parliament dated 1638.

The most outstanding poet of the times of Humanism, Renaissance and Reformation, Jan Kochanowski, clearly sympathised with the Reformation in his early works. In an elegy, written in Latin, he criticized the corruption of the clergy and of the Pope, who instead of uniting all Christians conducts bloody wars himself. Young Kochanowski was twice in Królewiec, in 1552 and in 1555-1556. He was connected, albeit rather loosely, with the Firlej Reform court and - what is more important - with the court of Mikołaj Radziwill called 'the Black', the leader of the Reformation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Fundamental works, as has been already mentioned, were created at the court of Radziwill. The most important of them was a translation of the Bible. Moreover, one of the creations was Lexicon Latino-Polonicum, by Jan Maćzynski to the edition of which Kochanowski added his own enthusiastic verses. There was also a hymnal edited in 1563-1564, including also a hymn to God by Jan Kochan-
This hymn had in fact appeared before the middle of 1562 together with a poem to Zuzanna in Cracow in the printing house of the Calvinist WIRZBIETA, and this edition was dedicated by KOCHANOWSKI to Elżbieta Radziwiłł, wife of MIKOLAJ CZARNY

In later years the sympathy of KOCHANOWSKI towards the Reformation cooled, his poetry began to contain criticisms of the politically-minded representatives of the gentry from the Reform circles. But KOCHANOWSKI never became a clear-cut adversary of the Reformation. Among his close friends he retained both the advocates of the Reform and of Catholicism. He dedicated his poetic translation of the Psalms to PIOTR MYSZKOWSKI, who was then the bishop of Cracow, but this work, like his "Songs", the poet gave to everyone. His psalms and hymn to God and several other poems were first seen in Evangelical hymnals: those of Lutherans, Calvinists, Bohemian Brethren and Arians, and only afterwards also in Catholic books. The first printing of the "Carol" (Koleda) by KOCHANOWSKI appeared in 1587 in Toruń in an Evangelical hymnal. In the 17th Century, a quarrel about KOCHANOWSKI took place between the Catholics and the Evangelists. Both sides thought of him as of their writer, and as a matter of fact both were right, because KOCHANOWSKI belonged to everyone.

The Reformation played a very important part in the great development of writing in the Polish language, particularly in the second half of the 16th Century. Mainly, however, it had a role in the development of Polish prose, of various styles: intellectual, polemic, Biblical. However, it also had its influence on the development of the Polish poetry. It was created not only by REJ, the didactician and humorist, but also by many other writers, in particular authors of psalm-books, but not only them, as may be exemplified by the verses of ANDRZEJ TRZECIESKI THE YOUNGER. In the 17th Century, many outstanding poets representing the reformed cults contributed to Polish poetry: DANIEL NABOROWSKI, a Calvinist; ZBIGNIEW MORSZTYN, an Arian; WACŁAW POTOcki, also an Arian, though later (after 1658 according to some), a Cryptoarian.

In the 17th Century, the participation of Evangelical writers and in particular of Arians in the development of prose composed both in Polish and in Latin, was no less important. Outstanding works of Arians, SOCYN and others, were printed at first in Cracow and in Rakow. Then, after the closing of the Arian printing houses, the excellent works of SAMUEL PRZYPKOWSKI (referring to the ideas of HUGON GROTIUS), of ANDRZEJ WISZOWATY
and others were printed away from Poland, mainly in Amsterdam. These works declared the ideas of tolerance, of the need to seek common factors and thoughts in divided Christendom, some sort of early Ecumenism, the need for a religion in accordance with reason. The precursors of European Enlightenment read the outstanding works of the Polish Arian thinkers, looking in them for inspiration20, because the role the Reformation played in the development of Polish writing and Polish culture was also a role played in the development of European culture.

Footnotes

6 Ibid.: 119-121.
11 J. PELC. Europejiskość i polskość literatury naszego renesansu, 113-454.
14 A. KAWECKA-GRYCZOWA. Ariańskie oficyny wydawnicze Rodeckiego i Sternackiego. Dzieje i bibliografia - Les imprimeurs des antitrini-


