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ALEKSANDER TRZASKA-CHRZĄSZCZEWSKI AND POLISH POLITICS

ABSTRACT

The article describes life and political ideas of Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, one of the most distinctive political scientists and conservative thinkers of the interwar period in Poland. The essay contains many – earlier unknown – biographical details and Chrząszczewski's political, international and historiosophic conceptions. In his essays Chrząszczewski criticised political system based on the democratic constitution from 1921 and political practise of authoritarian regime ruled after 1926 r. He precisely pointed out inconsistency of Pilsudski's camp, which declared strengthening of the State as an aim of political activity and on the other hand very often ruled by informal instruments. In the international relations' area Chrząszczewski was a follower of pro-French orientation. He observed evolution of German political system during Nazi regime and warned against rising of political and military power of Third Reich. *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji* (The Tides of Democracy), written in 1939, is still the most recognizable Chrząszczewski's work. The Author proposed original vision of political changes stimulated by increasing or decreasing activity of masses. Chrząszczewski's theory is one of the most interesting attempts to analyze social and political events of 1930s, that could be compared with the ones made by José Ortega y Gasset or Florian Znaniecki.

Keywords: Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, dictatorship, parliamentarism, conservatism

If it were not for the 1981 reprint, by Oficyna Liberałów, of Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski's outstanding book *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji* [The Tides of Democracy], the memory of one of the most significant Polish political scientists of the interwar period would have vanished completely. Even though the interest in his legacy is not very widespread today, brief analyses of his concepts emerge occasionally, which usually stress the remarkable originality of his ideas in comparison with other notions in Polish political thought.¹ It seems that due to their uniqueness, as well as being virtually impossible to assign to any specific political faction, they have been treated as fringe ones. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski was not a politician, and as a conservative writer he never became permanently associated with any conservative circles or press titles. Educated, like Adolf Bocheński, in Western Europe, he introduced an entirely novel perspective to Polish political discourse. And it was neither the perspective of a political party, nor of an ideology, but a preference for systems analysis. One should remember that in the first half of the 20th century political science in Poland developed to a large extent on the basis of legal theory, while Chrząszczewski manifested a strong, typical of French thinkers, sociological approach considering political phenomena in the context of social transformations. This recognition of a certain 'spirit of the laws,' not only of nations, but also epochs, determined the permanence of political system solutions and of the ability to accomplish political goals. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski sought the conditions of political processes on many different planes. It would be a simplification to abridge his legacy to the theory of the 'tides' of democracy, its high tides and low tides. Although his historiosophical concept was one of the most interesting accounts of the transformations which occurred in the age of 'the revolt of the masses,' his reflections on political systems and geopolitical issues, as well as his analyses of Polish political sociology are evidence to his outstanding analytical skills, often transcending the context of his times. The exceptional qualities of that thinker was rather perversely described by Piotr Bartula: *Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski was not one of the intellectuals who can be included in the narrow group of European Elite. Some go as far as refusing him the privilege of being a philosopher. Indeed, he wrote only two books, but what he wrote in them was indisputably valuable. The treatment of him as a secondary thinker only points to the lack of Polish thinkers of primary importance in the complicated field of philosophy of politics which teaches us distance and critical approach to all transient systems, as opposed to such permanent political qualities as liberty, safety and private property.*² The Krakow-based philosopher rightly noticed the European level of Chrząszczewski's reflection, perhaps slightly arbitrarily depreciated to the secondary status. However, independently of the scope of appreciation, he definitely belongs, on a par with Adolf

¹ P. Bartula, "Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski. Krytyczna filozofia polityczna", in J. Skoczyński (ed.), *Kotakowski i inni*, Kraków 1995, pp. 77-87; A. Sobiela, "Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski – zapomniany geniusz polskiej filozofii polityki", *Meritum*, no. 2 (2010), pp. 161-173; K. Tysza-Drozowski, "Fale cofają się w Coimbrze", *Kronos*, no. 1 (2016), pp. 228-238.

² P. Bartula, "Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski...", p. 87.

Bocheński or Konstanty Grzybowski, to the most important, in the qualitative aspect, political thinkers and political analysts of the young interwar generation.

The reception of his legacy is not aided by his nearly unrecognized biography. In his introduction to the underground reprint of Chrząszczewski's work *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, Janusz Korwin-Mikke wrote about the author as someone who perished in the war turmoil.³ For many years, even the date of his death was unknown, and the only pieces of information were vestigial. Not a politician, he never pursued an academic career, and authored texts as a freelancer, remaining outside of the interwar conservative elites. Chrząszczewski fought battles on his own account, gaining the status of an independent writer, but paying the price of the lack of his own history's chroniclers. Thus, in the face of the shortage of biographic information, it seems important to precede the analysis of his political concepts with the most important facts from the life of Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski.

I. BIOGRAPHY

One thing needs to be rectified first. Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski⁴ was born as Teodor – Aleksander was his middle name, however, the one he actually used.⁵ He was born on 9 November 1887 as a son of a nobleman from Kuyavia, Teodor Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, an owner of an estate in Wierzbinek, and Gabriela Modlińska.⁶ According to Aleksander, patriarchal relations prevailed in the estate, including the care over the local population and a clearly hierarchical social structure. His father died in 1928, leaving debts against his estate. Aleksander was not fond of participating in business activities, however, due to his sense of duty, he was initially involved in the running of the agricultural enterprise. However, following some family disputes, he withdrew from the active management of the estate, although remaining its co-owner. As he admitted, he did not visit Wierzbinek even once in the years 1932-1945. Many years later he wrote: *As concerns me, my hopeless resignation turned out to be a good thing. I felt an immediate moral relief due to abandoning the dispute, and gained the very desired peace of mind necessary for my intellectual work. In fact, afterwards, I never experienced any feelings of loss when the property was taken over in the course of the agrarian reform, as I had long stopped counting on reclaiming any share in it.*⁷

³ J. Korwin-Mikke, *Przedmowa do II wydania*, in A. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, Warszawa 1981.

⁴ I sourced all the most important biographic data from the memoirs of Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski available in the National Library (BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 1-407).

⁵ Contrary to the family tradition, according to which the names Teodor and Aleksander were used alternately, due to the fact that the writer was born on his father's saint's day, he received the name of his saint patron.

⁶ His mother died in 1918, during a typhus epidemic.

⁷ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fol. XII.

Trzaska-Chrząszczewski discovered his true vocation in intellectual activities, aided by his excellent education. He graduated from Rontaler's school of agriculture, and in 1907 he went to Germany to study there. Initially, upon his father's advice, he enrolled at the Academy for Social and Commercial Sciences in Frankfurt am Main, however, after his first semester there, he moved to the University of Göttingen's Department of State Sciences. There, he attended the lectures of such famous economists as Wilhelm Lexis and Gustaw Cohn and the lawyer and expert in constitutional law, Julius Hetschenk. The latter persuaded Trzaska-Chrząszczewski to write the dissertation *O parlamentarnym orzecznictwie* [On Parliamentary Jurisprudence], published later in a slightly changed form in Polish as *Znaczenie i zmiana ustawy konstytucyjnej* [The Importance and Amending of Constitutional Law]. Having earned his diploma in social insurance in 1911, he moved to the University of Strasbourg, where he intended to work on his doctoral thesis in the scope of political studies. The war thwarted his plans. On 2 August 1914, as a citizen of the Russian Empire, which was at war with the German Empire, he was swiftly expelled from the country and travelled to Switzerland.⁸ Following numerous problems caused by his Russian citizenship and constantly being suspected of espionage by German security services, he arrived in Lausanne, where a relatively sizeable Polish community existed. At that time he met Władysław Studnicki, on his way to Berlin, and August Zalewski, the future head of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, Switzerland was not merely a stop on the way back home – he spent another year in that country. In November 1915, he returned to the Kingdom of Poland, which was then occupied by the Axis powers. There he promptly joined Polish local government structures, and then, following the Act of 5 November, the state administration. For a short time, he served as a secretary to the commander of Warsaw City Militia, Franciszek Radziwiłł. In June 1918, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski started his work as a clerk at the Council of Ministers' Legislative Department, headed at the time by Jan Steczkowski. Treating his role in the categories of civil service, he was disgusted at the strife between political parties in winter 1918. He actually stressed that at the moment when the German defeat was obvious and carried a promise of regaining independence, Polish political parties, from left to right, focused on their petty political goals.⁹ This inability of working together to achieve a political consensus in the face of historical challenges became a permanent trait of his later evaluations of the state-forming capabilities of Poles. From that position he followed the developments behind the establishment of the independent state. His memoirs reveal the picture of the Polish

⁸ Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski published fragments of his memories from Switzerland in *Czas* under the title "Ze Szwajcarii do Szwajcarii" [From Switzerland to Switzerland] (*Czas*, 27 June 1934).

⁹ He wrote: *Therefore, in mid-October, the situation became compromising and humiliating for Poland. In the face of the widely obvious defeat of Germany and its pending capitulation, the walls of our prison were falling down unaided, and we, liberated due to a miraculous coincidence, could not even do as little as organise ourselves and arrive at an agreement on how to use this independence of our dreams, for which generations fought and died over a hundred years, and now falling from the sky like manna, for the good of the nation. We were not even able to establish a government* (BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 146-147).

independence behind the scenes, and a demythologized picture of the Polish 'fathers of independence'.

Trzaska-Chrząszczewski was employed at the administrative office of the Council of Ministers until September 1921. Next he was transferred to the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from there to the Main Liquidation Office, and in early 1923 he took a post at the Civil Chancellery of President Stanisław Wojciechowski, which he held until 1926. Although formally responsible for representative issues, he was soon advanced to the position of the constitutional law advisor to the head of the chancellery. By that time, he had already published the above-mentioned brochure *Znaczenie i zmiana ustawy konstytucyjnej* (1919),¹⁰ and a series of articles to the monthly *Drogi Polski*, in which he discussed the issues of the political system. In 1924 he edited the entry 'President of the Republic' in *Podręczna Encyklopedia Prawa Publicznego* [*Podręczna Encyklopedia of Public Law*] edited by Professor Zygmunt Cybichowski.¹¹ Moreover, on several occasions, upon the initiative of the president, he published articles in *Kurier Warszawski*, in which he discussed various issues from the perspective of the Polish head of state. Despite his awareness of more profound reasons behind the May coup, particularly the constitutional ones, Chrząszczewski was very critical about the coup staged by Józef Piłsudski in May 1926, which was characteristic of some conservative circles. He overtly described the struggles as the testing of strengths between military discipline and lawlessness.¹² However, as he often stressed, he was critical not of the coup itself, which he considered inevitable, but of the manner in which it was carried out, and, instead of being a political manifestation similar to the March on Rome, evolved into an open civil war.¹³

Stanisław Car, the new head of the chancellery of President Mościcki, offered Chrząszczewski a position at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, he refused and asked to be placed on inactive status. He spent over a year working for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (from April 1927 to September 1928). However, the resignation from the position at the Chancellery of President Wojciechowski marked, in fact, the final stage of his government career. He criticised the rule of the *Piłsudskiites* mainly for the manner of exercising power by Piłsudski, informal and, in fact, detrimental to the state, and for creating a parallel hierarchy, in which political footing and servility determined a person's career, rather than competences and public service.¹⁴ He argued that the 1939 defeat had its sources in the system established in the wake of the coup of 12 May 1926. He considered the measures meant to heal the state taken after the coup as completely disappointing. He called them a repair of government by means of

¹⁰ See also A. Sobiela, 'Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski...', pp. 161-162.

¹¹ A. Chrząszczewski, 'Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej', in Z. Cybichowski (ed.), *Podręczna encyklopedia prawa publicznego (konstytucyjnego, administracyjnego i międzynarodowego)*, vol. 2, n.d., pp. 779-785.

¹² BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 273.

¹³ *Ibid.*, fol. 253.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fols. 279-281.

chronic lawlessness.¹⁵ In this context, he strongly criticised the policies of the conservatives. In his article of 1934, Chrzęszczewski accused them of wasting great chances for development. He stressed the fact that Polish conservatives rushed to reap benefits of their new alliance with the ruling coalition. Rather than focusing on propagating conservative political ideas, they, in fact evolved into the 'soldiers' of the government policies. Copying, to a certain extent, Jan Bobrzyński's critical evaluation of the leaders of SPN (National Right Party), Chrzęszczewski argued that the political strategy which he described as *from one accident to another* usually leads to the *from one collapse to another* scenario.¹⁶

Undoubtedly, Chrzęszczewski saw his role as a conservative through the prism of ideological effort. In 1930, he published his book *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury* [From the Rule of Parliament to Dictatorship], highly prized by Adolf Bocheński, among others. He actively collaborated with conservative papers, and his articles were published by such newspapers as *Dzień Polski*, *Czas*, *Kurier Warszawski* and *Kurier Polski* as well as *Bunt Młodych*, the paper of young conservatives. Interestingly, he always published in those papers which revealed a certain level of independence from the official line. As an example, he never collaborated with the Vilnius paper *Słowo*.

A few months prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, *Polityka* bi-weekly published his most famous book *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji* [The Tides of Democracy], which contained his historiosophical considerations with fairly obvious propositions concerning government (more about his later). He spent the years of German occupation in Warsaw. Very little is known about his post-war years. He continued writing, but in a limited scope, and worked at Zarząd Państwowych Nieruchomości Ziemskich, a government agency responsible for management of state-owned land properties. It is difficult to establish when he moved to Poznań, where he died on 29 November 1961. He was buried at Junikowo Cemetery in Poznań.

II. THE STATE IN THE FACE OF TRANSFORMATIONS

Trzaska-Chrzęszczewski's political reflection was, to a degree, focused on constitutional debates held in the interwar period, however, it did not end with the introduction of the April Constitution. In the case of many conservative thinkers, the fulfilment of some conservative postulates in the general law of 23 April 1935 led to the limiting of their agenda in that scope and continuing a debate solely around the maintenance of the 'spirit of the Constitution' and opposing the rules of the voting system introduced in July 1935. To Trzaska-Chrzęszczewski, the issue of the type of government continued to be open after 1935. He did not see the problem of the stability of government exclusively through the prism of an appropriate distribution of competences, but, first

¹⁵ Ibid., fol. 299.

¹⁶ A. Trzaska [A. Trzaska-Chrzęszczewski], "Od wypadku do wypadku", *Kurier Warszawski*, 21 September 1934 [evening edition].

of all, he considered the relation between the political system and the dynamics of social changes, which vastly accelerated in the mid-1930s.

In September 1922, a little over a year after the adoption of the March Constitution, and even prior to the election of the first president, Chrząszczewski formulated a highly strong criticism of the new general law as an act that was illogical, disorderly and not accounting for the conditions of the political life.¹⁷ However, what worried him even more was the lack of any self-reflection on the faults of the government system among the political elites of the newly established state, who focused all their energy and effort on party rivalry. The March Constitution, in his opinion, was based on a false, optimistic premise concerning the nature of man. Since man is naturally good, then a political system should, rather than correct and restrict, first and foremost, care about the proper communication of the 'general will' in order to guarantee a harmonious development of the country.¹⁸ The general law did not take into account any social tensions and divisions; instead, in a republican spirit, a Utopian assumption was made that an authentic national will can guarantee the rule of the 'noblest ones'. Drawing from the arguments proposed by the *Stańczycy* faction from Kraków, the author overtly rejected the possibility of building the state upon virtues instead of institutions. He associated such pernicious ideals with the First Commonwealth, the traditions of which, at the threshold of independence, found their apologists in Artur Górski or Antoni Chołoniewski. The problem was fundamentally in the 'apolitical' formation of the nation which had learned to function in a cultural and economic space outside a state, and sometimes against it.¹⁹ In the same manner as the Bocheński brothers two years later in their brochure *Tendencje samobójcze narodu polskiego* [The Suicidal Inclinations of the Polish Nation],²⁰ he reintroduced the *Stańczycy* faction's vision of history, identifying the reasons of the fall of Poland, contrary to the Warsaw school, in the flawed organization of the nation's forces. *The clock of history had struck the hour of Poland's fall* – he wrote – *long before the Constitution of 3 May was passed*.²¹ Neither the rapacity of the neighbouring countries, nor the Western powers' lack of understanding of the role of Poland in the international system, explained or, even more so, justified her fall. He stressed that *it is the duty of every organism, whether individual or collective, to assimilate to the conditions in which they live, as only that duty guarantees the chance to live and develop, and constitutes, at the same time, the ultimate principle to them. Poland in the second half of the 17th century and in the 18th century was not able to fulfil that duty – and fell for exactly that reason*.²² He followed in the footsteps of Józef Szujski who claimed

¹⁷ A. Chrząszczewski, "Zagadnienie organizacji państwa", *Drogi Polski*, no. 8-9 (1922), p. 523.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 532-533.

²⁰ More on the subject: A. Bocheński, A. Bocheński, "Tendencje samobójcze narodu polskiego", in A. Bocheński, *Imperializm państwowy. Wybór pism*, K.M. Ujazdowski (ed.), Kraków-Warszawa 2015, pp. 15-56.

²¹ A. Chrząszczewski, *Zagadnienie organizacji...*, p. 536.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 537.

that false history is a master of false politics. Historical optimism led to demoralizing political optimism releasing one from the duty of thinking about effort and ability of independent, and, what is important, genuine shaping of own fate. It was not about the ability to shape energy. Chrząszczewski stressed that organization does not create any forces, but merely properly guides the already existing potential. A state is not capable of replacing a nation, however, a nation cannot turn a state into an incidental fact concerning its own existence. The nation of noblemen (*szlachta*) was not more immoral or selfish than other nations, but its sin was, first of all, in the lack of political thinking, an apoliticality incorporated into the *szlachta* ethos. However, it did not associate politicalness with the notion of material common good, but with the actual chances of its occurrence. He directly associated this political infancy with the assumptions of good human nature and, in principle, about the 'unnecessity' of a state as a political form, which requires no more than a civil form.

*A state cannot – he stressed – be based on heroes, but on a quotidian, general effort of an average citizen, fulfilling his responsibilities to the state. Since that effort must be perpetual and systematic, it cannot be based on sacrifices, because then life would turn into a chain of them, and that would be beyond the strength of even the greatest idealist. Instead, it should be based on possibly the most directly understood own interest.*²³ Chrząszczewski was extremely realistic in his claim that one should be very wary of idealists. *We need to be aware of those who have associated their ambitions with ideas and attempt to use them in order to save their neighbours. They are much more dangerous than those who treat life as a struggle for existence, and see the purpose of it in their own elevation.*²⁴ Chrząszczewski considered the belief that human nature is good (N.B. the defence of the old Polish government by Jean Jaques Rousseau comes as no surprise here) as the most detrimental aspect of Polish political thought, which was reborn along with the state and brought morbid consequences.

The March Constitution reflected some deeply rooted issues of the national mentality. By assigning two goals to the general law, namely assigning power to a defined institution and the protection of the citizens from any abuse of power by it, he argued that none of these goals were fulfilled. In fact, power was never transferred to any government body. The meagre powers of the president, the total dependence of the cabinet from the parliament, the nature of both legislative chambers – all these factors led to the situation where any elements of a balanced government were abandoned. The Sejm was not, in fact, a branch of government. The system emerging on the grounds of the March Constitution was not a parliamentary system in the traditional British meaning of the term. Where was the power, then? He answered: *In the hands of the omnipotent party oligarchy, accountable to no one for the last five years.*²⁵ It seems obvious that the issue of the 'phantom' state was the key problem of the Polish political life as diagnosed

²³ Ibid., p. 543.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ A. Chrząszczewski, "Co nam dała konstytucja z d. 17 marca 1921 r.," *Drogi Polski*, no. 10 (1922), p. 616.

by the author of *Przypływy i odpływy demokracji*. It is worth noting here that the issue in question continued to exist despite any political and system transformations. The most important critique formulated against Piłsudski and his successors considered the maintaining of this *hetman* model of exercising power, in which the internal force of the nation was wasted due to the lack of an appropriate channelling and to the permanent replacing of the institutional organization by elements of political voluntarism accountable to no one.

The Constitution of 21 March 1921, by introducing, as he described it, *despotism moderated by disorder*,²⁶ also offered a limited protection to the citizens. While on the part of the executive power, some forms of guarantees were provided, the lack of judicial control of the constitutionality of laws resulted in abandoning the possibility to reduce the will of the parliament infringing on the constitutional guarantee of the rights of individuals. Chrząszczewski joined this powerful discussion on the issue of examining the constitutionality of laws,²⁷ and took a rather isolated and peculiar position. In his earlier work he proposed that Competence Tribunal should determine whether laws are contrary to the general law.²⁸ Based on the solutions in the March Constitution, he argued that the control of general courts in this scope is possible in spite of a lack of specific indications in the constitution.²⁹ Certainly, in his opinion, of key importance to this solution's effectiveness was the problem of the independence of the judiciary, which, alas, is unattainable in the state governed by political parties, what, in turn, led to the inability to employ the solutions proposed by the author in any sensible manner.³⁰

The internal political inertness connected with the problems of creating a stable majority, and, consequently, a strong cabinet, led to the fact that in late 1922, before the assassination of President Narutowicz and almost at the same time when Mussolini seized the power, Chrząszczewski diagnosed the twilight of parliamentarism.³¹ He wrote that parliamentarism, transposed to the Polish circumstances, devoured itself like a mythical serpent, and only its head remained, which, as provisions of the constitution, allow the Sejm to overthrow the cabinet.³² *Our Sejm* – he wrote – *is still burdened with*

²⁶ Ibid., p. 617

²⁷ See more: B. Szlachta, T. Wiech, M. Zakrzewski (eds.), *O praworządność i zdrowy ustroj państwowy. Zagadnienia zabezpieczenia konstytucyjności ustaw w polskiej myśli politycznej i prawniczej okresu dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Kraków 2006.

²⁸ A. Chrząszczewski, *Znaczenie i zmiana ustawy konstytucyjnej w naszym przyszłym ustroju państwowym. Studium prawno-polityczne*, Warszawa 1919, pp. 87-88.

²⁹ Idem, "Co nam dała...", p. 624ff.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 633. In fact, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski returned to that issue in 1928, when he once again voiced his scepticism towards the idea of establishing Constitutional Tribunal, insisting on the necessity to provide for the general courts' control of the constitution (A. Trzaska, "Sądowa ochrona konstytucji", *Dzień Polski*, 23 May 1928).

³¹ A. Chrząszczewski, "Zmierzch parlamentaryzmu", *Drogi Polski*, no. 11-12 (1922) [reprinted as a brochure in 1923].

³² Ibid., p. 676.

*the legal capability of overthrowing an existing cabinet, and the actual inability to establish a new one.*³³ He rejected the notion that the crisis of parliamentary government is solely related to the Polish political culture, stressing the fact that it is a wider trend. When analysing the situation in France and Great Britain, he also noticed, in the countries often indicated as models for Poland, the failure of former structures and the practical shift of the centre of gravity in the nexuses of political power from parliaments to executive bodies, resulting in the shift towards the American model of the separation of powers.³⁴ He discerned a similar trend in Italy, arguing however, that it is difficult to predict the direction taken by the Fascists, and in the Weimar Republic.³⁵ He overtly claimed that parliamentarism *is becoming a relic. It is facing the same fate as all mundane theories, systems and devices which draw the final consequences from their assumptions and thus arrive at the absurd.*³⁶ Similarly to Stanisław Estreicher,³⁷ he argued that the legislative chambers assumed the duty of leading the entirety of the state, but lacking sufficient resources. Moreover, at the time of increasingly developed forms of organization in the scope of sciences and economics, he presented a contrary, and outdated, in fact, rule of administering the state, which lagged behind its contemporary times.³⁸ The path presented for Poland is clear: striving to strengthen the executive power, while strengthening the position of independent judiciary serving control functions towards both the legislative and the executive branch of government, and strengthening the position of local self-governments.³⁹ In his early assumptions of 1922, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski presented the initial elements of his later approaches. They demonstrated his strong sensitivity to the transformations of the political model of the times and his indication of the necessity of tuning into the 'rhythm of the times' in order not to face again the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, completely oblivious in its quietism to the changing requirements of maintaining own state. This tuning in the trends of the times was the prerequisite of political prudence allowing to accurately capture the relations between the means of action and its objectives.⁴⁰

It should be remembered that this modernist approach of Trzaska had nothing in common with the field of political ideologies; instead, it was connected with the political techniques of state administration. Moreover, in the manner typical of his contemporary conservative critics, he stressed the fact that the boundaries between what is 'organic' and 'organisational' should not be abolished. To his mind, a state, as mentioned

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 693.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 695ff.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 698.

³⁷ See e.g. S. Estreicher, "Walka z partyjniactwem", in A. Wolek (ed.), *Konserwatyzm krakowski. Wybór pism*, Kraków 2012, pp. 301-321.

³⁸ A. Chrząszczewski, "Zmierzch parlamentaryzmu", p. 698.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 703-704.

⁴⁰ A. Chrząszczewski, *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury. Studium polityczno-porównawcze*, Warszawa 1930, p. 6.

before, could not replace a society. Statism was not a proper response to republican anti-statism, but it was rather an attempt to harmonize both these fields in order to strengthen cultural and economic potential of a community by means of a proper directing, which, in a way, is not able to emerge on its own.

He provided the first full expression of such a perspective in his 1930 work *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury* [From the Rule of Sejm to Dictatorship]. The crisis of parliamentarism he perceived not any more as an expression of a technical inefficiency in the scope of administering the state, but mainly in the general transformations of relations between an individual and the society. Following the trend prevailing at the time in the European right-wing circles, Trzaska described change as an expression of reaction to the failed 19th-century experiment of introducing bourgeois ideals rooted in the French Revolution. However, what's important, rather than to individualism, he linked the legacy of that revolution, in a Tocquevillean spirit, to the levelling movement of two interrelated processes: egalitarisation and state control. He associated both these phenomena not only with the optimistic premises of Jean Jaques Rousseau's philosophy, but also with the process of strengthening French absolutism from the times of Richelieu.⁴¹ This appropriate understanding of the tradition opposed by a certain 'coalition,' within which he recognised Action Française, Italian fascism and Polish conservatism, should help discern the specific nature of his agenda. The starting point was in the rejection of optimism and stressing (assuming that it was feasible from both the religious and atheistic perspective) the observation about a defective, and reformable – to a limited extent – nature of a human being.⁴² What is important, and what announces, to a considerable degree, his later claims from *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, is the fact that this political optimism is connected with the sphere of irrational emotions and dreams, and that it pushes politicalness towards a myth governed by elation and hope rather than by clear rules. He criticized the democratic trend, following the positions of the French 'doctrinaires' rather than the 'founding fathers' of conservatism, from individualistic positions. He wrote that: *the reaction against the ideas of the French Revolution in the scope of philosophy means a rejection of faith in good human nature and infallibility of human mind; in the political scope it means protection of the quality of human individuality against the levelling pressures of democracy manifesting themselves in the omnipotence and pervading interference of the democratic state.*⁴³ The main problem of the democratic system was in its resistance to practical thinking and drawing ultimate consequences from own assumptions, leading to the incapability of functioning in the space of *realpolitik*.⁴⁴

When confronting the postulates of Action Française, Italian fascism and Polish conservatism (slightly modified to better suit his argument), he stressed their common traits: limiting the role of the state in the scope of economy and transferring the initiative to individual creativity (which is rather perplexing, particularly in the case of

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 33-40.

⁴² Ibid., p. 42ff.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 184.

Italian fascism), decentralisation of government, religious revival, organization of national representation upon the principle of representing the interests of broader vocational/professional groups, abandoning the omnipotence of parliamentarism for the sake of autocracy, either in the form of monarchy or dictatorship.⁴⁵ Chrząszczewski openly voiced his preferences for monarchy as the form of government that not only enhances the authority of the state, but is also less invasive (than democracy) in the organic structure of the nation.⁴⁶ Interestingly, on several occasions he revisited in his memoirs some monarchical scenarios emerging within the *Piłsudskiite* circles, treating them as chances to institutionalize the one-man rule in the structures of the state.⁴⁷ Paradoxically, the aim of such a reaction is to defend individualism. On the one hand, by creating genuine mechanisms protecting an individual from the excessive expansion of the state, with parliament being an excellent tool of control, on the other hand, he discerned what was stressed by the critics of mass society, such as Tocqueville or Le Bon: that democratic society creates a 'democratic individual' who, deprived of the creative action capability, adapted to the workings of the bureaucratized system. The activity of such an individual was lacking his personal expression, and constituted merely a method for survival in the framework of organisational regulations.⁴⁸

In his opinion, all three movements, that is, Action Française, Italian fascism and Polish conservatism, positioned themselves against the important current issues in a similar manner. It should be stressed here that the fact of including fascism in this group resulted from the process of 'civilizing' fascism, noticed by Chrząszczewski, by means of its closer integration with traditional forms, such as the monarchy and the Church. In his opinion, this was tantamount to the end, in fact, of the 'popular' nature of the movement.⁴⁹ For similar reasons, he was attracted to the political classicism of Maurras, who, in the midst of ideological clamour, distilled non-ideological political instruments. In particular, Chrząszczewski appreciated the 'Catholic atheism' of the Action Française leader, as a symptom of his political maturity and capability to properly identify the means and goals of political action.

The most important problem connected with the process of democratisation was in the faulty, Utopian assumptions and the creation of a universal model capable of being applied independently of circumstances, as it reflected the *Enlightenment* vision of human nature, considered as appropriate. Eight years after publishing the texts of 1922, Trzaska revisited the inevitable diagnosis of parliamentary crisis connected with the fundamental 'apolitical' nature of the democratic project, which, then, to a larger or smaller extent, was in decay. He insisted that every type of government is of an individualised nature and it can multiply its potential only by means of reflecting appropriate development factors.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁴⁷ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 290-295.

⁴⁸ A. Chrząszczewski, *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury*, pp. 188-191.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

Democracy, in his opinion, was merely a promise. In practice, all democratic ideals, when crossing the line between the world of ideas and the real world, turned into their own caricatures. In place of 'rule of the people,' oligarchic, bureaucratic structures emerge, which, however, tied with the necessity of struggle for votes, are not capable of carrying out a rational policy. Individual dictatorship was the response to this pathological development. To Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, the exemplary solution was the pragmatic Napoleonic regime, which, finding support in left-wing forces, implemented, in fact, an anti-revolutionary programme.⁵⁰ Chrząszczewski openly claimed that the actions of Napoleon I were commendable, both in their formal scope, that is, in distancing the regime from ideological programmes (lack of a programme), and in their material scope, including a clear and effective financial system, restoration of the authority of religion and social hierarchy, bolstering family bonds.⁵¹ In this perspective, he analysed the European dictatorships existing at the time, appreciating the Italian politics evolving towards conservatism, while being critical about the regime of Primo de Rivera that, for the sake of protecting order, promptly followed statist models of political action.⁵²

To Chrząszczewski, this entire analysis of the transformations on the continent provided a necessary background for a proper presentation of Polish politics. It seems proper to answer here a question concerning the lack of the Polish nationalist camp among the members of the 'anti-levelling coalition.' It may seem a paradox that, to Chrząszczewski, Polish conservatism was an equivalent to the nationalist Action Française. This is important in the context of Tysza-Drozdowski's remark about the fundamental affinity of Trzaska-Chrząszczewski's reflection on the most powerful French right-wing circles of the time.⁵³ As Adolf Bocheński stressed in his discussion of Wacław Lipiński, the influences of Maurras and the AF circles could occur in two, not necessarily associated directions: concerning government system and nationalism.⁵⁴ It is difficult to find elements of nationalist doctrine in the concepts of the author of *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury*. Moreover, as he stressed in his polemic with another Polish admirer of Maurras, Leszek Gembarszewski, a direct transposing of AF models into the Polish circumstances would be hardly rational.⁵⁵ Any French inspirations, obvious in Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, were distorted by Polish experience, as particularly evident in the case of Polish nationalism. Although Chrząszczewski never attempted a critique of nationalism from the perspective of the doctrine's essence, he considered its functionality in the Polish context. He emphasised the fact that the role of nationalism in a monoethnic country is different from that in a multinational one. The former was present in France, as well as in Germany and Italy, and, as he stressed, nationalism in these countries was a force against the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁵² Ibid., p. 112ff.

⁵³ K. Tysza-Drozdowski, "Fale cofają się...", pp. 228-236.

⁵⁴ A. Bocheński, "Ukraiński Maurras", *Biuletyn Polsko-Ukraiński*, no. 33-34 (1933), p. 3.

⁵⁵ A. Ch-ski [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Polski Maurras", *Czas*, 14 June 1934.

rule of the people.⁵⁶ Its banners bore the slogans of strong national government, what was connected with another element of nationalism in uni-national countries – imperialism. Nationalism in a multinational state is directed inward, towards ethnic minorities. Despite the existence of a sovereign state, nationalists continue disputes about its content. The implications are twofold. Firstly, thus-situated nationalism, as in Poland, was not capable to create an imperial programme (even more so as it did not possess its own, numerous minorities abroad), secondly, it leaned towards the rule of the people. In its actions against minorities, it forged alliances with the masses.⁵⁷ That factor was so strong that it permanently defined the strategy of Polish nationalism, even against the programmes declared by the leaders. He perceived the call for a ‘strong rule’ that crystallised in the nationalist camp after the May coup as of a declarative nature, characteristic of slogans formulated by oppositional forces. Any access to the instruments of power would bring nationalism back to the tracks of mass politics.⁵⁸ In his opinion, it was impractical to become engaged in fighting social radicalism and minorities at the same time.⁵⁹ For that reason, Polish nationalism, as opposed to the French case or to the German right-wing movements of the time, could not be of a conservative nature.⁶⁰

Another question that arises is, certainly, the issue of the conservative elements in the Sanation dictatorship. Chrzęszczewski stressed that Piłsudski adjusted his tactics to the psychological traits of the Polish nation, such as superficiality, a tendency to make empty promises.⁶¹ However, the problem that he noticed was in the fact that such a tactics became, at the same time, Piłsudski’s political horizon. The goal of Piłsudski’s regime was to solidify government upon new, different principles.⁶² Although Piłsudski’s ideas were inscribed in anti-levelling trends, Chrzęszczewski insisted that the incorporation of national psychology in the strategy of political action, naturally necessary, may lead, due to emotional and democratic inclinations, to a vicious circle, and to abandoning necessary reforms for the sake of maintaining power by a political party.⁶³ Piłsudski’s system existed not thanks to the strengthening of the domestic relations and de facto consolidating its own position in the strong position of the nation, but Piłsudski *acts with a craftsmanship of an outstanding political psychologist and player, who will take this talent to his grave, and then he renders powerless the creative efficiency of the regime in the entire scope of the governing technique*.⁶⁴ The only way to utilise monocracy would be to preserve it in the institutional space by means of reintroducing monarchy.⁶⁵ Trzaska-Chrzęszczewski pointed

⁵⁶ A. Chrzęszczewski, *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury*, p. 131.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 135.

⁵⁹ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrzęszczewski], “Nacjonalizm w Polsce”, *Dzień Polski*, 7 May 1928.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ A. Chrzęszczewski, *Od sejmowładztwa do dyktatury*, p. 175.

⁶² Ibid., p. 177.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 178.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 179-180.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

to the necessity to make ultimate decisions, not only political, but also concerning the system of government. He emphasised the fact that although Sanation moderated the excesses of the left and the right alike, that was the only positive aspect of it. Moreover, it was reactive in the primary meaning of the word and built nothing new.⁶⁶ In the 1930s he stressed that the scenario of political endurance without institutional actions would lead to the radicalising left-wing and right-wing movements taking initiative, and, in fact, to sliding towards Nazi or Bolshevik-type dictatorship.⁶⁷ Chrząszczewski saw a certain degree of hope in the conservatives' influence on the direction of changes in the politics of *Piłsudskiites*. In fact, he participated in discussions about the forms of government preceding the adoption of the April Constitution. He strongly advocated strengthening the role of the head of state and including a representation of local governments in the parliament.⁶⁸ However, his growing disappointment was evident. In the already mentioned paper *Od wypadku do wypadku* he criticized the conservatives for losing their understanding of a difference between the role of a governing formation and the role of a ruling party. For the sake of a imaginary impact, they neglected conceptual work and lost their influence on the shape of the state policies, thoughtlessly supporting the actions of the 'colonels'.⁶⁹ It is hardly surprising, then, that from 1934 on, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski published his texts not in *Czas*, but in the oppositional *Kurier Warszawski*, and also in *Bunt Młodych*, a paper critical of the conservatives' strategies.

Moreover, he was very critical of the direction of the works on the constitution act. In his article 'Konstytucja jako umowa' [Constitution as a Contract], he entered into polemic with Prime Minister Jędrzejewicz, who declared that the future general law will constitute a particular contract among the nation, the government and the head of state.⁷⁰ In his articles written to *Kurier Warszawski*, he totally rejected that claim, stressing the fact that such a form of constitution would require the existence of separate factors, and in the circumstances occurring after 1930 the alleged contract would be executed by a national representation elected under strong pressure from the government factors (the 'Brześć election'), the government itself and the president, which all change periodically. Chrząszczewski insisted that such an approach to the constitution only testifies to the pursuance of solutions that are provisional, essentially political, and not institutional. When Stanisław Car announced the assumptions of the new constitution, Chrząszczewski once again stressed the contradictions in regulating the system's centre of gravity, that is, the role of the president. In this case, the prerogatives connected with the assumed role of a mediator for the government bodies were

⁶⁶ Al. Chrząszczewski, "Z wysokości wieży Babel (III)", *Czas*, 13 May 1934.

⁶⁷ Al. Ch. [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Liberalizm a parlamentaryzm", *Czas*, 28 July 1934.

⁶⁸ Al. Chrząszczewski, "Głowa państwa", *Czas*, 23 August 1933; A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Dwie nie obce sobie polityki", *Dzień Polski*, 29 May 1928.

⁶⁹ A. Trzaska [A. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Od wypadku do wypadku", *Kurier Warszawski*, 21 September 1934 [evening edition].

⁷⁰ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Konstytucja jako umowa", *Kurier Warszawski*, 3 December 1933. A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Połowa szczęścia", *Kurier Warszawski*, 10 February 1934.

mixed with the position of the head of the executive.⁷¹ Inconsistences and the lack of cohesion resulted in a conclusion that the draft of the future constitutional act will be underdeveloped.

The critique of Car's postulates, passed by the Sejm on 26 January 1934 as the draft of the new constitution act, was carried out by Chrząszczewski in a series of articles published in *Kurier Warszawski*.⁷² In his most complex text, 'Prometeusz spętany' [Prometheus in Shackles] of 27 February 1934, he emphasised the fact that the constitution was drafted by individuals educated upon democratic ideals, whom political practice put in an authoritarian position. As he stressed earlier, a lack of a uniform vision and combination of different ways of thinking about politics resulted in a peculiar merger, in one document, of doctrines by Rousseau and Sieyes with the approaches of de Bonald and de Maistre.⁷³ He noticed and criticised the inconsistency in establishing the position of the president and Sejm, and the mixture of political forms. The retaining of certain democratic elements connected with the preservation of the five-point electoral law (universal, direct, equal, proportional, anonymous) resulted in the fact that the principles of the Polish government system were not fundamentally remodelled. He wrote that *Prometheus of the democratic idea has not been slayed, but merely shackled, and every five years, before general election, the eagle will tear out his entrails*.⁷⁴ In his memoirs he insisted that when writing those lines he could have not seen the extent of his mistake. The Sanation authorities, free to shape the principles of the system, created a formula which they immediately started to breach,⁷⁵ for example in the new electoral law act, which he criticised as being contrary to the constitution. He discussed the act in his article 'Kto będzie wybierał?' [Who is Going to Vote?].⁷⁶ Paradoxically, he criticised the decision whose absence he criticised in 'Prometeusz spętany'; he emphasised the fact, thought, the decision was a breach of the constitution.

III. THE HIGH TIDES AND LOW TIDES

In the framework of his collaboration with *Bunt Młodych* (published from 1937 as *Polityka*), Chrząszczewski published his best-known book *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*. Although not a regular columnist, his texts appeared in the paper more frequently

⁷¹ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Trzyletni dorobek", *Kurier Warszawski*, 23 December 1933.

⁷² A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Armja a polityka", *Kurier Warszawski*, 3 February 1934 [evening edition], A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Połowa szczęścia", *Kurier Warszawski*, 10 February 1934.

⁷³ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski], "Prometeusz spętany", *Kurier Warszawski*, 27 February 1934 [evening edition].

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 312-313.

⁷⁶ A. Trzaska [A. Chrząszczewski], "Kto będzie wybierał?", *Kurier Warszawski*, 28 May 1935 [evening edition].

than on occasional basis. Aleksander Bocheński stated that *Chrząszczewski was a regular collaborator, but he never adopted our programme*.⁷⁷ As early as in 1933, Aleksander Bocheński was seeking contact with the former officer of the Civil Chancellery of President Stanisław Wojciechowski.⁷⁸ From 1934 on, Chrząszczewski's texts appeared in *Bunt*. In early 1939, Aleksander Bocheński wrote to Mieczysław Pruszyński: *Chrząszczewski has sent me an excellent material for a brochure. Not a very academic one and with certain research shortcomings, but it formulates an argument concerning the government system which explains the entire current confusion*.⁷⁹ The publishing of that book, *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, was an important event. In the foreword to it, the publishers distanced themselves from the arguments in the book.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, they decided to publish it as one of the most interesting political studies of the times. The book reveals the echoes of the author's earlier considerations and questions, however, in a finished, complete form.

Trzaska-Chrząszczewski departed from his pendulum concept of history, writing that: *any emanation of human energy is always a subject to the pendulum effect, as both man and society are, undoubtedly, such 'energy devices' (although their properties, including their character, do not deplete), and for that reason community life has its own mechanics; nevertheless, the very nature of action and reaction is different in the wide, monotonous vastness of steppes and different on peninsulas surrounded by water, different in the nations of a sophisticated civilisation and different in primitive societies*.⁸¹ The author used the symbols of tides to explain that mechanics later in his book. On the same note, several years earlier Kazimierz Władysław Kumaniecki wrote that: *the contrasting tides frequently flow next to each other, and when the dominating one begins to exhaust itself, the other one, bouncing off the shore of reality, returns with a low tide, but strengthened by the booty of the one which will now start flowing out*.⁸² While to Kumaniecki, the tides in question were those of rationalism and romanticism, Chrząszczewski pointed to a different, although not contradictory, series of consequences, that is, reactions and revolutions.⁸³ The author of *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji* explained this process in

⁷⁷ A. Bocheński, "Dlaczego wydaliśmy Chrząszczewskiego", *Polityka*, no. 23 (1939).

⁷⁸ In March 1933, Aleksander Bocheński asked Ksawery Pruszyński to contact him, via the editorial office of *Czas*, with Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski (ARB, Aleksander Bocheński's letter to Ksawery Pruszyński of 28 March 1933).

⁷⁹ ARB, Aleksander Bocheński's letter to Ksawery Pruszyński of 6 February 1939, ts.

⁸⁰ The foreword read: *The author, drawing from a historical analysis, offers a highly bold historiosophical argument, in the light of which the current rise of the Italian and German totalism, and also similar attempts in Poland, take on a new meaning. The author concludes the book with his own concept of the political system in Poland. Although our magazine does not entirely agree with the final arguments of the author, we published this book without any doubts, hoping that in doing so we certainly contribute to the refuting of countless prejudices concerning historiosophy and government, so frequently encountered in Poland (Publisher's Foreword, in A. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, Warszawa 1939).*

⁸¹ A. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, *Przyptywy i odpływy...*, p. VIII.

⁸² K.W. Kumaniecki, "Na powrotnej fali", in idem, *W poszukiwaniu suwerena*, Kraków 2006, p. 156.

⁸³ A. Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, *Przyptywy i odpływy...*, p. 6.

a simple way: *At the time of a reaction, dissatisfaction with the existing relations emerges, usually resulting from the fact that the content of life ceased to reflect the established forms. Prophets of new ideas appear, and win masses to them. They emphasise chimeric arguments of the new ideology containing a multitude of promises, and, therefore, charming. Among the factors connected with the existing relations, reaction is being born. A struggle begins, in which both fighting sides mobilize masses, which, automatically, boosts the importance of an average citizen and his impact on the government. Finally, revolutionary ideas, when encountering life, lose their power of attractiveness. It turns out that they could not make all promises and hopes come true, although they improved many aspects of the former relations and adapted to new requirements. Disappointment steps in, because the masses, cheated by false prophets, expected a heaven on earth, and only for that reason they willingly participated in the struggle for new relations. Therefore, an average citizen's interest in public issues fades, coupled with an increasing range of freedom for those who rule. The latter, then, start consolidating their power, and in their own interest as well as in the public one, they launch the campaign of arranging and stabilizing relations.*⁸⁴ Thus, we deal with a process of social empowerment, connected with an ideology that, however, due to its inability to realise its own goals, cause a reaction, shifting the centre of gravity towards bureaucracy. The democratic-ideological moment drifts away, giving way to the a-ideological technocratic moment. Democracy is always egalitarian, while bureaucracy walks in the footsteps of outstanding individuals. Chrzęszczewski merged this process with a broad historical plane, attempted to formulate a general rule of history. He indicated the most important signs of 'high tides': Christianity, Reformation and socialism.⁸⁵ And when enthusiasm faded, the sphere of technical organization (church organisation, state) emerged reinforced, referring, certainly, to its own 'revolutionary roots'. In other words, the idea takes on a political dimension, loses the wings of Utopia, and becomes an entity fighting for survival and influence. Interesting in this context is the case of the French Revolution, which did not fully fit this pattern and was, from the author's perspective, a historical anomaly, since it *was caused by the rulers' decadence, not by revolutionary sentiments.*⁸⁶ He wrote that *it was a premature outbreak, which could not have brought results other than tearing off the feudal-noble decoration from the edifice of the state that had long been nothing but a decoration. Therefore, the French Revolution could not have led to a shift in the great high tide of nationalist-materialist ideologies, but, despite its magnitude, was only a prelude to it.*⁸⁷ Not every upheaval marks an high tide of ideology; similarly, not every high tide results in a crisis.⁸⁸

However, the most interesting part of Chrzęszczewski's considerations is the analysis of his contemporary times. The totalitarian direction, in his opinion, distinguished by

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 10, 42.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

its dynamics in the 1930s, was, ironically, the moment of low tide, putting order back to the libertarian 19th century. Totalitarianism is always a work of individuals who come to lead vast bureaucratic apparatuses. Social subjectivity vanishes, and enthusiasm for obedience steps in.⁸⁹ Ideology, so much highlighted in such systems, in Chrząszczewski's opinion has more to do with theatre than with an authentic stirring of the masses.⁹⁰ The low tide had two phases: heroic and stable. The former is dominated by ethos (Julius Caesar, Cromwell, Napoleon I), the latter by pragmatism, and the 'divinity' of a brilliant individual fades (August, Charles II, Louis XVIII).⁹¹ The 1930s are the days of a heroic period, which, if Europe survives, will enter the phase of stabilisation, and it will have, as its prophet, Charles Maurras and his idea of the religious and monarchical revival.⁹² In this approach, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski argued, the position of Poland would be exceptional. Although the national elites flourished during *high tides*, they should notice the necessity to adapt to the general pace that determines the terms of political domination.⁹³ Following 1918, Polish political evolution was characterised by hesitance. The April Constitution, which, according to its authors, was a sign of prudence and a path between totalitarianism and democracy, Chrząszczewski saw as a sign of weakness. He called again for abandoning the democratic sentiment in favour of a stabilising dictatorship, since *the tasks and goals of every dictatorship are usually in the boosting of the nation's material power. Every dictatorship... builds roads, railroads, canals, channelises rivers, multiplies national income, regulates finances*.⁹⁴ However, the governance 'stride' resulted in the fact that the system combined the faults of both approaches, instead of their advantages. On the one hand, social energy was limited, on the other, the effectiveness of the dictatorship was trapped in populism. Pretending democracy meant hindering its development. However, in practice, Chrząszczewski was far from radicalism, and close to rather typically conservatist pattern assuming the simultaneous strengthening of the executive and local governments. Monocracy, in his opinion, should be restricted by Christian values and the civil rights of individuals. He developed a model of a liberal authoritarianism, in which individuals lost their impact on the state, but, at the same time, maintained legal guarantees of their rights. Autocracy where a Chief of State designates a chancellor should be limited not only in the normative scope, but also in the institutional one, by the House of Commons (representation of local governments) and the Senate (ex-officio members and nominees for life).⁹⁵ The author openly claimed that the best form of autocracy is hereditary monarchy based on military structures. In his book, he strongly blamed Piłsudski for the fact that, being effectively a dictator, he failed to shape the principles of autocratic leadership, best

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 76, 107ff.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 77.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 79.

⁹² Ibid., p. 91.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 195.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 221.

expressed in monarchical system.⁹⁶ Trzaska-Chrząszczewski went further than Adolf Bocheński, who proposed separation of the issues of the military and foreign affairs from public opinion, but wanted to make another step and eradicate the 'remnants' of parliamentarism based on the general electoral law.⁹⁷ Poland was not in the position to follow in the footsteps of single-party dictatorships: it is *necessary to adopt the rule of authoritarianism* – he wrote – *merely adjusting it to our conditions*.⁹⁸ A single-party dictatorship would not be possible in Poland. In Italy and Germany, the regimes emerged as a result of bottom-up social pressures in opposition to the parliamentary system. In Poland, where authoritarian government had existed for fifteen years, a similar process to create a dictatorship, bound to eventually enter a bureaucratic phase anyways, would be impossible. For that reason Chrząszczewski investigated other patterns and identified them, for example, in Portugal ruled by António de Oliveira Salazar. The Iberian dictatorship impressed him, first of all, with its reform potential and restoring order in the state in the fields of administration and finance. The Christian dimension of Salazar's regime was of a secondary importance to him.⁹⁹

His remark about a proper position of the technocratic element is important in the context of the contemporary political situation. Chrząszczewski stressed that the most outstanding architects of state powers in the days of low tides were always designated by a supreme authority (Richelieu, Bismarck, Colbert, and Salazar), and thus in this case, such a stabilised leadership factor, most probably in the person of Marshal Śmigły-Rydz, should play the role of Louis XIII or Wilhelm I. From the author's perspective, Piłsudski's death was a conclusion of the heroic period (low tide) in Poland, followed by the phase of stabilisation.

Trzaska-Chrząszczewski's analysis, equal, in its large scope and historical perspective to the works of the most outstanding writers of the German conservative revolution, was reviewed, among others, by Jan Hoppe in *Jutro Pracy*. In response to it, Aleksander Bocheński, expressing, at the same time, the opinion of his entire milieu, published a text of a telling title, 'Dlaczego wydaliśmy książkę Chrząszczewskiego' [Why We Have Published Chrząszczewski's Book].¹⁰⁰ Apart from detailed remarks, such as those pertaining to the French Revolution, Bocheński addressed the fundamental issue. While generally adopting the author's theories, he placed his contemporary times on the axis of 'high tides' and 'low tides' differently. He emphasised the fact that the time period in question witnessed all signs of the emergence of a new democratism (the young peasant movement), while the masses' growing aspirations to subjectivity

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 252. In his memoirs, Aleksander Trzaska-Chrząszczewski also blamed Piłsudski for the fact that he completely adapted to the mentality of the nation that he wanted to lead, instead of educating it. When he died, the system he left behind turned out to be completely deprived of any internal content (BN, acc. no. 13.548, A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 319-321).

⁹⁷ A. Chrząszczewski, *Przyplawy i odpływy...*, p. 252.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 263.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 265ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Polityka*, no. 23 (1939), p. 1.

was looming on the horizon.¹⁰¹ Hence Chrząszczewski's call for a maximum exclusion of public opinion from the participation in government was rejected by the reviewer not only due to the pace of the historical process. He stressed the fact that a certain participation of citizens is necessary in an effective control and the rule of law, and the latter was, in his opinion, an important quality, despite a high tide or low tide of democracy.¹⁰²

IV. GEOPOLITICS AND IDEOLOGY

The international dimension of Chrząszczewski's journalism is completely ignored by researchers. A superficial glance is sufficient to see that analyses of geopolitical situation constitute an important part of the author's legacy. Here we are going to stress only two main issues connected with the position of Poland in the turbulent 1930s. This thread is connected with yet another important segment of his considerations. Among conservative authors, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski was one of the most consistent observers of the transformations in German politics in the 1930s.; paradoxically, that position led him to a consistent adoption of pro-French attitudes. It was with this thread in mind that Aleksander Bocheński remarked that Chrząszczewski had not adopted *Polityka's* programme. However, what is interesting, his texts appeared more and more often in Giedroyc's paper from the moment of the shift in the political course of the Foreign Minister Beck and the acceptance of the British guarantee. From then on, the journalistic activity of the paper's main contributor, Adolf Bocheński¹⁰³ (associated with a pro-German orientation) slowed down considerably, marking the growing activity, in the capacity of a reviewer of a foreign press, of Trzaska-Chrząszczewski, considered pro-French.

It is worth mentioning here the basic observations of the author of *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji* regarding the transformations in German politics following the end of the First World War in order to better demonstrate the negative and vital, in this case, point of reference for formulating concepts of foreign politics. In his memoir, he included the following remark: *Germans as individuals probably constitute the most valuable human element on earth, while as a uniform political organism, not driven by emotions or limited interests but by a reasoned ideology, constitute one of the gravest dangers to our civilization.*¹⁰⁴ Chrząszczewski noticed something that usually escapes Polish discourses about our western neighbour – the fact that they are a young nation. Being very familiar with German context, he always noticed the note of particularisms in the political and social structure of Germans. Hence he was very sceptical about the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ See more M. Zakrzewski, "Adolf Bocheński i pułkownik Beck", in A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją. Wybór pism*, Kraków 2020, pp. VII-XIX.

¹⁰⁴ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fol. 104.

political potential of Hitler's movement. In 1930, in a series of articles, he insisted that Hitlerism, despite its dynamics, is not capable of healing the regional, class and ideological divisions in the extent sufficient to become a platform for a pan-German movement – that could be achieved only by monarchy.¹⁰⁵ Later, he resentfully wrote about the national-socialistic movement as the *ultimate political humbug in the history of the world*, however, he certainly noticed the strengthening of the German potential and wrote in 1934 that Germany was going to war.¹⁰⁶

What is more, he strongly stressed – from the perspective of time – the antagonism between the ideological madness of Hitlerism and Prussian tradition, as the latter, representing little-German idea, was the best factor levelling pan-German ideas. He described the politics of Potsdam as moderate and reasonable, while Hitler's politics as its negation.¹⁰⁷ It was not a coincidence that Prussian militarists constituted the final opposition against Hitler.¹⁰⁸ The main problem was in the fusion of certain traits of German psychology, that is, consistency and inclination to pursue ideas in real space with ideological mirage. In the German case it was not only an idea of race, but also an idea of overpopulation.¹⁰⁹ Trzaska-Chrząszczewski stressed the fact that what finally shaped German nation was the Treaty of Versailles and that the natural propensity of German politics would be in revisionism reinforced with the pan-German idea in a racist version.

Considering this factor as a one determining German politics, he diagnosed natural Polish-German antagonism, and the resulting necessity to remain in the French political orbit. All projects assuming the possibility of a diplomatic game involving France and Germany he saw as fantasies which would ultimately engage the eastern neighbour of Poland, de facto limiting the reality of alliance with France.¹¹⁰ When analysing the politics of balance based on two non-aggression pacts, he stressed the great effort of Polish diplomacy to bring about a rapprochement between France and Russia, symbolized by the eastern pact project. Entering into a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1932, Poland, in his opinion, eased the French psychological blockage concerning a rapprochement with Russia, and then Beck's pro-German 'flirt' of January 1934 in the form of Polish-German declaration of non-aggression finalized the effort of establishing cooperation between the French Third Republic and the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ Against the political line of *Bunt*, Trzaska-Chrząszczewski emphasised the fact that the Franko-German antagonism should serve as a foundation for Polish diplomacy, and considered the looming conflict between Germany and Russia as too little developed to

¹⁰⁵ A. Chrząszczewski, "Kryzys hitleryzmu (III)", *Czas*, 18 January 1933.

¹⁰⁶ A. Ch. [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Niemiecki bluff gospodarczy", *Czas*, 26 September 1934.

¹⁰⁷ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], 'Duch Poczdamu', *Polityka*, no. 12 (1939).

¹⁰⁸ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fols. 103-105.

¹⁰⁹ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], 'Kłamstwo imperializmów', *Kurier Warszawski*, 8 April 1935 [evening edition].

¹¹⁰ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], 'Historia pewnej mrzonki', *Kurier Warszawski*, 11 September 1934 [evening edition].

¹¹¹ Al. Chrząszczewski, "Dwa przeciwieństwa", *Bunt Młodych*, no. 15 (1934).

build a political strategy upon it. However, he did not overestimated the role of an ideological factor in the international space, regarding relations between states through the prism of an appropriate national interest. In *Czas*, he often engaged in polemics with Studnicki and his work *Political System of Europe and Poland*. While appreciating the analytical capabilities of the leading Polish Germanophile, Chrząszczewski entirely rejected his political conclusions, that is, those about forging an alliance with Germany. The rapprochement with the western neighbour was leading, in his opinion, to the strengthening of the dominant role of Germany, and it would, in fact, erase the subjective position of Poland in the international strife.¹¹²

Trzaska's first 'Przegląd zagraniczny' [International Review] in *Polityka* appeared in the same issue as a very important article by Adolf Bocheński 'Co to jest „polityka 1934 r.”?' [What is 'politics of 1934?'], de facto, a conclusion of the political line of that circle in the scope of international affairs. In his later articles in *Polityka*, he constantly underlined Germany's aspiration to hegemony on the continent, strongly advocated Beck's pro-British turnaround of spring 1939, hoping it was the end of the appeasement policy initiated along with the Western powers' acceptance of remilitarization of Rhineland. From that moment on, the door to the events of 1938, that is, Anschluss and the Munich Agreement, stood open.¹¹³ What is interesting, he was among very few Polish analysts who noticed that the lack of any anti-Soviet remarks in Hitler's speech of 28 April 1939 was not merely a matter of rhetoric but testified, which later proved to be true, to the reformulation of the tenets of German policy.

In his memoirs he was extremely critical of the foreign policy of the 1930s, describing it as the *policy of a great power sham*.¹¹⁴ He did not define the 1934 pact of non-aggression as an error, but the later political line based on it he considered as such. He also considered Beck's actions as a disarmament of the European safety system, which mainly rested on France's shoulders. The pact itself could have been a way to earn necessary time, however, treating it as a safety measure was, in his opinion, a mistake.¹¹⁵

In the Sanation's strategy he stressed the quality of 'wishful thinking' dominating in the diplomatic and military activities. A similar disastrous optimism, overrating own capabilities and ignoring political determinants led to another huge disaster – the Warsaw Uprising.¹¹⁶

Chrząszczewski's views on international affairs were in line with the traditions of Polish realism. The critique of political romanticism, the analysis of the situation based not on declarations or ideological conditions but on real interests of all subjects to the international game constituted the determinants of his perspective. What is important, in his style of thinking, this perspective was similar to that of the circles connected with the Vilnius *Słowo* or *Polityka* – with the fundamental difference that the distribution

¹¹² A. Ch. [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Dzieło dwóch autorów", *Czas*, 7 April 1935.

¹¹³ A. Trzaska [Aleksander Chrząszczewski], "Przegląd zagraniczny", *Polityka*, no. 7 (1939) and 9 (1939).

¹¹⁴ BN, acc. no. 14081, vol. 1; A. Chrząszczewski, *Wspomnienia*, ts. fol. 352.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., ts. fol. 354.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., fol. 368.

of vectors of his political concept was different. Closer to oppositional standpoints, he formulated, in fact, a conservative critique of Beck's policy, however, not from pro-German, but from pro-French positions. He noticed the fact, that Hitlerism presented a political style which differed from Prussian tradition. While Adolf Bocheński insisted that Hitler's policy is a follow-up to that of Bismarck, Chrzęszczewski saw, as a much better expert on Germany than Bocheński, that the follow-up line had been discontinued, and that Germany entered the road to the fulfilment of Pan-German imperialism which, sooner or later would turn its eyes toward Poland. However, what is more important, he insisted that Hitler, as opposed to the 'spirit of Potsdam,' manifested a lack of a sense of moderation, which made him a doubtful partner in international relations.

* * *

The personage and the work of Aleksander Trzaska-Chrzęszczewski still require proper studies and positioning in the tradition of Polish political thought. Undoubtedly, he was not, in a certain scope, a follower of the Stańcyzy tradition, however, he vitalised it in accordance with the requirements of the times, adopting, in a certain scope, in the revolutionary changes within conservatism, manifesting themselves not only in the Weimar Republic, but also in the French Third Republic as Action Française. Piotr Bartula aptly diagnosed elements of political realism in Chrzęszczewski's concepts and his objection to any forms of political eschatology.¹¹⁷ A conservative, in order to protect civilisational forms of life could not, therefore, ignore the effectiveness aspect, which was connected with the understanding of the rules of the political mechanics of power. That was connected with the category of responsibility. For that reason, as, again, noticed by Bartula, Chrzęszczewski's works are not of a theoretical nature, but they possess a practical dimension¹¹⁸ and are, de facto, considerations closely related to national interest. His view of the issues of government and geopolitics presented him as an original and brilliant participant of the debates of that time, and his historiosophical concept endowed his thought with a European dimension. His book *Przyptywy i odpływy demokracji*, published months prior to the war, was one of the final voices of Polish conservatism speaking from the perspective of action, creating and shaping reality, instead of defending bridgeheads, which was the role of conservative thinkers for decades to come.

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