

*Czesław Domański\**

## **LUDWIK KRZYWICKI (1859–1941)**

### **I. THE PROFILE OF LUDWIK KRZYWICKI**

The year 2009 marks the 150-th anniversary of birth of Ludwik Krzywicki – an eminent statistician, social activist and publicist. The present paper depicts his life and achievements from a statistical angle. We consider his critical approach



to the population census which was carried out for the first time after Poland had regained its independence in 1918, and his critique of Malthus theory.

Ludwik Krzywicki was born on 21 August 1859 in the family of landed gentry in Plock. He completed his secondary education in Plock and in 1878 he went to Warsaw to study. In 1882 he graduated from Warsaw University in mathematics. Krzywicki was not only scholar but also a social activist and political journalist. Since the early days of his scientific and publicist career he strongly voiced his socialist views becoming one of the main propagators of socialist ideas in Poland. In the years 1882–1884 he worked as the editor for the Polish translation of volume I of the “Capital” by K. Marx and was one of the leading translators. The following two years, which Krzywicki spent in Leipzig, Zurich and Paris, were devoted to studying economics and social sciences, as well as anthropology, ethnology and archeology. He combined his studies with taking an active part in political life of the countries he visited and he joined the proletariat organizations. Towards the end of 1886 he returned to Poland and settled in his native Plock, where the tsarist authorities forced him to stay not allowing him to

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\* Professor, Chair of Statistical Methods, University of Lodz.

live in Warsaw. The years 1886–1888 were spent in Płock under an overt supervision of the police and finally, in 1888 Krzywicki moved to Warsaw where he stayed until 1891. The years spent in Warsaw were the time of intensive work which was mainly focused on studies and scientific research in anthropology and sociology, lectures given at the so called “Flying University”, and last but not least, on political journalism. If we add his involvement in the working class movement, we get a full spectrum of Krzywicki’s activities at the time. Between 1892 and 1893 he travelled abroad again this time visiting Berlin, where he accepted the post of an assistant at the Royal Library, and the United States of America, where he mostly devoted his time to scientific research. During that time he published a series of letters in the various national newspapers and, simultaneously, finished working on his dissertation entitled “Kurpie” (“The Kurpie Region”), which became the basis for conferring a doctorate on him by the University of Lvov in 1906. Having returned to Poland he continued his efforts to combine his scientific work with political journalism. It was just this part of his activity that led him twice (in 1898 and 1905) to the Warsaw Citadel (the high security prison for political prisoners). He used the time spent there to write a series of sketches and reviews, which were later collected and published as a volume entitled “In abyss” in Warsaw in 1909. He initiated the work and became one of the major contributors to the “Manual for the Self-Taught” and he also was the editor-in-chief of the “Great Universal Illustrated Encyclopaedia”. In the years 1906–1914 most of his energies were channelled into organizing the system of education for the working class people.

In 1916 Krzywicki embarked on a task of organizing the Statistical Department of the Temporary State Council, which was later transformed into the Central Statistical Office. In 1918 he was appointed the deputy director of the Central Statistical Office, and he held that position until 1925. Towards the end of the war (1917–1918) he was the deputy director of the Higher Scientific Courses, was giving lectures on sociology and history of economic doctrines in The Higher School of Trade, and was lecturing on the theory of statistics and general sociology at Warsaw University. Between 1921–1922 he was also delivering lectures on statistics in The Higher School of Intendancy in Warsaw. He was teaching sociology and the history of economic doctrines at the Free Polish University, and in the academic year of 1918/1919 he held the post of its President. In 1921 he was conferred the degree of full professor at Warsaw University where he was the head of the Chair of History of Social Orders. In the same year, in cooperation with H. Kołodziejcki and K. Krzeczowski, he established the Institute of Social Household, which later became the leading centre for social studies in Poland.

The first surveys undertaken by the Institute were conducted in the mid-1922 and they dealt with the workers’ trade unions in the Poland of the pre-

independence era. In the same year the survey on household budgets was devised and primary research was carried out in Warsaw. Due to some problems with inflation the work was suspended, and it was only after the Statute of the Institute had been adopted in 1926 that the research on living conditions of Polish workers gathered momentum. Thanks to the Institute of Social Household numerous studies could be published e.g. H. Krahelska's "Textile Industry of Łódź and Labour Legislation"(1927), S. Rychliński's " Working Time in the Polish Industry" (1929) and (1930), "Living Conditions of Working Class in Warsaw, Łódź and Dąbrowa Basin in the Light of the 1927 Surveys" (1929), "Small Industry and Cottage Industry " (vol.1 1931, vol. 2 1934), W. Landara's " Fight for Work Safety and Chambers of Work " (1930) and (1932), "Life and Work of the Polish Writer on the Basis of Survey of Polish Writers' Union in Warsaw " (1932), W. Niemyska 's "Emigrants' Return to Poland (1936). The above mentioned titles constitute but a small fraction of the publications of the Institute and the total number of books and brochures which came out before 1939 reached 72. Throughout its history the Institute of Social Household managed to attract nearly 200 of writers and publicists .Among them such outstanding Polish sociologists as Stanislaw Rychliński and Julian Hochfeld, economists – Oskar Lange and Ludwik Landau, and educational activist – Helena Radlińska. It is worth emphasizing the fact that all the Institute publications were discussed by Ludwik Krzywicki in his writings, and majority of them had a preface or introduction of his authorship.

The Institute applied a new procedure of collecting materials in 1931 when, on the initiative of Władysław Landau, the first diary competition was announced. The competition output was a huge number of diaries later published in 1933 as a collection entitled "Diaries of the Unemployed". As T. Szturm de Sztrem puts it: "This way a whole range of works was originated, which complemented the research conducted with the use of statistical methods". The Institute adopted an innovative approach – not only did it examine a given phenomenon in a qualitative way, but it also allowed the respondents who were the subjects of survey to voice their opinions.

In 1928 Ludwik Krzywicki became the corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Knowledge, and in 1932 the member of the Warsaw Learned Society. In 1931 he was unanimously elected the chairman of the newly-established Polish Sociological Society. He also became a member of the editorial board of the "Polish Biographical Dictionary" when it began to be published in 1935.

In recognition for his activity Ludwik Krzywicki received several awards – among others: The Natanson Award . The Mianowski Society Award, and in 1934, The City of Warsaw Award. In 1940 the University of Kaunas awarded him *honoris causa* doctorate to express the appreciation for research on

Lithuanian cities conducted by Krzywicki since almost the beginning of the century . Several of his studies discussing the problem were not only published in Polish but also translated into Lithuanian.

## II. THE FIRST GENERAL CENSUS OF 1921

The general census of population, houses and flats, livestock, as well as farm horticultural and forest enterprises was due to be held at the end of 1920 but the Bolshevik invasion prevented carrying it out as planned. Therefore The Central Statistical Office had to postpone it until the next year, and the month of June was chosen as the best time for examining farm relations. However, the Office was once again forced to put it off due to technical reasons – shortage of paper and problems with printing millions of copies of questionnaires. Finally, it was decided to hold the census on September 30, 1921, not because the time was seen as the most suitable but because it was in the country's best interest not to postpone it.

For many reasons the end of September was not a convenient date. Firstly, it was the time of Jewish religious festival and it was easy to predict that the Orthodox Jewish communities would use this argument against the census. Ironically, it also turned out that the Christian population refused to be registered on the ground that the Jewish had decided not to participate .

Secondly, September was the time of potato lifting which caused absence of a large group of rural population from homes, and provided others with a very good excuse for being absent. This situation was particularly acute at the Podgorze Region; in Myślenice area the local population was so much engaged in potato lifting, gathering cabbage and beetroot crops, sowing winter crops and gathering firewood that agents taking the census often found the doors closed; in Zywiec area the population was away from their homes (as it often happens in the mountainous regions) for largely the same reasons .

The results of the one-day, general census of September 30, 1921 invalidated a common belief that, in comparison with the pre-war times, the Polish cities are seriously overpopulated i. e. that the present number of population is much higher. In reality, what the cities suffered from most was the shortage of flats; in case of Warsaw the phenomenon was of acute character. Although the lack of flats was a phenomenon of a universal character, substantial differences in the level of housing needs in particular cities were observed. The census showed that the total number of the urban population is lower than before the war; in 1910 and 1911 the 37 cities having the population of more than 25,000 inhabitants totalled 3,362,000 people while in 1921 – 3,308,000 people. Some of the possible reasons for this situation were :

transforming a certain number of flats into offices or demolition of a certain number of dilapidated buildings. It seems, however that the above reasons were not the main ones. The public opinion tried to explain the shortage of housing by a substantial increase in the population number, yet the census results showed clearly that there was no such growth. Finding such a discrepancy between the population number and the number of flats the public opinion put forward another explanation – the number of urban population registered during the census is inaccurate (see Table 1).

Table 1 The population number in Poland in 1911 and 1921 by voivodships

Voivodship	Population			
	1/I 1911 r.	30/IX 1921 r.	Difference between 1911 and 1921	
			absolute	%
Total	<b>12 036 888</b>	<b>10526983</b>	<b>1509905</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Warsaw	935 000	931 176	3 824	0.4
The Warsaw Province	2 463 633	2 112 106	351 527	14.3
The Łódź Province	2 587 834	2 251 097	336 737	13.0
The Kielce Province	2 756 822	2 534 214	222 608	8.1
The Lublin Province	2 507 320	2 085 557	421 763	16.8
Suwałki and Łomża Poviats which joined the Białystok Province	786 279	612 833	173 446	22.1

Source: L. Krzywicki (1922) , The Critical Analysis of the Genrerel Census results, The Statistical Monthly, nr 6.

### III. CRITICAL REMARKS ON MALTHUS THEORY

On the basis of data related to France we can make a generalization which is just the opposite of Malthus theory, namely, the level of the national wealth (food in particular) adjusts to the level of population. It is worth noting here that the rate of constant increase in wealth is greater than increase in population. This statement can be proved not only indirectly (giving the numbers related to the increase in production of bread, coal and iron) but also directly. According to the research conducted by a French statistician de Flaix the overall wealth of France was growing much faster than the number of population, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of wealth and population number in France

Year	Total wealth (bln francs)	Population
1815	38	29 574 943
1842	45	34 457 282
1865	86	38 011 368
1875	188	36 638 163
1882	226	37 780 277

Source: Collected Works vol. 3, Articles and Dissertations 1886–1888, Warsaw, 1959, pp. 264–270.

The comparison of the growth of wealth with the increase in population in the years of 1815–1882 is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of size of wealth with the population number in France (in %)

Periods	Wealth growth	Population growth
	%	
1815–1865	209	29
1842–1875	119	7
1842–1882	139	9

Source: Collected Works vol. 3, Articles and Dissertations 1886–1888, Warsaw 1959, pp. 264–270.

We can see that throughout the whole analysed period the wealth growth exceeded the population growth several dozen times.

The facts given above prove without any doubt that Malthus theory is not congruent with the empirical research. Ludwik Krzywicki arrived at the conclusion that there was no antagonism between the forces of nature and human fertility. Therefore, no antagonism of this kind can be used to explain the existence of the social disease which was named “the working class issue”.

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