

Łukasz M. Dominiak\* (ORCID 0000-0002-6384-0782)

## Improving God's world. On Franciszek Bujak and his agrarianism

Franciszek Bujak's biography has been the subject of numerous studies of different nature and purposes. The facts from the life of this extraordinary historian from Maszkienice are quite well known and there is little to be added here. A slightly extended information on the biography and work of Franciszek Bujak may be found in the afterword to his *Studia nad osadnictwem Małopolski* (Studies on the settlement in Lesser Poland), written by Andrzej Janeczek (2001). Szacki (1995) and Winclawski (2001) also write about the author of *Żmiąca, wieś powiatu limanowskiego* (Żmiąca, a village in the Limanowa District), offering a brief biographical note that has a more sociological focus. This article makes occasional references to all these works. However, most information presented here comes from Bujak's autobiographical publication from 1927.

Because the list of reference sources dedicated to this historian from Kraków has grown only slightly recently, there is no point in presenting his biography here once again. Instead, this article will take a closer look at Franciszek Bujak's political and social views based on his works from 1918–1920, i.e. *O naprawie ustroju rolnego w Polsce* [On the reform of the agricultural system in Poland] and *O podziale ziemi* [On the division of land (1918)]. It will therefore focus on other than purely cognitive conditions of Bujak's scientific activity and less known aspects of his work.

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\* Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

The social rise of Franciszek Bujak, a would-be priest by choice, was a result of his brilliant university career and the fact that he married well. He owes his position in the history of the Polish economy and social research to his diligence and persistence (as the motto of his habilitation thesis he chose the words *assidue rem gerens*, which roughly translates as ‘being persistent in getting to the point’), and his political connections first with the National Democracy (‘Endecja’) and the socialist movement (1895–1901), and later the people’s movement (1906–1947).

Some motifs in Bujak’s biography, such as the fact that he was originally destined to join the clergy, his social rise through the academic career, stable marriage and scientific focus on critical social issues, bear a resemblance to the professional path of another well-known sociologist – Émile Durkheim. The latter also parted with the professional identity of his primary group and moved on to have a model university career, continuing his scientific and intellectual work on the most significant issues regarding contemporary society. This analogy, while not entirely correct chronologically, allows us to capture major features of social science as practised by these two representatives of different national traditions.

Compared to Durkheim’s famous work *The division of labour in society* (original title in French: *De la division du travail social*), Bujak’s *On the division of land* is much more modest. Deprived of a comparable philosophical and erudite input, it is rather a political and social declaration. Nevertheless, it presents a number of interesting observations regarding the foundations of society as the author would like to see it. However, this is where the similarities between these two books end. Durkheim analyses the legal and moral aspects of the morphology of an increasingly industrialised and specialised society (French), while Bujak discusses the project of an agricultural society (Polish).

Written in 1918, *On the division of land* was originally published in the Polish weekly *Piast*. Therefore, among its first readers were supporters of the People’s Party (in Polish: *Stronnictwo Ludowe*) established in 1895 by Jakub Bojko, which proved to be the most important political faction representing peasants in Galicia. The work came out later in its unchanged form as a book. In the publication Bujak analyses in detail the possibility of equal division of land. His study was inspired by legislative experiments in the then Bolshevik Russia and social-national Ukraine. In light of the ongoing Russian Revolution, Bujak did not dismiss the egalitarian subdivision of

agricultural areas in the future Poland as generally impossible. He found this concept inappropriate only for pragmatic and normative reasons.

In this rather unknown work, Bujak calls for the economic strengthening of the middle class of peasants (in Polish: *włościanie* – peasants who could own some property) by satisfying their ‘hunger for land’ through increased income from harvest and partial subdivision of large-scale landed estates. At the same time, he opposed the equal distribution of land and considered the possibility of including unmarried women working in agriculture in the process of dividing the new arable lands. He supported his arguments with ample historical and statistical data, and took significant effort to be, as he put it in the introduction, ‘a fair judge in this case’, trying to refrain from any ideological arguments. Nevertheless, *On the division of land* was in a way written as a response to contemporary political events, i.e. the Russian Revolution. As an intellectual counterrevolutionary manifesto it resembles another work of similar nature – *Upadek cywilizacji zachodniej* [The Decline of Western civilisation] by Florian Znaniecki.

When rereleasing *On the division of land* in 1920, Bujak, at that time a minister in the government of Władysław Grabski, not only presented the practical guidelines for resolving the social problem addressed in the publication, but he also revealed his personal – as it seems neoconservative – political and ideological views. Similarly to Adam Smith, Bujak defined society as a group of independent and economically active individuals whose self-control was subject only to their internal moral standards. These individuals (i.e. farmers) form groups that are connected not only through family bonds but also through things they have in common: (1) minimum level of dependence on state institutions (not in terms of bureaucracy but basic infrastructure, such as schools, roads, post offices, etc.); (2) the need to exchange goods and services; (3) state and national focus, i.e. the Hobbesian guarantee of minimum protection against uncontrolled violence; (4) urbanisation and agglomeration; (5) benefits from trade; and (6) the idea of social justice understood as a natural extension of the Christian principle ‘love your neighbour’ (Bujak 1918: 12–19). Moreover, Bujak believed that life in this form, however necessary and natural, was organised in such a way by God, making it a source of social inequality (Bujak 1918: 23). Referring to a divine force as the ultimate architect of social order seems to contradict the author’s scientism. However, this was not an isolated case in the early days of social sciences in Poland at the

beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such approach could be connected with Le Play's monographic method, promoted in social magazines both as a way of collecting data and a doctrine, and its reception from the 1880s onwards (Winclawski 2008).

One may argue that *On the division of land*, merely sixty-five pages long, was not a work of great scientific significance and was rather an act of political propaganda in times of the need for a consolidation of Polish statehood and society. It may indeed be seen as a call for the nationalisation and naturalisation of Galician peasants, and thus the beginning of a long process initiated by Bujak in 1900, i.e. 20 years before he was appointed Minister of Agriculture and State Property (an office in which he served for one month). As such it might confirm the previously suggested implicit impact of Bujak's naturalistic-organic and neoconservative worldview on sociology in its early stages of development in Poland.

A testimony to the validity of these ideas may be found for example in Michał Łuczewski's work from 2012, *Odwieczny naród* [Eternal nation]. Following into Bujak's footsteps, the author visits Żmiąca, a Galician village originally studied by Bujak, where he finds that the project of educating peasants towards being a nation, which they definitely were not in 1900, is now nearly complete. This not only shows that sociology can act as a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it also confirms the strength of Bujak's utopian project – his vision of southern Poland (i.e. Galicia) as an economically independent, capitalist, Polish and Catholic agricultural region. In the interwar period Bujak had a scientific, intellectual, expert and political capacity to put his vision into effect, which he did with due diligence. However, disappointed with only a partial success of the land reform from 1920 and the agricultural policy of the socialist regime after 1945, which marginalised peasant parties (including the Rural Youth Association of the Republic of Poland 'Wici', supported by Bujak), he deemed his actions ineffective and eventually, after 1947, withdrew from politics for good.

Łuczewski confirms that in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century a typical resident of the village of Żmiąca is by now Polish; however, this is not due to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalist ideologies, such as primordialism or ultramontanism, but because of the post-war gradual unification of classes and nationalities of various social groups in the People's Republic of Poland, including those in the areas of former Galicia. The concept of a nation and society (Hobbesian and Smithian at its core) proves to be ultimately a teleological

claim rather than a scientific theory: it argues what society should be like and what social order it pursues or should pursue, but it does not say much about the actual processes that lead to particular changes.

In his sociological and historical analyses Bujak refers, on a micro scale, to the idea of enlightened agrarianism of Stanisław Staszic, whose writings are another pre-sociological, albeit scientific, source that drives Bujak's passion for reforms. In his historical studies Bujak goes even further, back to the times of the first Piasts, to show that a state intervention in the agricultural economic system generally causes harm and is in some cases comparable to natural disasters. Bujak argues that peasants are capable of coping in new conditions because of their self-organisation, as designed by Staszic, and that in a short time they can become valuable Polish citizens as a result of their educational effort and improved agricultural technology, which – according to Bujak – have for centuries been founded on their access to fertile farmlands.

Nowadays, a hundred years after the first publication of *On the division of land*, it would be easy to criticise Bujak for his anachronistic theses – his obsolete organic conception of a nation, a social theory that does not take into account changes, such as migration or assimilation, or finally, a theory that rather than explain current processes tends to create them. However, this has never been the intention of this article. Instead, it seeks to point out a certain value in Bujak's works. His neoconservative vision constitutes a different, quite specific, variation of the Polish society project which may still prove to be useful. Some of its elements are bound to be found in modern rural areas. We can still analyse and transform them today, albeit with greater caution and less political zeal than their advocate a century ago.

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