

Jan Gottlieb Bloch (1836-1902) – Biography outline by Andrzej Żor

After years in oblivion, Jan Gottlieb (in Polish: Bogumił) Bloch regains its rightful place in history. He was a "king of railways", a financier, an industrialist and a landlord, while being an economic and social activist in the Congress Kingdom of Poland and the Russian Empire, a philanthropist as well as the originator of numerous civic initiatives. Among the latter, one should underscore the organization of the first true Statistic Office in Poland and his contribution to the establishment of the Warsaw Technical University. First and foremost, he is the author of the "bible of pacifism" – a mutli-volume work entitled *Future war – economic, technical and political aspects* (he was a candidate for the Nobel Prize for this work) - and of several scores of other research works and popularized science text, two of which were awarded gold medals at the geographical congress and the world exhibition. He is becoming the object of keen interest of historians, economists and political scientists.

He was born on 24th June 1836, which is probably why he received the name "Jan". He was born in a Jewish family in Radom - one of the greater towns of the Kingdom of Poland of the time (in Russian sector), located about 100 km away from Warsaw, the capital of the country. His family came from Leszno in the Prussian sector of the former territory of Poland, partitioned by the neighbouring powers, which was sanctioned by the provisions of the Congres of Vienna after Napoleon's defeat. Bloch's grandfather, Fajwel (Filip) was moving from Leszno to Berlin, where he owned a cloth factory. The Polish Judaic Dictionary says, that he was selling tallits. It is not known, what were the reasons, why he decided to abandon Berlin and move to the Kingdom. The family first settled in Gostynin, but later moved to Radom where they settled for good. The Blochs were not the only family to migrate. The fate of numerous other Jewish families was similar. The Kronenbergs (the richest among the potentates of the time) also moved from Prussia, while the famous family of the Toeplitzes undertook an almost identical peregrinations from Leszno, yet they did not go to Radom, but directly to Warsaw. Perhaps, the families knew each other or they bound somehow, due to the shared place of residence. For young Jan Bloch, having moved to Warsaw, found a job precisely in the banking house of the Toeplitzes. Fajwel Bloch married Marianna Hamburger. They had three children: Maurycy, Karolina and Selima (Shulima). The latter married Fryderyka Gdala, neé Neumark. The Neumarks name often appear on the pages of the 19th century history of the Polish territories, either in the history of industry or of Masonry, or in the annals containing the names of neophytes, who adopted a Christian faith. By way of anticipation of events, we can say, that there are no traces whatsoever of any connections between the family of Selim Bloch and the activities of the Masonic lodges, so popular in the 19th century. None of the Blochs is mentioned by the experts in the domain of Freemasons' activities. Selim and Fryderyka had no less than nine children, namely Teresa, Gustaw, Ferdynand Adolf, Stanisław, Józef, Julia, Jan Gottlieb, Emilia and Maria. Thus, the future "king of railways" was the seventh child in this family.

Both financial and social position of the Blochs was not exceptionally good. The uprising of the Polish nation against Russian occupation – the November Uprising, which broke out in 1830 and lasted for almost a year – caused obvious damages to the economic condition of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The years after the uprising were even worse. The tsarist government did not limit its repressive measures to eradicating all manifestations of Polish identity, closing of schools, plundering libraries and destroying social and cultural institutions. It also introduced

severe economic restrictions in the form of high customs duties on goods produced in the Kingdom and exported to Russia. The restrictions affected primarily the textile industry, and this was exactly the branch taken up by Selim Bloch (although he also dealt with dyeing, connected inseparably with the textile industry). The family suffered financial problems, which they were unable to cope with (in spite of the help granted by the municipal authorities of Radom) for many years. What made Jan Gottlieb to set out to Warsaw to look for a suitable job and for a carrier? It is not known for sure, but such suppositions seem to be right. Nationality- and religion-related aspects were not helpful in making a career either. At that time, Jews – who constituted about 10% of the population of the Kingdom – were devoid of citizenship rights and civil rights. The simplest way to leave the caste was to change the religion. The cases of conversion to Catholicism, Lutheranism or Protestantism were getting more and more frequent in the 19th century, especially in the circles of rich middle class.

In 1850, Jan Gottlieb Bloch – 14 years old at the time – came to Warsaw and took up a job in the banking house of the Toeplitzes. He was an apprentice or a messenger (which meant the same thing). He also attended the Jan Nepomucen Leszczyński Secondary School, but no records concerning his learning progress have been preserved from the years of his education. A year after coming to Warsaw, he became a member of the Reformed Calvinist Church. No motives of this move are known, apart from the general supposition, that the conversion was supposed to open the route to career. The assimilation of the Jewish population was quite extended at the time. Many families, intending to blend into the Polish society, decided to take the religious conversion route. Bloch was not an isolated case. Who made him take this step? It is not known. The majority of the family retained the faith of the ancestors. The Toeplitzes converted to Christianity much later. Some Bloch's biographers claim, that he underwent such religious metamorphosis twice. Apparently, when he was 20 (1856), he converted for the second time and became a Catholic. The issue, however, is not quite clear, and it constitutes one more among the unexplained mysteries in Bloch's life. His biographers (e.g. professor Ryszard Kołodziejczyk) make reference to the testimony of Sergey Witte – a minister of finance and, later, the Prime Minister of Russia, who was Bloch's subordinate at the time of his activities in the South-Western Railways of the Empire. The Polish Judaic Dictionary considers Bloch a Catholic as well. His wife was a Catholic and their children were baptized and brought up in this religion. Bloch himself apparently attended masses and was pretty familiar with Catholic priests. But – and this is the main argument used by the opponents of the thesis, including Ewa Leśniewska, Ph.D., who studied Bloch's activities as a landlord (the owner of the Łęczna estate near Lublin) – he was buried at the Evangelical Cemetery in Warsaw, which was reported by all papers of the time. Then, his body was moved to Powązki, the main cemetery of Warsaw, but neither the date, nor other traces of the first burial and the transfer to Powązki could be found. If he had been a Catholic, he would never have been buried at an evangelical cemetery, Leśniewska claims. Facing the difference of opinion and lack of convincing arguments, we have to accept, that there is no final evidence and the matter is unresolved, at this stage. The uncertainty grows, as Teodor Jeshke-Choiński, a scholar examining the Jewish roots of Polish families, multiplies the related questions in his most famous book, entitled *Neofici polscy* [Polish neophytes]. He informs, that Jan Bloch, son of Selim and Fryderyka Gdala, a clerk of the municipal office in Radom, converted to Catholicism in 1838. The parents' names show, that he is speaking of the family in question. The problem is, however, that there is no other Jan among Bloch's siblings. On the other hand, it

could not have been Bloch himself, as he was two years old in 1838 and he could not have possibly worked as a clerk in municipal offices. If the date had been misread and the related fact took place in 1858, and not in 1838, Bloch would have already been in St. Petersburg and not in Radom. It seems appropriate to assume, that he practiced religious rites in Roman Catholic Church and was commonly considered to be a Catholic, while he remained formally a Protestant.

This is not the end of biographical vagueness. In 1856, Bloch left the territory of Poland and left to St. Petersburg to seek his fortune. The journey was proceeded by his work in the Hołyńskis' estate in Podole, where Bloch was a scribe, according to one sources, or a supervisor, according to others. Either way, the post was rather inferior and did bring neither honour, nor money. Who influenced Bloch to decide to go to St. Petersburg, and why – we do not know. Perhaps, he went there driven by hope, as all other pioneers of early capitalism, but hope usually does not suffice to make money. We should assume, that he was not sure, that fate shall show him railway investments as his destiny. For, he started his activity in Petersburg by constructing a steam mill. Only later, did he become a subcontractor in the construction of Warsaw-St. Petersburg railway. Who recommended him? Who gave him money to make first investments or to "buy his way" into the group of railway magnates? This also remains a mystery. It may happen, that the key to this mystery can be found in Russian archives, not necessarily related to railway construction. His name appears in the latter for the first time in 1860, as Kołodziejczyk claims, but he appears already as the owner of "Enterprise Bloch" company and a serious businessman.

Russia was undergoing the so-called railway boom at the time. Tsar Nicholas I decided in 1838 to construct the first railway line (of rather decorative character) from St. Petersburg to Tsarskoye Selo (25 km). The construction of the Warsaw-St. Petersburg line was commenced at the beginning of the fifties. It was discontinued for the period of the Crimean War and took up after its end, in 1857. The decision to build railways or not to build was conditioned by the adopted military strategy. To simplify the issue and put it in a humorous form: The followers of attack were advocates of railway construction, as it allowed for quick transport of armed forces, while the followers of a defensive strategy were against investments of the type, as they allowed the troops of the enemy to move swiftly through the home territory. The tsar's decision to intensify railway construction was influenced by, among others, the Minister of Finance of Russia, Michail Reutern, who was an advocate of industrialization and of economy based on sane financial foundations. Reutern's successors in the post of the minister, i.e. Ivan Vyshniegradsky and Sergey Witte, were connected to railways in their youth. Anyway, they had been Bloch's subordinates, which shall be discussed below.

The tsar and his ministers, when deciding about the investments, faced another alternative: finance railway construction from the state budget or entrust the construction to private concessionaires. The second option was selected in the middle of 19th century. The state treasury was unable to bear so huge expenditure. The railways were "nationalized" only near the end of the century.

Licensing supported by state guarantees (a condition posed by private capital in the face of so risky investment) provided a perfect environment for corruption and making fortunes "out of nothing". Rapacious capitalists of the primary accumulation period caught the wind of huge profits. It would not have been strange if Bloch had done so too. Where, however, did he – a messenger and a scribe from Radom, a son of a poor dyer – find means to catch up with the group of entrepreneurs? Who supported him in these undertakings?

Ryszard Kołodziejczyk supposes, that Bloch acquired the means for commencing his professional activity from Nicholas Skvorcov, a Russian merchant and industrialist, partly residing in Warsaw and the Kingdom. The rest was due to his talent, hard work and good organization. This reasoning does not seem to be convincing, but it has to be accepted in the absence of evidence to the contrary. It is bound to remain a mystery for a long time, how this "Polish Rockefeller" acquired his first million. The question is not in the fact, that he used the methods characteristic for the early capitalism, that he took advantage of cheap labour or was giving or accepting bribes. Everybody did it. The later Minister of Finance of Russia and his principal protector, Ivan Vyshniegradsky, was notorious for bribery. There were even anecdotes told about him, that it was better to place plated cutlery in his table setting, instead of gold or silver one, to avoid its disappearance. The mystery is, how Bloch got inside this circle, and how he managed to receive the first commissions. How did he manage to take the first step to become a respectable and recognized businessman? Later, the decisive factors were: talent, shrewdness, business intuition, cheaper offer, higher prospective profit.

During his stay in the Empire, he married to a niece of Leopold Kronenberg (an industrialist, banker, investor as well as an economic activist and a politician, considered to be the richest and the best known capitalist of the Kingdom) and a daughter of a well-known Moscow doctor, Henry Kronenberg - a neophyte Catholic, ennobled by the tsar. Emilia Bloch was a beautiful woman, endowed with numerous personal and social virtues, who graced Warsaw salons with her presence. They had five children: a son and four daughters. Bloch himself was frequently criticised, reproaching him for his physical ugliness, among other things. Nobody, however, dared to utter even the least critical remarks concerning the beauty, the talents and the character of his spouse.

The affinity with the Kronenbergs created outstanding perspectives for career for Bloch. Before long, however, Bloch entered into conflict with Leopold the great. The pretext seemed to be found in a conflict of interest. The true reason, however, was the rivalry for the leading position in the world of the financial and industrial circles of the time. Bloch was eclipsed by Kronenberg and did his best to come up to him, or even defeat the rival. Unlike Kronenberg, Bloch did not participate in the preparations for the outbreak of the next national uprising against the Russian despotism and in the January uprising 1863 itself. Leopold was a leading figure in the moderate wing of the "whites" in the Polish independence movement, which objected against the outbreak of the unprepared uprising, which finally ended in a tragic defeat. He presided over the Municipal Delegation, which negotiated with the Russian authorities in the Kingdom. Later, during the fights, he also supported the insurgents' treasury with considerable donations. This is why he had to emigrate abroad. Bloch also left Warsaw and his biographers ascribe this decision to the intention of avoiding commitment on any of the conflicting sides. He went to Berlin to receive additional education. Although he did not do regular academic studies there, he profited greatly by getting acquainted with the most modern developments in economy, finances and statistics. He used this knowledge later on in practice. His stay abroad did not last long, however, as he frequently travelled home and bought an estate in Warsaw, near the crossing of Marszałkowska and Królewska Streets, known later as the Bloch's palace. In the first half of the sixties of the 19th century, he was an affluent man, the owner of a banking house and a merchant. He did not suffer from the post-uprising repressions. What's more, he even helped Kronenberg to acquire a permission to return to the Kingdom.

These years witnessed the commencement of the conflict between the two great rivals. Kronenberg won the struggle for the concession for the so-called Terespol railway line, which was to connect Warsaw with the border town of Terespol, on the way to Brześć and further on to Moscow. He suspected Bloch, who filed the offer on his behalf, to have postponed filing of the offer, motivated by the intention to take over the concession. At that time, their paths diverged and they became most ruthless enemies.

The monopolization of the construction of the Terespol railway line by Kronenberg (who was the majority shareholder of the Warsaw-Vienna railway line) induced Bloch to take efforts to obtain a concession for the Łódź railway line - a short section (27.5 km) which was to connect the fast-growing textile industry centre of Łódź with the Warsaw-Vienna railway line at the Koluszki railway station. Industrialists from Łódź had been seeking ways to construct this section for years. In 1865, tsar Alexander II granted the relevant concession to a company, where Bloch was the main shareholder. The company constructed the line in a virtually express manner, namely in 3 months, which constituted a record that most probably has not been broken until today. The quality of the line was far from perfect, but the quick construction brought Bloch considerable profits from the line exploitation. The undertaking was not risky, anyway. For the state treasury guaranteed the income of 5% of the annual profit to the concessionaries. Having realized this investment, Bloch became a recognized figure, operating in different economic fields.

After a successful independent début, Bloch undertook to construct the Libawa railway line, connecting the open Baltic port in Libawa to the Koszedary station at the Warsaw-St. Petersburg line. The construction lasted two years, from 1869 to 1871. The investment did not bring Bloch great profit, but it consolidated his reputation of a reliable specialist, who realizes contracts in a timely manner.

During the construction of railway lines (and in other undertakings), Bloch – as an investor – used the services of experts. In the majority of cases, Hipolit Cieszkowski was the engineer responsible for the design and supervision over the technical aspects. His brother-in-law, Maksymilian Jellinek operated as the works manager.

Another clash with Kronenberg was occasioned by the rivalry concerning the so-called Vistula railway line (from Kovel through Warsaw to Mława) in 1874. High income of the shareholders in their former investments increased the interest in buying shares to an unprecedented level. The two great rivals competed to acquire majority shares in the enterprise. As they did not have sufficient means at their disposal to buy a majority block of shares, they borrowed not only from banks, but even from private persons, paying a 12% interest per day. Kronenberg won the struggle and bought 70% of the shares, but it was considered a Pyrrhic victory at the time. Bloch did not have the majority block, but with his 30%, he was able to hinder his rival's manoeuvres. The rivalry for the domination over the Vistula railway line was the last straw. Both used various means to shape public opinion and grind down the adversary. Bloch published notes and articles in the press, where he demanded the contract conditions to be disclosed. Kronenberg went even further. He engaged Ignacy Kraszewski – one of the most outstanding Polish writers of the time, the author of numerous historical novels – to write the novel entitled *Roboty i prace* [Works and labours], where Jan Bloch is the negative protagonist (primarily in terms of character features). First, the novel was published in instalments in *Gazeta Polska*, where Kraszewski had worked as the editor (the readers had a chance to learn and follow the vices of the protagonist for an entire year). Then, the novel appeared as a book. Kraszewski did not deny Bloch (portrayed under the name of

Płocki) organizational talents or diligence, but he showed him as an extreme egocentric, filled with the desire to succeed at any price and using any means without hesitation to reach his goals. In the novel, Bloch won the business struggle. His competitor (corresponding to Kronenberg himself) withdrew from the undertaking. The struggle for railway concessions produced similar results. Bloch finally turned out to be the "winner", as he acquired concessions for the Brześć-Kiev, Brześć-Grajewo and Dęblin-Dąbrowa lines. He integrated three railway lines in the South-Western territories of the Empire and established the South-Western Railways Company, which he managed. The construction of these railway lines and their skilful management marginalized the Vistula railway line. Among others, the South-Western Railways Company employed Sergey Witte – as mentioned above – who was later to become the Russian Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister. In 1876, Bloch became the Chairman of the Committee of Representatives of Railroads of the Empire and the Kingdom of Poland, and he became a member of the National Committee for Controlling of Railroads Income and Expenditure. As a consequence, he managed a railway Empire stretching from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea, from Odessa to Grajewo, located in the North-Western fringes of the Empire, near the Prussian border. He controlled 3 thousand versts of railways in the territory of Russia and the Kingdom of Poland. Kronenberg practically withdrew from the construction and supervision over the exploitation of railways. He died in 1878, and his sons did not continue the work of their great father.

The theoretical fruit of the series of Bloch's achievements took form of a multi-volume work entitled *The impact of railways on the economic condition of Russia* (written in Russian and published in 1878), which was awarded the 1st prize at the Geographical Congress in Paris. The work was later supplemented with a volume concerning Polish railways and translated into Polish and French. In recognition of the value of this work, Bloch was appointed state counsellor and raised to nobility, receiving the coat of arms of Ogończyk Odmienny.

It was typical for the emerging capitalism in the Polish territory to combine various types of economic and financial activities. Generally, each of big investors in industry and economic infrastructure had his own banking house. Bloch was not an exception. In the decree of tsar Alexander II, which granted him the concession to construct the Łódź railway section, Bloch is referred to as a Warsaw banker. He did not convey large-scale business in his bank. His main financial undertaking consisted in the participation in the establishment of the Trade Bank in 1870 - the undertaking, which also involved Leopold Kronenberg, the Natansons and other industrialists and financiers of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, as well as representatives of recognized aristocratic families. Bloch was one of the major shareholders of the Bank. At the beginning, he even participated in its management board, but he limited his activities later to proprietor's functions. He also participated in the establishment of Warszawskie Towarzystwo Ubezpieczeń [Warsaw Insurance Association], but he withdrew from its activities later. In 1873, he became the Chairman of the Warsaw Stock Exchange Committee (and performed this function for 12 years), which comprised Leopold Kronenberg, Henryk Natanson, Mieczysław Epstein, Juliusz Wertheim and others. In 1879, he became a senior member of the Merchants Assembly in Warsaw. He was also a member of the strict management of the Credit Association of the Capital City of Warsaw.

Bloch's experiences in the financial domain resulted in another big research work, published in 1882, entitled *Finances of Russia*, and supplemented later on with the history of finances in the Kingdom of Poland. It was also written in Russian and

translated into French, German and Polish. Bloch was awarded the 1st prize at the world exhibition in Paris. The work was based on the material gathered in tsarist archives and contains valuable historical and statistic data.

Industrial undertakings constitute another sphere of activities. The period of early capitalism in the Polish land brought about, apart from infrastructural investments, the development of certain branches of industry, namely textile industry (with the main centre in Łódź), mining, ferrous metallurgy and agricultural and food industry. Bloch started up by purchasing a steam mill in Solec Street in Warsaw and erected a bakery, which employed 150 workers. Then, he invested in sugar manufacturing by purchasing "Dobrzelin", Częstocice" and "Żytyn" sugar factories and establishing one of the first cartels in Poland. Sugar industry was very popular in those years. Similar investments were made by Leopold Kronenberg, but his activities went even further into heavy industry, as he purchased several coal mines and ironworks. Bloch, on his part, constructed big sawmills and factories producing railway cross-ties (which were later used in the construction of railway lines) and established the first factory of floor tiles and plywood in Poland. He did not confine himself to pure business activities in this field either, but attempted to document his experience in theoretical form. Thus, he wrote two more books: *Manufacturing Industry in the Kingdom of Poland* and *Land and clearing it of debts in the Kingdom of Poland*. When commenting on Bloch's theoretical output from the seventies and eighties of the 19th century, one of his biographers, Andrzej Grodek wrote: "As an economist, Bloch did not follow any definite scientific approach. He was not a scientist, but a journalist with a practical mind, sensitive to topical questions, which he approached with a rich and skilfully assembled apparatus of various means and treated them with a keen mind of a practising financier." Among the means mentioned by Grodek, one should indicate primarily the Statistical Bureau established by Bloch in Warsaw (at the Warsaw Stock Exchange and the Merchants Assembly). The bureau provided numerous interesting data Bloch used in his works. Among others, it employed Bolesław Prus – probably the most eminent Polish writer of the positivist era – who focused on Bloch several of his weekly bulletins published in the Warsaw press. The use of the data gathered by the Bureau personnel in his own works instigated ironic comments in the press and a campaign of whispers in the society. It was supposed, that Bloch was not the author of his texts, but that he just signed texts written by others with his name. This accusation has to be rejected as groundless, in the light of the memories of his contemporaries. Bloch obviously took advantage of analytical data (which does not seem strange to anyone nowadays, as most of scientists work in this manner today), but he worked out his own theoretical generalizations and designed the structure of his works. One of his secretaries, Alfred Wysocki, described in his memories Bloch's methods of work: he dictated his arguments for several hours in a publishable form. The malicious accusations were due to a certain astonishment and surprise of the public opinion. Nobody was surprised, that Bloch made big money. At the time, such fortunes (although not so big) were not infrequent in the Polish society. But the scientific research and science popularisation were reserved for a narrow circle of the elect with academic background, who came from the gentry. While Bloch, a man of Jewish descent, who never studied as a regular student and was not a *sensu stricto* scientist, published works with an enormous load of facts, that were distinguished and awarded prizes. Nowadays, the majority of his texts is of exclusively historical interest, but they can certainly be counted among the not very rich output of the 19th-century economic thought.

In spite of fast development of capitalism in the Polish territory, enhanced by granting freehold to peasants, favourable customs policy measures (especially after 1877) and the development of transport infrastructure guaranteed by the state, the

group of owners of big capital remained still very narrow. The social structure was dominated by the gentry, who imposed their own values on the rest of the society. It was ennobling to be a landlord. This was the class of origin of all aristocratic families and of all recognized figures in the world of culture and science. For this reason, the bourgeoisie bought such estates. Bloch was not an exception. In 1879, he bought the estate in Łęczna near Lublin and introduced there changes, that were indispensable to establish foundations for modern agriculture. The estate prospered and Bloch dedicated more and more time to the place, which he liked.

As he was ennobled by the tsar and entered the circles of landowners, it became much easier for his children to marry well. His son, Henryk, married countess Izabela Wodzińska, while his daughters got married, respectively, to: Józef Kościelski (the owner of Miłostaw in Poznań province, a poet and politician, the chairman of the Polish club in the German Parliament, closely related to Kaiser Wilhelm II), Józef Weyssenhoff (a landowner and writer, the author of the novels *Soból i panna* [A Sable and a Girl] and *Żywot i myśli Zygmunta Podfilipińskiego* [Life and thoughts of Zygmunt Podfilipiński], famous at the time), Ksawery Hołyński (an owner of estates in the Eastern fringes of the former Republic of Poland) and Kazimierz Kostanecki (a Rektor of the Jagiellonian University). Of all these marriages, the matrimony of Aleksandra Emilia Bloch with Józef Weyssenhoff was not successful, and it ended with a divorce, once the husband gambled his family fortune away. The third daughter, Emilia became a widow after Hołyński's death and got married again to Michał Ordęga. These were not isolated cases. 25% of marriages of rich bourgeoisie at the time were marriages with nobility or aristocracy.

Business undertakings and social activities fortified Bloch's position among the Warsaw elite. On the one hand, he was engaged in purely economic enterprises, while, on the other hand, he was getting more and more involved in social activities. The famous controversy over the sewerage system in Warsaw is an example of the former activities. Rather early, did Bloch work out (in cooperation with Hipolit Cieszkowski, his main partner) a proposal for creating a municipal sewerage system, but it was rejected as excessively expensive. When the City Mayor, Sokrat Starynkyevitsh started to work on this issue several years later, Bloch violently opposed the project of a sewerage pipeline system and was in favour of sewerage disposal by vehicles, which he justified with ecological impact of releasing sewerage into the Vistula river. He presented his views in the book entitled *Głos w kwestii kanalizacji miasta Warszawy i łączenia nieruchomości z kanałami* [An opinion on the question of municipal sewerage system in Warsaw and on connecting real estates with sewerage pipelines], published in 1889.

There are numerous aspects of his strictly social activities. Against the commonly held opinion, that early capitalist investors were interested exclusively in profits, Bloch had a project of pension funds for railway workers prepared, as he perceived the funds to be a solution, which should ensure decent living conditions for workers, who finished their vocational career. The project was presented and discussed at the 6th Convention of Russian Railways Representatives in 1874. "No doubt," Ryszard Kołodziejczyk writes, "Bloch was a man of broader views than the majority of his partners. He understood and appreciated the protection of railway employee rights at the time, when none of them was even capable to notice the issue." The education-related activities constitute the second type of social-oriented undertakings. In this field, Bloch's involvement in the establishment of the Warsaw Technical University was the most important undertaking. When the new and the last tsar of Russia,

Nicholas II visited Warsaw in 1897, the community of the Polish capital organized a big campaign of money raising for the establishment of a technical university. The campaign succeeded and the authorities consented for the school to be opened. Bloch handed over certain premises in the centre of Warsaw to the Technical University. They were adapted for educational purposes at the cost of 100 thousand roubles. The University was opened in 1898 and enrolled 267 students in the first year. The second among Bloch's big projects – only partly realized in his lifetime – consisted in establishing the so-called folk houses - institutions operating for the development of culture and morality among the impoverished classes. He allotted a huge sum of 250 thousand roubles in his last will to this purpose and entrusted his wife with the mission of establishing these institutions.

The third domain consists in charity works. Bloch was famous for his generosity. In her memories, Anna Leo underscores, that he worked not so much for the national cause (it is truly difficult to find evidence of such works), but rather in the domain of philanthropy. Among the most important initiatives in this field, one can name: aid in the construction of children's hospital, organisation of a mutual assistance fund for poor university students, the legacy for the Warsaw Charity Society, handing over land plots in one of Warsaw districts to a St. Salezy poorhouse, collections of money for charity, organized by his wife. He allocated considerable sums in his last will for charity purposes. Apart from this, he allocated means for the establishment of the editorial house under the name "Biblioteka Żydowska" [Jewish Library] – which employed Isaac Perec, one of the eminent Yiddish writers – and for a shelter house for Jews. His library of 10 000 volumes was handed over to the Public Library of the City of Warsaw.

Finally, social activities constituted the fourth domain. The 19th century is the era of artistic, scholarly and high society salons. A salon was not only a meeting place, but primarily an institution for shaping public opinion, working out and imposing model attitudes and behavioural patterns, for exchanging ideas and for intellectual disputes. This role of salons was dominant especially in France and Germany. In Prussia, numerous Jewish salons were established and maintained by the most eminent figures of this community, including "learned ladies" such as Henrietta Herzs, Rachel Lewin-Varnhagen, Dorota Mendelssohn. Among the guests, one could find the Humboldts, Schelling, Schlegel, Schiller, Goethe, Heine and Hegel. Polish salons attempted to imitate those models. Among scholarly and literary salons, Deotyma's salon (Jadwiga Łuszczewska's) and Karol Benni's salon stand out. Among aristocrats' and industrialists' salons, the Blochs' salon – organized by Emilia Bloch and her equally beautiful sister, Mrs. Frankenstein – was one of the most popular and placed high in the hierarchy. Bloch also gathered numerous works of art, which provoked admiration of the visitors, as well as mockery at the parvenu.

The most famous discussion, which provoked polemics in the press and influenced mutual relations between the Polish and Jewish communities, focused on the memorandum of the Stock Exchange Committee. Bloch was one of the main authors of the text. In the first half of the 19th century, both communities inhabiting the territory of the Congress Kingdom of Poland lived in hermetically separated enclaves. Their contacts were limited to the sphere of economy. Jews were active primarily in trade and broking, but they were also involved in industrial undertakings. They were devoid of citizenship rights and civil rights. Assimilation through conversion was – as mentioned above – the only possibility of getting out of the caste. A Jew leaving his caste was exposed to repressions of his own community.

Those, who decided to become converts, were looking for a possibility of assimilation and blending into the local community. The assimilation movement gathered momentum in the mid-century. It was the moment of commencement of works – initiated by Aleksander Wielkopolski, who became later the head of the civil government in the Kingdom – on amending the legislative provisions, in order to grant Jews equal rights. The new rights entered into force in 1862, in the period of intensified insurgent activity. At that time, the relations between both communities became closer. Eminent Jewish activists, e.g. Beer Meisels or Matias Rosen, participated in the struggle for independence. It was not infrequent for Jews to enrol into insurgent troops. At the end of the seventies and at the beginning of the eighties, the situation developed in a rather negative manner. Anti-Semitism was growing in the Polish society. This attitude had various origins. Among them, one can mention a mass inflow of the so-called *litwacy*, i.e. Jews deported from the territory of Russia and settled in the territory of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. In 1882, Jan Jeleński established an anti-Semitic paper "Rola", which expressed the opinions of the Polish lower middle class, which perceived the Jewish community as competitors in the economic domain. Anti-Semitism was also characteristic for the activities of the national democratic political group, which was becoming more and more influential at the end of the century.

In parallel, the Zionist movement was gathering momentum in the Jewish community. The first notes on the plans to establish a Jewish settlement in Palestine appeared in 1876. The first convention of "Polish" Zionists took place in 1884 in Katowice. The assimilation tendency was receding. The mutual antagonisms were fuelled by the situation in Russia. Having assumed the throne, the reactionary tsar Alexander III issued numerous anti-Jewish decrees, which restored settlement zones for Jews and removed them from cities. At the end of 1881 and the beginning of 1882, Jews suffered from pogroms in Elizavetgrad, Kiev and Odessa. In December 1881, Warsaw also witnessed a pogrom, provoked by an unfortunate coincidence. 20 persons were trampled to death at the moment of panic, caused by an alleged fire in the Holly Rood Church. A rumour said that the panic was triggered by a Jewish thief. Shops were vandalized and passers-by of Jewish origin were attacked.

In the first half of the eighties, when the regulations discriminating Jews in the Empire were already in force, the authorities contemplated the possibility of extending their application to the Congress Kingdom of Poland. A special government committee commenced to work on this issue. The Stock Exchange Committee, presided by Bloch, addressed the authorities, requesting the possibility of presenting its stance on this issue. The authorities consented and the Committee prepared answers to three specified questions, concerning the role of Jews in the development of the economy in the Kingdom. They were presented in the form of a memorandum, signed by Jan Bloch, Henryk, Ludwik and Kazimierz Natanson, Stniśław Krzemiński and Aleksander Kraushar. The memorandum "leaked out" to the press. It was published in shortened form in the paper "Niwa" (with editorial comments), which vehemently protested against emphasizing the role of Jews in industrial and trade activities and deprecating Polish community in the memorandum. The paper concluded, that the authors slandered Polish society. They introduced a tribal differentiation between Poles and Jews and underscored the mutual strangeness (in spite of the fact, that both inhabited the same territory). The accusations – although mostly unjustified (the analysis of the memorandum shows, that it was of defensive character and underscored the role of Jews to prevent the introduction of the discriminative regulations) – irritated the ambition of the public opinion and thus the memorandum resulted in an number of anti-Semitic

publications. The novel *Zaginęta głupota* [Stupidity got lost] (1899) by Waclaw Gąsiorowski, with Bloch as the main villain, is an example of the process. Thus, two pasquil-novels were aimed at Bloch in his lifetime, namely Ignacy Kraszewski's *Roboty i prace* [Works and labours] and Gąsiorowski's *Zaginęta głupota* [Stupidity got lost], which is sort of sensational in public life. The memorandum (sent by Bloch to his protector, Ivan Vyshniegradsky) also had a positive impact: it stopped the works on legislative provisions in the Kingdom, that were disadvantageous for Jews. Exegetes of the early phase of Polish-Jewish relations came also to the conclusion, that the memorandum indicated, by underscoring the role of Jews in industry and trade, that such discriminating legislative provisions would open the way for the expansion of German and, partly, Russian capital. Polish capital was too weak to counteract such expansion. Wrongly understood good intentions (they could not have been expressed explicitly) led to a conflict, which had a negative impact on the assessment of the figure of Bloch and – in a wider perspective – on the entire complex of Polish-Jewish relations. The question of Jews is the central subject of Bloch's next five-volume work (published in St. Petersburg in 1891): *Spravnyenya materialnogo y nravstvyennogo sostoyanya naselenya v tshertye osiedlosti Yevreyew y vnye yego*. The book did not survive to our times. Almost the entire edition burned in a fire and it was never reprinted.

One can assume, that the controversy over the memorandum of the Stock Exchange Committee made Bloch reduce his social activities and focus primarily on scientific issues. However, the most famous of his works, i.e. *Przyszła wojna pod względem ekonomicznym, technicznym i politycznym* [*The Future War in Its Technical, Economic, and Political Relations*], was inspired, like the previous books, by his sense of civic duty. Bloch was never concerned with military issues, although he had to consider military aspects during railway construction. He did not serve in the army. As the tension caused by the preparations to an imminent large-scale European military conflict was constantly growing, Bloch asked, on behalf of Warsaw merchants, for access to materials concerning the protection of the city of Warsaw and its citizens against possible results of military activity. To his surprise and dismay, he saw that strategic documents are dominated by purely military issues, while no attention is paid to such questions as provisions for the population, citizens evacuation in case of conflict escalation, medical care for inhabitants. The issue was not negligible. The Congress Kingdom of Poland was the arena of the first clash between enemy armies, as nobody doubted that – after the French-Russian alliance (1893) and in the face of continued tension in the relations between Russia and Austria – the clash between Russia and France, on one side, and Germany and Austria, on the other side, is imminent. Thus, Bloch's concern for the fate of the capital of Poland directed his interest to the course of the future war. He started to analyse the problem and gradually extended the field of his interest, as he always did. At first, he thought that Warsaw must hold out a four-months' siege, but he continued analysing interrelated issues and examined everything that was or could have been related to war. At first, instead of a merchants' memorandum focused on strictly utilitarian goals, he wrote a short dissertation, which turned into a large-scale work, presenting a comprehensive analysis in five volumes. To make it easier for readers to struggle through complex technical and economic arguments, Bloch also wrote a single-volume synthesis, which summarized the main theses of his work. He worked on the book for eight years and published it (simultaneously in Polish and Russian) in 1899. The book was preceded by the publication of fragments of the work in the papers: "Biblioteka Warszawska" and "Russky viestnik". The book was promptly translated into French, German and English and – apparently – into Dutch

as well. Its fragments were also printed in German and French specialist journals.

The work on the *Future War...* burdened him so much, that he suspended his other business activities. He was writing during entire nights, dictating from memory huge parts of the text. He was buying dozens of books concerning various aspects of military issues, primarily economic and social ones, as these questions were marginalized by specialists in the domain of military strategy. It is said he was cutting out entire fragments, not to waste time on rewriting, and quoted them in his text. The five volumes contain considerations focused on arms and the operation of different types of armed forces – cavalry, artillery and infantry (volume I) – on the size and composition of armed forces of both potentially conflicting sides, on the questions of army command, war tactics and guerrilla warfare (volume II), on maritime war and types of war crafts (volume III), on war economy and economic and social impact of war preparations and of war itself (volume IV). This chapter presents the comments on the measures to be taken to protect Warsaw in case of a siege – the starting point of the entire work. In volume V, Bloch tackled the issue of solving international conflicts peacefully.

Bloch followed a methodologically tested route: informing the authorities about readiness to realize civil duties – preparation of a memorandum in the name of an institution or a body of persons – presentation and defence of arguments – extension of the work to get a possibly comprehensive examination of the subject matter. The book was considered to be the most original work in the history of bourgeois military thought of the period.

The main idea of the work is rather simple. Modern war does not make any sense. There will be no winners or losers. The effort of war preparations and the losses suffered during the conflict are going to exhaust the potential of the state and the society not only in military terms, but also and primarily in economic terms. The war faced by the humanity is a total war, which draws entire societies into its orbit, and not only professional groups that deal with killing. The social ability to accept military actions is also going to be exhausted, which shall lead to social revolt. Extreme revolutionary forces shall gain popularity and destroy the existing social and political system. This was probably the threat, that Bloch feared most. Therefore, the arms race has to be stopped, and people should start to work on peaceful methods of solving conflicts. This idea – unintelligible in the years, when Bloch was writing his book – gained new significance in the nuclear war era, when the gathered nuclear arsenals are capable of destroying completely the life on Earth many times over. What is the purpose of a war, which allows one to achieve nothing, but total destruction? Why escalate war preparations, while other forms of understanding and other rules of coexistence can be found?

Thus, Bloch asked a rhetorical question: "Having considered all the data, one has to ask himself a question. War is improbable in these conditions. Millions of troops cannot bear the cataclysms of the future war, while the remaining population at home cannot bear the hunger and the blockade of all production, which means all possibility of earning their living. If everybody came to this conclusion, each would ask the following question: Why are nations focused on losing their forces to gather such destructive measure, which are not going to guarantee a decisive settlement of future international conflicts? Why do they make the efforts to prepare for the titanic struggle, which is purposeless? Why do the governors, especially of Western European countries, awake opposition to excessive sacrifices and generate such an explosive force in the nations, that can have stronger impact than dynamite, such a

power, that can blow up not fortresses or cities, but the entire society itself?" The book is addressed to the circles of opponents of war and arms race. It does not make reference to moral categories, neither does it attempt to elicit humanitarian responses. The author constructed a precise reasoning, supported by facts, numbers and arguments, which is aimed at convincing all the persons responsible for making the relevant decisions, primarily military men, that war does not make sense.

Bloch's knowledge and the materials he gathered must have focused the interest of the addressees of the book: the power establishment and the military decision-making circles. For, the arguments presented in the work allowed one to realize particular political objectives.

It is not quite clear, and shall remain so for a long time, whether Bloch inspired the authorities (especially of the Russian Empire) to look for international understandings, or rather to the contrary, whether he played a role imposed by the tsar's court and the Russian military circles (in this case, he would be a *porte-parole* of the tsarism). There are divergent opinions in this issue. It seems – in the light of documents elucidating the genesis of the work - that he did not follow a commission of the authorities, but the work was a result of his own reflections. Peter van den Dungen claims, that the ideas presented in the *Future War* impressed greatly tsar Nicholas II and his wife, Alexandra Teodorovna, as well as the minister of war, Dymitri Milutin, and the Prime Minister, Sergey Witte. It is said the book generated the idea of coming up with peace initiatives. Russia was delayed in the arms race (quick-firing guns) and could take advantage of the time of negotiations – if Germany and Austria were to limit their activities in the field – to catch up. But the idea of a peaceful solution of conflicts was rather popular among Russian politicians and diplomats, so that Bloch, instead of inspiring, could simply support the views that were deeply rooted in the Empire. On the other hand, Russian military men – primarily Puzyrevsky and Dragomirov – and German theoreticians of war were against Bloch's views. All accused Bloch of ignorance in the art of war, dilettantism, etc. On the other hand, Kołodziejczyk claims, that available documents bear no traces of the interest of the tsar's family or the military command circles in the ideas presented in the *Future War*. Where, however, does the concurrence of views come from?

In August 1898, Nicholas II issued his famous manifesto against the war, where he repeated exactly the argumentation presented in Bloch's work. A year later, the Russian emperor put forward a proposal of summoning a peace conference in the Hague – the first one to have such a broad scope. Earlier, only inter-parliamentary conferences were held. Bloch expected (and made efforts to achieve this) the conference to focus on the issue of freezing arms race. During the preparations, the character of the conference subject was modified (primarily due to pressure from Germany and France) to focus on the principles regulating and limiting military activities and "civilizing" them. Two concepts clashed during the preparations: that of maintaining peace through disarmament and that of maintaining peace by ensuring a balance of powers. Neither of the concepts have become obsolete and their mutations are observed until today.

Bloch's views on the issues of war and disarmament as means of avoiding conflicts brought him closer to pacifist circles, although his pacifism was of special character. Pacifists generally appeal to idealistic and moral arguments. Bloch did not pass them totally over, but they were not decisive for the shape of the work. Julia Birmele uses the term "scientific pacifism" to describe the type of pacifism practiced by Bloch. It

was not affected, but reasoned pacifism. To "be against the war" meant for Bloch to learn and understand the mechanisms provoking war, and to find efficient countermeasures. War is a phenomenon with an internal logic and it does not make sense to apply axiological criteria to assess it.

Peter Brock distinguishes three types of pacifism:

- separation pacifism – withdrawal from public life and cultivation of one's own convictions and views,
- pacifism aimed at achieving a noble goal,
- pacifism consisting in involving societies into active struggle for peace in the world.

No doubt, Bloch was a representative of the third type.

The Hague conference was certainly an event aimed at the realization of a determined goal. It gathered representatives of 26 countries. Its sessions lasted for over 2 months. It brought about the adoption of several conventions (on peaceful settlement of international conflicts, on the rights and practices during land war, on the application of the provisions of the Geneva convention of 1864 to marine war) and prepared ground for the next meeting of the type. In spite of unquestionable progress, these achievements, however, did not avert the danger of a military conflict. The World War I broke out, lasted for over 4 years and brought about millions of casualties and extreme damages.

The Hague conference allowed representatives of different types of the pacifist ideology to present their views.

Bloch gained his position in the pacifist circles thanks to his views presented in the book, but also to his activities during the preparations to the conference and during its sessions. Bloch was not a member of any official delegation. Notwithstanding, he participated actively in the works of the conference. He delivered four papers. As the author of a work of almost 3000 pages, he aroused understandable interest. He also irritated the official representatives, especially of Germany, who accused him, baroness von Stuttner, W.T. Stead (a British journalist), and others of spying for Russia. Many considered him to be the *spiritus movens* of the Hague conference. Bloch must have liked this role very much, as he started to disseminate enthusiastically pacifist ideas. He wrote a lot, travelled a lot and delivered numerous lectures. Beside the already-mentioned Berta von Stuttner, Stead, Alfred Nobel, Andrew Carnegie, Frederic Passy and Elie Ducommun, he became a leading activist of the pacifist movement.

The idea of establishing a Museum of War and Peace was his original idea. The museum was to show, what war is, why arms race should be frozen and why one should aim at maintaining world peace at any price. To achieve this goal, the author of the *Future War* established and presided a joint-stock company in Switzerland. The museum was to cost 200 thousand roubles. Bloch contributed 40% of the capital, while he granted a low-interest long-term credit to other shareholders. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the opening of his "work", which took place several deaths after his death (his son, Henryk, became the president of the company). The museum was located in Lucerne, in the Shooting Festival Hall. Later, it was moved to another building, but it did not survive the WW I. However, it originated the process of establishing museums of the type all over the world.

The museum consisted of thirteen divisions. The first and largest comprised all instruments of war that have been invented by man since the Palaeolithic period. The remaining divisions presented artillery posts, fortifications, marine wars,

destructive impact of modern weapons, etc. This gave rise to the justified question: was it a museum of peace or war? Such concept, however, fitted perfectly into the framework of Bloch's philosophy. The museum was to attract primarily military men. Bloch did not appeal to moralists or readers of sentimental novels, but to professionals: politicians and military men, to the people who decided about the fate and the future of the world. The Museum of Peace and War was a place where the opposing views of "militarists" and "pacifists" were confronted. War preparations and war itself can be stopped only by those, who know all the aspects of war, and who conclude – as a result of scientific analysis – that war can end in the extermination of humanity.

This approach, presented in the book and then visualized, turns Bloch into one of the precursors of polemology - the study of aetiology, anatomy and functions of war. Gaston Bouthoul – a French scholar considered to be the founder of polemology - proposed to replace the old Roman maxim *si vis pacem, para bellum* with a new one: if you want peace, get to know war. The same course of thought can easily be found in the concept behind the Museum in Lucerne.

Future War... gained publicity in the world. Unfortunately, not in Poland. In Bloch's motherland, the imminent threat of conflict between the founders of the Holy Alliance raised hopes for regaining independence. War was no longer perceived as a cataclysm, as it was to give Poland a chance to become a sovereign state. The "globalist" perspective – the term certainly applies to Bloch's approach – did not correspond in any way to the point of view rooted in national aspirations. No wonder, that only a few Polish journalists (partly subsidized by the Blochs) participated in the opening ceremony of the Museum in Lucerne, and it was quickly forgotten after his death. Only now, efforts are made to analyse in greater detail his fascinating economic activities and his original views.

In spite the fact, that his ideas did not find response in Polish society, Stanisław Tarnowski – the then rector of the Jagiellonian University (Cracow in the Austrian sector) – proposed Bloch for the Nobel Peace Prize. Unfortunately, Bloch died before the application was considered. The Nobel Peace Prize was granted (quite justifiably) to his friend and enthusiastic follower: Bertha von Stuttners, the author of *La these de Jean Bloch* published after Bloch's death.

Bloch died of heart aneurism on 6th January 1902. It is not surprising, once his lifestyle is considered. He was known to be an extremely hard working man, who devoted his nights to scientific research, while conducting his business during the days. This is the image he left in the memory of his collaborators. His contemporaries criticised him severely, as they neither understood nor were able to accept his success (in a truly American style) or his creative passion for (and success in) scientific research.

The family did not follow the career of their progenitor. His son, Henryk was not endowed with business talents. He was primarily interested in horse breeding and horse races. In a very short time, he encumbered the estate in Łęczna in such debts, that his mother, Emilia Bloch, had to buy it out.

In spite of excellent marriages, the daughters' families did not leave any traces in the memory of the following generations. Only Władysław Kościelski, a Bloch's grandson, became famous for establishing the Kościelskis' Foundation which exists until today and, among other things, grants literary prizes.

The following generations were not very interested in his activities or views either. The strong independence-centred current of thought, dominant in the period between the wars, was not prone to glorify a businessman, who collaborated with the Russian occupational authorities. After WW II, in the eyes of the apologists of Marxism, he was seen as a representative of bourgeoisie, so hated by communists, an exploiter who preyed on the live body of the working class.

Only the renaissance of capitalism in Poland provides an occasion for this figure to be fully presented and his merits to be properly exhibited. This is the objective both of the Jan Bloch Society, established almost 20 years ago, and of the Jan Bloch Foundation, established a year ago.

Aleksander Bocheński, a renowned historian and social thinker of the second half of the 20th century, rebuked his contemporaries in these words: "Gentlemen writers, you are wrong! Please, reflect for a while on the statue of Jan Bloch, the statue which cannot be found in Poland." The future will certainly remedy this oversight.