

Karolina Studnicka-Mariańczyk

Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4116-9350>

Józef August Ostrowski of the Korab Coat of Arms (1850–1923) – landowner, citizen, politician*

Introduction

The biography of Józef Ostrowski is an interesting example not only of the political career of a landowner born in a small, provincial town, but also of the inheritance of the role established by his father, following in his footsteps, using his connections and influence as well as adapting his views and ideas. For a history researcher, studying the life of Józef Ostrowski and the facts related to him is a good opportunity to draw conclusions that allow to characterize the person himself – the host and entrepreneur; social worker, and one of the leading Polish politicians of that time, i.e. the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the first dozen years of the 20th century. It is also an opportunity to focus research attention on the environment in which J. Ostrowski's life and career developed, and to try to identify the factors that favored his promotion or, on the contrary, hindered the development of his career. In turn, the course of his career raises questions about the breakthrough moments in his biography, in particular the attitudes towards historical events, motivations that determine the undertaken actions or those that lead to passivity. Another area of interest is the relationship between Józef and his father as well as relationships of all kinds, including with his family members, and social relationships with neighbors, colleagues and people within the social and political spheres. One could also ask questions about the influence of the father's ideological principles on his son's activities, or more broadly – about the influence of the landowning community with conservative views on the manifested political activity. The character of Józef

* Translation services were co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science pursuant to agreement No. RCN/SP/0245/2021/1 of 1 November 2022; value of the grant awarded as part of the „Development of scientific journals” program – PLN 80 000.

Ostrowski also arouses curiosity about the nuances of politics – in particular about the conditions of activity and the actions of the Regency Council. In general, researching the biography of Józef Ostrowski is a good opportunity not only to characterize the person and to trace his life story, but also to sketch the image of a certain social environment: a political alliance representing the interests of the landed gentry, as well as conservative thought – in terms of ideological range and worldview ideological or liberal in relation to economic issues; the implementation of a political concept resulting from experience and historical analysis, doubts and convictions about current necessities, tactical choices or alliances. The justification for this approach to the problem can be found in the statement that the biographies of individuals who are politically or socially active naturally contain a broader historical context at the cognitive and narrative level. This is due to the fact that the biographies of the described people have been shaped by historical events to a greater extent than those of people who spent most of their lives within the four walls of their house, farm, or little homeland. Thus, a biographer or history researcher must adjust his/her research observations accordingly, expanding the scope of scientific interest to include socio-political issues, including socio-cultural and household/economic aspects. Obviously, this task cannot be accomplished in a short article, as formal limitations are unavoidable. However, it is possible to take a closer look at the specific characteristics of the person described, to define the outline of the main issues, to set directions for further detailed research, or to sketch the results obtained. The author of this article has set such goals when she began researching on the figure of Józef Ostrowski. However, it should be specified and emphasized that the main focus of this article is on the first years of Ostrowski's life, schooling, academic education, and the beginnings of public activity. Other episodes of his biography are only hinted at and require further, more in-depth research.

Early life (childhood)

Józef Ostrowski was the fifth child of Aleksander and Helena Ostrowski of Morsztyn and the fourth, youngest son¹. He was born in Maluszyn on January 21, 1850, and baptized the following day, as evidenced by the record, a brief copy of which is presented below:

It took place in the village of Maluszyn on the twenty-one day of January, the year eighteen fifty, at five o'clock in the afternoon. Aleksander Ostrowski, the heir to Malu-

¹ Sketch of a family tree, prepared on the basis of documents preserved in the family archives – stored in the Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi (hereinafter: APL), in a collection referred to as the Archiwum Potockich i Ostrowskich z Maluszyna (hereinafter: APiOM) – refer to K. Studnicka-Mariańczyk, *Siedziba ziemiańska Korabitów Ostrowskich w Maluszynie*, Warsaw 2014, p. 19.

szyn and other estates, thirty-nine years old and a resident of the village of Maluszyn, appeared. Also present were Zygmunt Dębicki, an agronomist, twenty-two years old, and Paweł Kowalski, a brewery bookkeeper, thirty-five years old, both from the village, who showed us a male child, born in the village of Maluszyn on the previous day, at nine o'clock in the evening, of his wife Helena of the Counts of Morsztyn thirty-four years old. The child was given the following names at the baptism: Józef Adam Zygmunt Aleksander, and his godparents were: Tomasz Count Potocki, heir to the estate of Prażek, and Helena of the Potocki Counts of the estate of Chrzastów. We have read and signed this deed in front of the witnesses.

Józef's childhood was spent in the happy atmosphere of a family home. The Ostrowski family stood out among the surrounding landed gentry due to their wealth – good management and continuous modernization of the manor farm which was part of the estate provided them with a steady income. The earnings from their economic activity were further increased by the benefits of Aleksander Ostrowski's professional and political activity. Thanks to these efforts, the family lived a prosperous life in a spacious, newly built residence of palace architecture. The mother's loving care, supported by a large group of servants, a governess, and carefully selected teachers, provided the children with the right conditions for growth, education, and development. Józef, like his siblings, was educated at home from an early age. There was no lack of foreign tutors among the guardians, whose task was not only to develop the children's intellectual abilities and prepare them for further education, but also to provide a basis for further mastery of European languages. In Helena Ostrowska's diary, we can find numerous fragments expressing her motherly concern for her children, their health and educational progress². From this we can conclude that Józef's health was not the best and he was prone to illness, and in later years he struggled with various ailments. However, he grew up well, and his mother especially enjoyed his lively intelligence, cheerful and kind disposition, ability and willingness to learn, and curiosity about the world. Helena Ostrowska, when describing various events at home or writing from abroad, always characterized her youngest son with loving words and using only superlatives, e.g. 'extremely talented', 'with rare abilities'³, etc. This attitude is well conveyed by the following diary fragment written during one of the foreign trips 'to the waters', undertaken for health reasons, but also to broaden her children's horizons:

This nice and beautiful child fulfilled his task to the fullest, cheering up his mother and older siblings, with his wit, enjoying the liveliness associated with submission, and with

² H. Ostrowska, *Dzieje Maluszyna i jego dziedziców, z opowiadania i z pamięci zebrane...*, z rękopisu wydał, wstępem i przypisami opatrzył A.J. Zakrzewski, Warsaw 2009, *passim*.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

his desire for news, wise curiosity, enthusiasm for the fine arts, almost as if guiding them on the path of consuming the beautiful impressions of civilization unfolding around them. (...) A few months stay in Warsaw had already sharpened his young mind, which blossomed even more as a result of the many new sights and the acquaintance with children of different nationalities, with whom he learned French and made great progress in German during the year. In the field of geography, not only the practical aspect, but also the theory was cultivated with enthusiasm. It bore surprising fruit for a child of this age. Reading, writing, and native history were not neglected or delayed⁴.

Aleksander Ostrowski also noticed progress in the youngest son's development, although he did not participate in the children's daily activities and, according to the patriarchal model of the family and the resulting distribution of duties⁵, he did not directly deal with the care, upbringing or education of his children but rather supported his wife by giving his high priority to proper education and upbringing. He himself was a man with a university degree and fully appreciated the benefits of good education and a wide range of knowledge, both general, specific, and professional.

In his early childhood, apart from his parents and governors, the closest people to Józef were his younger sister Ludwika (1851–1926), and Stanisław Skórkowski (a cousin living in the neighborhood, the son of Kazimierz and Urszula Skórkowska of the Morsztyn Counts of Wielka Wola)⁶, as well as Aleksander Potocki (the youngest son of Henryk Potocki of Chrzęstów). His sister was almost at the same age, therefore she also participated in many games, home lessons, or walks in the area, while the boys were members of the 'Science Club' – an ad hoc group formed for educational purposes, under the care of a hired tutor (including the French Danton). The friendships forged at this time continued into later years, and particularly close bonds developed between Józef and Ludwika, and their older brother Jan Leon. In addition to family ties, they shared a common destiny – none of them started a family, so they lived together in Maluszyn, and also managed the estate together.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 68.

⁵ See: A.J. Zakrzewski, *Z dziejów dziewiętnastowiecznej rodziny ziemiańskiej. Ostrowscy h. Korab z Maluszyna*, [in:] *Dzieje Maluszyna...*, passim; D. Rzepniewska, *Rodzina ziemiańska w Królestwie Polskim*, [in:] *Spółeczeństwo polskie XVIII i XIX wieku. Studia o rodzinie* Vol. 9, ed. J. Leskiewiczowa, Warsaw 1991.

⁶ This is what Helena Ostrowska says in her diary (op. cit., p. 73). In turn, Tomasz A. Nowak (*Radomszczański słownik biograficzny*, Vol. 1, ed. G. Mieczyski, series: Radomszczańska Biblioteczka Regionalna, Vol. 13, Radomsko 2017, p. 168) mentions Bolesław Maurycy Skórzewski (1841–1908) as a companion of Józef's play and learning. It seems, however, that this information is incorrect because Bolesław accompanied Jan Leon Ostrowski (cf. H. Ostrowska, op. cit., p. 114), while Stanisław Skórzewski was Józef's companion.

School education and university studies

Home education was a common practice among wealthy landowning families to prepare children for secondary and higher education. For girls, this was usually the basic stage of education, since it was rarely decided to continue with education in public schools, at high school level, and even less so at university level. In this case, self-education was a natural way to broaden intellectual horizons and deepen knowledge. However, the approach to boys' education was different. Home education was only an introduction, a preparation for further learning. The case of Józef Ostrowski was no different. After reaching school age and acquiring the basics of general knowledge, the boy was sent to schools in Warsaw. First it was the Second Junior High School in Warsaw⁷, then he studied at the Warsaw Main School at the Faculty of Law and Administration and at the Imperial University of Warsaw. He continued his legal studies at the University of Berlin (Friedrich Wilhelm University), and he acquired agricultural knowledge at the Faculty of Agriculture in Halle and Hohenheim⁸.

Józef Ostrowski began his education in the Second Junior High School in Warsaw in the school year of 1862/1863, starting with the fourth grade. In Warsaw, he lived first with Mr. Groidevaux, the former teacher of his older brother Jan, and later he was under the care of Karol Peplowski⁹. Interestingly, the tutor's efforts were not limited to simply watching over young Józef's safety or ensuring his progress in school. As a tutor, Karol organized the boy's daily life in Warsaw: carriage rides, visits to the barber and tailor, regular baths or social gatherings. He was also responsible for purchasing the necessary textbooks and books, school supplies and materials, as well as maintaining the boy's wardrobe and underwear. In case of illness or cold, he brought in doctors and purchased medications. Another important task was to organize additional classes – tutoring, especially in the fields of music, drawing, gymnastics, and dance. Józef took piano lessons with two teachers – Mr. Pfanhauser and Mr. Kratzer. He also had the opportunity to do additional piano exercises in a specially rented room, and whenever possible, he attended other lectures and events to broaden his knowledge and cultural development¹⁰. All expenses related to Józef's education and stay in Warsaw were regularly covered by Aleksander Ostrowski on the basis of K. Peplowski's expense reports. Therefore, it can be assumed that the parents fully accepted the tutor's efforts, including those that went beyond school duties and broadened the young man's intellectual horizons. These actions

⁷ See: J. Schiller, *Warszawskie rządowe szkoły średnie w latach 1795–1862*, „Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty” 1994, Vol. 36, pp. 91–92, 108.

⁸ J. Molenda, *Józef August Ostrowski*, [in:] *Polski słownik biograficzny*, Vol. 24, Wrocław 1979, p. 556.

⁹ H. Ostrowska, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁰ Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych (hereinafter: AGAD) archival collection: APiOM, Wydatki Józefa Ostrowskiego, ref. II-82, pp. 501–509.

brought very good results in the form of grades on school certificates, awards and distinctions, as demonstrated by the following example:

ATTECTAT

[Patent]

[Certificate in Russian and Polish]

Ostrowski Józef of the Roman Catholic religion, aged 17, enrolled in the 4th grade of the Secondary School in Warsaw in 1862/3, remained there until the completion of the entire course of learning, that is, until June 19 (July 1) 1866. During his stay in the Junior High School, he was exemplary, and at the final exam he showed progress in the sciences, as follows:

Religion	excellent	Algebra	excellent
” in the Polish language	excellent	” Trigonometry	excellent
” ” Russian	satisfactory	” Physics	excellent
” ” Latin	excellent	” Mathematical Geography	excellent
” ” Greek	excellent	” Chemistry	excellent
” ” German	–	” Natural History	excellent
” ” French	excellent	” Geography	excellent
” Arithmetic	excellent	” History	excellent
” Geometry	excellent	” Calligraphy	satisfactory
		” Drawing	excellent

As a result, the Pedagogical Council of the Secondary School in Warsaw decided to issue this certificate to Ostrowski Józef, with proper signatures and applying the official seal.

Warsaw, 19 VI (1 VII) 1866¹¹.

Józef Ostrowski also achieved good results during his studies at the Warsaw Main School, which he began in 1866 and where he immediately received further credits. The curriculum consisted mainly of legal subjects such as: history and institutions of Roman law; encyclopedia and sources of law; pandect of law (extracts from literature); international, state, criminal and civil law. The scope of legal knowledge was supplemented by subjects such as: introduction to philosophy, encyclopedia of philosophical sciences, logic, Roman history, practical economics, and encyclopedia of public skills. He passed some exams with distinction, which allowed him to be included in the group of outstanding students – the best ones¹².

¹¹ Ibidem, ref. II-82, p. 499.

¹² Ibidem, p. 476a–e.

As already mentioned, Józef Ostrowski deepened his knowledge of law at the Imperial University of Warsaw, where in 1870, he obtained the degree of a candidate of law after defending his thesis *Legal power of evidence from witnesses in criminal proceedings*, published by J. Ostrowski in Berlin in 1872. In the monograph, the Author addressed issues such as (among many others):

On evidence in general, On evidence in criminal cases, Differences in the meaning of eyewitness testimony due to different procedural systems, Obligation to provide benefits and persons exempted from this obligation, General considerations according to which the value of testimony is assessed. Guarantee of the credibility of eyewitness testimony and its distribution, Consistency with other evidence, Number of witnesses, Conditions of complete evidence from witnesses according to the theory of evidence of Prussian and Austrian procedures in force in the Kingdom of Poland, etc.¹³

As already mentioned, the culmination of his legal studies was the beginning of studies at the University of Berlin. Józef's mother remembered this moment as follows:

Today, November 21, a new chapter begins in the young life of our son Józef. He has just said goodbye to us at the University of Berlin, after graduating from the Warsaw School of Economics, proudly holding the title of Candidate of Law. Józio is 21 years old. Certain principles, from which he has never deviated, a mind developed through exemplary diligent learning, we can therefore expect that he will not abuse his freedom and will return to us the same, only enriched with additional treasures of knowledge and experience of people and the world¹⁴.

Interestingly, Józef Ostrowski continued his studies at German universities, only in the field of agronomy. In this way he repeated the educational path of his father, Aleksander. On this basis, we can assume that the professional direction of Józef Ostrowski was defined quite early, as the acquisition of knowledge proceeded consistently, in accordance with the adopted plan and model established by his father¹⁵. It should be emphasized that the educational profile was a very good preparation for taking up a job within the official and administrative structures; whether on a local or national level, as well as for running a management board in one's own estate. Józef Ostrowski performed

¹³ J. Ostrowski, *Moc prawna dowodu ze świadków w postępowaniu karnem. Rozprawa napisana dla pozyskania stopnia kandydata prawa Carskiego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, Berlin 1872.

¹⁴ H. Ostrowska, op. cit., p. 245.

¹⁵ Certainly, there have been some fluctuations and doubts about the choice of life's path – this will be discussed later in the article.

both types of activities with considerable success. The farms that belonged to the inherited estate always yielded significant income, and the political career was crowned with the appointment to the three-member Regency Council – a supreme authority in the Kingdom of Poland. Participation in the work of the Council was undoubtedly a great challenge, but also a fulfillment of personal ambitions. His knowledge of law was particularly useful.

The stay in Germany is connected with a peculiar anecdote that is told in Helena Ostrowska's memories, which is quoted here not only as an interesting fact, but also as an indication of a characteristic detail in the biography:

A few days later, on February 10, our son Józef arrived from Berlin to fulfill his duty to join the army. However, he arrived two days too late, as he had not received the two letters from us in which he was to report to Radomsko on [February] 8. This is not the kind of thing you would expect from an arch-wise [postmaster] with new equipment. Is this due to the lack of a Russian address? Unknown, because many letters from us and to us reach their destination. Can I blame one of the six officials at the post office in Radomsk(o), or was it disorder and negligence? Fortunately, the delay did not have too harmful effects on Józef's purchase. However, he had to sacrifice his last savings in Piotrków in exchange for his good fortune, No. 818, with a poor man sentenced to march out with the recruits, then submit his buyout, 1000 rbs, and be free once and for all, if one can say that, considering the constant change in laws and regulations¹⁶.

The quoted fragment from Helena Ostrowska's memories clearly explains how Józef escaped the draft, and also indicates a practice – quite common in landowning families, who could afford to buy out. Let us add that none of Aleksander's sons pursued a military career, although the father (as well as his grandfather – Wojciech Ostrowski) had gained war experience during the November Uprising (and perhaps that's why the young Ostrowscy avoided military service).

The host and social activist

After returning to the country in 1874, Józef Ostrowski took over the management board of the family estate, which included not only farms but also processing and industrial plants. To be precise, it was not an independent board, after all, the father was still alive. The older brother Jan Leon also had a lot to say, and the voice of Ludwika Ostrowska was often taken into account as well, especially in matters related to fruit and vegetable production, or textile manufacturing, which were under the management of

¹⁶ H. Ostrowska, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

the youngest, unmarried sister¹⁷. The relatively large number of farms and the diversity of agricultural and livestock production, as well as the functioning of the processing and industrial plants, gave each member of the family community a fairly large degree of autonomy in the performance of their duties and opportunities for involvement. The main strategy of operation was determined by Aleksander Ostrowski, taking into account the submitted suggestions and opinions, thanks to which (but also owing to the authority of A. Ostrowski in the circle of his family and colleagues) the management was carried out without major friction or discrepancies, and after his death, the arrangements were continued along the lines set earlier. The diversity of managerial responsibilities and the structural links between individual farms or plants were also important. They allowed for competent replacement in the absence/departure of a member of the community by persons remaining on site.

Józef Ostrowski directly managed the estate in Pukarzewo, and was also the director of the Sugar Beet Factory and Refinery in Silniczka¹⁸. The sugar factory belonged to the company founded by Aleksander Ostrowski, Henryk Potocki of Chrzastów, Jan Siemieński of Żytno, and Ignacy Ostrowski of Łękawa and Piaszczyce in the 1950s (1853)¹⁹. The heir to Maluszyn owned 50% of the company's shares, therefore he had the casting vote in management issues, including the appointment of the plant's management. For example, Jan Leon was the direction before Józef, and for the Józef, the youngest son, this work was an excellent practice in managing the company. Józef was undoubtedly the director of the plant and the manager of the farm. He made use of the knowledge he had acquired during his studies, as well as the experience of his father and older brother who was well versed in sugar-related matters and the operation of the sugar factory itself. Soon, new modern machines and processing equipment will appear in Silniczka, and the installed power generator will allow for partial electrification of the factory and the farm. Nevertheless, one could get the impression that these activities did not fully satisfy Józef's ambitions. Clear dilemmas had already arisen before his departure for Germany. We find traces of them in Helena Ostrowska's account:

(...) in a state of distressing hesitation about his future, he would be better off spending more time with and talking to his father, the most reliable advisor and a model of patience in the difficult circumstances in which we have to live. The question is whether Józio will wait for better times and continue with his law studies, which he has devoted himself to at the University of Warsaw, and for which he currently has no application in terms of

¹⁷ More: K. Studnicka-Mariańczyk, *Domena Ostrowskich z Maluszyna. Przykład przemian kapitalistycznych w polskim rolnictwie XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2014; eadem, *Ludwika hrabina Ostrowska (1851–1926)*, Warsaw 2016.

¹⁸ J. Molenda, op. cit., p. 556.

¹⁹ APL, APiOM, Akta dóbr Silniczka, ref. I-148.

a career or profession. Or will he immediately turn to the vocation of an agricultural host, the only field always open to every young Pole of means, regardless of his skills²⁰.

Based on the above, it can be assumed that a trip to Germany to study law was the result of personal aspirations, and on the other hand – a consequence of the lack of interesting job offers in the learned profession. In other words, studying abroad was an opportunity to acquire legal and managerial knowledge, including agronomic knowledge, and also to implement the “wait” plan, i.e. to wait for a change in unfavorable conditions. This situation appears to have repeated itself a few years later. The return to Maluszyn could be motivated not only by the desire to take over the inheritance or support the family in its economic efforts, but also by the lack of prospects for the use of legal qualifications and the opening of a clerical career. However, his ambitions remained alive, and the example of his father’s commitment provided additional impetus. From this perspective, it seems that we can better understand the motives for Józef Ostrowski’s social and later political activity. In addition to a natural inclination towards civic affairs, the activating factor was his own ambition, the desire to measure up to his father. The forces that moved him can be broadly described as the desire to go out into the world, beyond the hardships of farming and agricultural duties; the desire to make contacts, acquaintances that would break the barriers created by staying in the provinces and open up opportunities for further careers.

The search of his own way in life, however, began very modestly. Józef Ostrowski made his first efforts in 1876 by running for the office of a municipal judge. Let us turn once again to Helena Ostrowska’s notes, which thoroughly reflect the atmosphere associated with the competition for the position of a judge:

The educations he has received will lead him to this activity, and respectability encourages us to seize this opportunity to exert a healthy influence on this defective system in our community. Whether he will be elected is still a question, because many candidates, some of whom can barely sign their own name, driven by the prospect of financial benefits, are presented everywhere on lists intertwined with those who are driven by higher aspirations²¹. (...)

The candidacy of our son Józef in the commune of Dąbrowa, where he is little known, was lost; in the municipality of Koniecpol he was elected by the majority of votes, and in Maluszyn by acclamation. The effect made no distinction between that of the father ... and the son but was equally flattering for both: “He has not harmed us so he will not harm us ...!”. Thus, the day of the election became a day of triumph for our group (...)²².

²⁰ H. Ostrowska, *op. cit.* p. 253.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 385.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 390.

An undoubtedly important factor in the development of Józef Ostrowski's career was his father's position in the landowners' circles, among the leading entrepreneurs and financiers. Another important factor was Aleksander Ostrowski's connections with the most important officials in the state, established during his time as a minister. The social position of the Ostrowski family was strengthened by important family alliances, their wealth and social contacts. Józef's advancement on the ladder of social hierarchy followed, in a gradual process spread over several decades, during which the heir to Maluszyn matured as a person and as a politician. For our considerations at this point, it is worth noting that political advancement preceded social advancement, which continued later.

One of the first social activities of Józef Ostrowski was his participation (together with his brother Jan Leon) in the organization of the Agricultural Exhibition in 1874. Józef Ostrowski was a member of many different societies, sometimes somewhat "exotic", such as: the Polish Millers' Association. He financially supported the activities of local fire brigades, libraries, science clubs and scientific societies. As a lawyer, he settled disputes in the courts of peers and honor. An important episode in his biography was his cooperation with the Editorial Board of the Warsaw daily "Słowo" [*Word*] in 1899, of which he became a member. The initiative gathered to form a political party – the Real Politics Party – arose from the community centered around the newspaper's editorial office. The idea was implemented in 1905, during the wave of political thaw caused by Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and the subsequent revolutionary turmoil. In the meantime, Józef Ostrowski was elected president of the Party.

Significant moments of social activity were also the establishment of cooperation with the editors of the St. Petersburg weekly "Kraj" [*Country*], which resulted in an invitation of the group to the organizers of the Warsaw branch of the "Kraj" Information Bureau. In addition, participation in the work of the committee appointed to send a medical ship for wounded soldiers to the Far East was established²³. Later, he supported the activities of many social and economic societies, including Macierz Szkolna. In 1908–1917, he was a member and honorary president of the Council of the Society for the Support of Social Work. This organization was structurally and programmatically linked to the Real Politics Party.

Political activity

Józef Ostrowski began his political activity with informal and cabinet activities. As the son of Aleksander Ostrowski, the landowner's environment associated him with his

²³ J. Molenda, op. cit., p. 556.

father's activities and the legacy of Aleksander Wielopolski's political thoughts and actions. These were aimed at increasing the autonomy of the Kingdom and modernizing the country. Continuing this philosophy of political activity, Józef Ostrowski participated in social meetings where the situation in the country, in Russia and at the imperial court was discussed. In the course of these meetings, the concept of taking measures aimed at gaining allies in order to gradually increase the autonomy of the Kingdom matured. This meant the abandonment of the policy of russification, restoring the right to use the Polish language in schools and offices, and liberalizing the conditions for conducting economic, social and political activity. These allies were sought among Russian aristocrats, high-ranking officials, representatives of generals, and economic, financial and cultural elites. Józef Ostrowski used his contacts and position to organize such meetings and participated in many of them, at the request of friendly landowners and industrialists. As noted by Jan Molenda – the author of the biography of Józef Ostrowski in the Polish Biographical Dictionary – the heir to Maluszyn belonged to an influential group of Polish landowners, industrialists, and bankers. From the 1890s, they tried to use their personal connections to persuade the Russian authorities to change or soften their anti-Polish course²⁴. It is well known that these efforts did not bring the expected results, but they consolidated the group around the so-called Polish affairs and set the stage for further actions. Józef Ostrowski, on the other hand, proved to be a trustworthy representative of the landed gentry and the liberal-conservative party; an effective organizer, a competent lawyer, and a skillful politician who was not afraid of program work.

As mentioned above, the breakthrough in Józef Ostrowski's political career came in 1905 with the establishment of the Real Politics Party. From then on, the heir to Maluszyn – as the president of the Party elected by the delegates – significantly increased his public activity. He was not a politician who drew crowds at rallies or meetings, because he belonged to those activists who preferred to talk in the quiet shelter of the cabinet; to do organizational work, to draft create statutes, appeals, and program materials. However, he did not shy away from public speeches. As an example of this type of activity, we can use a part of the draft program for a rally prepared by Józef Ostrowski.

DRAFT PROGRAM (project program)

Polish realpolitik

In the face of this new era, which begins for our country with the appointment of the representatives of the people to the State Parliament, there is a concern that our nations

²⁴ Ibidem.

not waste this opportunity by reckless, premature or immature acts or omissions. From this concern arises the need to unite all moderate, prudent, and public-spirited individuals in common political and social work. As a means to this end, it is necessary to establish certain guiding principles of real politics that would guide serious citizens of our country in the new period of political life.

Wishing to contribute to this mission, we, the followers of the principles of Polish conservative politics, declare that in our efforts and actions we will adhere to the following guidelines:

(...)

When reforming the general state system in the spirit of decentralization, we shall take the position that the separate historical, ethnographic and cultural conditions of the Kingdom of Poland should be duly taken into account. Therefore, we shall strive to obtain for this Kingdom, by means of common nationwide institutions: a) autonomous and self-governing institutions; b) recognition of the right to use the Polish language as the national language in national offices and institutions; c) public education in the Polish language and the national spirit; d) finally, a cultivation and development of the national culture in a whole range of institutions and in the whole sphere of social life²⁵.

In the years 1906–1910 Józef Ostrowski was a member of the Russian Council of State, a member of several committees, and the chairman of the participants of the Polish Fraction of deputies representing various groups; in the country he organized election committees for the State Duma. However, after 1910, he gave up his mandate and limited his activity, which was undoubtedly due to health problems. This situation lasted until the outbreak of the war. Józef Ostrowski regained his vitality only after the withdrawal of the Russians from Warsaw and the occupation of the German administration. Then he resumed his organizational and political activity. The culmination of this activity and the peak of his career was his appointment as a member of the Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland, a supreme authority that announced the imminent revival of independent statehood.

Among the archival documents, we can find a characteristic message sent to Józef Ostrowski's address in Warsaw. Due to the symbolism of its content, its pronunciation can serve as a summary of the political career of the heir to Maluszyn on his way to the heights of power.

²⁵ AGAD, APiOM, Akta Józefa Ostrowskiego ts. Stronnictwa Polityki Realnej, 1905–1912, ref. II-28, p. 6.

Radomsko, October 21, 1917.
 Powiat National Council
 Radom District, Piotrkowska District

Warsaw
 His Lord Excellency
 Józef Ostrowski
 Member of the Regency Council.

Most Beloved Lord!

The National Council of the Powiat of Radom, Piotrkowska District, is pleased to greet one of its compatriots and the highest dignitary of the Polish State, and to ask him to accept tribute to the Regency Council, together with the assurance of obedience and ardent support in the realization of the independent Polish State.

[stamp] [signature] President of the Powiat National Council. Leon Siemieński
 [signature] Secretary Stefan Pawłowski²⁶

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Józef August Ostrowski of the Korab Coat of Arms (1850–1923) – landowner, citizen, politician

Summary: Józef Ostrowski was the son of Aleksander and Helena Ostrowski of Morsztyn, and the last owner of the Maluszyn estate on the Pilica River. After graduating from junior high school in Warsaw, the heir to Maluszyn studied at the Warsaw Main School and then at the Imperial University of Warsaw. At the latter university, he received his Master's degree by presenting his diploma thesis in the field of jurisprudence. He continued his law studies in Berlin. He also studied agriculture at the Universities of Halle and Hohenheim. After returning to his homeland, he followed the career of his father, Aleksander Ostrowski. He was involved in economic, social, and political activities and held various positions; he was the president of the Land Credit Society in Kalisz (similarly to Aleksander Ostrowski), a member of the Editorial Board of the daily “*Slowo*” [*Word*], one of the organizers of the Real Politics Party (later its president), a member of the Russian Council of State, the president of the Polish Fraction, the vice-president of the Union of the Fractions of the Kingdom of Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia, a member of the Second State Duma, and a member of the Regency Council. His social activity is also worth mentioning. He was a municipal judge, and he participated in the establishment of agricultural societies, landowners' and rural self-governments. His career path was similar to that of his father.

Keywords: Józef Ostrowski, gentry, politics, education, career, estate

Józef August Ostrowski Wappen Korab (1850–1923) – Landadliger, Bürger, Politiker

Zusammenfassung: Józef Ostrowski – Sohn von Aleksander Ostrowski und Helena Ostrowska, geb. Morsztyn, der letzte Besitzer der Domäne Maluszyna am Fluss Pilica. Der Erbe von Maluszyna nahm nach dem Abitur am Warschauer Gymnasium ein Studium an der Warschauer Hauptschule und anschließend an der Zarenuniversität in Warschau auf. An dieser Universität verteidigte er sein Magisterdiplom mit einer Arbeit aus dem Bereich der Rechtswissenschaften. Anschließend setzte er sein Jurastudium in

Berlin fort. Außerdem war er Student der landwirtschaftlichen Fakultäten der Universitäten Halle und Hohenheim. Nach seiner Rückkehr nach Polen begann er seine berufliche Laufbahn nach dem Vorbild seines Vaters Aleksander Ostrowski. Er engagierte sich in wirtschaftlichen, sozialen und politischen Bereichen. Er übernahm folgende Ämter: Präsident der Kredit- und Landgesellschaft in Kalisz (wie Aleksander Ostrowski), Mitglied der Redaktion der Tageszeitung *Slowo*, einer der Organisatoren der Partei der Realpolitik (später ihr Präsident), Mitglied des russischen Staatsrats und Präsident des Polnischen Kreises, Vizepräsident des Verbands der Kreise des Königreichs Polen und der Länder Litauen und Ruthenien sowie Abgeordneter der Zweiten Staatsduma und Mitglied des Regentschaftsrats. Erwähnenswert ist auch sein soziales Engagement: Er war Gemeinderichter und beteiligte sich an den Vorarbeiten für die Gründung von landwirtschaftlichen Gesellschaften, der Land- und Dorfselbstverwaltung. Sein beruflicher Werdegang verlief ähnlich wie der seines Vaters.

Schlüsselwörter: Józef Ostrowski, Landadel, Politik, Bildung, Karriere, Domäne

Józef August Ostrowski herbu Korab (1850–1923) – ziemianin, obywatel, polityk

Streszczenie: Józef Ostrowski był synem Aleksandra i Heleny z Morsztynów Ostrowskich, ostatnim właścicielem domeny maluszyńskiej nad Pilicą. Dziedzic Maluszyna po ukończeniu gimnazjum w Warszawie podjął studia w Szkole Głównej Warszawskiej, a następnie na Carskim Uniwersytecie Warszawskim. Na tej właśnie uczelni obronił tytuł magistra, prezentując pracę dyplomową z zakresu prawoznawstwa. Studia prawnicze kontynuował następnie w Berlinie. Był także studentem wydziałów rolniczych na uniwersytetach w Halle i w Hohenheimie. Po powrocie do kraju rozpoczął drogę kariery wzorem ojca Aleksandra Ostrowskiego. Zajął się działalnością gospodarczą, społeczną i polityczną. Pełnił następujące funkcje prezesa Towarzystwa Kredytowo-Ziemskiego w Kaliszu (jak Aleksander Ostrowski), członka Rady Redakcyjnej dziennika „*Słowo*”, był także jednym z organizatorów Stronnictwa Polityki Realnej (potem jego prezesem), członkiem rosyjskiej Rady Państwa i prezesem Kola Polskiego, wiceprezesem Związku Kół Królestwa Polskiego i krajów Litwy i Rusi oraz posłem do II Dumy Państwowej i członkiem Rady Regencyjnej. Warto podkreślić również jego działalność społeczną – był sędzią gminnym, brał udział w pracach przygotowawczych do powołania towarzystw rolniczych, samorządu ziemiańskiego i wiejskiego. Droga jego kariery była podobna do tej, jaką przeszedł jego ojciec.

Słowa kluczowe: Józef Ostrowski, ziemiaństwo, polityka, edukacja, kariera, domena