

## **Be like Ignacy, live like Ignacy**

### ***Tymoteusz Pruchnik***

**Abstract:** Ignacy Łukasiewicz is a person who went down in Polish and world history as the inventor of the kerosene lamp and pioneer of the oil industry. Ignacy Łukasiewicz is an example of a person who in his personal and professional life went far beyond the mediocrity of those living in the 19th century. The purpose of this article is to present the professional successes of Ignacy Łukasiewicz in the development of the oil industry and to show him as a pioneer of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article uses available literature on the life and work of Ignacy Łukasiewicz and selected literature on CSR.

**Keywords:** Ignacy Łukasiewicz, petroleum, Corporate Social Responsibility

### **Introduction**

As the oil industry developed in Subcarpathia and the living conditions of the Subcarpathian people improved, the legend continued to be recounted in the Krosno and Jasło areas long after Łukasiewicz's death that he was a heaven-sent comforter who came to feed the hungry and clothe the poor.

How is it that one man was able to change life for the better for so many people and make them see the value of these changes? The answer to this question is the combination, in one person, of exceptional personality and character traits, supported by undeniable talent and great diligence. All this made up the picture of an outstanding Polish inventor, a man ahead of his time, whose creative thought gave the world epochal values, and whose genius for nearly a century and a half has set the course of the humanistic development of mankind.

This great Pole, indefatigable pharmacist, outstanding inventor, and industrialist has been named Patron of the Year 2022.

The purpose of this article is to describe the life and professional successes of Ignacy Łukasiewicz related to the development of the oil industry in Poland.

### **The life and work of Ignacy Łukasiewicz**

Ignacy Łukasiewicz's parents showed considerable intuition in choosing a name for their son, the root of which is found in the Latin word *ignis* – fire – and means a man with a fiery heart. Łukasiewicz, with his entire life and actions, confirmed the truth of this claim and proved that he was a man with a big and warm heart, not only for his own family, but most importantly for Poland and the Poles.

He came into the world in 1822 as a representative of the generation about which Adam Mickiewicz wrote – "*born enslaved, chained in my crib*", a generation that produced characteristically outstanding figures of Poles devoted to God and the Homeland, socially committed, active in many fields, uncommon. For Poland, he was ready for anything, as he proved during his entire life, full of passion, hard work and, in the end, the invaluable merits that he left behind for the use of then and future generations of Poles.

Ignacy Łukasiewicz was the fifth child of Józef and Apolonia Łukasiewicz, and as it turned out years later, the greatest pride of this not very wealthy family and of Poland as a whole. Born in Zaduszniki, close to the border with the Russian partition, on an estate leased by his parents, he was brought up in the spirit of love for his homeland and for others. He was moulded into a strong, conscious, and determined man, a righteous citizen who acted with dignity and was guided by the moral law, a good Pole. Not without influence on such an image of the young Łukasiewicz was the education he received from his earliest years. First from the home tutor, the former colonel, Woysyn Antoniewicz, and then, when the Łukasiewicz family moved to Rzeszów in 1830, from teachers at the Piarist gymnasium, which was called the "school of characters" for good reason. He was educated there from 1832 to 1836, remaining in the memories of his contemporaries as a talented and kind man: "*...we came to know him as one of the brightest and most diligent students and the best colleague. He worked strenuously, and facilitated the study of less capable colleagues with private, selfless lectures. At that time, there was not yet such a plethora of scholarships (...), along the thorny road of scarcity, the greater part broke through forward, and in the last need a colleague saved a colleague. Łukasiewicz was one of the first in this regard and shared his last penny with those in need.*" (Anczyc 1882).

The Rzeszów period was a time of conspiratorial activity for young Ignacy, for which in 1846 he was arrested by the Austrian authorities and imprisoned in a local prison, then forcibly sent to Lviv. Upon his release from prison, he was classified as "a dangerous individual for the future who should be placed under special police supervision".

While in Lviv, he managed to take a job at the pharmacy of Piotr Mikolasch, one of the leading pharmacies in Galicia, with extensive laboratory testing capabilities. It was there that Łukasiewicz first encountered rock oil and enthusiastically began experimenting with its use for lighting. Unfortunately, lack of funds and adequate knowledge prevented him from achieving his goal. His employer, however, seeing his uncommon abilities, helped him get an education. Łukasiewicz completed his pharmaceutical studies in Cracow and then travelled to Vienna to study analytical chemistry. With his master's degree, he returned to work at Mikolasch's pharmacy and began researching oil distillation and its use.

"Open-mindedness", an unconventional, often risky way of doing things, achieving success, allowed him in 1852, after weeks of hard work together with Jan Zeh, to obtain a preparation devoid of such light fractions as gasoline and to

separate it in the apparatus from other heavy hydrocarbons such as asphaltenes, technical oils, and others.

This is what Łukasiewicz himself said of this success: "*...I succeeded at last in so purifying and heating the crude of this distillate that my product was an excellent material for illumination and could compete boldly with the best Italian rock oil.*" (Morawski 1871; 34).

A year later, Łukasiewicz constructed the first prototype cylindrical kerosene lamp, which Lviv tinsmith Adam Bratkowski helped him make. It first shone in Mikolasch's pharmacy in March 1853, while in July of the same year its public use took place during a night operation in Lviv's Lychakiv hospital. This day, July 31, 1853, is taken as the beginning of the Polish oil industry and the date of the world's first "oil transaction".

In 1854, Łukasiewicz, together with Tytus Trzeciecki and Karol Klobassa, founded the world's first oil company to extract and exploit oil. During this time, he moved out of Lviv and relocated near the oil fields. The company began oil production in Bóbrka, and two years later launched the distillery in Ulaszowice.

Throughout his life, Łukasiewicz was active in the development of the oil industry, setting up more mines and refineries and working relentlessly to improve oil processing, which resulted in the awards he received for oil products at exhibitions in Jasło, Lviv, and Vienna. He also constantly improved the drilling techniques used in the mines, innovating in this area.

Łukasiewicz said of oil: "*...this liquid is the future wealth of the country, it is the prosperity and well-being of its inhabitants, it is a new source of earnings for the poor people and a new branch of industry that will bear abundant fruit*" (Brzozowski 1974; 86).

Łukasiewicz, thanks to his attitude, quickly became a wealthy and widely respected man, which enabled him to purchase a landed estate. Łukasiewicz's manor house in Chorkówka soon became a place teeming with "Polish" life, where veterans of the struggle for independence, many of whom ended up in Galicia after the collapse of successive national uprisings, found refuge. As a man known for his noble character and altruism, Łukasiewicz was eager to share his wealth with others. He was wont to say: "*It is a great art to be rich, and also a great responsibility*", and to the emerging criticism that not all the recipients deserved his help he replied: "*I'd rather give to 99 unneedy people than to abandon one needy person*". (Sozanski 2004; 43).

The atmosphere of the Łukasiewicz home was brilliantly painted in her memoir by Anna Potocka née Działyńska: "*As I walked through the dining room, I was amazed by the number of place settings in the home of a childless couple and thought I had found some kind of reception area. But when we sat down for afternoon tea, I found that it was only seats for domestic and regular guests, who slowly descended. The first was introduced by two men: a veteran cripple with grey hair and a noble face, a victim of the maltreatment at the Warsaw Citadel. Behind him came in a few more veterans, and further on, in contrast, youths high and savage,*

*who came from various universities and foreign professional schools for vacations to the Łukasiewiczzes, who not only provided the numerous peasant youth with the means of education, but gathered them truly like a family home. It was also among this group, in addition to reverence and gratitude, that filial confidentiality prevailed. Soon the conversation revived. Discussions began. Father Łukasiewicz (for he was not called by any other name in the neighbourhood) gave the youngsters a pep talk, only occasionally with a benevolent smile, experience and advice curbing too exuberant impulses(...). All this together constituted a feature of a true Polish court and a grace indescribable!"* (Honarata ze... 2005; 48)

During this time, Łukasiewicz developed large-scale philanthropic activities. He built schools, churches, roads and bridges, and promoted the establishment of courts. In Bóbrka, he opened a therapeutic iodine-bromine bathing facility, in Chorkówka a chapel for the local population, and in Zręcin he and his partner Klobassa founded a church in the neo-Gothic style. He also founded a Lace School for girls in Chorkówka, which was run by his wife Honorata. He was a founder and member of many societies and associations. He sought and cared for the development of education and culture, as well as the education of oil workers, resulting in the establishment of a mining school.

As a member of the Galician parliament of the fourth term, he led to the convention of industrialists at which the idea of forming an association of oil owners and entrepreneurs was conceived, as a representation of their common interests. This initiative resulted in the Congress of the Oil Industry, during which the most important issues related to the functioning of the Subcarpathian oil industry were discussed, and its aftermath was the establishment of the National Oil Society for the Care and Development of the Oil Industry and Mining in Galicia, based in Gorlice. The formation of an association representing the interests of one of the most important industries at the time was an unprecedented event and once again testified to Łukasiewicz's perspicacity and his ability to introduce innovative solutions, necessary in a changing reality.

For all his greatness, Ignacy Łukasiewicz was seen as an extremely humble man. This is how Kazimierz Chłędowski characterised Łukasiewicz: *"He was an interesting man: modest and even exaggerated in modesty, with downcast eyes and a gentle smile, always wearing a long grey chamois, always at work. He gave himself appearances, as if he endured this wealth as an admission of God, as a burden placed on him by Providence. He also did immeasurably more good"* (Chłędowski 1951; 158). His all-around charitable work and his attitude toward others led Pope Pius IX to confer on him the title of Papal Chamberlain and award him the Order of Saint Gregory in recognition of his charity.

Ignacy Łukasiewicz died in 1882 at the age of 60 at his estate in Chorkówka as an ardent patriot, social activist, initiator of the economic rebirth of Galicia and a noble positivist, who not only illuminated the Polish lands with the kerosene lamp, but thanks to which a ray of a better life came to the peasant cottage in the Subcarpathian region.

## **Ignacy Łukasiewicz as the pioneer of CSR in the Polish field**

In the modern world, a great deal of attention is paid to corporate social responsibility, commonly known as CSR, and it would seem that it is a brilliant invention of our times, an indispensable part of the activities of modern companies. Nothing could be further from the truth, however, as CSR has been known and practised around the world since ancient times, although its modern concept originated in the second half of the 19th century, when entrepreneurs such as John H. Patterson and John D. Rockefeller laid the foundation for the philanthropic movement. Throughout this period, CSR has been dynamically evolving to adapt to the changing world. In the 1970s, the first widely accepted definition of CSR emerged by Archie Carroll, identifying economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibility. At the same time, the first CSR code was established. And now we are seeing a proliferation of various standards and the emergence of more CSR guides and codes that emphasise the emerging changes and needs of the modern world, such as care for the environment.

If we wanted to define corporate social responsibility, we would briefly say that it is a responsible way of functioning of a company in the social, economic, and natural space. Because CSR has many facets – from investing in human resources, to environmental protection, to community relations (Bernatt 2009). Such a strategy of action can be adopted by anyone – a large corporation and a small enterprise from a small town, because a socially responsible business is one that cares about the environment and its inhabitants. It takes into account the interests of the local community and supports its employees to develop and pursue their passions. And more than anything, it boils down to one thing – clarifying and re-orienting the goals facing the business. It is a misunderstanding to say that the sole purpose of business is to make profits and benefits. These are merely means to an end, which is to serve society by providing it with safe and high-quality products and services that contribute to an increased quality of life without deteriorating ecological and social systems (Buglewicz 2017).

Having a general idea of what CSR is, let's return to the person of Ignacy Łukasiewicz. Can he be called the prototype of CSR in the Polish field? The man who laid the foundation for the idea of corporate social responsibility? I think so, although in the beginning it was a CSR that was somewhat romantic, although it was already going beyond the traditional philanthropy of creating eateries or shelters for the poor. One might even be tempted to say that Poland was one of the motherlands of today's CSR ideas, although it took shape under somewhat different conditions than elsewhere in the world. After all, Ignacy Łukasiewicz became famous as a philanthropist in social service at a time when Poland was not on the maps of Europe, so the social responsibility he introduced was based primarily on values such as patriotism.

When, at the end of the 19th century, many of the world's industrialists were bloodily suppressing workers' strikes, Ignacy Łukasiewicz created the largest labour package in Europe at the time, and his refinery a dream workplace. Workers

employed by Łukasiewicz worked 12 hours at a time, but then had a 24-hour break, which was unheard of at the time. He was the first businessman in Europe to introduce a compulsory fraternal fund, to which employees paid 3% of their earnings. In return, they could count on medical coverage, disability, and family benefits, and after 20 years of service, a decent pension. He also financed the education of his employees' children.

Łukasiewicz's activities were not limited to the construction of social facilities, but reached far in serving the local community. Łukasiewicz established credit unions, and financed the construction of roads, bridges, schools, and churches. In the Krosno powiat, it was said that the roads there were paved with Łukasiewicz guldens. Pensions, free medical treatment, education for children, in a 19th century famous for predatory capitalism, this was a real novelty.

We can read about his activities for the benefit of the immediate area in Edward Windakiewicz's work on Galician industry, published in 1875: "*...the impact of this industry on the surrounding population is very beneficial. One need only see the roads, the cultivation, the dwellings of the small and larger owners on the way to Bóbrka, in order to experience such an impression as if one had been transferred to some better cultivated area of Germany or France. Good roads, trees planted everywhere and fields criss-crossed by water ditches, further clean and extensive buildings and factories, peculiarly in Zręcin and Chorkówka, and in addition to this well-fed, clean-dressed peasants, all this makes a good impression, for a certain prosperity can be seen everywhere, which also caught my eye while visiting the mines; namely, I saw that the workers during the lunch hour cooked meat and baked pork fat, which, by the way, I had never seen anywhere in Galicia. In Chorkówka there is also a school, an Advance Fund, so that the landowner, who usually sends two people to work, is quite freed from the hands of usurers. The greatest merit in all this is due to the director of the mine and the owner of Chorkówka, Mr. Ignacy Łukasiewicz, who tirelessly goes to the people in every way and is truly their father.*" (Windakiewicz 1875; 52).

The best confirmation of the importance of the best practices introduced by Łukasiewicz is the introduction in independent Poland of pension insurance, already available to workers in Bóbrka, throughout the country. In the opinion of his contemporaries "*...by this deed Łukasiewicz erected for himself a monument more durable than bronze in the hearts of the workers, who, in recognition of his extraordinary merits in relation to them and to human misery in general, bestowed upon him a direct filial affection and called him Father Łukasiewicz, by which name the whole country knew him*" (Bielski 1932).

The situation of the workers in Bóbrka contrasted with what was happening at other factories and mines at the time. This is reflected in a description of the working conditions created by Łukasiewicz, presented in 1872 in the "Gazeta Lwowska": "*...in Bóbrka the workers have an advance fund and a kind of savings bank arranged by the manager and owner of the kerosene distillery in Chorkówka, Mr. Łukasiewicz. The relationship which Mr. Łukasiewicz has established between*

*his numerous workmen and craftsmen is to be counted among the most beautiful in the country: every worker will find help from him in time of need and rescue in case of illness, and a certain patriarchality shines through in the whole apparatus and becomes a special contrast to the factories and plants in which the head of the company, preying only on the exploitation of the last strength of the worker, does not care at all about the improvement of his moral and material existence. Not a utopia in carrying out his devices, but a strictly practical man, Mr. Łukasiewicz was able to bring order and tidiness to his factories, characterising the best foreign factories of this kind, and to win the sincerest respect from his neighbours. How far the development of any enterprise, even an oil enterprise, hung on the nobility of the man at the head, the best proof of this is to be found in many other mines in the Carpathian foothills, where the great quantity of oil extracted serves the people only to pay the vendor and is a stimulus to great depravity, the neighbourhood of Bóbrka, meanwhile, is rising materially, and the poor people make good use of their earned pennies." (Chłędowski 1872; 158).*

This opinion was corroborated by others, writing: "...in Bóbrka you can see contentment on the face of each worker, everyone here works crisply and eagerly, because everyone knows that only true work will find recognition from the administrator" (Teleżyński 1870; 15), "...the people have learned to work. Those who formerly went on the road behind oxen to Multany and Wołoszczyzna, today he prefers to work smeared" (Morawski 1871; 34).

These words are a confirmation that Ignacy Łukasiewicz in his time was able to create a unique business model in which people played an important role. The principles and best practices incorporated gave workers a sense of stability and built public trust. In turn, over time, they became universally valid standards, although at the time of their introduction they went far beyond the framework of the era in which their promoter lived.

Even today, the domain of CSR activities of company managers is not only personalised identification with the success of a particular company, but the introduction of objective and reliable programmes that motivate employees and bond them to the company. At the same time, it is the best example of respect for a person, their work, their skills often backed up not only by talent, but also by perseverance to achieve their own success and that of the company. Without a doubt, Ignacy Łukasiewicz embodied ideals that place him among the ranks of outstanding individuals ahead of his era, and perhaps several eras.

An explorer and inventor, a titanic worker, an innovator and teacher of youth, an entrepreneur and millionaire, a philanthropist and social activist, a patriot and politician, but above all a good humble man dedicated to others. Such was Ignacy Łukasiewicz and such should the world know him.

Undoubtedly, he built the foundation of the modern oil sector and contributed to the development of civilisation by becoming part of the economic history of the world's energy industry. He combined his knowledge, skills, and managerial abilities with the courage to strive to discover new things and chart new directions.



However, he proved that being an entrepreneur and innovator does not exclude social and philanthropic – simply human – attitudes. As a pioneer of social business engagement, he changed many human stories for the better.

The words of John Paul II seem significant in the context of Łukasiewicz's lifetime achievement; he said: "*Profit is important, but it is not a measure of success. There are also the people, who make up a company's greatest asset*" (Encyclical *Centesimus Annus* 1991).

## Conclusion

Summarising the consideration of Ignacy Łukasiewicz's pioneering CSR activities, it should be said that the legacy he left behind in this regard should be continued and emulated. The world needs modern-day Łukasiewiczes.

For example, the energy policy of the 21st century is characterised by the need to constantly anticipate emerging changes and take advantage of opportunities arising from multiple variables. Its primary goal is to achieve energy security and competitive advantage. The example of Łukasiewicz is also a good reference point for building energy and power strategies. This is because it indicates that innovation in thinking, as well as courage and consistency in action, should be the guiding principles. At the same time, innovation should be multidimensional and not be limited to work in the laboratory, but also include work organisation, business management, business models, communication, cooperation, and teamwork, as well as legislative solutions. Effective energy policy requires determination, consistency, and perseverance.

If we forget these principles and values, then let the Museum of the Oil and Gas Industry in Bóbrka named after Ignacy Łukasiewicz be a reminder – a unique facility worldwide where you can learn about the genesis and see for yourself the cradle of the Polish oil industry in the world's oldest and still operating oil mine.

Ignacy Łukasiewicz believed to the end of his life that his discoveries and inventions should serve not only profit, but the common good of the people, while the money from oil should support the development of local communities. He was wont to say: "*A man in the world is like a soldier on guard duty, and as long as he lives, he must work, and what he earns he does not take to the grave, it is useful here for other people.*" (Stokłosa, Wojcik 2019: 32).<sup>12</sup> His beautiful biography shows that there is not a shadow of exaggeration in these words. However, it should be clearly noted that in the current world, corporate social responsibility is developing on a completely different basis than in the days of the "Sheikh of Galicia". Companies, when undertaking CSR activities, do so mainly to strengthen their position and to arouse positive associations in the minds of consumers, which, it should be noted, in a competitive and free market environment is no bad thing. Modern CSR has nothing in common with 19th-century philanthropy or charity. It is a well-planned and well-considered effort to increase the value of the company.



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