REVIEWS

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Michał Gierke, *Geneza i rozwój miast Nowej Marchii do połowy XIV wieku. Przestrzeń – społeczeństwo – kultura* [The Origin and Development of Neumark Towns until the Mid-Fourteenth Century. Space – Society – Culture], Szczecin, 2024, Książnica Pomorska, 225 pp.

At times, the history of the lands that once formed Neumark may seem like a neglected area in Polish Medieval studies. Although this is far from true, one cannot deny that the fate of this part of present-day Poland is more difficult to incorporate into the historical narrative than that of its neighbours, Western Pomerania and, in particular, Silesia. Straddling the border may be the culprit: after the Piast dynasty lost these borderlands in the thirteenth century, they witnessed severe turbulence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Moreover, no neighbouring political power viewed this territory as a centre of its administrative or commercial power. Nevertheless, it was this very region, as well as Silesia and Western Pomerania, that were the first lands east of the Oder to witness the beginnings of town chartering.

The book by Michał Gierke focuses on urban development in this briefly discussed area. The publication is the outcome of the Author's PhD studies at the University of Szczecin, which were completed in 2021 after a successful PhD dissertation defence. The reviewed title comprises an introduction, three parts addressing selected issues, a conclusion, a bibliography, a personal-geographical index, lists of figures and tables, and abstracts in both German and English.

In the introduction, the Author outlined the state of the art of research on the history of medieval Neumark towns, and presented the purpose, subject and scope of the book. Michał Gierke intended to present "a new approach to the genesis and early development of the medieval towns of Neumark" (p. 15). The Author's analysis covered a total of 21 medieval Neumark localities. As for the analysed time, Gierke adopted the middle of the fourteenth century as its declarative end. By that time, argues the Author, a stable urban network had consolidated in Neumark, while towns strengthened their position under the Wittelsbachs and during the 1348–1350 civil war against False Valdemar. The Author proceeds to discuss the source base and outline the structure of his book.

As the Author states in the introduction, his interest is limited to "only those [towns] whose functioning was regulated by municipal law and where

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local government bodies had been developed, the latter unanimously believed to constitute one of the most salient achievements of medieval urbanisation" (p. 16). Centres described by the researcher as "having urban character" fall beyond the scope of analysis. One ought to assume that this is a reference to localities which "to some extent served their immediate surroundings as economic hubs, and sometimes had a makeshift local government" (p. 16). The Author excluded ten of the listed centres, which he referred to as either quasi-urban settlements (according to his classification: Boleszkowice, Danków, Korytowo, Osieczno, Santok) or private towns (Cedynia, Drawno, Drezdenko, Golenice, Złocieniec).

Frankly, I must admit this decision has raised my doubts. The Author refrained from providing a broader explanation to pinpoint which quasi-urban settlement features led to exclusion from the analysis. A closer, slightly exegetic reading paves the way for concluding that the Author perceived such quasi-urban centres as purely commercial (market) settlements (pp. 142, 171). In my opinion, depicting urbanisation processes in their entirety requires an analysis of the towns listed by the Author. Upon chartering, it is difficult to predict whether a newly established town will develop as planned, or whether perhaps it will make use of emerging opportunities offered by various factors: human (owners, rulers), infrastructural (roads, trade routes) and environmental (rivers, presence of soils conducive to settlement). Showcasing any discrepancies identified between the models of chartering and development of royal, knightly and church-established urban centres would enrich the thematic scope of the reviewed book. It remains uncertain to me why the Author excluded private towns from the scope of his publication. Based on the literature of the subject, it is possible to ascertain that references to the town of Cedynia date back to 1299, councillors were mentioned in 1344, while a 1346 source takes note of a *sołtys* (village bailiff or mayor, Latin: *scultetus*) and lay judges. Edward Rymar surmised that Chojna was Cedynia's appellate town. The Author himself turns to the example of Cedynia to discuss the tests performed on human remains found in a thirteenth-century cemetery (pp. 123, 138). Drezdenko was also referred to as a town in 1317 and 1347. Similarly, Złocieniec became a town by 1333 at the latest. The owners of Złocieniec re-chartered the town under Brandenburg law. Sources dating to the same year mention councillors and a mayor in 1401. Since the 1330s, and practically until the early 1600s, the term *opidum* or its equivalents was used to describe Golenice. The small and underdeveloped Boleszkowice were referred to as a town or a small town (and, still in the fourteenth century, a *villa forensis*!). However, there are early fifteenth-century mentions of a local fair.[1]

[1] Andrzej Wędzki, 'Drezdenko', in Zbigniew Kaczmarczyk and Andrzej Wędzki (eds), *Studia nad początkami i rozplanowaniem miast nad środkową Odrą i Dolną Wartą (województwo zielonogórskie)*, vol. 1: *Ziemia lubuska, Nowa Marchia, Wielkopolska* (Zielona

Was the exclusion of private and quasi-urban towns motivated by greater subordination to owners than that of towns with royal patronage? Even in royal towns, such as Kostrzyn on the Oder, higher-level courts were governed by the ruler and his representatives, while townspeople were called before *sołtys* courts up to the 1380s.[2] The Author himself discusses several centres (Barnówko, Czelin, Ińsko, Kalisz, Świdwin) which failed to secure a high degree of independence in the fourteenth century and were mediatised by subordinating them to the local knighthood (pp. 163–4). This begs the question: how were Barnówko, Czelin, Ińsko, Kalisz and Świdwin different from Cedynia, Drawno, Drezdenko, Golenice, and Złocieniec?

The Author consistently refers to the analysed centres as *new-type towns*. By using this term, Michał Gierke intends to introduce a conceptual range broader than that of other notions used in literature, such as *chartered* or *communal town*. The Author links this term to the innovativeness of new-type towns and their distinctiveness from other urban centres (p. 16). These are very general statements. Chartered towns were an innovation which differed from all other localities not only in urban space development but also in political governance (introduction of a municipal government, though still to varying degrees subordinate to the town owner) and cultural transformation (rulers brought colonists with a strange, or at least distinctively different material culture). I would thus refrain from construing the term *chartered town* as different solely regarding spatial layout, even if it was more regular – as I infer, this is the heart of the difference between the Author's terminology and the term well-established in Polish historiography. Moreover, the Author abstains from using the term *old-type town*, and refers to all centres bearing typical town features (e.g. more densely developed or with a higher number of craftspeople) as *early urban centres* (pp. 23, 27–9, 42, 79, distinction made clear particularly on p. 67). The Author may possibly be referring to pre-charter settlements established under German market law (pp. 51, 105, and specifically: pp. 142, 171, 175, where the differentiation between a *new-type town* and a *market settlement* is most striking). However, elsewhere, Gierke notes that the basic condition for "a new-type town to function was being

Góra, 1967), 166, 168; Edward Rymar, 'Cedynia jako ośrodek administracyjny (XII–XIII w.) i miejski (XIII–XVI w.)', in Paweł Migdalski (ed.), *Cedynia i okolice poprzez wieki* (Chojna–Szczecin, 2013), 118–20; Edward Rymar, *Słownik historyczny Nowej Marchii w średniowieczu*, vol. 2: *Ziemie chojeńska, mieszkowicka, trzcińska i kostrzyńska* (Chojna – Wodzisław Śląski, 2016), 16–17; *id.*, *Słownik*, vol. 3: *Ziemie lipiańska, myśliborska, golenicka, gorzowska, pełczycka* (Chojna – Wodzisław Śląski – Myślibórz – Gorzów Wielkopolski, 2020), 51–2; *id.*, *Słownik*, vol. 5: *Ziemie drawska, świdwińska, złocieniecka, kaliska, 'duży i mały pazur' (ziemia Ińska)* (Chojna – Wodzisław Śląski – Drawsko Pomorskie, 2017), 163–5.

[2] *Id.*, *Słownik*, vol. 2, 123, 125.

granted a market right", which enabled free trading not just at fairs. Another element added by the Author to the term he champions is that in *new-type towns*, the prerogatives to govern the commune and judiciary were transferred from the hereditary *sołtys* to municipal communes (p. 110). Elsewhere, the reader learns that *new-type towns* fulfilled a variety of central functions for their immediate surroundings (p. 172). Stretching the term slightly, the Author seems to use a *new-type town* not as a synonym for chartered town (although, to my mind, such is the intention on p. 141), but to introduce a new terminological quality. Should the reader be provided with a clear explanation of how the Author understands the proposed and used term, perhaps the above reflections would not be necessary.[3]

The first part of the book explores the process of chartering Neumark towns. This section has been split up into several chapters. The first chapter discusses the pre-chartering settlement situation. The Author points to a scarcity of information about settlement coverage in the analysed area, and indicates rather a pattern of isolated larger settlements clustered around a few gords. In the second chapter of this section, Gierke provides a timeline of the chartering process and specifies which entities bore responsibility for establishing towns under German law. The Author does not limit his attempts to summarising the state of the art about the beginnings of the centres he intends to discuss. Gierke also puts forward his own proposals, which result in carrying the town charter dates back by more than ten or even several dozen years. This approach may raise some doubts. Let me leave detailed analyses of these proposals to historians better versed in Neumark, and limit myself to expressing appreciation for Gierke's creativity. It ought to be noted, however, that these conclusions are, to a considerable extent, either hypothetical or drawn by analogy. In some cases, the Author builds on a hypothesis to present further hypothetical conclusions. To a substantial degree, these conclusions follow from the contents of the sources, rather than from the historiographical views that have emerged over the past hundred years. The Author frequently chooses to argue against the latter. The book almost completely fails to touch upon town back-up facilities and any colonisation progress in the settlement vicinity. Admittedly, Gierke does mention an increase in settlement quantity leading up to 1337 by invoking the example of former Cedynia lands (despite having excluded Cedynia from his analysis) (pp. 168–69, merely as an *exemplum* in the conclusion). While the Author embarked on an attempt to determine the settlement context related to gords and proto-urban settlements, he presents chartered towns as centres situated in a nameless void. The last chapter aims to investigate the

[3] For a more detailed description, see Michał Gierke, 'Średniowieczne miasta nowego typu', *Przegląd Uniwersytecki*, 4–6 (2018), 9–11.

relationships between chartered towns and the existing settlement patterns in the immediate vicinity of newly established centres. Gierke argues for revising the assumption that chartered towns evolved from gord suburbs or Slavic settlements. The Author claims that nearly half of the analysed towns could have been chartered in an undeveloped area (*in cruda radice*), and only five emerged near state or knightly gords. The only fact that may be somewhat contentious is that the Author recognises *villae forenses* as units next to which towns were chartered. Numerous studies demonstrate that settlements bearing such names in twelfth- and thirteenth-century sources constituted the first step in the process of urban centre formation.[4] Perhaps this differentiation and separation of chartered town space from market settlements follows from an observed absence of archaeological traces that would point to earlier settlement. After all, the Author mentions towns springing up next to these settlements (p. 79). As he proceeds to carry out a more thorough analysis, however, Gierke classifies them as later urban layouts, which had sometimes absorbed neighbouring areas once occupied by markets.

Part B elaborates on the urban space of chartered towns. When discussing the most frequent urban layouts, the Author uses the retrogressive method to analyse the more accurate images of specific towns from the seventeenth to the nineteenth, and even the twentieth centuries. The Author notes that the most frequent surface area of a chartered settlement located within town walls was about 16 ha, with varying market square sizes. A surface area of 16 hectares roughly corresponds to one Pomeranian *łan* (Ger. *Lahn*; Lat. *laneus*) or a later unit of measurement, one Myślibórz *łan* (pp. 86–7). Gierke argues that the market street formed the central axis of Neumark towns. Two additional streets ran parallel to the market artery, intersecting it at several cross streets (p. 90). The Author also discussed cases where a chartered town area was expanded. I once again refrain from delving into the details behind the researcher's proposals and limit myself to highlighting that, in line with his interpretation, the urban layout of Drawsko was atypical. Were one to adopt the proposed approach, Drawsko would constitute the only Neumark town with a river passing through its urban layout, which would be atypical not just in the context of the area's standards. Further on in Part B, Gierke describes elements of urban space: from the town walls encircling it, to typical urban objects like a market square, a town hall, and a parish church. The Author assumes that any differences in market square dimensions (calculated based on cartographic materials from Early Modern and Modern periods) appeared due to the gradual shrinking of main market squares or the encroachment of buildings onto market space, which over

[4] Sławomir Gawlas, *O kształt zjednoczonego Królestwa. Niemieckie władztwo terytorialne a geneza społeczno-ustrojowej odrębności Polski* (Warszawa, 2000), 28–9, 88–9.

time led to the emergence of small "partial mid-market quarters" (p. 112). Written sources mention that town halls appeared later, from the perspective of the selected period, and date back to the fifteenth century. Thus it is worth taking a closer look at the outcomes of the archaeological excavations at the town halls in Chojna and Trzcińsko, which revealed that some facilities had been constructed in the fourteenth century and expanded afterwards. Parish churches generally occupied a separate block adjacent to the market square. In the fragment on the parish church timeline, the Author enumerated the differences between earliest church structures, which first involved granite, and later brick structures. Afterwards, Gierke discusses the locations of Dominican, Franciscan, and Hermits of Saint Augustine monasteries and monastery churches, which always sat on the verge of a chartered settlement. The first hospitals (in Myślibórz, Choszczno, and Chojna) were also erected on the outskirts of towns. It was not until later that, in other urban centres, hospitals were pushed beyond town limits. Gierke proceeds to briefly discuss the only written reference to the dimensions of a burgher plot recorded in 1326 in Myślibórz, and provides a more detailed analysis of the archaeological findings from several plots in Choszczno, Gorzów Wielkopolski and Rzecz.

The final part of the book focuses on the urban community and its material culture. The Author is cautious about the earlier, unilateral assumptions of mainly German historiography that the new towns had been inhabited mainly by ethnically German settlers. Still, the Author does admit that most probably town elites spoke German, and certainly had German or Germanised names and surnames. When discussing *Kietze* (defined in literature as either ancillary settlements situated close to gords, settlement features from the German colonisation period, or locations where Slavs were settled after being conquered by German rulers), the Author refers to the second concept. Gierke considers *Kietze* to be "bottom-up [...] settlements of the native population, which was Germanised over time" (p. 142). The Author's final remark is that the only ethnos identifiable in the sources is the Jewish one (p. 142). Owing to the absence of suitable sources, two paragraphs suffice to accommodate the process of estimating urban population size. The historian provided a hypothetical estimate of the possible urban population at the beginning of the fourteenth century, which he based on a comparison with Chojna's population (calculated by other authors elsewhere) as of the end of the sixteenth century. The estimate is based on the fertility rate, and correlates the resulting data (1,500–1,700 residents in Chojna, Myślibórz, and Choszczno) with the surface area of the remaining towns, which constitutes a percentage of the surface area of the three above urban centres (p. 145). Next, the Author proceeds to discuss material culture findings, pointing to different clay pot forms dated before and after the breakthrough in chartering. Another issue touched upon by the Author is town law, its type (Madgeburg or Branderburg), urban authority structures and the number

of their members. The Author takes relatively long to reflect on the activity performed by margraves and towns alike, consisting of lifting economic burdens and transferring the powers of *sołtys* to town councils. Here, I would only pose the question whether these reflections provide a sufficient basis for stating that towns were truly becoming independent of territorial authorities, or whether they were only making use of political upheaval to pursue mainly economic objectives.

The closing section extends beyond a mere summary of the conclusions and hypotheses presented by the Author in the three parts of the book. Apart from the (too) brief indication of rural colonisation progress in former Cedynia lands, Gierke strives to compare the situation of the part of Neumark located east of the Oder with the urban trends of Altmark and chartering activity of Pomeranian dukes. The ensuing comparison proves to be very general. It seems that it would be worth taking a closer look at the chartering towns' processes in the listed areas and in other places, which would provide valuable content for comparison, e.g. Silesia and Greater Poland. Further into the conclusion, the Author underlines the importance of towns in Ascanian politics, particularly in the political and economic activities associated with capturing new territories. It is all the more regrettable that the part of the book devoted to economic and settlement matters has not been presented more thoroughly. The final section ends with a summary of Gierke's conclusions, mainly from Parts B and C, and research postulates.

The book contains the classic features indispensable to a scientific monograph (bibliography, abbreviations, indexes), which have been duly drafted. I wish to draw attention to the list of figures. The book contains 37 figures. Throughout the publication, the Author fails to provide information on the origin, source and author of the presented images. Such information is not offered elsewhere, but rather in the list of figures enclosed at the end of the book (pp. 213–15).

Generally, the book's language is easy to understand. Sometimes, however, when the Author attempts to link his hypotheses with other hypotheses the narrative becomes complicated, and the grounds for his conclusions are not always clear. The Author may want to rethink overly technical terminology, e.g. replace "spatial augmentation" with a simpler option, such as "expansion" or "adjoined land". However, these choices do not affect the overall reception of the publication. Tables with summaries of basic information about the discussed urban centres help to follow the timeline of the facts explored in the book.

The book has many significant merits. The Author collected data on mentions about urban settlements in the former Neumark lands in the analysed period. Wherever he believes it is justified, Michał Gierke does not shy away from questioning the current findings of Polish and German historiography. It is worth noting that he does so relatively frequently, especially when calling

for earlier dating of numerous chartered towns than has generally been agreed upon. I presume that scholars better versed in this area will engage in a discussion with the Author's proposals. Gierke aptly juxtaposes classic historical techniques with archaeological findings from the historical towns of former Neumark. Some conclusions and hypotheses are grounded in the outcomes of archaeological excavations, not in sources. The Author thus successfully demonstrates that urban archaeology can lead to new interpretations of urban beginnings and bridge the gaps in written sources. Indeed, if early chartered town scholars wish to free themselves of the confines of known sources and historiographic materials, their options are gradually shrinking, and they have to adopt the approach exemplified by the Author.

One of the book's strengths – drawing new conclusions and putting forward new hypotheses – can also be considered its weakness. At times, the hypothetical nature of the Author's observation cripples any counterarguments based on more or less certain proofs. Again, this trait is characteristic of medieval studies. The question remains, how far should one venture with hypothesis-based findings? My remaining doubts were previously expressed in the review. Let me only reiterate that I believe the book's most significant flaw is the failure to include quasi-urban centres and private towns (as referred to by the Author) in the conducted analyses. Taking these settlements into account would allow for a more precise depiction of Neumark's urbanisation up to the mid-fourteenth century.

It seems that no one has ever succeeded in publishing a book that suits all tastes. Michał Gierke's work is made up of both persuasive and faulty fragments. Still, I believe that the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. Therefore, I recommend this title to all readers whose interests involve not just Neumark, but also more general and broader aspects of how the lands which now form present-day Poland were urbanised. I also hope that the book will serve as a stimulus to strengthen the bonds between urban archaeology and history, and will inspire more researchers of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century urbanity to combine the methods and findings of these two disciplines.

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Arkadiusz Janicki, *Wyprawa Michała Kleofasa Ogińskiego do wschodniej Kurlandii i na Dyneburg w 1794 roku* [Michał Kleofas Ogiński's Expedition to Eastern Courland and Dyneburg in 1794], Gdańsk, 2024, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 236 pp., 15 maps, 28 ills, index of personal and geographical names

The historiography of the Kościuszko Uprising of 1794 is rich and varied, comprising syntheses, monographs, and research articles; however, it cannot be called homogeneous. For many years, the scholars were primarily focused on the general course of the Uprising, its international context, military aspects, and the most important individuals involved. Side issues mainly were described only in connection with the aforementioned main topics. Earlier publications were based on incomplete source material, memoirs, and older studies. This paucity of sources, especially archival ones, was rooted in the political situation in Poland at the time, which influenced the topics covered and the materials used. It was not until the turn of the twenty-first century that it became possible to access many previously unknown or difficult-to-access sources. This mainly applied to documents stored in the archives in Russia and the former Soviet countries.

This historiographical gap regarding the Kościuszko Uprising is filled by Arkadiusz Janicki's book *Wyprawa Michała Kleofasa Ogińskiego do wschodniej Kurlandii i na Dyneburg w 1794 roku* [Michał Kleofas Ogiński's Expedition to Eastern Courland and Dyneburg in 1794]. The author is a researcher who has been studying the history of Poles in the Russian Empire for many years, particularly in the Baltic region (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia). The book covers an episode of the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising: the Polish army's fight against the Russian army in the area of Courland. Although Polish historians have written extensively about the Uprising, this episode has never been explored in such detail.

The author used a rich source base, particularly archives, drawing on materials stored in many countries, including Poland – the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (AGAD), Russia – the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), the Russian State Archives of Ancient Documents (RGADA), and the Russian State Military Historical Archive (RGVIA), all three located in Moscow, the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) in St Petersburg, Lithuania – the Lithuanian State Historical Archives (LVIA) in Vilnius, Latvia – the Latvian State Historical Archives (LVVA) in Riga. Janicki also consulted the manuscript collections of national libraries in Russia, i.e. the Russian State Library (RGB) in Moscow, the National Library of Russia (RNB) in St Petersburg, and in Poland – MNK the Czartoryski Library (a branch of the National Museum in Kraków), and the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It must be stressed that some of these materials are currently difficult to access or unavailable to many researchers.

Among the archival sources, reports stored in the Russian State Military Historical Archive (RGVIA) in Moscow take centre stage. The vast collection of the Military Scientific Archive (No. 846) comprises documents of military significance, organised chronologically and categorised by the rulers of Russia. These documents describe individual wars and conflicts fought by the Russian Empire. In addition, archival materials generated by the central state authorities, local authorities, and individuals involved in the events described were used.

The book is split into four chapters that chronologically cover Michał Kleofas Ogiński's campaign in Courland. There is a bibliography, an index of people and places, maps, illustrations, and a summary in five languages (English, German, Russian, Latvian, and Lithuanian). The maps, indispensable for military history studies and descriptions of military operations, greatly help the reader follow the author's argument and understand the content adequately.

The primary goal of the book was to provide a deeper understanding of these events, as well as to establish and verify their chronological sequence. This mainly concerned dating, a process complicated by the use of two different calendars (Gregorian and Julian) in Poland, Prussia, and Russia, as well as chronologically vague documents, memoirs, and earlier studies. The author also sought to preserve the events in question and the people involved in them from falling into oblivion.

It must be noted that the author successfully achieved these challenging objectives. The book presents many new factual and chronological findings, offering a more comprehensive view of Michał Kleofas Ogiński's campaign. Janicki quotes numerous sources, mainly archival ones, and uses them to challenge existing findings. He also incorporates many micro – historical threads related to the biographies of little – known figures who played key roles in the events of the Uprising. In the following three chapters, he presents Michał Ogiński's expedition in detail, although he focuses mainly on military aspects. The last chapter concerns the Polish and Russian reactions to the expedition, both official and unofficial (rumours and gossip). The Russian authorities' treatment of people suspected of supporting the Kościuszko Uprising is also discussed.

Despite the book's great value, it does have some flaws that occasionally make it difficult for the reader to follow the author's narrative. A few sections typically found in military history studies are nowhere to be seen, and the book belongs to this category, as clearly indicated by its title: *Michał Kleofas Ogiński's Expedition to Eastern Courland and Dyneburg in 1794*. In the opening sections of the treatise, the author should have characterised the theatre of war and presented the forces of both sides, their organisation and size. Even a brief description of the Kościuszko Uprising and the destination of the expedition (Dyneburg) in its context would have been helpful.

In general, the book under review should be considered very valuable and important for the historiography of the Kościuszko Uprising. The author explores a lesser-known aspect of Poland's struggle against the Russian Empire in 1794. It contains many findings that clarify or verify both previous conclusions and the chronology of events. Arkadiusz Janicki also introduces many little-known or unknown sources into academic circulation, primarily archival documents stored in foreign archives.

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Stephan Stach, *Nationalitäten aus der zweiten Reihe. Konzepte und Praktiken zur Einbindung nationaler Minderheiten in Piłsudskis Polen (1926–1939)*, Göttingen, 2024, Wallstein Verlag, 412 pp.

The historiography of the interwar period has long lacked a monograph on the minority policy of the Polish state. Although many works have been written in the last four decades about its various aspects, as well as about the situation of individual national minorities, more than 45 years have passed since the publication of the last and, until recently, only monograph on the policy of the Second Polish Republic towards its citizens who were not ethnic Poles. Although that work remains a significant scholarly contribution to this day, there is no doubt that the topic has long deserved another study – if only because in the 1970s, when Andrzej Chojnowski conducted his research, a large number of sources were not available to scholars and the freedom of publication was restricted by communist censorship.[1] The latest monograph by Stephan Stach, a German historian with considerable experience in researching Poland's recent history, including Polish-Jewish relations and the memory of the Holocaust, fills that gap.

A foreign historian who undertakes research on an important, complicated and controversial topic in the modern history of another country – and the Second Polish Republic's policy towards national minorities certainly is one such topic – finds himself in a more difficult position than native scholars. Even apart from the necessary fluency in a foreign language, he or she is not only obliged to gain familiarity with the extensive literature on the subject, which they largely do at the earlier stages of their education and academic career, but also to assimilate the social, political and cultural context of the phenomena or events he or she is analysing. Without this, it is not infrequent

[1] A. Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921–1939* (Wrocław, 1991).

that a foreign scholar makes oversimplifications or factual errors, adopts a posture of moral superiority toward the studied country or, on the contrary, is seduced by its charms and overlooks the darker sides of its past. In my view, Stephan Stach has managed to avoid these pitfalls in an exemplary manner. His monograph is fair and unbiased. It contains many critical observations on Polish policy towards national minorities, but is neither an indictment, nor an apotheosis.

In line with the subtitle, the timeframe of Stach's analysis is set between the beginning and end of the dictatorship of Józef Piłsudski and his successors. Restriction of the research to the period of *Sanacja* distinguishes Stach's approach from that of Chojnowski, whose monograph also discusses in detail the Polish policy towards national minorities in the years 1921–6. In practice, however, this difference is not decisive, as Stach devotes the first chapter of his monograph to the period before the coup d'état in May 1926. Although it serves primarily as an introduction, in which the author presents competing visions of the reconstruction of the Polish state in 1918–21, as well as the most important conflicts concerning the participation of national minorities in Polish political life (with a special focus on the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1922 and the assassination of President Gabriel Narutowicz), the reader will find here the most critical facts about minority policies of the period.

Stach's monograph is also distinguished from Chojnowski's book by the approach to the problem it examines. The German historian analyses not so much the agenda of key actors and state structures, but the activities of institutions and figures in the 'second row' who, as expert bodies or think-tanks, had an indirect influence on the state's minority policy. His field of interest includes the Institute for the Study of Nationality Affairs [Instytut Badań Spraw Narodowościowych], which had been founded already in early 1922 by the left wing of the Piłsudski camp as a non-governmental organisation, as well as two state institutions established shortly after the coup d'état in May 1926: the Commission of Experts on National Minorities and Eastern Provinces [Komisja Rzeczoznawców do spraw Mniejszości Narodowych i województw wschodnich] at the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, and the Nationalities Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs [Wydział Narodowościowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych]. After 1926, they tried to develop and implement a new policy towards national minorities (in particular Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews) under the guise of *Sanacja*. This new approach was meant to convince ethnically non-Polish citizens that loyal cooperation with the state could be beneficial to them. In this way, one of the key sources of internal instability in interwar Poland would be removed. Stach devotes five chapters of the book to the activities of these institutions. There, he investigates new initiatives in minority policy and their gradual decline, which began only months after Piłsudski's coup

d'état and finally led to the collapse of rapprochement. Only the last two chapters of the monograph go beyond this interpretative pattern. In them, Stach discusses cases of practical implementation of minority policy after 1926 towards the Jewish minority and the Ukrainian inhabitants of Eastern Galicia.

Stach's focus on institutions and individuals in the background required the use of a specific methodology and the identification of appropriate historical sources. The author refers to his approach as "institutional and biographical". His analysis encompasses both the institutes and commissions mentioned in the previous paragraph and the people who worked in them. His goal was to reconstruct the network of actors influencing Poland's interwar nationality policy and the interactions between them. Stach bases his research on a broad range of sources. These include not only materials from Polish state authorities, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Council of Ministers' Praesidium, but also documents from the collections of individuals who were actively involved in shaping minority policy behind the scenes. Among them, the files of Stanisław J. Paprocki and Aleksander Hafftka, a journalist of Jewish origin employed by the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs, are particularly noteworthy. Stach was the first to treat both of them as objects of study. In his monograph, he also drew upon a wide range of interwar journalism, from daily newspapers to specialist periodicals devoted to nationality policy.

The sad record of the minority policy of Piłsudski and his supporters is familiar to anyone with even a passing knowledge of the history of interwar Poland: the political camp that proclaimed the equality of all citizens before the state and dissociated itself from Polish nationalism ended up as an authoritarian regime, brutally pacifying Ukrainian villages, destroying Orthodox churches, and discriminating the Jewish minority, by either banning ritual slaughter or accepting bench ghettoes at universities. Stach does not question this record in principle, but convincingly demonstrates the ambiguity of Polish policy towards national minorities after 1926. His analysis shows that the proponents of a liberal approach to Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews (other minorities absorbed them to a lesser extent) developed a surprisingly modern and efficient institutional base, particularly in the Institute for the Study of Nationality Affairs. Despite the increasingly unfavourable circumstances, they were able, at least until Piłsudski's death, to influence state policy and, perhaps more importantly, maintain contacts with key figures within the national minorities. The decomposition of the Piłsudski camp in the second half of the 1930s and the seizure of power by a group centred around Edward Rydz-Śmigły dealt a fatal blow to that influence, as the latter adopted a radically nationalist programme to strengthen their own political position.

Stach's monograph also documents the frailty of the foundations on which Polish state policy towards national minorities was based after 1926. This is not solely due to the fact that an authoritarian regime could abolish or deprive

any institution of its influence at any time. After all, not all Piłsudski's supporters were in favour of a liberal approach to national minorities, and the Marshal himself quickly lost his taste for uncertain political experiments. Of equal importance was his conviction that every internal threat had to be met with repression for the state not to be seen as weak. When these repressions fell on national minorities or their political organisations, as was the case with the outlawing of the Belarusian *Hramada* in 1927 or the pacification of Ukrainian villages in Eastern Galicia three years later, this resulted in each case not only in a deterioration of relations between the minority in question and the state, but also – as Stach demonstrates – in the loss of influence by supporters of liberal minority policies. Shortly after *Hramada* was outlawed, the Commission of Experts on National Minorities and Eastern Provinces ceased to convene at all. Tadeusz Hołówko, the most important advocate of rapprochement with the national minorities among Piłsudski's supporters, was appointed head of the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which deprived him of the possibility of publicly criticising government policies (pp. 104–8). The pacification of Eastern Galicia in 1930 had a similar side-effect. Another important advocate of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, Henryk Józewski, was dismissed from the post of Minister of the Interior (pp. 171–2). The Nationalities Department of the ministry was then utilised by the new Minister, Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski, as an instrument of repressive state policy towards the Ukrainian population. To pre-emptively silence the Institute for the Study of Nationality Affairs, its head, Stanisław J. Paprocki, was called up for military exercises that lasted several weeks (pp. 175–7). The final act of this process occurred in the aftermath of the dictatorship's turn towards nationalism, which took place in the second half of the 1930s. The head of the Nationalities Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Henryk Suchenek-Suchecki, was then forced to resign, and the Institute for the Study of Nationalities Affairs lost any real influence on those in power (pp. 246–55).

As Stach rightly emphasises, however, the gradual withdrawal by the Polish authorities from a policy of reconciliation with national minorities after May 1926 was not solely the result of changes within the *Sanacja* camp. External factors also played an important role in this evolution. National minorities were infiltrated by Germany and the Soviet Union, which effectively incited them to anti-state activity, as the long-term goal of these two states was to revise the borders established in 1919–21. From the late 1920s onwards, this was compounded by the terrorist activity of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which deliberately targeted the figures involved in Polish-Ukrainian talks, like Hołówko. To make matters worse, the state authorities limited their room for manoeuvre by yielding to pressure from conservatives who, after 1926, sided with Piłsudski and showed reluctance to make any concessions to national minorities. The conservatives fought

against plans for a settlement with Ukrainians and Belarusians to secure their land in the eastern areas of the country. As Stach demonstrates, the daily newspaper *Słowo Wileńskie* and its columnist Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz played a particularly infamous role in this short-sighted campaign (pp. 104, 123–4, 203–4, 235–8).

Adverse external factors did not, of course, justify the brutal repressions or even petty harassment that the Polish dictatorship deployed against national minorities – but they certainly set the limits of its political capabilities. Had Poland not been ruled by Piłsudski and his supporters, it, too, would have been unable to tolerate the anti-state activities of national minorities. However, it probably would not have had to respond to them with violence based on collective responsibility. It is impossible to say today whether the more conciliatory policy proposed by Hołówko, Paprocki, and others from their milieu would have proved effective. However, as Stach has demonstrated in captivating fashion in his monograph, alternative concepts of such a policy and the tools for pursuing it were within the grasp of state authorities.

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Barbara Szacka, *Życie i pamięć w mrocznych czasach* [Life and Memory in Dark Times], introduction by Ellen Hinsey, Warszawa, 2024, Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 471 pp.

Barbara Szacka (*née* Plewniak, 1930–2025), the professor of sociology at the University of Warsaw, had explored numerous areas of study throughout her academic career. Her doctoral dissertation, as well as several monographs, focused on Stanisław Staszic, a Polish thinker, writer, and journalist of the Enlightenment period. However, she was most widely known as a scholar of collective memory – a fact of no minor significance for readers of her memoirs. Every memoir, diary, or recollection can be a source for the historian, but not all are equally valuable or trustworthy. Szacka's memoirs constitute a source of exceptional value – precisely because they were written by someone professionally interested in the study of social memory, someone perfectly aware of its workings and pitfalls. As a result, the author did not exhibit uncritical belief in her own words or memories; instead, she verified facts and reported on instances where her recollections diverged from real events, tracing the causes of these disparities. Therefore, the factual reliability of her book vastly exceeds that of the typical memoir composed years after the fact.

Życie i pamięć offers an expansive historical panorama. The book opens with an introduction by Ellen Hinsey, Szacka's close collaborator in the research

into the Katyn massacre and the 2010 presidential plane crash in Smolensk. The memoirs themselves follow a chronological pattern, beginning with the author's childhood in a family from the intelligentsia in pre-war Kalisz, then moving on to wartime, the post-war evolution of the new, "socialist" reality, Stalinist repressions, the Thaw, the strange days of Gomułka and Gierek, and the period of Martial Law, and concluding with the collapse of the Polish People's Republic (PRL).

Although there is minimal disruption to this chronological pattern, it is not merely a straightforward recounting of events. Several parallel narratives converge here, each addressing a distinct issue. Part one, "Childhood and war", mainly deals with personal matters – everyday life, the home, and school experiences. In a brief preface, the author relates her family history. Then, her remembrances turn to the family home in Kalisz and her doctor parents. For a twenty-first-century reader, it may come as a surprise that an intelligentsia's home in the early twentieth century differs very little from one today. Both of the author's parents were employed – her father was a radiologist and her mother was a dentist. They had two children; notably, the relations between parents and children were very straightforward and informal: if things were not done, they were not merely forbidden, but explained; the personal preferences of each child, for instance, in food, were respected. If the child had something really important to relate, they could interrupt the mother at work. Though public attention in the summer of 1939 is consumed by talk of a war that many still think will not come, the family are busy discussing vacation plans. There is no difference in how the siblings – a sister and a brother – are being raised. Only once (ever, according to the author) did her aunt tell her that a girl should not be running about with boys, but she waved it off as "pure idiocy" (p. 44).

War found the family in Warsaw and set them wandering through a string of towns. Father came to Warsaw in military uniform, said his goodbyes, and was never seen again; he was murdered by the NKVD in 1940 in Katyn, along with other Polish officers. The account of wartime is a particularly captivating part of the story, as Polish memoirs of war rarely focus on the everyday – not major events and dramas, but descriptions of life at school, budding friendships, and the lives of children and adolescents who remain children and adolescents even in war. Szacka writes: "I was more and more consumed by fear, though that didn't stop me taking joy and sorrow from the petty details of everyday life" (p. 73). The author belonged to a scout group, though Polish scouts were made illegal, but since parental consent was required for the children to take part in the more dangerous missions, and one father would not give it, Barbara was left to rue never having received the scout cross – a token of belonging to the scouts.

After the war, the time came for Barbara to complete her education in Warsaw, but there was a problem. Pupils were not all the same age; they

did not share the same life experiences. However, for the teachers, they were still the same pupils from pre-war, knowing only their homes, schools, and the care of their parents. The closing of the war, of course, also brought about a political transformation, and there was little indication initially as to what might be expected – official statements and actual events contrasted so drastically that even experienced politicians were unsure what might happen; a young girl was even less so.

The final section of "Childhood", entitled "The first post-war years: mirages and their dissolution", follows a pattern distinct from the preceding part of the memoirs. A new narrative element appears – brief outlines of contemporary political and social developments in Poland. From this point on, personal remembrances are depicted against the backdrop of historical events. Though it may seem too textbook-style to Polish readers, especially those older or possessing an education in history, the majority of the audience of the book that is less conversant in the history of the PRL will find this addition invaluable because it allows for a better understanding of the broader context of life-choices and difficulties that would arise not from individual decisions, but from dramatic changes in the political situation inside the country.

The subsequent chapters, entitled "Years of study in a changing world" and "Stalinism", respectively, raise two major questions deserving of attention. One is seemingly personal (because what Szacka is writing about are her own decisions and choices), but actually of significance for a large number of people living in Poland at the time. These mechanisms led people who initially espoused entirely disparate political views, with no ties to the authorities or the party, to support the political slogans of an increasingly dictatorial regime of terror and endorse it. For readers who are unable to find an answer to the question "how was that possible?" or tend to see any form of support for the government of the PRL as treason, or perhaps a pragmatic choice by a career opportunist, this account will provide an opportunity to see that things were not as straightforward. Szacka masterfully depicts how propaganda affected – not infrequently! – intelligent, well-educated, and conscious people, and how their political choices could not be reduced to mere opportunism or blind faith in Stalin and the righteousness of the new order.

The other significant question – or, more precisely, layer of narration – are the changes that happened at the universities, especially the elimination of "bourgeois" sociology, which the author was in the process of studying at the time. The relevant department at the University of Warsaw was closed in the 1949–50 academic year, but already enrolled students were allowed to complete their studies; even though the authorities decisively asserted that sociology not only does not contribute to socialism, but even actively counteracts it, the discipline continued to be taught at the university in some of its aspects, and occasionally under new names. As a result, its re-emergence in October 1956, following the end of Stalinism, required little effort.

These portions of the book, which address both politics and personal life, also illustrate how difficult it is to combine scholarly work, family life, and raising children, remain on track with one's dissertation and then habilitation, even for those who eventually become tenured full professors, excelling and gaining recognition in the international arena.

The later history of post-war Poland is the subject of three subsequent chapters: "The times of Gomułka", "The Gierek era", and "The agony of the Polish People's Republic". Aside from the undercurrents of politics and personal life that were present before, this part of the book also introduces a new narrative strand, perhaps the most interesting and crucial in the memoir as a historical source, because it is so uncommon. It is an account of the scholarly community "from the inside", a post-war history of Polish sociology and its practitioners – a group that is not particularly well-recognised. Although studies devoted to the university and sociologists do exist, personal recollections from someone who belonged to that group, and not merely as a rank-and-file member, are truly an invaluable resource. Notably, Szacka describes not only the life of the post-war sociology department at the University of Warsaw, but also some of the studies conducted by employees of the said department (including one of the most famous of them, in which Polish sociologist Stefan Nowak assessed the attitudes of the student body). This section reflects on methodologies, including a detailed account of errors, and the relationship between the study results and social reality. Perhaps this might be a tad too detailed for historians, but for scholars of social phenomena, sociologists, or political scientists, it serves as a fascinating source on the history of science. This is so because Szacka highlights how quickly the demands placed on social research changed, what kinds of studies were encouraged and celebrated in the past, but would very likely be considered methodologically untenable today. It is, however, beside the point that, methodologically deficient though they may appear today, these studies provided highly valuable information, prompting the question of whether perfect methodological adequacy deserves to be put on a pedestal, even when it is achieved at the cost of abandoning studies that cannot meet the strict criteria. One also finds great interest in reports from scholarship programs abroad and accounts of current challenges, such as obtaining a passport, navigating bureaucracy, and securing finances, faced by scholars who were fortunate enough to secure invitations to foreign universities on research trips of various lengths.

Perhaps some readers, especially historians and sociologists, will be disappointed by the author's awe-inspiring discretion. Her memoirs abound with various personages – some whose faces graced magazine covers (like Bronisław Geremek, historian and anti-communist opposition activist, and then politician, minister of foreign affairs, and deputy to the Sejm in the Third Republic of Poland), as well as others, such as celebrated scholars

from Poland and abroad, but the book offers very little about them. Barbara Szacka was always keen to reserve judgment; even when her tone turned to disparagement, she usually restricted herself to providing the last name initial of the person in question or a very general account of the particular situation. On the one hand, this is very unfortunate, since the author would likely have a great deal of interesting things to say about people whose lives impacted the history of Poland and Polish academia; on the other, one hopes that this tactfulness, the ability to look at people objectively, the discretion, will serve as an example to other memoirists, even at the expense of biographers and writers hungering for the sensational. Nevertheless, one finds no justification for the absence of an index of names, other than the additional cost; it is sorely needed here.

In the final chapter – especially the part devoted first to "Solidarity" (established in August 1980) and then Martial Law (introduced by the authorities on 13 December 1981) – one is particularly captivated by a decisively "non-textbook" historical narrative, in which the author highlights inconsistencies in the actions of the authorities, the search for gaps in the system, the exploitation of strictly party-oriented institutes to facilitate discouraged research. Despite her active participation in the opposition during Martial Law, Szacka does not describe herself as a hero; she is forthright about the challenges of illegal activity in the PRL and the absence of clarity about right and wrong. Beyond that, she studiously avoids pathos. On 13 December 1981, the day Martial Law was introduced, Szacka was supposed to travel into the country to collect an order of meat – a highly valuable product, difficult to obtain in stores. As can be expected, she did not: "And so, the first day of Martial Law registered in my memory as the day when everyone worried about their fatherland, and I worried about the pig" (p. 415).

The ending, devoted to the Katyn massacre, the trip to Katyn, and the farewell to the Father, frames the entire account. Instruction about the Katyn massacre was forbidden in post-war Poland; it was also discouraged to admit when one had lost a family member there. The author writes little about the impact her father's death in the massacre had on her life in PRL because she shows no inclination to present her biography in martyrological tones. However, the preface and conclusion to the book reveal that Katyn cast a shadow on her being, whether she was willing to admit it or not.

In truth, *Life and Memory in Dark Times* is the history of a part of the Polish intelligentsia from the 1930s until 1989. It speaks of unavoidable political entanglements, mechanisms allowing for a relatively everyday and creative existence in times when it was difficult to find logic or reason in events or government actions. It should be stressed, too, that the late author was a formidable and self-deprecating writer, and therefore, in contrast to many memoirists, capable of shedding light not only on her successes but also her failures. The problems she faced early in her professional career, when

she was forced to combine family life with scholarly work and struggled to complete her dissertation, will likely give many young readers who see their future in scholarly work an opportunity to understand that one is not a failure when they cannot swiftly overcome all challenges. That goals can be reached even when the only thing one sees at first is hurdles.

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