

PIOTR STEFAN WANDYCZ
(20 SEPTEMBER 1923 – 29 JULY 2017)

The demise of Professor Wandycz closed a chapter in a history of Polish historiography. He belonged to a group of outstanding Polish historians who came to North America during and shortly after the Second World War. Throughout the worst years of the communist regime in Warsaw, when the Soviet Marxist orthodoxy stifled historical research in Poland, they wrote essential works, contributed to the development of the world scholarship, and upheld the best tradition of historiography. Some of them, such as Oskar Halecki (1891–1973) and Jan Kucharzewski (1876–1952), belonged to the older generation, which started brilliant scholarly careers long before the war. More numerous came as young men and women and joined the American academia at the early stages of their careers. The best known among them were Marian Kamil Dziewanowski (1913–2005), Anna Cienciąła (1929–2014), and Piotr S. Wandycz. In 1969, Damian S. Wandycz, Professor Wandycz's father, a veteran of Józef Piłsudski's First Brigade of the Polish Legions and the director of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA), published a *Register of Polish American Scholars, Scientists, Writers, and Artists*. It named 1034 persons, including 48 historians. Yet, next to them, there were numerous intellectuals, who worked in the fields bordering on history: political scientists, such as Jan Karski and Janusz K. Zawodny; lawyers, such as Wiktor Sukiennicki; historians of culture and literature, such as Waclaw Lednicki and Wiktor Weintraub, sociologists, such as Feliks Gross, and Sovietologists, such as Zbigniew Brzeziński and Richard Pipes.

Most of them have already passed away. Piotr S. Wandycz was one of the last survivors of this unsurpassable cohort. Born in a family of Polish patriotic intelligentsia in Cracow, he was raised in Lwów/Lviv, where he lived until 1939. After the Soviet invasion of Poland, he left with

his family for Romania and then for the unoccupied part of France. He graduated from the Polish Cyprian Norwid Lycee in Villard de Lans and studied at the University of Grenoble in 1941–2. In late 1942, he managed to reach the United Kingdom. He could continue his university studies, but instead, he joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West. Promoted to a second lieutenant of artillery in 1944, he left the army in 1945. He rejected the idea to return to communist-controlled Poland and continued his university studies at the University of Cambridge where he met the most outstanding British historians, and received his B.A. and M.A. In 1951, he defended his Ph.D. thesis on *Liberal Internationalism. The Contribution of British and French Liberal Thought to the Theory of International Relations* at the London School of Economics. Also in 1951, he received a diploma of European Studies at the Collège d'Europe in Bruges and, reluctantly, relocated to the United States where he taught a history of East Central Europe and diplomacy at Indiana University (1954–66). In Bloomington, he published his first books well received by other scholars, and he supervised his first doctoral student, the outstanding historian Anna Cienciała. He felt a bit lonely in Indiana and wanted to move closer to New York, to his family and friends. In 1966 he transferred to Yale University where he was promoted to full professor in 1968, mentored several Ph.D. students, was named Bradford Durfee Professor in 1989, served as director of graduate studies in Russian and East European studies and history, chair of the Council on Russian and East European Studies, and director of the Language and Area Center. He retired in 1997.

Professor Wandycz did not live in an ivory tower. He was active in numerous organizations. After his arrival in America, he joined the Polish Freedom Movement “Independence and Democracy” (*Polski Ruch Wolnościowy “Niepodległość i Demokracja”* – NiD), established to protest the Yalta decisions concerning Poland and to bridge the political cleavages that had split Polish political emigration after the Second World War. NiD gathered a group of outstanding personalities, such as Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, Tadeusz Żenczykowski, Jerzy Lerski, Józef Garliński, and Bolesław Wierzbiański. Also, Professor Wandycz was a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (after 1992), the Polish Academy of Learning, and an honorary member of the Polish Historical Society. In 1989, he joined the board of directors of PIASA and served as its president for three consecutive terms between 1999 and 2008. One of his doctoral students, Professor Mieczysław B.B. Biskupski,

holds this position today. Professor Wandycz worked closely with Jerzy Giedroyc, served as one of his primary historical advisors, and contributed to his periodicals *Kultura* and *Zeszyty Historyczne*, both of them crucial to the survival of Polish independent thought in the era of communism. He also kept in touch with historians in Poland and served as a liaison between scholars in Poland and abroad. Since 1982, he used to write for *Tygodnik Powszechny*, which was quite unusual among Polish émigré historians.

Recipient of numerous prestigious awards, Professor Wandycz received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and honorary Ph.D. degrees from the Sorbonne, University of Wrocław, the Jagiellonian University, and the Catholic University of Lublin. He sat on advisory and editorial boards of numerous scholarly periodicals, such as *Acta Poloniae Historica*, *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, *Kosmas*, *Annales of Communism*, and *The Polish Review*, where his first publications appeared in 1957. A prolific writer, he authored 18 books and approximately 500 articles and book reviews. All his works are based on meticulous archival research and international multilingual scholarship. His command of many foreign languages was impressive.

The scholarly activities of Professor Wandycz concentrated mostly in four fields. First, he researched the disintegration of the Versailles system in Europe and the consequences of this phenomenon for Poland. Second, he studied the history of Polish diplomacy. Third, he examined the similarities and differences between particular nations of East Central Europe and analyzed the reasons, for which they were unable to cooperate. Fourth, he described the transformation of the Polish society in modern times.

The best representatives of the first field of studies are three books: *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers 1940–1943* (Bloomington, 1956), *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919–1925* (Minneapolis, 1962), and *Twilight of the French Eastern Alliance: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from Locarno to the Remilitarization of the Rhineland* (Princeton, 1988). The first of them received a prestigious award from the American Historical Association and all of them are indispensable to the studies of history of international relations in East Central Europe. Also, *Soviet-Polish Relations 1917–1921* (Cambridge, MA, 1969) is still a useful book. It questions the traditional Polish interpretation that the Soviet aggression of 1920 was unavoidable. Professor Wandycz presented the strategy of Józef Piłsudski as the fulfillment of his

federation idea. The book summarizes the paradoxical outcome of the Polish-Soviet war: Poland became too large to be anybody's satellite, but it was too small to be an independent great power.

Several books by Professor Wandycz are devoted to a history of diplomacy: *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), *Zjednoczona Europa* [United Europe] (London, 1956), *August Zaleski. Minister spraw zagranicznych RP w świetle wspomnień i dokumentów* [August Zaleski: Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Republic in the light of memoirs and documents] (Paris, 1980), *Polska a zagranica* [Poland and abroad] (Paris, 1986), *Polish Diplomacy 1914–1945: Aims and Achievements* (London, 1988), and *Aleksander Skrzyński, minister spraw zagranicznych II Rzeczypospolitej* [Aleksander Skrzyński, Minister of the Foreign Affairs of the Second Polish Republic] (Warszawa, 2006).

The most outstanding product of the research of Professor Wandycz on the nations of East Central Europe is *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London and New York, 1992). This internationally acclaimed academic textbook, translated into several languages, develops the ideas of Oskar Halecki about the geopolitical, social, and cultural divisions of Europe. Finally, in the fourth field, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland 1795–1918* (Seattle and London, 1974), the seventh volume of the prestigious series *A History of East Central Europe*, is still handy as a textbook at English-language universities.

In the mid-twentieth century, Hitler and Stalin drove away over 25 thousand scholars from Europe. They wholly reformed the American academia. There were quite numerous outstanding historians among them, such as Hajo Holborn, Hans Rothfels, Felix Gilbert, Hans Kohn, Oszkár Jászi, Robert Kann and Guido Kisch. They thoroughly transformed the American historiography. Professor Wandycz belonged to the elite group of Polish intellectuals forced into exile. Before they arrived in America, there had not been there Polish professional historians. Professor Wandycz, an heir of the top stream of the tradition of the Polish intelligentsia, was one of the most outstanding Polish historians active outside of Poland and contributed significantly to the American academia. It will be challenging, if not impossible, to replace him.

Piotr J. Wróbel