

Historia dyplomacji polskiej X-XX w. (A History of Polish Diplomacy 10th–20th Centuries). A collective work edited by Gerard Labuda and Waldemar Michowicz. Warszawa 2002, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 759 pp. + 120 illustrations, maps, indexes.

A one-volume synthesis of the history of Polish diplomacy presented against the background of the foreign policy of the past ten centuries would not see its realisation unless a quarter of a century earlier work had been taken up upon its "older sister", of impressive size and contents, under the same title, but divided into five chronological volumes, each embracing a different period¹.

The *spiritus movens* and the editor-in-chief of that enterprise was Gerard Labuda, in the last two volumes, concerning the 20th century, assisted by Waldemar Michowicz. Their undertaking, initially meant to consist of three volumes, grew to five (the fourth embraces the inter-war period, and the fifth — the years of the Second World War), and has not yet stopped, since the sixth volume is under preparation, which is to reach the present day, that is the moment of Poland's accession to the European Union. Thus the beginning and the end of that exposition are sealed by two crucial events: Mieszko the First's decision of Christianization and the accession to the organizational structures of the Continent after ten centuries marked by bloody wars.

Much space in the great synthesis is occupied by the matters concerning the subject and scope of its exposition; in the one-volume work they are briefly presented in the *Introduction* which, on the basis of the results of analytic studies, offers a bird's eye view of the main directions of Polish foreign policy, its continuity also under the partitions, as well as the significance of its achievements in exile and in the parliaments of the invading powers. The construction of this smaller synthesis refers to the structure of the earlier five volumes, which has proved correct.

The 12-person team of authors also includes those who were connected with the big synthesis, among them all the editors, with the only exception of Ludwik Bazyłow, deceased in 1985. The author of the completely new chapter on People's Poland is Józef Kukułka.

In *Chapter I* Gerard Labuda presents the four centuries under the Piast dynasty, eliciting from the sources little known information, especially that which concerns the organization of diplomatic activities as well as the techniques and methods of medieval diplomacy in its four stages (the 10th century up till 1025 together with pre-history going back to the 6th century, the period of the breakdown and rebirth of the monarchy 1025–1138, the feudal disintegration of 1138–1295, the reconstruction of a regional, and later all-Polish kingdom from 1295 to 1370). The author closes it with the conclusion: "The road to the restoration of Polish sovereignty on the Baltic led through Ruthenia and Lithuania, which from 1325 and 1340 entered into the orbit of the integration policy of the Piast and Jagiellon dynasties".

¹ *Historia dyplomacji polskiej w pięciu tomach (A History of Polish Diplomacy in Five Chapters)*. Editor-in-Chief Gerard Labuda; Vol. I (*The Middle of the 10th Century — 1572*), ed. M. Biskup, Warszawa 1980 (2nd ed.: 1982), 876 pp.; Vol. II (*1572–1795*) ed. Z. Wójcik, Warszawa 1982, 776 pp.; Vol. III (*1795–1918*) ed. L. Bazyłow, Warszawa 1982, 1016 pp.; Vol. IV (*1918–1939*) ed. P. Łossowski, Warszawa 1995, 720 pp.; Vol. V (*1939–1945*) ed. W. Michowicz, Warszawa 1999, 840 pp.

The short-lived rule of the Angevin dynasty (Louis, King of Hungary and Poland, and the first years of the reign of his daughter Hedwig: 1370–1386, who were a link connecting the Piasts to the Jagiellons), has been “annexed” to the era of the dynasty derived from Lithuania; nevertheless, it occupies most space (40 pp.) in Marian Biskup’s discussion of that era. The author divides it into five sub-periods — the rule of Ladislaus Jagiello and Hedwig; Ladislaus III; Casimir IV; his two successors (John I and Alexander I); as well as Sigismund I and Sigismund II, and apart from the international situation and the activities of Polish foreign policy he devotes much space to the organization of diplomacy and the functioning of diplomatic service. He assesses the “Sigismund period” very positively both as regards its political thought and the modernized organizational forms. The state did not commit mistakes in the international arena and did not let itself be involved in the dangerous conflicts with the Ottoman Porte. A positive phenomenon was the education of a large group of diplomats by employing them in the Royal Chancery; thus, when the last of the Jagiellons died, Poland still could boast of a solid diplomatic staff on a level with the rest of Europe. The fact that the abundance of good diplomats was not matched by that of good statesmen, a situation felt acutely in the days of the first free elections, is quite another matter.

The times of the first seven elective kings (1572–1699) have been treated briefly by Zbigniew Wójcik, who shows the road from the golden times of the Commonwealth to its permanent crises that led to its downfall. In keeping with the accepted periodization, he introduces a division into two stages with the year 1648 as a boundary date. An analysis of reasons for the progressing decline would make us seek them in the almost half a century long reign of Sigismund III, who at the beginning aroused suspicion, and at the end of his reign — when he had given up reforms and confined himself to a relatively efficient administration — was treated as “our national” ruler, universally respected by the Polish gentry.

Józef Andrzej Gierowski faced the task of demythicizing Saxon times in the general opinion, which since the middle of the 19th century has tended to charge that period with responsibility for all the calamities of the 18th century, in keeping with the slogan that they were caused by foreigners; the author firmly opposed the latter approach already in the big synthesis, while in the short one he devotes as much space to the position of the Commonwealth in the international arena as to the organization of Polish and Saxon diplomacy in the days of the personal union of 1697–1763. Dresden certainly exerted a large influence on Warsaw as far as organization is concerned; however, the progressing decentralization of the State and the growing power of magnate centres undermined the domination of this chief organ of foreign policy.

Jerzy Michalski has also revised many current opinions on the times of King Stanislaus Augustus, both those concerning the political realities on the threshold of catastrophe, and — perhaps in the first place — those about our last king himself. He firmly opposes the negative, bitter assessments of this ruler, formulated without a good knowledge of the sources, displayed in a dilettante manner even by professional historians; this was also documented by the already deceased author of the excellent *Spór o Stanisława Augusta (A Controversy About Stanislaus Augustus)*, Andrzej Zahorski.

The 19th century (or more precisely: the years 1795–1918) has been well shown by the above-mentioned three authors; Sławomir Kalembka has especially thoroughly presented the activity of Prince Adam Czartoryski in Paris, devoting to it a whole chapter about the period between the Uprisings of 1830 and 1863. On the other hand, domestic achievements have been brought out by Władysław Zajewski and Jerzy Zdrada, the latter concentrating his attention on the first years after the stifling of the 1863 Insurrection.

Piotr Łossowski places equal emphasis on the matters of politics and diplomacy reconstructed after over a century long break, and has shown the results of work on the creation of the apparatus of diplomatic service in the years 1918–1939. An equally long chapter (pp. 509–547) by Waldemar Michowicz

deals with the Second World War; in fact it presents the picture of Polish diplomacy in exile and its activity in relation to the Western Allies and the contracting party from Moscow. Józef Kukułka in his outline of Polish diplomacy between 1944–1989 includes information that is especially valuable, since it is missing from the big analytic synthesis; he had to confront many subjective approaches which still linger, as well as fill the gaps in the state of research and finally, avoid emotional appraisals. Eight of his main sub-chapters (the ninth — very brief — deals with culture), present, at first, the situation after the end of the Second World War (the conditions under which diplomacy worked, endeavours to gain recognition in the international arena), then the activities and condition of diplomacy itself (the organization of foreign service, policy regarding personnel, methods and techniques of work), and finally its activity in the “circle of neighbours”, Europe and the world. In contrast to all the other authors, who were perfectly able to provide the overview of the existing volumes of the analytic synthesis, the last author rather makes an outline of selected questions that are still the object of work of the researchers who are preparing volume VI.

The work closes with an index of events after 1989, a selective bibliography, indexes of personal, geographical and ethnic names, a list of maps (8) as well as the list of persons (described in detail), figuring in 120 illustrations.

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