

## EDITORS' NOTE

*A symposium on sociotopography of feudal towns in Central Europe took place on September 7th and 8th, 1974, that is on the eve of the 11th General Congress of Polish Historians held in Toruń. The symposium, presided over by A. Gieysztor and T. Rostkowski, was organized jointly by the Commission on the History of Towns at the Committee on Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Commission on Medieval Studies of the Polish Historical Society.*

*The agenda of the debates comprised more than ten papers (covering the period from early Middle Ages till the end of the 18th century) which are included in this volume, mostly in English and French translations as they are meant to be available for foreign historians. The papers were prepared by specialists in various scientific disciplines (historians, archaeologists, geographers of settlement, town planners, historians of art and architecture), whose collaboration is intended for making a manysided analysis of "feedback" between socio-economic structures of urban centres and their spatial systems, which was defined as "sociotopography." Taking into account the problems of interest of those participating in the symposium, Polish materials constituted a point of departure though frequently there was a comparison against the background of Central or even Western Europe. The problems discussed testified to a new approach to urban questions which have often been presented in a traditional way. This resulted from the necessity, pointed to by contemporary historiographers, to carry out inter-disciplinary research. Recently it has been best manifested at the 14th International Congress of Historians in San Francisco during which one plenary session was devoted precisely to problems concerning social topography of medieval and modern towns.*

*Pointing to the demand for "sociotopography," both papers read in Toruń and, above all, statements made during the lively discus-*

sion (which was too extensive to be included in this volume) did not deal with the whole material which could form a basis for defining a full scope of problems encompassed by this branch of science. This is why it appears now as a programme or a large-scale research venture rather than a full-fledged branch of urban historiography already existing in scientific practice. Most statements tackled individual elements of urbanization processes separately, this corresponding, after all, to the present state of research. Particular attention was drawn by controversies round "location threshold" (showing ever new possibilities of interpretation), problems concerning the town network and types of towns, above all, of small towns, and there was a warning not to absolutize examples concerning the biggest towns. A great interest was also paid to the changes that took place in the field of urbanization, above all in Poland, in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, in the period of the Baroque and the Age of Enlightenment.

Though relatively less attention was given to theoretical problems, there were statements, sometimes polemic ones, which showed the necessity to study correlations between social and topographic transformations on three parallel planes: on macroscale — taking into account the interdependence between the general evolution of social structures and the types of urban centres as well as their network; on "mezzoscale" — of interest here are, above all, "sociotopographic zones" and their essential points in urban structures (of particularly great importance in this domain are the results of recent studies concerning Toruń of the late Middle Ages); finally, on microscale — encompassing the closest environment of town inhabitants, seen from the perspective of professional groups, family or groups of relatives.

The symposium — the main event devoted to medieval studies held during the Toruń Congress, was attended by some 150 people, and this indicates the great interest it aroused among Polish specialists. It is hoped that matters discussed during the symposium will attract the attention of foreign scholars giving rise to comparative studies and discussion.

T.R.