

NOTES CRITIQUES

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Matthew Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713 - 1783*, London 1961, Longmans; French Edition: *L'Europe au XVIII^e siècle*, in *Histoire de l'Europe*, vol. VIII, ed. by D. Hay Sirey, Paris 1968, 377 pages.

In Poland, unfortunately, there is a lack of history books dealing with problems in wide scope, books aimed not merely at the student or scholar, but at the general public as well. This is an added inducement to us to be on the look-out for books of this type appearing on the foreign market. When we find them, it is worth our while to examine them carefully since, for one reason, they present us with a view of Polish history as seen from various standpoints, for another they enable us to test how far the conclusions reached by our own historians are free from "Polocentrism."

Matthew S. Anderson is a British historian who has an established position as an expert on Europe of the 18th and 19th centuries.¹ *Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, which encompasses the period 1713 - 1783, has had several reprints in English,² and also a French translation.³ It forms part of a many-volume series on the history of Europe, and so, while dealing with the history of Europe as a whole, it also gives an account of British history in the broader, European setting.⁴

The reviewer, for his part, although not blind to matters of general moment, is here⁵ concerned primarily with assessing how far the picture painted by Anderson of Poland's position in Europe is an adequate and acceptable one. To avoid

¹ In 1966 the same author published *The Eastern Question 1774 - 1923. A Study in International Relations*, London, Macmillan - St. Martin's Press, and in 1958 a dissertation on *Britain's Discovery of Russia, 1583 - 1815*.

² There have been several abbreviated, popular editions of this book. In the present case the reviewer has compared the French edition with the first English edition. He found, firstly, that the two editions were identical (the page numbers cited here refer to the French edition, which was more easily obtained, and secondly, that the French edition contains a surprising number of factual errors (mainly in the dates); some of these errors are to be found in all the successive editions of the book.

³ Dates of the Treaty of Utrecht and the Treaty of Versailles.

⁴ The interest of the English reader is catered for specifically in an extensive account of British-French rivalry (p. 245 - 271), and generally speaking by a certain preponderance of "external" problems over the history of social structures or European culture, or problems of mentality and ideology.

⁵ More extensive comments on the attitude of West European historians to Polish history may be found in a discussion in "Kwartalnik Historyczny" vol. LXXVIII, 1971, and also in my review of M. H. Serjski's book *Europa a rozbiory Polski [Europe and Partitions of Poland]*, Warszawa 1970, "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. LXXVIII, 1971.

misunderstanding, it should be made clear that the reviewer, in making his observations and objections, applies two different measures: in the one case he keeps to the framework and limits set by the author (immanent criticism), whereas in other cases he approaches the matter from a wider standpoint, and says how he feels the history of Poland should be treated in books dealing with the history of Europe as a whole.

The title of this volume states precisely the dates that form the narrow framework for this history of 18th-century Europe. The division of European or even world history into periods during the time of Enlightenment and Revolution is a question that has repeatedly given rise to controversy. Diverse solutions have been adopted. For a long time continental (but not British) historians accepted the periods 1715 - 1789 or 1715 - 1815 as the boundaries within which they worked. Recent decades, however, have seen other approaches (Gottschalk, Palmer and Godechot), and there has been a tendency to accept the boundary between the time of the "Ancien Régime" and the "Revolution" as falling about the year 1770.¹ For a long time there was a strong tradition among historians to concern themselves mainly with diplomatic history, and so they frequently gave prominence to the year 1713 (the Treaty of Utrecht), or the year 1763 (the Treaty of Paris²), or 1783, the year Anderson has taken as marking the close of a period (the Treaty of Versailles). Elsewhere, B. Królikowski³ has suggested that Anderson's choice of these narrow boundaries for his study of the 18th century is not, from many points of view, too happy a one. It should be emphasized that this criticism is particularly apt in the case of the history of Poland, since Anderson's account of it is confined to a recital of the facts of the first half of the 18th century, the first Partition of Poland being treated merely as an epilogue. No mention is made of Poland's economic, cultural, or political renaissance under King Stanislaw August. In general it can be said that all attempts to divide history into periods are to a certain extent arbitrary, and as far as the history of Europe as a whole is concerned, only the dates 1789 and 1815 are of fundamental significance. If we relegate the French Revolution and the French Empire to a later period, the history of the Enlightenment Period in Europe should come between the dates 1713 - 1715 and 1789. For almost two-thirds of all the countries in Europe, the date 1783 is of no significance at all. It has no value at all as a point of reference for a history of changes in the social structure or in ideology.

Basically, Anderson has undertaken the difficult task of dealing with this vast and complicated subject by tracing the problem along three main lines. Chapters III - VIII acquaint us with the first line of thought, in which Anderson approaches the problem from the structural, comparative point of view. He depicts the successive social structures, the economic life of the times, the political forms, the military problems of the day with special reference to naval questions,⁴ and problems of

¹ Cf. J. Godechot, *Les révolutions (1770 - 1779)*. Second Edition, Paris 1965, Nouvelle Clio, vol. 36, p. 1 - 5.

² Cf. the periods adopted in the well-known series "Peuples et Civilisations": P. Muret, *La prépondérance anglaise, 1713 - 1763*; P. Sagnac, *La fin de l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution Américaine, 1763 - 1789*. Cf. L. Gershoy, *From Despotism to Revolution, 1763 - 1789*, 1st American edition 1944, French edition 1966.

³ In "Kwartalnik Historyczny", vol. LXXVI, 1969, p. 956ff.

⁴ The author has devoted all of pages 143 - 151 to problems of the Navy. When so much weight is given to military affairs, it is strange that no mention is made of E. Léonard's *L'Armée et ses problèmes au XVIII^e s.*, Paris 1958.

international relations. Chapters IX - XIII give a geographical panorama¹⁰ of the situation of the diverse European countries, with particular emphasis on questions of foreign policy and the rivalry between the Great Powers. Chapter XIII attacks the difficult problem of defining Europe's place and relationship to the rest of the world. Chapters XIV - XV, rounding off the picture as a whole, deal somewhat too cursorily with the history of education, culture, ideology and religion. The volume closes with a few, brief conclusions arrived at by the author, and with a list of the more important references on the subject, which supplement the bibliographical references listed at the end of each chapter. Obviously these items do not tally with all the sources used by the author. In his bibliography he mentions only those which he regards as being of especial importance.

Europe in the Eighteenth Century attempts to deal in general terms with a very wide field. It would not be fair to expect the author to have collected all the source material himself. Nor would it be fair to expect him to have drawn on the quite innumerable books, written in many languages, on this subject. But surely it is not too much to expect that with regard to countries of the rank of Spain, or Poland or Sweden, the author: 1. should be acquainted with those publications, written in the main Congress languages, that deal with the subject in fundamental, general terms, and that 2. he should supplement this kind of information by drawing on some of the latest reports of research published in English, French or German in the more important historical journals. Unfortunately, however, with regard to Poland Anderson has been content to draw on the Cambridge History of Poland, and on the somewhat out-of-date book by R. H. Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland*, (1915). A point to note is that in the French edition no items beyond 1961 supplement the basic bibliography¹¹ even on matters of general moment.

Accepting though not approving this attitude on the part of the author, let us now consider what is the minimum that can be demanded of a bibliography. For this period of Polish history J. Roach, for example, suggests a bibliography¹² of 37 selected items, in Polish and other languages, which he regards as fundamental. Even if we eliminate the items written in Polish, we are left wondering why, with regard to the history of the first stage of the renaissance of culture and education in Poland, Anderson did not draw on W. J. Rose's *Stanislaw Konarski, Reformer of Education in Eighteenth-Century Poland*, (1929). Then with regard to earlier times, the German historian H. Lemke's book *Die Brüder Zaluski und ihre Beziehungen zu Gelehrten in Deutschland und Danzig*, (1958) could have given him a great deal of information on culture in Poland towards the end of Saxon times and in the early days of the Polish Enlightenment. It is worth underlining the great influx of new ideas into Poland, a country which even after the First Partition occupied more than 500,000 square kilometres, and had a population of about 8 million. One is struck by the fact that there is no mention of works which are now classics, such as the writings of J. Fabres (1952) or A. Roberts (1941), or of older dissertations, in either French or English, by Konopczyński or Rutkowski or even

¹⁰ The author begins — and this is no doubt an innovation — with the Russian expansion and with the Turkish question, on which he is an acknowledged expert.

¹¹ He ignores the latest research by Austrian historians (such as E. Winter, F. Valjavec, F. Maas), or by German or French ones (such as Pomeau, Ehrard, Grosclaude, Mandrou, etc.). It is also surprising that there are no important items on Spain, published even before 1960, such as J. Sarrailh's book (1954), M. Defourneaux's book on Pablo de Olavide, or even R. Heer's book published in 1958 — *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain*, Princeton 1958.

¹² J. Roach, *A Bibliography of Modern History*, Cambridge 1968, pp. 209 — 211.

S. Askenazy's *Die letzte polnische Königswahl*, (1894).¹⁴ Still confining ourselves to items of basic importance, it is worth pointing out that in 1955 B. Leśnodorski published an article on *Les facteurs intellectuels de la formation de la société polonaise moderne au Siècle des Lumières*.¹⁴

From the above it is surely evident that the chief impediment here is not language barrier ("*Polonica non leguntur*"), but solely reluctance to break away from the "West European monopoly." In other words, historians apparently remain convinced that they run no risk of criticism for drawing persistently on the same old sources (few in number and generally out-of-date), even though these give a false picture of Poland at the time of the Partitions and even although this picture consists of 19th-century stereotypes manufactured by historians both Russian and German, the latter enjoying the quite unjustified confidence of British historians.¹⁵ Another objection that may be raised is that with regard to problems unconnected with Poland, too, the author's choice of literature has been too confined.¹⁶ For instance, within recent years an immense amount of new literature has appeared on ideological, cultural, and social problems. Anderson must be criticized for drawing almost solely on works by Anglo-Saxon authors.¹⁷

The reviewer is far from taking the view that Anderson has made no effort at all to take the problems of Eastern Europe into account, but he does assert that most of what he does write is about Russia. Here, too, some of the author's opinions are unacceptable, if only for methodological reasons.¹⁸ Here, however, what interests us most is Polish history and the way it is presented in *Europe in the Eighteenth Century*. Many criticisms must be levelled at the author. For example, in Chapter II, which deals with the question of sources, Anderson is clearly unaware

¹⁴ In Anderson's chronology (p. 356) even the date of the last election of a Polish king is wrong, being given as 1759. In the text (p. 188) the date of Poniatowski's election is rightly given as 1764, but in the index of persons there is no note of him as Stanisław August at all.

¹⁵ Cf. *La Pologne au X^{ème} Congrès international des sciences historiques*, Varsovie 1955. In 1968 it is difficult to comprehend how anyone could ignore two series of studies which appeared in French: *Utopie et Institutions au XVIII^e siècle. Le pragmatisme des Lumières*, Paris-La Haye 1963, and a special issue of "Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française", (abbrev. AHRF), 1964, 3, which appeared under the title *La Pologne de l'époque des Lumières au Duché de Varsovie*. Publications which may be noted in more recent years are: B. Leśnodorski, *Les institutions polonaises au Siècle des Lumières*, Warszawa 1963, H. H. Kaplan, *The First Partition of Poland*, (1962), and a thick volume, *Great Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, (1967), by D. B. Horne, who has an established position among British historians as an expert on Polish affairs.

¹⁶ Some instances of this are so blatant as even to be embarrassing. For example, A. Haseel, the author of vol. VI of the series "Periods of European History", which comes under the title: *1715 — 1789. The Balance of Power*, 5th Edition., London 1950, is content with Field Marshal von Moltke's reminiscences of his youth, and the stereotyped hearsay opinions he expresses in his other works written in the middle of the 19th century, as reliable sources for the history of the decline of Poland.

¹⁷ For example, too much emphasis is put on the role played by Joseph II, and too little on Kaunitz, Martini or Sonnenfeld's influence on the Enlightenment Period in Austria and especially on the creation of the aura prevailing in Austria during that monarch's reign. In spite of R. Hubert's classic work, *Les sciences sociales dans l'Encyclopédie*, (1923) has been ignored by Anderson, as well as all the most recent literature, this important question has been relegated to a place of minor significance.

¹⁸ What the reviewer has in mind here is that Anderson has not only not listed foreign-language works (e.g. recent works by Italian historians such as Venturi, Valsecchi, or R. Mori) in the bibliography but that he has not made use of their conclusions in his text.

¹⁹ E.g. on p. 31: "On peut donc sans aucune exagération ou presque, soutenir que la société russe a été une création de l'Etat et que ses structures n'ont été que le reflet des besoins et des volontés du pouvoir."

of the strong Polish tradition of "gentry democracy," which goes back for centuries. Hence on page 18, where he states that the development of the press was retarded in Russia, and emphasizes that an appropriate intellectual atmosphere was necessary before it could develop, Anderson never mentions that there was already a long-rooted intellectual tradition of this kind in Poland.¹⁹ He makes the same error with regard to the pamphlets, which (on p. 21) he incorrectly describes as being found only in Western Europe. Since his views are based on meagre and inadequate sources, Anderson is very critical of Poland. It is rather embarrassing to have to remind him that although the rest of Europe, especially between 1584 and 1648, was torn by religious strife, Poland even then had a tradition of freedom and tolerance.²⁰ He has no justification for stating (on p. 34) that the lot of the feudal peasant was better in Russia than in Poland. A more striking error, however, seems to have crept in on page 43, where he states that in 1772 only five towns in Poland had a population more than 2,000. This surely can only be a printer's error. To go further, the author says not a word about the renaissance of the Polish towns which was already noticeable before 1772. Neither does he say anything about the development of manufactures in Poland.

Although it is true that during 17th - 18th century Polish jurisdiction was at a low ebb, and there were signs of anarchy caused by the overweening powers of the magnates, nevertheless there is no justification for completely ignoring the Polish traditions of law and order, and the traditions whereby the rights of the lesser nobles were guaranteed. Apart from England, these traditions did not exist in any other country of Europe at all before the end of the 18th century. Hence the generalizations on page 89 are fallacious.²¹ Another of the book's shortcomings is that it fails to mention Poland's role in the history of the humanitarian reform of the criminal law. For it should be remembered that in 1776 a law was passed in Poland not only doing away with the use of torture to extort confessions but also abolishing witchcraft trials. All in all it may be said that Anderson, while making many justifiable criticisms of Poland, has, on the other hand, not been free of the fault of simplified judgements and errors of fact. For instance, he erroneously but strongly believes there was religious intolerance in Poland, whereas in actual fact traditions of religious tolerance were no less strong in Poland than in Britain. The reason for this mistaken belief is that the author probably based his views on minor and biased German sources. The same reason is no doubt also responsible for the many and often blatant errors of fact.²² On page 107 there is a some-

¹⁹ Cf. I. Homola-Dzikowska, *Walka o wolność druku w publicystyce drugiej połowy XVIII wieku* [Fighting for Freedom of Print in Journalism in the Second Half of the 18th Century], PH, 1960. I also, by the present reviewer, *La presse et la diffusion des Lumières en Pologne dans la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle*, "Annales Historique de la Révolution Française," 1964, 3, pp. 295 - 307.

²⁰ See, for instance, the bibliographical references given by J. Nowak-Dłużeński, *Bibliografia Staropolskiej Okolicznościowej Poezji politycznej, XVI - XVIII w.* [Bibliography of the Old-Polish Occasional Political Poetry, 16th - 18th c.], Warszawa 1964.

²¹ Anderson even states that: "[...] pendant toute cette période, l'administration de la justice en Europe centrale et orientale continue d'être l'une des branches de l'administration." He evidently knows nothing about the Royal Tribunal (*Trybunał Koronny*) in Poland, or the village, regional, or provincial courts.

²² Anderson's reference to Calvinism in Poland in the 18th century is misleading (p. 324). Objections can be raised to his view that Masonry in Poland had a particular mystic character. As a matter of fact that epithet can be applied with more justification to German Masonry. He is mistaken in his contention that Poland, as compared with other European countries, was particularly severe in the persecution of heretics. His remarks on what is known as the Toruń Tumult (p. 331) are completely wrong. What actually happened was that

what imprecise reference giving the dates of attempted reforms in Poland as the period 1760 - 1770. In actual fact the Czartoryski reforms should be dated 1764 - 1768.

The weaknesses of government in Poland during the time of gentry rule have frequently been expounded by Polish historians. But in some of the phrases used by the British historian one would seem to detect a certain reserve, and even indifference. On page 183 Anderson rightly points out that in those days British foreign policy "*se désintéressait totalement de l'Europe orientale.*" Is it perhaps the case that this is also the attitude of British historians today?²¹ Perhaps that is why one can see a tendency to treat Poland's place on the map of Europe as non-existent. No mention is made of the Cadet School or the Commission for National Education or King Stanislaw August's patronage of art and culture. Consequently the picture painted of Poland in these days has been deprived of its most valuable elements.

To sum up, Anderson's book is an ambitious undertaking. The author has chosen the difficult path of approaching the problem from the structural, comparative point of view. But the book's main characteristic is that the author has remained true to his narrow interest in diplomatic, military, and political history. Despite his desire to encompass the history of all Europe, he nevertheless has kept to the tradition of portraying the history of Western Europe alone, supplemented, on the whole, by an account of Russian history only. The reviewer realizes that Anderson's book is limited for space, but suggests that if the author made the additions suggested here (apart from corrections), that part of the text that deals with Polish history would have to be expanded by no more than one or one and half pages. The most important thing is, not the amount of space devoted to Poland's history, but the veracity of the picture.

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during a Catholic procession in Toruń in 1724 (not in 1719) fighting broke out between the local Lutherans (who owing to the ancient privileges of their estate held the key positions of authority in the town) and the Catholics. Since the local authorities remained passive, the Lutheran mob seized and demolished the Jesuit College, and destroyed many of the religious objects in it. The result of this was that the central government intervened and applied severe measures, which was a pretext for the Protestant Powers to interfere in Polish affairs. But Brandenburgian-Prussian propaganda presented the matter in quite a different light, and their version has survived as a stereotype even to this day.

²¹ As we can see from his assertion (on p. 193) that a considerable part of the population in the territories annexed by Russia and Austria were not Poles, it is clear that Anderson wishes, perhaps unconsciously, but at any rate quite definitely, to justify to some extent the First Partition of Poland.