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## SHORT HISTORIES OF POLAND

Since the publication of the much discussed Norman Davies' *God's Playground* in 1982 there appeared several books aimed at the English-speaking reader and meant to introduce him to Poland's past. Two of them to be reviewed here are: Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, and Anita J. Prażmowska, *A History of Poland*.<sup>1</sup>

Jerzy Lukowski is Professor of Polish History at the University of Birmingham and specializes in late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hubert Zawadzki teaches at Abingdon School and authored among others a monograph on Adam Czartoryski. Prażmowska holds a professorship in International Relations at the LSE and has written several books on twentieth century diplomacy and Poland.

In their 'Preface' Lukowski and Zawadzki note that a concise history is bound to contain generalizations, omissions and different emphases. Their volume stresses politics at some expense of socio-economic factors. The authors seek to explain the complexities of Polish history mentioning ethnic diversity, the complex involvement with the neighbors, the different names given to the same places in the course of history *etc.* They justify the division of their volume into two parts – pre- and post-partitions – by insisting that there were *de facto* two very different Polands. This is a debatable opinion.

In her preface Prażmowska points out that past developments are often seen from the point of view of relevance for the present, and

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<sup>1</sup> Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (2nd rev. edn., Cambridge Concise Histories, xiii, Cambridge, 2006), 371 pp., 58 plates, 13 maps, genealogical charts, chronology, list of heads of state, communist party leaders, bibliography, index; Anita J. Prażmowska, *A History of Poland* (2nd rev. edn., Palgrave Macmillan Essential Histories, viii, Basingstoke, 2011), 227 pp., 4 maps, bibliography, index.

from the perspective of the nation/state. She opposes the tendency to view Polish historical process as necessarily leading to national independence. She mentions certain stereotypes about the Poles connected with the nineteenth-century 'Polish question' when the Poles were seen as heroes or victims. There has also been a tendency in the West to overemphasize Polish anti-Semitism. The Poles on their side have resented the insufficient recognition of their contribution to Europe, to mention the relief of Vienna in 1683 or the 1920 victory, which stopped the westward Bolshevik advance.

Prażmowska says that in the interwar period the impact of politics resulted in the emphasis on the Polish *Kresy* (eastern borderlands), while after WWII Marxist-Stalinist writings stressed 'the recovered' western territories. The fall of communism liberated Polish historiography from dogmas, permitted filling the 'blanc pages' and presented Poland's past with greater balance and objectivity. Postulating the study of history for its own sake with lights and shadows, Prażmowska concludes that her own book is a story of peoples who inhabited lands that became Poland and she seeks to take into account all the factors which have shaped it in the past.

In the pages that follow I shall try to compare first the treatment respectively by Lukowski/Zawadzki and Prażmowska of medieval Poland, the Jagiellonian era, the Commonwealth up to the Partitions.

Lukowski and Zawadzki handle the medieval period in one chapter, entitled 'Piast Poland (-1385)'. Unlike Prażmowska they mention the document called *Dagome iudex* (relating to Mieszko's Poland and so much discussed by medievalists), and such chronicles as Gallus Anonymus. They rightly devote a great deal of attention to the role of the Germans and the interaction between the Piasts and the Holy Roman Empire. They cover well internal and external developments in Poland, after it disintegrated into principalities and then reunited to become gradually an international player under Casimir the Great. One wishes that they would stress various processes in virtually all walks of life in the thirteenth century which Henryk Samsonowicz described "as basic as those in the tenth century, but most likely penetrating deeper the Polish society."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Antoni Mączak, Henryk Samsonowicz, Andrzej Szwarz, and Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Od Plemion do Rzeczypospolitej. Naród, państwo, terytorium w dziejach Polski* (Warsaw, 1996), 29; my translation.

Noting that Louis of Hungary's Košice privileges marked the first important limitation of royal power, the authors move to the Jagiellonian era. They rightly stress the important role of 'King' Jadwiga in assuring the advent of Jagiello to the Polish throne, brought out so clearly in Oskar Halecki's *Jadwiga of Anjou* published posthumously.<sup>3</sup>

The years 1385 to 1572 are covered in the chapter 'Jagiellonians'. We find here a good discussion of Lithuania and its relationship with Poland before and after the accord of Kreva. The ongoing dispute about the term *applicare* and the different positions of the Jagiellonian rulers in Lithuania and Poland are clearly explained. While the relationship with the Teutonic Knights from the battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg) to the secularization of the Order is stressed, conflicts with Tatars and Muscovy are not neglected. The authors emphasize the fact that with the Jagiellonian rule in Poland, Lithuania, Bohemia and Hungary there emerged "the greatest dynastic concatenation of territory Europe had yet seen." One may add that its very extension meant that the bloc faced complex and simultaneous problems in the south, north and east.

The authors discuss extensively important developments in the constitutional and socio-political fields, to mention only such acts as *Nihil Novi* and *Neminem captivabimus*. They draw attention to the Execution of the Laws movement. The special position of Gdańsk (Danzig) is highlighted – less so of Royal Prussia. The personalities of Sigismund the Old and Sigismund Augustus emerge clearly from the narrative. I only wish the authors had expanded their treatment of the 'Golden Age' in cultural, scholarly, ideological, religious and artistic spheres. They do mention Copernicus, Frycz-Modrzewski, Rej, Kochanowski, *etc.*, and the renovation of the Jagiellonian University but I wonder if the reader will fully appreciate the scope and importance of Polish achievements during the sixteenth century. The Reformation might have been treated more fully. The authors note, however, the first publication printed in Lithuanian which is not often the case. Lukowski and Zawadzki make clear the different position of the Jagiellonian rulers in Poland and Lithuania.

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<sup>3</sup> Oskar Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou and the Rise of East Central Europe*, ed. with a foreword by Thaddeus V. Gromada (East European Monographs, cccviii, Atlantic Studies on Society in Change, lxxiii, Boulder, CO and Highland Lakes, NY, 1991).

The chapter dealing with the years 1572 to the partitions is called the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. It covers the reigns of Henri Valois (remembered chiefly for *Pacta Conventa* and Henrician Articles), Batory, the Vasas, Sobieski, Wettins and finally Stanislaus Augustus. Discussing the seventeenth century filled with wars and domestic upheavals Lukowski and Zawadzki state that *Rzeczpospolita* “showed itself capable of burst of energy and resilience in the face of invasion and rebellion” (p. 71), but they see the overall picture as sober. Victories at Kirchholm and Cudnów (Ukr.: Chudniv) are viewed mainly in the context of negative domestic repercussions. The authors characterize the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as more “a cumbersome federation than a unified state” (pp. 68–9). They seem ambiguous about the reforms of the Execution of Laws movement, although they see some merit in the Zebrzydowski (or Sandomierz) *rokosz* (rebellion).

In these and other respects their opinions contrast with the revisionist views of some Polish historians, notably Andrzej Sulima Kamiński<sup>4</sup> who draws a distinction between the pre- and post-1648 periods, and reminds us of the successes culminating in the 1630s. He opines that the victories over Turkey, Sweden, Moscow and the early Cossack rebellions produced a feeling of strength and stability. This opinion is supported by another historian<sup>5</sup> who cites the views of a contemporary writer: “in some strange and unusual way a mixture of three forms of government has formed.” He meant monarchic, aristocratic (the senate) and democratic (the lower chamber). Kamiński lauds the attempts to create a ‘citizen’s state’ (*państwo obywatelskie*) in which he sees a not insignificant role of the towns. He considers the term *obywatel* (citizen) as more adequate than *szlachcic* (noble). He reminds us that more people had the right to vote in the Commonwealth than in England before 1832. Finally, it would have been useful to mention in this chapter that the crisis in the Commonwealth was not unique. There was a general crisis of government throughout

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<sup>4</sup> See his *Historia Rzeczypospolitej Wielu Narodów 1505–1795. Obywatele, ich państwa, społeczeństwo, kultura* (Dzieje Krajów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Lublin, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Jarosław Pelenski, ‘Muscovite Russia and Poland-Lithuania 1450–1660: State and Society – Some Comparisons in Socio-Political Developments’, in *idem* (ed.), *State and Society in Europe from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Warsaw, 1985), 113.

this period, especially during the seventeenth century which took different forms.<sup>6</sup>

The authors' presentation of the increasingly chaotic politics of the eighteenth century is based on Lukowski's impressive research and writings on this period. All the plans of Augustus II collapsed. The Great Northern War was an unmitigated disaster, particularly in the economic sphere. Poland was becoming a Russian protectorate with Peter the Great calling the tune. Still, Lukowski and Zawadzki may have added, as the historian Jacek Staszewski has shown, that the 'black legend' of the Saxon kings, largely accepted by Polish historiography, had been spread from Berlin to discredit its rival.

The authors did not fail to notice a kind of 'healing' under Augustus III. They signal the first signs of Enlightenment, *Collegium Nobilium* and Konarski's role. They point out that the political treatise *Głos wolny wolność ubezpieczający* ('The free voice guaranteeing freedom') ascribed to Stanislaus Leszczyński contained ideas of reforms later entertained or realized. The discussion of the Czartoryski camp and especially of Stanislaus Augustus is balanced. The authors avoid being drawn into the heated debates about this admittedly controversial last king of Poland. Their remarks about the problem of Protestants and Orthodox are enlightening. As they say the policies of intimidation and use of force by Empress Catherine were bound to provoke a reaction namely the Confederation of Bar. One can share the authors' view that it "opened the way to four years of civil and guerilla warfare, with uncontrollable international repercussion."

The international setting of the partitions is clearly analyzed and presented. No wonder, since Lukowski is the author of the only book in English on the three partitions.<sup>7</sup> The statement that the Four Years Sejm was "the culmination of ... process of forced political education" is apt. So is the summary of the May 3 Constitution, although the authors may have added a word about American and not only French inspiration. It was also worth mentioning by the authors (and by Prażmowska), the words "the will of the nation" added after "the grace of God".

The treatment of the 1792 Russian-Polish war is so cursory that its military side and the leadership of Kościuszko and Prince Józef

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<sup>6</sup> See Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith (eds.), *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London and Boston, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Jerzy Lukowski, *The Partitions of Poland 1772, 1793, 1795* (London and New York, 1999).

Poniatowski are lost on the reader. It is a pity for according to General Kukiel<sup>8</sup> the Polish soldiers fought so well for the first time since the days of Sobieski. Some Polish historians opine that the war was not yet lost when the king joined the Confederation of Targowica.

The conclusion of the first part of the book deserves to be cited *verbatim*:

The experiment in noble democracy was over, a resounding failure. What lived on was the resentment of a noble-nation, which despite being torn apart, still felt itself a coherent unity and which, in its final years, had experienced a new pride in cultural and political resurrection. (p. 105)

The expression ‘resounding failure’ seems to dismiss all the achievements of pre-partitions Poland. Kaminski argues that “The Partitions of the *Respublica* brought death not only to the state but they also destroyed the best (next to Great Britain) developing civic society.” (p. 234). Similarly, the American historian Robert Lord deemed the Commonwealth as “the largest and the most ambitious experiment the world had seen since the days of the Romans.”<sup>9</sup>

Let us now turn to Prazmowska’s treatment of the same centuries starting with the Middle Ages and taking us to the partitions. Her two chapters entitled ‘The Lands that became Poland’, and ‘The Consolidation of the Polish Kingdom’ bring in a lot of material. She devotes a good deal of attention to the prehistoric period and the discussion of what were Polish original borders. These are meaty chapters which discuss, sometimes with too much detail, the evolution from a primitive collection of tribes to a kingdom which according to her was by 1138 on a par politically, socially, economically and religiously with neighboring states of Europe. As for possible criticism, the role of Christianity and the religious orders might have been emphasized. As in the Lukowski and Zawadzki volume the thirteenth-century ‘modernization’ of the Polish society is not sufficiently highlighted. I miss in both books such terms as *locatio*, *hospites* or the significance of the ‘Magdeburg law’. The beginning conflicts with the Teutonic

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<sup>8</sup> General Marian Kukiel (1885–1973), historian, the author of many works dedicated to the military history.

<sup>9</sup> Cited by Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (2nd edn., London and New York, 2001), 88.

Knights and the Mongol invasions are well presented. So are domestic developments such as the adoption of legal statutes, from that of Kalisz to those of Piotrków and Wiślica, intellectual and scholarly achievements (Cracow University). Prazmowska mentions Casimir's protection of the Jews but also the first pogroms occurring at the time of Black Death for which they were blamed. Minor mistakes such as calling Duke Każko Casimir's nephew – he was his grandson – do not detract from the value of the presentation.

In the two chapters that follow: 'Jagiellonian Poland' and the 'Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth' Prazmowska presents a fairly detailed picture of the centuries which started with the reign of Ladislaus Jagiello and was followed by the elected kings. Incidentally, when she mentions later the nobles' demands for a 'Piast king' the reader may not realize that it meant a native candidate not a descendant of the old dynasty. The author treatment of wars and domestic conflicts is uneven. She is very detailed at times (for instance an almost minute description of the battle of Grunwald) but plays down the importance of the emergence of the Jagiellonian bloc in East Central Europe.

Speaking of the Renaissance in Poland, the author states twice that it "flowered lightly" but then discusses it at some length. Similarly when she says that the Reformation was a passing phenomenon in Poland this is correct from a purely religious viewpoint, but ignores its impact on intellectual life of the country's elite which was significant. So was religious toleration in the early phase, admired abroad among others by Erasmus of Rotterdam ("Polonia mea est"). The ennoblement of nonchristened Jew was without precedent in Europe and deserved a mention especially since Prazmowska devotes an entire page to the treatment of the Jews. The Warsaw Confederation might have been highlighted. By the late seventeenth century with the activity of the Jesuits and the struggles with Protestant or Orthodox enemies, Counter-Reformation triumphed and was characteristic of what Prazmowska calls 'the Sarmatian culture'.

The author rightly points out that the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries were shaped by two factors: the Union of Lublin with all its consequences, and the transformation of the monarchy into a *Respublica* or a commonwealth of the nobles. She wonders who profited more from the Union – Poland or Lithuania, and observes that the transfer of the Ukrainian lands from Lithuania to the Crown meant that Poland proper stood now face to face with Muscovy.

Prażmowska points to the vested foreign interest and involvement of Batory (Transylvanian) and the Vasas (Swedish). Their inability, especially of Sigismund III, to work with the reformers – although both sides saw the need for reforming the state – led eventually to what Bogusław Leśnodorski called ‘the decentralization of sovereignty’. The local gentry’s assemblies (*sejmiki*) came to be manipulated by the oligarchy. Another historian, Antoni Mączak, calls the system one of clientele-patronage, Prażmowska however exaggerates when she calls the gentry’s claim to political freedom ‘nonsense’. When the Sapiehas went too far in oppressing the gentry, the latter defeated the magnates at the bloody battle of Olkieniki in 1700.

International developments of this period were extremely involved, and Prażmowska’s handling of them is at times confusing. So is the chronology. There are some statements that require explanation, e.g. the ‘Polonization’ of the Ukraine. Sigismund III’s Russian policy is barely touched upon. The invasion of the Commonwealth by several of its neighbors (‘the deluge’) ended with the Treaty of Oliwa with Sweden without any territorial cessions, but the wars with Muscovy led to the virtual partition of the Ukraine. The crucial importance of the latter for the Commonwealth – the discussion of the Cossacks and the impact of the Khmelnytsky uprising – may not have been sufficiently underlined. Some attempts at a solution (the Hadziach Union) mentioned by Lukowski and Zawadzki are ignored. So are the battles of Kircholm and Klushino and the names of the great war leaders such as Chodkiewicz and Żółkiewski. The scars left by wars, foreign occupation, economic ruin, plagues, population decline and a lingering constitutional crisis (Lubomirski *rokosz*) meant a dramatic decline of the Commonwealth. Could it still recover? – asks Prażmowska.

The author sees the post-Vasa period as synonymous with the emergence of a distinct Sarmatian culture of the gentry. Sarmatism, however, is a more complicated and evolving concept that Prażmowska seems to realize. Some historians view the Sarmatian myth as a cement of the multinational society, although the Lithuanians never called themselves Sarmatians, and not all contemporary writers (for instance Szymon Starowolski) identified Sarmatians exclusively with the gentry. Nor did the name ever replace that of the Poles. Then there is the cultural side to Sarmatism associated with the age of Baroque.

According to Prażmowska *liberum veto* which allowed ‘everyone’ (?) to invalidate the decision of the *sejm* was the essence of Sarmatism.



This is not quite true for the basic concept of the Commonwealth was a 'golden liberty' and *liberum veto* was a derivative.<sup>10</sup> Other contemporary beliefs were that Europe needed Poland because she was the bulwark protecting it from the East, its granary, and an example of the ideal Aristotelian *forma mixta*. Thus, Prażmowska tends to reduce Sarmatism to religious bigotry, xenophobia and orientalizing of dress and manner which is an oversimplification.

Discussing foreign affairs the author raises the old question whether Sobieski's relief of Vienna was a mistake. Discussing the Saxon period she deals extensively with the Northern War and its disastrous effects for the Commonwealth, but says little about the later economic recovery. As for the reign of Augustus III, she rightly stresses the growing domination of the country by the rival magnate families, but could one really say that "three largest families steered foreign policy"? Leszczyński was not merely "allowed estates" in Luneville and Nancy but was made duke of Lorraine and Bar. Prażmowska is not quite correct about the nature of the Tarnogród Confederation, and like Lukowski and Zawadzki very critical of the Bar Confederation. Similarly, like the two authors, she virtually dismisses the 1792 war with Russia.

More important than some minor slips is Prażmowska's assertion that the May 3 Constitution stripped landless gentry of its noble rank (p. 127). In fact, the latter was disfranchised which is not the same thing. The towns were not ignored and the peasants were to be taken under the protection of the state. The author, unlike Lukowski and Zawadzki, names the main leaders of the Targowica Confederation. The treatment of the partitions is fairly short and on the narrative is less nuanced or interpretative here than in some other parts of the book.

Lukowski and Zawadzki begin the second part with the chapter entitled 'Challenging Partitions' up to 1864 and followed by the 'Era of Transformation' which goes on to the eve of WWI. On some 44 pages Lukowski and Zawadzki deftly lead the reader through the complex period punctuated by three national uprisings. I feel, however, that the background of the November Insurrection could

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<sup>10</sup> As Jan Zamoyski put it "Fundamentum nostrae republicae libertas est". Cited in Anna Grześkowiak-Krwawicz, 'Noble Republicanism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (An Attempt at Description)', *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 103 (2011), 49.

have been explained more fully, and a balance sheet presented. The reader may not appreciate the fact that the regime in the Congress Kingdom was becoming more and more oppressive and arbitrary with its network of spies and arrests. An explosion was almost inevitable. As Maurycy Mochnacki put it, “under a mild foreign government the nation rebels because it can, under a tyrannical because it must.”<sup>11</sup>

The authors wisely avoided the historians’ debate about the alleged foreign inspiration of the January Uprising. As for the events of 1862 they might have explained more fully the Castle Square massacre and the role of Wielopolski then and later.

Lukowski and Zawadzki present a fairly detailed picture of developments, political, social and economic in the post-January 1863 period which one needs to understand to have a firm grasp of Polish twentieth-century history. They devote some place to the Jews – touch on assimilation and anti-Semitism – and the beginnings of Ukrainian and Lithuanian national revival. They discuss the rise of new ideologies and their leaders, and the dilemmas which the coming war posed for the Poles. The positions of the Piłsudski and Dmowski camps are clearly presented.

Prażmowska covers the period from 1795 to 1914 in one highly condensed chapter which bears the title ‘Under Foreign Rule’. It is hardly possible to do justice to all the complex developments during the Napoleonic period, the revolutions of 1830, 1863 and the post-January decades in some forty odd pages. Hence, there are oversimplifications and inexactitudes. The reasons for attaching Dąbrowski’s legions to Lombardy are not fully explained. The Treaty of Tilsit did not deprive Prussia of *all* of its Polish possessions. Grand Duke Constantine was not the viceroy (Zajaczek was) but commander of the Kingdom’s army. The conscription (*branka*) did not originate with Russian military but with Wielopolski. The reader can hardly appreciate the crucial and controversial role of the latter. The significance of the January Uprising, its vast territorial extension and network, and the amazing subordination of large numbers of Poles (and Lithuanians) to the orders of the anonymous National Government do not come out clearly from Prażmowska’s narrative.

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<sup>11</sup> Cited (in Polish) in Stefan Kieniewicz, Andrzej Zahorski and Władysław Zajewski, *Trzy powstania narodowe: kościuszkowskie, listopadowe, styczniowe*, ed. Władysław Zajewski (Warsaw, 1994), 272.

If the reader of Lukowski and Zawadzki may be overwhelmed by the number of names of distinguished Poles in various spheres of life, Prażmowska goes to the other extreme of mentioning hardly any. Even Traugutt – the hero and dictator of the January Uprising – is absent in her book. So is Norwid. The author is, of course, entitled to select what she considers important, but one wonders if in a brief survey there should be room for such curiosities as the *nêgres blanc* in San Domingo. There are mistakes and misspellings. To mention a few: Mierosławski was Ludwik not Wiktor, Prażdyński is misspelled, Lelewel was not the head of the Polish Democratic Society (*Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie*). The author, however, should be credited with stressing the role of women and of the Church to a greater extent than Lukowski and Zawadzki.

Discussing the post-January Insurrection decades, Prażmowska rightly observes that the diverse parts of partitioned Poland grew further apart. Russia, Prussia (Germany) and Austria-Hungary pursued different policies toward the Poles, and the latter, pondering the failed uprising also adopted diverse attitudes as for example loyalism or positivism. Toward the end of the century there arose political movements: socialism and nationalism. Prażmowska discusses them extensively including the split PPS – SDKPiL (the Polish Socialist Party – the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) as well as the socio-economic context in which they operated. She covers also the agrarians and the Ukrainian national revival, the Jews and the rise of Zionism.

Prażmowska deals with the 1914–39 period in a chapter entitled ‘War and Independence’. The treatment is uneven – there are some half-truths and odd omissions. Discussing international affairs the author deals briefly with the Polish question in WWI. The chronology of events is not crystal clear. The term and the concept of ‘Mittel-europa’ is missing, and Piłsudski’s role and the story of the Legions are dealt with rather superficially. We do not learn from the two books *when* the war with the Bolsheviks began. The Treaty of Riga was not “brokered by the Western Powers”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The authoritative monograph by Jerzy Borzecki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe* (New Haven, 2008) came out after the publication of the two books.

Prażmowska is highly critical of interwar Polish diplomacy but does not fairly present or analyze the foreign policy options. It is not true that the Poles were not willing to consider the threat to Poland should Germany and Russia reemerge as great powers. Piłsudski spoke about it openly several times. The author (like many western writers) regards Beck as the villain, but does not suggest what alternative course in foreign policy – which she terms as ‘bullish’ – he should have pursued.

The reemergence and consolidation of Polish statehood was no mean achievement given a hundred years of divisions, foreign rule, devastation by wars, rampant poverty, socio-economic backwardness and large number of minorities. The reader may not fully appreciate it as Prażmowska concentrates on shortcomings, which naturally were many. She seems to quote with gusto Keynes’ malicious remark about Poland being an economic impossibility whose only industry was “Jew-baiting”. True, anti-Semitic outrages especially in the 1930s deserve condemnation, and the policy toward other national minorities was inconsistent to say the least. But Prażmowska should have found space to speak of the building of Gdynia and of the economic policies of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski whom she ignores. She does not mention the phenomenon of ‘price scissors’. Incidentally, Polish social legislation was more advanced than that of France.

The high level attained by Polish literature and arts also deserved much more attention. Surely, the Skamander Group and especially its leading poet Julian Tuwim should have figured in the text rather than marginal in the long run futurists such as Bruno Jasiński. The Nobel Prize in literature awarded to Władysław Reymont is missing. So is the name of the internationally known composer Karol Szymanowski to mention some of the many glaring omissions.

The long chapter by Lukowski and Zawadzki which covers the years 1914 to 1945 is called ‘Independence regained and lost’. It provides a good deal of information on the complex story of the two world wars and the Second Republic. The international setting of the early part is perhaps a little weak.

Neither the two authors (nor Prażmowska) say when the hostilities with the Bolsheviks began, but the description of the war is excellent. Piłsudski’s ‘federation’ plans might have been presented in a more nuanced way. The 1934 Polish-German Declaration of Nonaggression is called here a Treaty – a common error. As regards domestic

problems during the interwar years there are minor inexactitudes. Kazimierz Bartel did belong to a political party Polish People's Party 'Wyzwolenie' and then to a small 'Klub Pracy' (Labor Party). As regards the May 1926 Coup the Polish Communists supported Piłsudski for which they were later blamed.

The authors are very good in their description of the September 1939 military operations but I miss a mention of the defence of Westerplatte. The subsequent pages, which deal with the German and Soviet occupation, contain useful figures. Polish war effort abroad is well described. The same is true about the presentation of the 'underground state'. In discussing Allied policy toward Poland, Lukowski and Zawadzki might have stressed the hypocrisy of Roosevelt. The President did not care at all for Poland, and he was largely insensitive about the Jews of whose terrible plight he was informed by the Polish emissary Jan Karski. The authors mention the latter and the organization to help the Jews called 'Żegota'. Their description of the Holocaust in occupied Poland is fair and it includes the Jedwabne massacre by the Poles. There is, however, a discrepancy between the number of Nazi ghettos given by the two authors and by Prażmowska.

Lukowski and Zawadzki show restraint in criticizing the Allied lack of support for Poland, but they say that to the majority of Poles Yalta was the ultimate betrayal. A comparison which they draw with the 'Polish question' at the Congress of Vienna is not very convincing. Lukowski and Zawadzki describe the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising but avoid polemics about it. Their description of conditions in 'liberated' Poland is relatively short but good. There are few minor slips and misspellings.

The chapter which covers the period from 1945 to 1989 is perhaps one of the best in their book. It discusses virtually all major issues and developments in detail and in a balanced fashion. In the concluding paragraph the authors seek to present a balance of the Communist decades. They rightly say that the satellite status was preferable to outright incorporation in the USSR, but the forcible imposition of an alien ideology, a cynical travesty of democracy, the humiliating subservience to the Soviets was hard to bear. Economic mismanagement made Polish economy increasingly backward.

Lukowski and Zawadzki entitled their last chapter 'A new Republic 1989-' A fairly detailed narrative of domestic and international

developments follows with a characterization of leading figures. The authors note both the achievements and the failures of the Third Republic. Describing its rise they praise Polish political realism, stress the Balcerowicz reforms and underline the profound socio-economic and political transformations. They mention 'lustration' and the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), and note some uneasiness about both of them. While evaluating the role of the Church they are critical of its involvement in politics. The authors rightly stress some paradoxes of Polish life.

Polish relations with neighbors are well presented and they include praise for such ministers as Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Bronisław Geremek. The authors speak of the attention paid by the government to 'Polonia' (Polish diaspora), and they mention the efforts of historians (particularly of the Lublin center) to promote regional cooperation.

Seeking to present a balanced picture of the Third Republic, the authors draw our attention to such dangerous phenomena as populism – and they might have added 'chauvinism'. Indeed, the current political scene with deep divisions accompanied by brutal partisan attacks and such phenomena as *Radio Maryja* (the Catholic Radio station and conservative movement) makes one anxious about the future. The chapter ends with the year 2005 and one can only share the author's hope and wish that the Poles show greater sense of responsible citizenship, social harmony, and achieve a more equitable division of wealth.

The last chapters by Prażmowska are entitled: 'Second World War and the Establishment of Communism in Poland', and 'From Communism to Democracy'. She praises Polish struggles on all fronts, but also omits any reference to Westerplatte and the decoding of 'Enigma'. She uses a misleading and unfair word 'fled' when referring to the Polish division which cut off from the main French army to cross into Switzerland. The controversial Warsaw Uprising she treats rather dispassionately.

Prażmowska states that there were no Polish collaborators with the Nazis largely because the latter were not interested. She alleges that Bolesław Piasecki made an offer which the Germans rejected. There is no evidence to prove it. Describing the horrors of the German occupation, Prażmowska rightly stresses the Holocaust, but when speaking at length about Polish anti-Semitism (and referring to Jan Gross'

*Neighbors*<sup>13</sup>) she omits any mention of ‘Żegota’ and the numerous Poles remembered at Yad Vashem.

Main postwar developments political, social and economic are fairly well presented. We have the Mikołajczyk episode, gradual Stalinization, ‘the thaw’, the Poznań events of 1956, Polish October and hopes for evolution entertained among other by the Paris *Kultura* which incidentally the author ignores. This is odd given its impact on the Poles.

In the passage on Ukrainian-Polish relations, Prażmowska mentions the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the forcible resettlement of Ukrainians (but leaves out the name ‘Operation Wisła’). She analyzes the Kielce pogrom and postwar anti-Semitism. Regarding Cardinal Wyszyński, the author omits the 1950 Compromise which he negotiated, and his later famous *non possumus* which led to his arrest. One misses any reference to American policies of Liberation, Containment and Engagement which were of significance for Poland. The input of Zbigniew Brzezinski deserved a word or two. Earlier, ‘the Rapacki Plan’ may have been mentioned. But all these slips do not detract from the value of this chapter.

The rise of Gomułka and the Polish October constituted a watershed which may have been more strongly emphasized. Whether in a short book on Polish history Marek Hłasko and Adam Wążyk deserve a line but Jerzy Giedroyc does not is to say the least surprising. The chapter ends with the author’s opinion that the early 1960s were a time of moderate optimism, the Poles being “allowed to become part of the developments affecting Europe”.

The above statement shows Prażmowska’s inclination to bring out people’s accommodation to the regime rather than dwell on the growing opposition. The reader may not fully realize that protests against wage increases quickly acquired a political dimension as expressed in the slogan ‘bread and freedom’. The rise and fall of ‘revisionism’ is not mentioned by name. The importance of the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) which helped to unite for the first time workers and intelligentsia, needed stressing. So did the Helsinki Third Basket which influenced the strategy of the opposition. The role of the Church, whether we think of cooperation with the opposition

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<sup>13</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001).

advocated by Michnik or its growing impact on the society especially after the election of John Paul II should have been more fully discussed.

The last chapter 'From Communism to Democracy' contains a rather optimistic appreciation of the recent events. The transition was peaceful and Jaruzelski's martial law was relatively painless. Prazmowska has her own and definite view on the general's motivation and Soviet decisions. Politically, Poland is active in European structures and doing better economically than some other states. As is often the case in this book there are some odd omissions of persons who had a real impact on Polish society and culture. Surely, Czesław Miłosz and Zbigniew Herbert ought to have been included. There are many vexing typos: Jaruzelski is misspelled once in the text, Leszek Kołakowski in the index, *etc.* Naturally, the Polish political scene as described in the conclusion has greatly changed since the publication of the book. Are the splits within the Church and the antagonism between major political parties: Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform) and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice), normal phenomena of democracy? We have no answer yet.

How should one evaluate these two books? As noted at the beginning, Prazmowska's *History of Poland* is shorter, does not include a real bibliography and has only a few maps. Whether this resulted from the nature of the series or was the author's choice one does not know. As noted, the number of mistakes and omissions is greater than in the Lukowski and Zawadzki volume. From the point of view of the student, the latter *Concise History* provides a richer fare, and the numerous maps, tables, charts, chronologies are particularly useful and enlightening. So is the extensive bibliography.

In my remarks I concentrated on shortcomings, which does not mean that I do not appreciate the two books. These brief histories of Poland constitute a genuine addition to Polish historiography in the English language. The revised second edition of Prazmowska's book is definitely an improvement on the original text. The three authors ought to be congratulated for providing us with learned, readable and by and large objective presentations. In this and other respects I found the volume of Lukowski and Zawadzki particularly praiseworthy.