

## Aleksander Gieysztor and Gerard Labuda. For the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Two Great historians' Birthdays (1916–2016)

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*Two Polish historians and friends, both born in 1916, were among the most eminent medievalists in Poland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their academic debut came in the years preceding the outbreak of WWII, while their careers progressed brilliantly in the years following the end of the war. For several decades, they marked their academic presence as the authors of great works, and they held the most prominent offices in academic life in Poland and in the international arena. They took an active part in the process of political transition, leading to Poland regaining full sovereignty in 1989, and they approved of its evolutionary mode. They were unquestionable moral authorities for scholarly circles and beacons in public activities. Aleksander Gieysztor died in 1999, followed eleven years later by Gerard Labuda (2010), who remained active until his last days. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their birthdays reminds historical circles, first and foremost, albeit not only, of Warsaw and Poznań, about their academic and public achievements.*

Key words: *Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century; Medievalism; science and politics; historical culture; political culture*

### I

The Gieysztor family came from the Trock region in historical Lithuania. They served as deputies to the Parliament of the Polish Republic and held a variety of posts in the life of the gentry of the Kowno region. Jakub (1827–1897) was forced to leave his homeland, having been sentenced to hard labour far away in Russia, as an insurgent in the 1863 uprising (he described his stay in Siberia in his memoirs). After seven years he was permitted to settle down in Warsaw<sup>1</sup>, where he was transformed from a member of the gentry to a clerk, and then a bookseller. He was buried in the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw. His

numerous descendants lived in Mazovia. They cultivated their family traditions, although they had already become members of the intelligentsia. The historian-to-be<sup>2</sup> was a son of Aleksander (1876–1948), a clerk on the Moscow-Kazań railroad board, who in 1921 moved with his family to Poland and settled in Warsaw after the collapse of czarism.

Aleksander Junior was born in Moscow on July 17, 1916, but he was connected with Warsaw, the capital of Poland, throughout his life. He already spoke foreign languages, primarily French and Russian, when he started learning in the renowned Ludwik Lorentz Gymnasium. Having graduated from that school, he took up history (and art history) at Warsaw University in 1933. In order to conclude his Master's dissertation about Charlemagne, he took an academic trip to Paris in 1937. Two years earlier, he participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Polish Historians in Vilnius. It was only towards the end of his life, however, that he was to visit the family seat of his ancestors (Gieysztorzy Małe and Gieysztorzy Wielkie), located in the former Sejny district on the Lithuanian side of the border. In this neighborhood, the village of Gieysztorzyski<sup>3</sup> was also located, in the Wołkowysk (Volkovysk) district.

As a disciple of Marcelli Handlesman and Stanisław Kętrzyński, under their supervision, he ventured deep into medieval studies. He was still a student when he penned his first publication, a review of the translation of *The Life of Charlemagne* by Einhard, translated by Jan Parandowski (1935). This was followed by two more publications in the following year, and four more one year later. Altogether, he published 14 papers and reviews, including his Master's dissertation (*Władza Karola Wielkiego w opinii współczesnych* [The rule of Charlemagne in the opinion of contemporaries]) before the outbreak of WWII. He also completed one year of military service. In the seminar classes run by Handelsman, Gieysztor met his future wife, Irena Czarnecka, who was to become a seasoned expert in historical demographics. Right after their wedding, in October 1938, they went to Paris, where Gieysztor had received

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1 Kosman, M. (2010). Z Wileńszczyzny nad Wisłę. Kartka z dziejów wychodźstwa politycznego po upadku powstania styczniowego. In *Studia z dziejów Europy Wschodniej*. Księga pamiątkowa dedykowana Profesorowi Arturowi Kijasowi w 70 rocznicę urodzin. Poznań, p. 217 ff.

2 An extensive list of studies devoted to him was developed by M. Koczerska, *Aleksander Gieysztor (1916–1999)*, in the 1<sup>st</sup> vol. of a collective work edited by J. Strzelczyk: *Mediewiści (2011)*. Poznań, pp. 29–30, footnote 1.

3 *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, vol. II. (1881). Warszawa, p. 548 ff.

a scholarship for one year. He spent his time working in libraries, studying in the renowned École Pratique des Hautes Études and meeting outstanding experts on the Carolingian era.

During WWII Gieysztor worked in the Central Archives of Historical Records and wrote his doctoral dissertation on the encyclical by Pope Sergius IV, which he defended in 1942 under clandestine conditions. He became active in the Information Department of the Home Army (AK). He taught at the underground Free Polish University, for which he wrote a coursebook, titled *Encyklopedia nauk pomocniczych historii* [Encyclopedia of auxiliary sciences of history]. He fought in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and after its collapse he was taken prisoner by the Germans and spent six months in POW camps.

When WWII ended, Gieysztor worked for the Chief Directorate for the Protection of Museums and Monuments, and at the beginning of the academic year 1945/46 he was employed as an assistant professor by the Institute of History of Warsaw University. For several years, he also commuted to teach at the newly established Łódź University. As early as 1946, he was awarded a postdoctoral degree (and the title of *docent*) on the basis of a dissertation about the treasury policies in the medieval state of the Piast dynasty. In 1949, he was nominated *professor extraordinarius* and in 1960 full professor. His home university appointed him as Head of the Department of Auxiliary Sciences of History and Director of the Institute of History in 1953 (he retained this office for over twenty years). In the 1956–1959 term of office, he held the position of Vice-Rector of Warsaw University. At the same time, he was Deputy Director of the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) where he was in charge of the Editorial Unit of Medieval Sources.

In the new political reality, Gieysztor continued his clandestine activities in the Freedom and Independence (WiN) organization, but when the amnesty was announced in 1945 he came out and fully committed himself to organizational and academic life. From 1945 to 1952 he was in the top circle of the Board of Studies into the Beginnings of the Polish State. In the Stalinist period, he turned out to be a realist, and refrained from extremist attitudes while maintaining a consensual standpoint in contacts with the state authorities. He held a number of posts as an editor of academic periodicals. He took part in many conferences in Poland and abroad, delivering lectures and acting as a member of different committees; at the San Francisco congress he was elected deputy chairman of the International Committee of Historical Sciences (1975–1980) and then its chairman for the next term of office. From 1957 to 1998, alongside Gerard Labuda and Brygida Kúrbis from Adam

Mickiewicz University in Poznań, he was on the editorial board of a prestigious annual "Studia Źródłoznawcze" published by the Institute of History at PAN.

The authority Aleksander Gieysztor enjoyed allowed him to defend freedom of speech after the political breakthrough in October 1956. In 1964, he was among the 34 signatories of a letter addressed to Prime Minister Józef Cyrankiewicz to protest against the curbing of academic publications and censorship. However, he shied from conflict with the authorities so as not to limit the potential contacts of Polish scholars with the West. This allowed him to become efficiently involved in the task of the reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, a huge symbol of national history and culture demolished by the Germans during WWII. The political decision to this effect was made in 1971, preceded by unofficial preparatory work started as early as 1949. Gieysztor was the first director of the Royal Castle, from 1980 to 1991, and when he retired, he held the post of the president of the Academic Board and continued to hold numerous meetings at the Castle.

In 1971, he was elected a corresponding member of PAN, and in 1980 became a full member, becoming PAN's chairman for a three-year term six months later. He held this function at a time of profound political transition in Poland. Once again, the members of PAN vested this noble office in him under new political circumstances for the term of office 1990–1992. Among a multitude of Polish and foreign distinctions, Gieysztor was conferred nine honorary doctorates between 1960 and 1997. He was a member of the Warsaw Scientific Society (TNW) (and its chairman for two terms), the Polish Academy of Learning, the Medieval Academy of America, the Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium, the British Academy and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm.

Despite all these tasks, Gieysztor still found time for academic studies. The majority of his works encompass several-dozen-pages-long studies on medieval arts that have taken a permanent position in medievalist historiography. The bibliography covering the first forty years (1935–1975) is 764 items long and lists purely academic studies next to significant publications in cultural periodicals addressed to a broader circle of readers.<sup>4</sup> The studies in his main research area produced publications in the field of the auxiliary sciences of history, designed for the purpose of academic teaching, including several re-editions of the

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<sup>4</sup> *Cultus et cognitio. Studia z dziejów średniowiecznej kultury* (1976). Warszawa, pp. 9–59.

volumes of *Zarys nauk pomocniczych historii* [Outline of auxiliary sciences of history] (co-authored by Stanisław Herbst). As time went by, Gieysztor, as an author, tutor of young faculty members and editor of collective works, devoted a lot of his time to the history of Warsaw and his homeland region of Masovia. Towards the end of his creative period, the mythology of the pagan Slavs came to the fore as the topic of his work, which was discussed in several editions of the study, enriched by the presentation of a critical apparatus in the issue published after his death.<sup>5</sup>

He received distinctions of war, the French Legion of Honor, Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and in Poland: the Knight's Cross, Commander's Cross and Commander's Cross with Star of the Order of the Rebirth of Poland and Order of the Banner of Labour of 1<sup>st</sup> class; he was an honorary citizen of Warsaw. In 1994, he received the highest distinction in Poland – the Order of the White Eagle. He died on February 9, 1999 and was buried in the family grave in the Powązki cemetery in Warsaw.

## II

When the academic community of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań gathered at the ceremony to inaugurate the new academic year on October 1, 2010 at 10am, the stage of the University Auditorium was filled with senators, visitors and former rectors of this university, with the exception of Gerard Labuda, a senior rector who had led the university from 1962 to 1965. It did not come as a surprise to those who were close to him; this senior Polish historian, who was to turn 94 in only three months, was heroically fighting serious health problems while retaining excellent intellectual condition. However, for several years he would attend the inauguration ceremonies *incognito*, taking a first row seat in the audience to avoid the burden of appearing officially on the stage and wearing the robe. On that particular day, we, his disciples and closest friends, were unaware that the Great Humanist was bidding farewell to the world in his house at 8 Kanclerska street, in Poznań. He had been ready for that moment for some time. One day earlier, he sent a letter to his successor in the rector's office in which he justified his inability to take

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<sup>5</sup> Gieysztor, A. (1982, 1986, 2006). *Mitologia Słowian*. Warszawa. Henryk Łowmiański (1898–1984), a great medieval expert from Poznań and the author of *Religia Słowian i jej upadek (w. VI–XII)* (1979). Warszawa, was most interested in the next book by Gieysztor.

part in the inauguration ceremony due to poor health and preparing for a long journey; he also informed the rector about his decision as to his final resting place, which was to be in his homeland Kashubia. It was on this very day of October 1 that the Wydawnictwo Poznańskie publishing company was supposed to deliver the copies of a fresh edition of his book *Próba nowej systematyki i nowej interpretacji źródeł historycznych z Postowiem*.

One week later, the University Auditorium was filled to the last seat during the mourning session of the AMU Senate which bade farewell to the senior rector, whose coffin was decorated with the Order of the White Eagle, awarded to him posthumously by the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski. This distinction was the culmination of the long list of awards Gerard Labuda received over six decades, including the Order of the Banner of Labour of 1<sup>st</sup> class and the Grand Cross of the Order of the Rebirth of Poland. Academic Poznań said goodbye to one of its great professors, and Polish historians paid tribute to the last of the great trio of eminent medievalists from Poznań, alongside Kazimierz Tymieniecki (1887–1968) and Henryk Łowmiański (1898–1984). The former was one of Labuda's masters, the latter, an expatriate from Vilnius who found the right place to produce his fundamental works in Poznań, owing to the initiative of the other two in 1945. At that time, Tymieniecki was the dean, and Labuda the deputy dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and they reinstated the historical seminar after the destruction of WWII. In the evening, the Senior Archbishop of Gdańsk, Tadeusz Gołowski, led the mourning service for Professor Labuda at the small St. Lawrence Church in Luzino, near Wejherowo. Next day, uncountable masses paid their last respects to Professor Labuda, including many priests and three bishops (the ceremony was led by the Metropolitan Bishop of Gdańsk, Sławoj Leszek Głódź, and the moving farewell speeches were given by his Kashubian compatriots, Senior Primate Archbishop Henryk Muszyński and Prime Minister Donald Tusk).

### III

The bustling family house of Gerard Labuda gradually quieted down; eleven years earlier his wife, Alberta of the Wielopolski family, doctor of Romance studies, left it for ever. The children became independent one after another, and now they live across the globe: Aleksander, a Romanist, is a professor at Wrocław University; Iwo, a mathematician, is a professor at the University of Mississippi, USA; Adam, an art historian,

lives in Berlin and Poznań; Damian, a geneticist, works in Montreal, Canada; and Anastazja, an art historian, works in Geneva. On that day, the four sons and daughter with their families accompanied their father on his last journey.<sup>6</sup>

Why was Luzino – a small locality with history dating back to the Middle Ages, selected as a burial place? The future historian went to elementary school there from 1924 to 1928, and he had especially good relations with this place in the last decades of his life, which was reflected in his being granted the honorary citizenship of Luzino; the same holds true also for Wejherowo where he was an outstanding student at the Jan III Sobieski classical gymnasium from 1928 to 1936. When Luzino was celebrating its 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1995, Labuda was the main author (pages 5–10 and 35–181) of the monograph *Dzieje wsi Luzino do schyłku XIX wieku* [History of the village of Luzino to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century], developed on the basis of a thorough search of the archives and published by the local municipal office. He found the time to pen it, despite his numerous tasks as an organizer and author of works about ‘great history.’ He was one of the three co-authors of this book (the remaining two were archeologists), but the most prominent one. He also wrote an autobiographical preface to it, where he mentioned his first teachers of reading and writing (that is his parents) and went on to add: “but it was the Elementary School in Luzino that taught me to read, write and speak Polish correctly. What good was it that I knew Polish, if I was familiar with it only from church sermons and the prayer book, and I read and pronounced every word in Kashubian, and my spelling seriously diverted from the rules of correct Polish.”

The way from home to school was “four kilometers long and it took me along the roads and dirt paths that were difficult to walk, especially in winter.” It had to be walked in all kinds of weather by a frail boy who had a lot of different adventures on the way; he told me about one, when he fell into a deep pit one winter and getting out of the snow demanded a lot of effort and ingenuity. Wejherowo was the door to the world for him; he commuted there every day from Wielki Las, where his family lived at the

<sup>6</sup> Kosman, M. (2007). Dziewięćdziesięciolecie urodzin Profesora Gerarda Labudy. Zapiski Historyczne, R. LXXII, Toruń, brochure 1, pp. 225–228; idem, Pożegnanie Profesora Gerarda Labudy (1916–2010), ZH, R. LXXV, brochure 4, Toruń 2010, pp. 157–163. A synthetic biography including biographic texts and major works by Gerard Labuda published between 2007 and 2010 can be found in: Strzelczyk, J. (2007, 2010). Gerard Labuda 1916–2010. In *Wybitni historycy wielkopolscy*, J. Strzelczyk (ed.), pp. 855–875.

time, walking, cycling or taking a train. He decided to bequeath his immense book collection to the Przebendowski Palace in Wejherowo, which received part of it several years earlier, while the rest was to be transferred after his death, because he used this impressive source of reference to his last days. For as long as his health allowed, he would also frequently visit Luzino; he celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday there in 1986 at a ceremony organized by his compatriots alongside the celebrations in the academic Poznań.

Gerard Labuda's academic biography goes beyond the framework that is typical even of outstanding scholars. He was lucky enough, however, not to have been constrained by those around him who were capable of recognizing the unique talent of a student who made his debut in academic discussion while still at high school, one year before his final examination (it is true that he used an alias, but he was easily identified by local professors). The historians in Poznań treated him as a partner right from the beginning, asking him to write a paper while he was still a freshman; this paper eventually transformed into an extensive dissertation of 220 pages in print (*Polska i krzyżacka misja w Prusach do połowy XIII wieku* [The mission of Poland and the Teutonic Knights in Prussia until the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century]). During the German occupation, this dissertation laid the foundation for his Master's degree, whereas the next one (*Magdeburg i Poznań. Założenie arcybiskupstwa magdeburskiego i biskupstwa poznańskiego na tle wschodniej polityki misyjnej Ottona Wielkiego* [Magdeburg and Poznań. The establishment of the archbishopric of Magdeburg and bishopric of Poznań versus Otto the Great's missionary policy in the East]), published by "Roczniki Historyczne" in 1938, was recognized as a doctoral dissertation by the Secret University of Western Lands in 1943. Additionally, in 1938, the student published eight inquisitive reviews in "Roczniki Historyczne" as well as in "Slavia Occidentalis," "Annales Missiologicae" and "Kwartalnik Historyczny."

In the first half of 1939, Labuda went to Sweden, for six months of a royal scholarship, and he returned with further papers that were ready to be published but which were lost during the wartime. He spent this time in the Kielce region, as a librarian of Margrave Wielopolski in Chroberz and a bookkeeper, after the estate was taken over by the German administration. He did not waste his time even then, however, writing a post-doctoral dissertation about the beginnings of the Polish state; this paper was also lost and had to be rewritten by the author upon his return to Poznań. Labuda and other scholars ventured to rebuild the historical seminar and did an enormous service in the reconstruction of the devastated collection of books.

In 1950, Professor Labuda was granted the title of *professor extraordinarius* and that of full professor six years later. In 1946, as a deputy professor he headed the Department of the History of Western Slavdom; from 1950 to 1970 he was in charge of the Department of the History of Poland and then of the Department of General Medieval History. As the rector of Adam Mickiewicz University from 1962 to 1965, he breathed a new spirit into the university and the academic circles of Poznań, coming forward with great initiatives that were to be implemented by his successors in the future. Shortly before the dissolution of the Polish Academy of Learning he became a corresponding member, the same honour was granted to him by the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1964, which acknowledged him as full member two years later.

It would be difficult to present a detailed account of all the organizational and editorial functions (the most important of which include the management of "Roczniki Historyczne" from 1958 to 1986, co-editing of "Studia Źródłoznawcze" from 1957 to 1997, and being in charge of the fundamental *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich* [Dictionary of Slavic Antiquities] from 1961 to 1999). He was Secretary General and then the Chairman of the Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences as well as the director of the Institute for Western Affairs, and saved both these institutions from liquidation using his skills as an exquisite strategist and a seasoned tactician. As a member of PAN, he was among the founders of its Poznań Branch, heading it from 1972 to 1980; he held the office of PAN Vice Chairman from 1984 to 1989. In the same period he was instrumental in the re-establishment of the Polish Academy of Learning in Kraków and its first chairman, elected in 1989. In 1994, he became its honorary chairman, a position which he held until he died.

Within PAN Labuda organized the Department of the History of Pomerania in Poznań, a part of the Institute of History, where he worked with his closest colleagues, the heads of research centres in Toruń (Marian Biskup) and Gdańsk (Edmund Cieślak) to be soon followed by Szczecin (Bogdan Dopierata). It was in this department that the many volumes of the *Historia Pomorza* [History of Pomerania] were drawn up under his editorial supervision. He took personal patronage over the development of *Historia Szczecina* [History of Szczecin]. Since his untypical biography has already been mentioned, one more fact is worth adding: in 1970, he lost his full time job at AMU but he continued to fulfill his responsibilities there (during an indefinite unpaid leave) and managed the department and received rector's awards. Only a few realized at that time that he was a full time employee of PAN alone. This relation was evidenced by successive jubilees and the last goodbye. A book of nearly

800 pages that commemorated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday was published under the joint patronage of Adam Mickiewicz University and the Institute of History of PAN,<sup>7</sup> and the celebrations in March 1987 took place both in Poznań and Warsaw. One year before he died, during the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AMU, organized under the auspices of the Speaker of Polish Parliament, Labuda reminded the audience that he had been connected with the University for 73 years. Those gathered in the University Auditorium welcomed him with great applause, unlike anybody else.

In the immeasurable (but scrupulously listed) creative achievements of Gerard Labuda, the topic of his homeland, Kashubia, seems to be overshadowed by the works on great history, but even the former alone would be enough for several diligent scholars. Allow us to mention several dozen papers, articles and monographs, including the above-mentioned monograph of Luzino, source publications (*Inwentarze starostw puckiego i kościerskiego z XVII w.* [Inventories of the Puck and Kościerzyna districts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century], *Inwentarze starostwa bytowskiego i lęborskiego z XVII i XVIII w.* [Inventories of the Bytów and Lębork districts in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries]; the critical edition of *Kroniki Klasztoru Franciszkanów Ściślejszej Obserwacji w Wejherowie w latach 1633–1676* [Chronicles of the Monastery of Franciscans of the Strict Observance in Wejherowo in 1633–1676] by Rev. Grzegorz Gdański, that Labuda completed, paying the price of serious sight impairment sixty years after he had found this text while arranging the collection of the former convent before graduating from high school), and collections of studies *Zapiski kaszubskie, pomorskie i morskie* [Notes from Kashubia, Pomerania and the sea] and *Kaszubi i ich dzieje* [Kashubians and their history], published by the Zrzeszenie Kaszubsko-Pomorskie, the Town Council of Wejherowo and Oficyna Czeć to commemorate Labuda's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and to "thank him for his research efforts and present best wishes in continuing creative work for the benefit of his homeland." The copy the author presented to me on May 2, 1997 bears a dedication where he referred to this book as the "Kashubian *membra disiecta* hoping that it would become the *membrum integrum* one day." His wish came true at the end of the 1990s when the first volume (534 pages) of *Historia Kaszubów w dziejach Pomorza* [The history of Kashubians in the history of Pomerania] encompassing the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ars historia. Prace z dziejów powszechnych i Polski* (1976). Poznań. The bibliography, spanning the period from his academic debut in 1935 to the early 1976, accounts for 1,059 items.

Middle Ages was published. In evoking the history of his Kashubian homeland, Gerard Labuda never supported its endeavors to become a separate entity, and always perceived it as part of the history of Poland, being himself an ardent patriot and sapient citizen, which he repeatedly evidenced, especially in periods of breakthrough. One such moment involved his participation in the Consultative Board at the President of the Council of State, when Wojciech Jaruzelski held this office. Its lively sessions held at the Belweder Palace forged the idea that was soon to take the shape of the agreement made at the Round Table.<sup>8</sup>

*Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego* [Studies into the beginnings of the Polish State], *Pierwsze państwo słowiańskie – państwo Samona* [The first Slav state. The state of Samo], *Fragmety dziejów Słowiańszczyzny zachodniej* [Fragments of the history of Western Slavdom], *Źródła skandynawskie i anglosaskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny* [Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon sources of the history of Slavdom], *Źródła, sagi i legendy do najdawniejszych dziejów Polski* [Sources, sagas and legends of the oldest Polish history], *Polska granica zachodnia. Tysiąc lat dziejów politycznych* [Poland's western border. One thousand years of political history], *Dzieje Zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach. Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, państwo, ideologia* [History of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. The economy, society, state and ideology] (co-authored with Marian Biskup), *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy o przeszłości* [Polish-German talks about the past] – are all milestones of Polish historiography in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that stand out among over two thousand publications enumerated in successive biographies published from 1976 (*Ars historica*) to 2006 (*Naukowe dzieło Profesora Gerarda Labudy*). The great collective works created under his editorship must not go unmentioned, including *Nauka w Wielkopolsce – przeszłość i teraźniejszość* (Academia in Wielkopolska – past and present], and – first and foremost – the many volumes of *Historia dyplomacji polskiej* [History of Polish diplomacy].

This team venture required both extraordinary organizational experience and purely diplomatic skills, as it was written in the period of censorship and conflict in the top echelons of power. Initially planned to encompass three volumes, it expanded to six (the last one has not been published so far, even in the conditions of full publishing freedom, because it deals with the ambitions and sensitive issues of the last fifty

<sup>8</sup> For more about the work of Gerard Labuda and Aleksander Gieysztor in the Consultative Board see part IV below.

years). The first three volumes (up to 1572 – edited by Marian Biskup, 1572–1795 – by Zbigniew Wójcik, and 1795–1918 – by Ludwik Bazylow) were published in 1982, followed by another two, encompassing the period of the interwar period and WWII (the government in exile and the underground state), issued after quite a long break when censorship pressures disappeared. Gerard Labuda and Waldemar Michowicz also edited an extensive volume presenting a synthetic outline of Polish diplomacy between the mid-10<sup>th</sup> and the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (which was also translated into English).

Professor Labuda was closely connected with the academic circles of Toruń, which culminated in an honorary doctorate conferred to him by the Nicolaus Copernicus University in 1993 (five more were awarded to him in Poland by Gdańsk, Kraków, Warszawa, Wrocław and Szczecin; in 1996 the doctorate awarded by his Alma Mater was renewed, and he was awarded the medal of *Palmae Universitatis Studiorum Posnaniensis*). His relations with Toruń were also reflected by his honorary membership of the Academic Society in Toruń (TNT). The first connection in terms of research topics was provided by Karol Górski (1903–1988), who received a postdoctoral degree in Poznań in 1933, and who moved to Toruń in the fall of 1945. Labuda, a young historian from Poznań, published his first paper on the pages of “Zapiski TNT” presenting a programme *O potrzebach historiografii polskiej w dziedzinie historii Pomorza zachodniego w średniowieczu* [The needs of Polish historiography in the field of the history of Western Pomerania in the Middle Ages](1947); he continued to publish there as an author and reviewer for over six decades. Two jubilee brochures including the bibliography of his works in 1976–1996 were published to celebrate Professor Labuda’s 70<sup>th</sup> and 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays respectively. On March 29, 1955, at the session of the TNT, he presented a paper titled *Próba nowej systematyki i nowej interpretacji źródeł historycznych* [An attempt at a new semantics and new interpretation of historic sources], which was later printed in the TNT Reports (*Sprawozdania TNT* 9, 1955, pp. 65–68), stirring a lively debate; the full version of this paper was published in the first volume of “*Studia Źródłoznawcze*” (I, 1957, pp. 3–48), and recalled in his last book, which he did not live to see.<sup>9</sup>

He was given a long life, and he made full and creative use of it. That is the reason for his unbelievably abundant achievements, and becoming

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<sup>9</sup> Labuda, G. (2010). *Próba nowej systematyki i nowej interpretacji źródeł historycznych* [reprinted from the 1957 edition with the afterword written from the 50-year perspective (*Postłowie*, pp. 94–114)]; Poznań.

a classic historiographer while still alive. All this happened despite his poor health and constant struggling with ailments. The long years of this struggle toughened him, and allowed him to endure the permanent crisis of the final stage never dropping his pen (he actually used an electric typewriter, and having revised his texts he would have them retyped in an electronic version). I met him for the last time precisely two weeks before October 1, 2010, and he showed me his last paper then (which he sent to be retyped but never saw the computer printout). It was not for the first time that he told me that only intellectual work kept him alive. On another occasion he compared his last years to the life of a monk following a strict rule. For a long time, he gradually resigned from his offices, remaining committed only to pure research. As a Pole, and a citizen, he was actively observing the current events, which made him increasingly concerned.

I started with this sad goodbye to move on now to the last grand jubilee – his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, which in December 2010 became a holiday for Poznań academia and historians from Poland and abroad, who filled the University Auditorium to the brim.<sup>10</sup> On the same day in the afternoon, the Small Hall (Lubrański Hall) hosted a session entitled “The academic achievements of Professor Gerard Labuda.” Outstanding experts delivered ten speeches in an attempt to encompass the entire scope of the achievements of the hero of the day; below follows the list of their topics: “Gerard Labuda’s studies on the history of culture;” “Social culture in the academic research by Gerard Labuda;” “Gerard Labuda as a historian of early Polish Christianity;” “*Český kontext díla Gerarda Labudy* [The Czech context of Gerard Labuda’s oeuvre];” “The beginnings of the Polish state in Gerard Labuda’s research;” “Gerard Labuda as a historian of early Slavdom and Slavic-German contacts;” “History of the Teutonic Order in the academic oeuvre by Professor Gerard Labuda;” “Pomerania – Brandenburg – Prussia in Gerard Labuda’s academic studies;” “Polish Western and Northern Lands in the historic work of Gerard Labuda” and “Sources in Gerard Labuda’s historic research.”

The topics of this session could have been expanded to include, for instance, Labuda’s studies of his Kashubian homeland, the more so as they had just borne fruit in the shape of the first volume of the history of Kashubia,<sup>11</sup> presented to him during the ceremony by his compatriots

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Dziewięćdziesięciolecie urodzin Profesora Gerarda Labudy* (2007), *ZH*, LXXII, brochure 1, pp. 225–228.

<sup>11</sup> Labuda, G. *Historia Kaszubów w dziejach Pomorza*. Vol. I: *Czasy średniowieczne* (2006). Gdańsk. The presentation brings the reader up to 1525. The successive two volumes that are supposed to bring readers to contemporary times are being prepared by Zygmunt Szulika and Jan Borzyszkowski.

from Gdańsk (where the work had been published), Wejherowo and Luzino. The Wydawnictwo Poznańskie publishing house presented him with a four-volume collection, edited by B. Wachowiak, and dedicated to Professor Labuda, *Źródła do dziejów kaszubsko-polskich aspektów dziejów Pomorza Zachodniego do roku 1945*. The extended texts of the speeches delivered during the session had been published in an extensive book (of 286 pages), prepared by the Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM under the same title as the session itself (*The academic achievements of ...*), to be distributed during the ceremony. The book also included the bibliography of Labuda's works, covering 1,875 items at that time<sup>12</sup> (currently expanded to well over 2,000). Professor Labuda also received the issues of periodicals dedicated to him on the occasion of his jubilee, including *Przegląd Zachodni*, which featured an extensive biographical section. He, in turn, presented his most recent study, *Studia krytyczne o początkach Zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach i na Pomorzu* [Critical studies of the beginnings of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and Pomerania] (407 pages)<sup>13</sup> and reaffirmed a written commitment made to the Director of Wydawnictwo Poznańskie that he would soon submit yet another essay for print, namely *Rozważania nad teorią i historią kultury i cywilizacji* [Considerations on the theory and history of culture and civilization]. He kept this promise, and the study of 562 pages was published in 2008, providing an occasion to meet the 82-year-old author at a promotional event organized at Collegium Historicum, during which he bewildered his younger colleagues with his excellent creative condition.<sup>14</sup>

Successive dissertations kept being published (including those in numerous commemorative books; further are in press) and reprinted. This

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<sup>12</sup> *Naukowe dzieło Profesora Gerarda Labudy* (2006). Poznań. During the 6th conference organized in the "Political culture in Poland" series on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Professor Labuda was also presented with two volumes of the collection of studies titled *Litwa w polskiej tradycji i kulturze politycznej* (2006). Poznań, 368+263 pages. G. Labuda took an active part in those meetings organized by the Institute (at present: Faculty) of Political Science and Journalism.

<sup>13</sup> Labuda, G. (2007). *Studia krytyczne o początkach Zakonu Krzyżackiego. Pisma wybrane*. Poznań. This extensive volume includes the studies published from 1954 to 1992. Several years earlier, *Szkice historyczne X–XI wieku. Z dziejów organizacji Kościoła w Polsce we wczesnym średniowieczu* (2004) [Historical sketches of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. About the history of organization of the Church in Poland in the early Middle Ages] (Poznań, 487 pages) were published, accompanied by another reprint of *Szkice historyczne jedenastego wieku* [Historical sketches of the 11<sup>th</sup> century] including a foreword by Gerard Labuda. Both were published by Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.

<sup>14</sup> Idem (2008). *Rozważania nad teorią i historią kultury i cywilizacji*. Poznań, p. 561.

is going to continue for a long time, confirming Horace's *Non omnis moriar*. Another quote by the same poet (*Aere perennius*) gave the title to one of the anniversary books celebrating his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>15</sup> It was published by the School of Management and Banking (WSZiB) where Professor Labuda was employed for the last decade of his life, and where he developed further valuable studies in the field of the methodology of the humanities and the evaluation of Polish historiography after 1945, working at the Institute of Political History. He was able to conduct this evaluation from the point of view of an active witness to this period<sup>16</sup> and he did so in an utterly objective manner and taking into account the broad political context, publishing potential and specificity of work in the times of censorship.

Free of the burden of teaching and organizational activities, he remained an active observer and participant in public life, a guide and pundit for younger generations of researchers, including his own disciples (many of them already retired) although he was aware of growing weaker.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, he did manage to conclude one more text, printed one year after his death.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Non omnis moriar. Profesorowi Gerardowi Labudzie dnia 28 XII 2001 roku w hołdzie* (2001). Poznań. For more on the celebration and presentation of the anniversary book on January 25, 2002, see: Kosman, M. (2002). *Profesorowi Gerardowi Labudzie w 65-lecie pracy naukowej*, Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania i Bankowości, Forum Naukowe. Instytut Historii Politycznej, R. VII, no. 2/15/ Poznań, pp. 256–273.

<sup>16</sup> *Rozwój metod dziejopisarskich od starożytności do współczesności* [Advancements in historiographical methodology from Antiquity to the Present]. Part I: *Do schyłku XIX wieku* [Up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century] (2003). Poznań; part II: *Wiek XX* [The 20<sup>th</sup> century] (2010). Poznań. See also an extensive study developed alongside a synthesis of the history of Poland, prepared in ten volumes by scholars from the Jagiellonian University (Kraków 1999–2001): *Zadania i cele poznawcze syntezy historii Polski od prawieku do współczesności* (2004), *Prace historyczno-politologiczne*, Rok IX, no. 4(19) Poznań, pp. 9–109; a book published by Wydawnictwo Poznańskie: *O historykach. Kto jest kim w dziejopisarstwie polskim*. Poznań 2010 and Henryk Łowmiański, prekursor „metody strukturalnej” w *historiografii polskiej*. In *Świat średniowiecza. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi* (2010). Warszawa, pp. 827–839.

<sup>17</sup> My private collection features an offprint of one of his last papers, *Kulturotwórcze aspekty ikonologii i ikonografii. Człowiek w obrazie* [The culture-forming aspects of iconology and iconography. The human in pictures] In *Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, kultura w dziejach nowożytnych. Studia ofiarowane Pani Profesor Marii Boguckiej*. Warszawa, pp. 277–288. It bears a meaningful dedication (dated August 26, 2010): “To Bogusia and Marceli, I am addressing my swan song and wise friendship” (emphasis by MK).

<sup>18</sup> Labuda, G. (2011). *Udział Marcelego Kosmana w tworzeniu syntezy historii dziejów Polski i krajów sąsiednich* [Contribution of Marceli Kosman to developing a synthetic history of Poland and neighboring countries]. In *Przez Kresy i historię po obrzeża polityki*.

## IV

After the jubilee ceremony for Gerard Labuda, held on January 25, 2002 in Poznań, its organizers received a letter from General Wojciech Jaruzelski, former President of Poland, who explained the reasons for his absence (being away and health problems), expressed his best wishes for Professor Labuda and went on to write:

“Professor Gerard Labuda is a Great Figure of Polish academia, a historian of great merits in discovering and documenting extremely important facts and the most significant stages of the history of Poland, and in particular its north-western regions and frontiers. The life and academic path of Professor Labuda is well-known and highly appreciated. The *Aere perennius* commemorative book both reminds and stresses that once more. I would like to add one comment here.

Professor Labuda has a profound understanding of the role and importance of state and statehood, both as a great scholar and great patriot. He knows that every form statehood takes, and especially an imperfect one, has to be improved and reformed, rather than demolished and put at risk. This must have been his intention when, in 1986, Professor Labuda found it feasible and purposeful to participate in the Consultative Board at the President of the Council of State. Professor Labuda, alongside other outstanding persons, stressed the role and significance of the Board’s establishment and operation with his authority. The Consultative Board became a valuable platform to exchange ideas, draw conclusions and make suggestions, thereby becoming a bridgehead for the Round Table. I am convinced that it would have been considerably more difficult to reach the Round Table Agreement and the further fundamental transformations without the Board. I am addressing these words to you<sup>19</sup> in the hope that they will reach Professor Gerard Labuda, together with my sincere greetings and the best wishes of good health and continued enhancement of his superb academic oeuvre.”<sup>20</sup>

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*Profesorowi Marcelemu Kosmanowi w półwiecze pracy naukowej*. Vol. I. Toruń, pp. 40–57.

Two weeks before his death, the author submitted the typescript of this text, written for a commemorative book, with handmade additions to be typed up and printed out.

<sup>19</sup> The letter was addressed to the Rector of the School of Management and Banking in Poznań.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted after: Kosman, M. (2002). *Profesorowi Gerardowi Labudzie w 65-lecie pracy naukowej*, see above, footnote 13 (emphasis by MK). Wojciech Jaruzelski’s letter, dated February 15, was sent in response to an invitation to the anniversary in Poznań, extended to the former President of Poland on January 14, 2002.

This is not the place to describe the tumultuous, but peaceful, transition to full sovereignty and political plurality of 1980–1990. On the government side, Wojciech Jaruzelski was the main architect of this transition, but the literature on this subject is permeated by subjective attitudes or even factual falsification<sup>21</sup> concealed under the elegant name of ‘historical policy.’ The struggle for ‘the souls of voters’ continues until today, even though it will soon be thirty years since the symbolic date of June 4, 1989 when the breakthrough parliamentary election was held.

On the path to democratization, Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party and Prime Minister (earlier also the Minister of National Defense from 1968), faced strong and highly petrified attitudes in the ranks of the party on the one hand, and on the other the cynicism of a large part of the opposition, concealed under the mask of noble patriotism.<sup>22</sup> Following the parliamentary elections in October 1985, Jaruzelski stepped down as Prime Minister and took the office of President of the Council of State (which happened six months after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Kremlin) concentrating on strategic matters. From his new site in the Belweder Palace, he could take a broader outlook on the domestic situation, and free from the burden of everyday matters he was able to keep a certain distance also to his closest coworkers.<sup>23</sup> He did not intend, however, to content himself with lonely musings about the future; instead, he decided to appoint an informal group – an unencumbered forum for the exchange of opinions about the state, and at the same time a kind of a conveyor between society and the Belweder Palace.

Part of the opposition responded to this decision with surprise and even mistrust. Some people were even pressured not to accept the invitation to the Consultative Board. Eventually, the Board was composed

<sup>21</sup> It was not by accident that the author of this paper, who primarily dealt with the period prior to the partitions of Poland, seeing the unprecedented falsification of modern history, ventured to examine the historic role of General Jaruzelski, the last leader of the Polish People’s Republic and the first President of the revived Poland. Cf. Kosman, M. (2001). *Z rozważań nad kulturą polityczną w Polsce*. Part II, Poznań; idem (2003). *Wojciech Jaruzelski wobec wyzwań swoich czasów. O kulturze politycznej w Polsce przelomu tysiącleci*. Poznań; idem (2007), *Polska w drugim tysiącleciu*. Vol. II: *Dzieje nowoczesnego narodu i państwa*. Toruń; idem (2008), *Los Generała. Wokół medialnego wizerunku Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego*. Toruń; idem (2012), *Między Grudniem a Czerwcem. Z badań nad transformacją ustrojową w Polsce 1981–1989*. Part 1. Poznań; idem, *Wojciech Jaruzelski, mąż stanu w czasach przelomu*. Toruń (further bibliography there).

<sup>22</sup> For more see: Kosman, M. *Los Generała*, p. 135 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 148 ff.

of 56 persons, primarily renowned and respected scholars, including the Chairman of PAN and the then Director of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, Aleksander Gięsztor and the President of the Polish Academy of Learning<sup>24</sup> Gerard Labuda, who was also Vice Chairman of PAN. They were accompanied by four more renowned historians.<sup>25</sup> The Council was composed of 34 carefully selected professors who formed the intellectual elite and were committed to social activities; they were able to present different opinions free from journalistic demagoguery and shallow populism. None held any state or party office at the time. Non-party members actually prevailed in the Council because President Jaruzelski sought the opinions of the representatives of the national elite.

Session topics were always well prepared in advance. The inauguration session was held on December 6, 1986, and the last one (the 12<sup>th</sup>) was convened on July 7, 1989, that is six weeks after the parliamentary elections that had radically remodeled the political arena in Poland. All this was preceded by the breakthrough negotiation at the Round Table that brought together some members of the Consultative Board representing the opposition and the government, respectively, including Aleksander Gięsztor, who was a representative of the government. Being a realist and a man of compromise while maintaining a firm political outlook, he nonetheless enjoyed the trust of both parties. Therefore, during martial law, he was able to mitigate the attitudes of some extremist activists of the underground, and take care of them in terms of their academic studies.<sup>26</sup>

Gerard Labuda took the floor at the very first session of the Consultative Board. In his erudite speech, taking into account the different paths leading to the political transition in Poland, he analyzed the term revolution and contrasted it with much more efficient and risk-free evolution, which is less spectacular and demands patience, but in the course of mundane, everyday work makes it possible to take advantage of prior achievements instead of denying, or even destroying them. This was consistent with his experiences and practical work during different stages of Polish history,

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<sup>24</sup> Having been suspended by the state authorities, the Academy was reactivated in 1989. The endeavors of the academic circles to reinstate the Academy met Jaruzelski's full approval, which Professor Labuda, who chaired the Council from 1989 to 1994, repeatedly stressed in our conversations.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Baszkiewicz, Jarema Maciszewski (both from Warsaw), Janusz Bieniak (a Catholic activist) and Józef Andrzej Gierowski (Rector of the Jagiellonian University).

<sup>26</sup> Session minutes, including the scripts of speeches made by their participants: *Rada Konsultacyjna przy Przewodniczącym Rady Państwa 1986–1987* (1988). Warszawa, p. 448; *Protokoły... 1988–1989*. Warszawa 1990, p. 575.

spanning the period from World War II to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He openly wrote in his studies about the lights and shadows of the recently ended martial law, and the prominent role Wojciech Jaruzelski played in the process of political transition in the recent history of Poland.<sup>27</sup>

## V

Formally, both historians retired in the same year the Consultative Board commenced its work, but they continued their active public life. They gradually reduced their teaching although they remained employed by non-public universities until they died. Labuda worked in Poznań, focusing on academic research and publishing impressive works, including the collections of studies and his last great synthesis: the history of his Kashubian homeland up to the modern era.<sup>28</sup> Gieysztor commuted to Pułtusk, where he marked his presence in a new humane university whose influence radiated on a considerable part of Mazovia and which took him as its patron after his demise.<sup>29</sup> In 1996, Warsaw University hosted a ceremony of his doctorate renewal and the third anniversary conference (the former two took place in 1976 and 1986, respectively).<sup>30</sup>

The 85<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays of Gerard Labuda were commemorated by the above-mentioned publications issued in 1996 and 2003, respectively.<sup>31</sup> After his death, his homeland Kashubia has become a special place of remembrance: it was there – to Wejherowo, where he graduated from high school, that Labuda donated his impressive book collection. He was buried in nearby Luzino, where he went to elementary school, and where popular and academic events are organized; his monument, created on social initiative in a Gdańsk sculpture workshop, is to be erected there on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the above quoted: *Zadania i cele poznawcze*, p. 98 ff.

<sup>28</sup> See footnote 10 above.

<sup>29</sup> Currently: Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieyszтора w Pułtusku.

<sup>30</sup> Like its predecessors, this conference was also commemorated with a jubilee book: *Człowiek w społeczeństwie średniowiecznym*. Warszawa 1997.

<sup>31</sup> See footnotes 11 and 13 above. The anniversaries of Gerard Labuda were also celebrated by the academic circles in Toruń which dedicated an issue of "Zapiski Historyczne" to him where an updated bibliography of his works was published.

<sup>32</sup> The following were issued after the death of the historian from Poznań: *Pro memoria – Gerard Labuda (1916–2010)* (2011). Collected and provided with a foreword by Józef Borzyszkowski. Gdańsk–Wejherowo (a volume of ca. 700 pages featured documentation materials and commemorative texts); *Początki państwa polskiego w badaniach Profesora Gerarda Labudy* (2011). Poznań; *W hołdzie Wielkiemu Kaszubie. Gerard Labuda (1916–2010)* (2011). Kartuzy; Kasprzyk, G. – Kraśnicka, M. (2011). *Gerard Labuda – żeglarz po oceanie nauki*. Luzino.