

## GERARD LABUDA

on his 90th birthday and 70th anniversary of his scholarly work

When Gerard Labuda was on the eve of his first jubilee (his 60th birthday), in 1976, he had had 1,059 publications to his credit; by 1986 he had added another 353 items, a further 308 by 1996, and the ninth decade, still incomplete, *in statu nascendi*, has witnessed the publication of a hundred new items. The 1976 jubilee was commemorated by a book published jointly by the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Adam Mickiewicz University<sup>1</sup>. The successive anniversaries were marked by commemorative publications brought out by the institutions with which he had cooperated for years: the Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences, the Kórnik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Scientific Society in Toruń<sup>2</sup>, the Institute for Western Affairs<sup>3</sup>, and the Higher School of Management and Banking in Poznań. Care was taken to revive some of Labuda's works, volumes of his selected studies were brought out, as well as an enlarged edition of his book on the beginnings of the Polish state<sup>4</sup> and an extensive volume of conversations on Polish–German past<sup>5</sup>. Labuda verified most of his earlier texts, equipping them with an epilogue or a commentary.

He did not publish his work on the Bishop of Cracow, Stanisław, when the first version was completed in 1973, for he did not want it to be used for political propaganda. He cleared the meagre source base of the deposits left by the past centuries, expressing his own opinion on the legends of the two anointed persons, the black legend of the king and the white legend of his antagonist. The small hall of the Collegium Minus of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań was filled to capacity on December 14, 2004 at the promotion of two works published by Wydawnictwo Poznańskie: Tadeusz Wojciechowski's (*Historical Essays in the 11th Century*), reprinted on the centenary of the book's first edition<sup>6</sup>, and Gerard Labuda's work<sup>7</sup>. The Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences brought out a beautiful reprint of Labuda's *Fragments of the Western Slavs' History*<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Ars Historica. Prace z dziejów powszechnych i Polski (Ars Historica. Studies in World and Polish History)*, Poznań 1976 (it includes a bibliography of the author's works).

<sup>2</sup> "Zapiski Historyczne" vol. LII, 1987, № 4; vol. LXI, 1996, № 4 (continuation of the bibliography).

<sup>3</sup> In 1986, in connection with Labuda's 70th birthday, the Institute for Western Affairs devoted № 5/6 of "Przegląd Zachodni" to its former director and in 2006 issue № 1 commemorated Labuda's 90th birthday.

<sup>4</sup> G. Labuda, *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego (Studies on the Beginnings of the Polish State)*, vols. I–II, Poznań 1987–1988 (the original one-volume edition was published in Poznań in 1946).

<sup>5</sup> G. Labuda, *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy o przeszłość. Zbiór rozpraw i artykułów (Polish-German Conversations about the Past. Collected Treatises and Articles)*, Poznań 1996, 553 pp.

<sup>6</sup> T. Wojciechowski, *Szkice historyczne jedenastego wieku (Historical Essays in the 11th Century)*, Poznań 2004, a reprint of the first edition with a preface by G. Labuda.

<sup>7</sup> G. Labuda, *Szkice historyczne X–XI wieku. Z dziejów organizacji Kościoła w Polsce we wczesnym średniowieczu (Historical Essays in the 10th and 11th Centuries. From the History of the Organisation of the Church in Poland in the Early Middle Ages)*, Poznań 2004.

<sup>8</sup> G. Labuda, *Fragmety dziejów Słowiańszczyzny zachodniej (Fragments of the Western Slavs' History)*, Poznań 2002, 965 pp., Epilogue, pp. 913–938.

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Gerard Labuda was born at Nowa Huta in the Kartuzy district on December 28, 1916. His father, an enlightened Cashubian farmer, noticing his son's non-agricultural interests, decided to give him a good education<sup>9</sup>. "The spoken word ... reigned in the house. My father was a very talented narrator ... my parents taught me everything that has turned out to be the most valuable for me. I regard them as my great and, in practice, my only masters. They have imparted to me the gift of comprehending the world..."<sup>10</sup>

The first stage on Labuda's road to the world and independence was the education he received at the John Sobieski classical secondary school in Wejherowo. It was already at that time that he bravely engaged in a polemic with a scientific authority, Stefan Nosek, on Nosek's study about the religion of the ancient Slavs. Under the pseudonym Henryk Gerla, he sent a critical article to Cracow which was published in May 1935 in a scientific weekly supplement to "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny", a paper with a nation-wide circulation<sup>11</sup>. When in the spring of 1936, before his matriculation examination, he was putting in order the Franciscans' book collection in Wejherowo, he noticed a Latin manuscript which turned out to be a valuable text concerning the first years of the existence of the town and the monastery. The text was so deeply engraved on the memory of the young man that several decades later he edited it and had it published<sup>12</sup>.

After the matriculation examination he went to Poznań, where he spent his time mostly in the library of the historical seminar and attended lectures by sociologists, geographers and psychologists. Having acquired a thorough knowledge of several foreign languages at the secondary school, he deepened his knowledge of Swedish as a scholarship student at Lund University during his third year of studies. At Lund he enriched his knowledge of the early history of Pomerania and the puzzling problems connected with the Scandinavian Vikings, critically analysing the rich relative literature, based on scant sources. He expanded his research horizons, having acquainted himself with the works of Danish and Swedish scholars in the original.

Before the outbreak of World War II two treatises by this remarkable student were published in historical periodicals: a study written during his first year of studies, *The Polish and the Teutonic Mission in Prussia up to the Middle of the 13th Century*, which planned to cover no more than some 20 pages, grew to as many as 235<sup>13</sup>, and *Magdeburg and Poznań*<sup>14</sup>. The young researcher also helped Józef Kisielewski prepare his significant, deeply moving book about "the ashes-

<sup>9</sup> *Wśród ksiąg. Z profesorem Gerardem Labudą rozmawia T. Agatowski (Among Books. T. Agatowski talks with Professor Gerard Labuda)*, in: *Aere perennitas. Profesorowi Gerardowi Labudzie dnia 28 XII 2001 roku w hołdzie*, Poznań 2001, p. 344.

<sup>10</sup> *Nie gniewam się na historię. Z prof. Gerardem Labudą rozmawia P. Grochmalski (I Am Not Angry with History. P. Grochmalski talks with Professor Gerard Labuda)*, "Wprost" N° 22 (183) of 1 VII 1986, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Henryk Gerla, *Na marginesie «Wierzeń religijnych naszych praociców Słowian» /Stefana Noska / (In connection with /Stefan Nosek's/ «Religious Beliefs of Our Slav Forefathers»)*, "Kurier Literacko-Naukowy" (supplement to "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny") N° 18 of 6 V 1935, pp. XII-XIII.

<sup>12</sup> O. Grzegorza Gdańskiego *Kronika klasztoru Franciszkanów Ściślejszej Obserwancji w Wejherowie w latach 1633–1676 (Father Grzegorz Gdański's Chronicle of the Ordo Cisterciensis Strictioris Observantiae in Wejherowo in 1633–1676)*, edited by G. Labuda, Wejherowo 1996.

<sup>13</sup> It appeared in the series "Annales Missiologicae" vol. IX, 1937, pp. 201–435.

<sup>14</sup> *Magdeburg i Poznań. Zakożenie arcybiskupstwa magdeburgskiego i biskupstwa poznańskiego na tle wschodniej polityki misyjnej Ottona Wielkiego (Magdeburg and Poznań. The Establishment of the Magdeburg Archbishopric and Poznań Bishopric against the Background of Otto the Great's Missionary Eastern Policy)*, "Roczniki Historyczne", vol. XIV, 1938, N° 2, pp. 185–238.

gathering earth" which unmasked the ruthless Germanisation of the ethnic inhabitants of the Prussian zone of Poland<sup>15</sup>. This is why he was wanted by the Germans when the war broke out and had to look for refuge far from his native region. Before he left home as a private of the Academic Legion he served in the army and then arrived at Chrobrze in the Kielce region, where during his holidays in 1937 he had been busy putting in order a magnificent library of the Wielopolskis. He continued to catalogue the archival materials and gave German lessons to the Wielopolski boys. But after a year the estate was taken over by German administration and Labuda, whom the Germans needed because of his knowledge of the language, was made a bookkeeper. He performed this function until January 1945, taking part all this time in the resistance movement.

During his leisure time he worked on his *Codex Myszkovianae ordinationis diplomaticus*, the manuscript of which he deposited after the war at the library of the Polish Academy of Learning in Cracow. During the occupation he passed his M.A. examination, obtained a doctorate, conducted lectures at the conspiratorial University of the Western Territories and started writing a thesis on the beginnings of the Polish state, which was to qualify him as assistant professor.

When he returned to Poznań after the war, he and his previous masters, K. Tymieniecki and A. Skałkowski, became members of a small group of researchers who rebuilt the Historical Seminar. After becoming assistant professor (associate professor in 1950, full professor in 1956), he was appointed head of the Chair of Western Slavs' History, which in 1952 was merged with the Chair of Poland's History entrusted to him. In 1969, after the reorganisation of the Institute of History of Poznań University, he became head of the Centre for General and Polish History up to the 15th Century. He had already performed the function of rector (from 1962/63-1964/65), and being a recognised scholar, was a corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Learning. He became a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences when it was set up (full member in 1964). From 1953 he headed the Centre for Pomerania's History at the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of History in Poznań. The Centre had its branches in Toruń, Gdańsk and Szczecin which worked out many monographs as well as fundamental syntheses of the histories of Toruń, Gdańsk and Szczecin, and, above all, the many volumes of *The History of Pomerania*. Together with M. Biskup, Labuda wrote *The History of the Teutonic Knights' Order in Prussia*, which has had two editions and has been translated into German.

Labuda's impressive scholarly output is documented in many bibliographies and reviews. His most important works, apart from those mentioned previously, are: *The Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon Sources to the Slavs' History* (Warszawa 1961), *The Sources, Sagas and Legends Referring to Poland's Earliest History* (Warszawa 1961), *The Lost Chronicle in Jan Długosz's Annals* (Poznań 1983), *Mieszko II, King of Poland 1025-1034* (Kraków 1992) and the biography of this ruler, freed of documentary materials *Mieszko the Second, King of Poland at the Turning-Point of History, 1025-1034* (Poznań 1994) and two syntheses in the series "The History of the Polish Nation and the Polish State": *The First Polish State* (Kraków 1989) and *The Crown and the Mitre. From Monarchy to Polyarchy* (Kraków 1996).

Subjects connected with his "little homeland", the land of his childhood with which he has always maintained close ties, were evidently favoured by Labuda in the 1990s. In addition to many articles he wrote then three books: *On the Cashubians, Their Name and the Land They Inhabit* (Gdańsk 1991), *The History of the Village of Luzino up to the End of the 19th Century* (Gdańsk 1995) and *The Cashubians and Their History* (Gdańsk 1996).

Mention should also be made of Labuda's editorial work for "Roczniki Historyczne", "Studia Źródloznawcze" (up to the 26th volume, together with

<sup>15</sup> J. Kisielewski, *Ziemia gromadzi prochy* (*The Earth Has Been Gathering Ashes*), Poznań 1939.

Aleksander Gieysztor and Brygida Kürbis) and *Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich* to which he has also contributed many articles.

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His term as rector of the Adam Mickiewicz University in the years 1962–1965 was remarkable because of the programme he infused it with. He explained his views on a modern university and its function in his inauguration speech which concerned the place of universities in the system of education and didactics<sup>16</sup>. The result was an impressive expansion of the University, the establishment of the Rector's Council of the Adam Mickiewicz University, the programmatic conferences organised at the beginning of each academic year, and the College of Rectors of university schools in Poznań, an important academic body which at its inaugurating sitting on December 20, 1962 entrusted the function of its first chairman to Professor Labuda.

If Labuda were only an efficient administrator, he would be remembered in history as a great builder, for it was during his term as rector that the idea of a modern university with much larger premises than those Poznań University had had in the pre-war period (frequently in pre-1914 buildings) was worked out and began to be implemented. Labuda was known in Poznań also as a man successful in solving difficult matters (thanks both to his talent for negotiations and arduous efforts), first and foremost for the Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences. Having been elected the Society's general secretary in 1961, when its existence was endangered, he stabilised it during his chairmanship (1972–1975). The same can be said about the Institute for Western Affairs (he was first its deputy chairman and then its chairman) which faced the prospect of being liquidated<sup>17</sup>. He combined his chairmanship of the Poznań Society of the Friends of Sciences with chairmanship of the Poznań branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1972–1981), which he organised. The result was a harmonious and model-like co-operation between the Polish Academy of Sciences and Great Poland's scientific organisation the tradition of which stretches back more than a hundred years. He was also very active as chairman of the Council for the Popularisation of Science (1980–1989) and in the Council of Scientific Societies at the presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences whose vice-chairman he was in 1984–1989.

In the last stage of this period which led to the change of the political system in Poland he devoted his efforts to bring about the revival of the Polish Academy of Learning in Cracow, an institution which had been "asleep" for several decades. This required his participation in the drafting of democratic political reforms. As far as his own, frequently bitter, experience was concerned, he had no reason to be grateful to the collapsing political system; nevertheless, he agreed to take part in the work of the Chairman of the Council of State's Consultative Council set up at the end of 1986<sup>18</sup>.

During the Council's meetings, which were held every few months in the Belvedere Palace<sup>19</sup>, he took the floor five times, raising questions which were of great importance for the changes then taking place. In his first speech he concentrated on the method of debates, drawing attention to the danger inherent in abrupt, revolutionary changes and pointing out that evolutionary changes,

<sup>16</sup> G. Labuda, *Rola i zadania uniwersytetu w nowoczesnej organizacji nauk* (*The Role and Tasks of Universities in a Modern Organisation of Science*), Poznań 1962.

<sup>17</sup> H. Olszewski, *Między nauką a polityką. Instytut Zachodni w latach 1944–2004* (*Between Science and Politics. The Institute for Western Affairs in 1944–2004*), "Przegląd Zachodni", vol. LX, 2004, No 2 (311), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> See M. Kosman, *Z rozważań nad kulturą polityczną w Polsce* (*Reflections on Political Culture in Poland*), Part II, Poznań 2001, pp. 69–84.

<sup>19</sup> *Rada konsultacyjna przy Przewodniczącym Rady Państwa 1986–1987* (*The Chairmann of the Council of State's Consultative Council in 1986–1987*), Warszawa 1988, pp. 31–33, 83, 384–387; vol. II, Warszawa 1990, pp. 160–161, 453–455.

though more tollsome, would be more durable. He warned against making promises which cannot be kept, for they only cause havoc in the minds of people who take them at their face value, expecting that they will be implemented by some mythical person. Labuda was specially interested in questions of a new constitution, national education, the organisation of science and health service and the physical condition of society (elite and mass sport).

His activity did not slow down when he retired. On the contrary, he continued his research work and set to carry out the task of reviving the Polish Academy of Learning. Forty years had passed since the Academy's last General Meeting (1951) when he became its member. On the initiative of the Cracow branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences an Organising Commission was set up. The "revival" meeting in which five persons took part elected the authorities of the Academy. Gerard Labuda who at that time was the youngest member of the Academy was elected its chairman. On March 6, 1990 the state authorities approved the revival of the Polish Academy of Learning.

Professor Labuda focused his efforts on putting the finishing touches to fundamental collective works, especially *The History of Polish Diplomacy*, a work comprising many volumes. He started with a great synthesis *The Polish Western Frontier* which from the planned several score pages grew to a 450-page book.

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Over forty years ago a great medievalist, the late Henryk Łowmiański, distinguished five main research currents in Labuda's work: 1) the beginnings of the Polish state, 2) Western Slavs in the early Middle Ages, 3) the history of Polish and Teutonic Pomerania, 4) source-books, 5) the history of the Polish western frontier. Practically everything that has been published since 1996 or is still being researched by Professor Labuda belongs to one of these currents. Let us draw attention to one more question, Labuda's "little homeland", the Cashubian region; Labuda finished the first Polish synthesis of its history ten years later.

The year 1997 witnessed the appearance of nearly 30 items, including *St. Adalbert in Polish Historiographic Tradition*, a 453-page anthology of texts with elaborate comments. The next two years saw the appearance of two more books<sup>20</sup> and of the fourth volume of *The History of Szczecin* under Labuda's editorship. Five books and seven treatises, including two devoted to Pomeranian-Cashubian questions<sup>21</sup>, a German translation of a work on the Teutonic Knights' Order in Prussia, written jointly with M. Biskup<sup>22</sup>, and monographs on St. Adalbert and Saint Stanisław, Bishop of Cracow<sup>23</sup> were published in the last year of the past millennium. The first year of the new millennium saw the publication of 12 articles and the completion of many years of collective research work on the history of Pomerania. In 2002 Labuda brought out a biography of Poland's first historic ruler and revived his *Fragments of the Western Slavs' History*. In 2003 he published a historiographic study *The Development of Historiographic Methods from Antiquity to Contemporary Times*, Part I. As regards publications brought out in 2004, let

20 *Nauka, nauczanie, upowszechnianie nauki (Science, Education Popularisation of Science)*, Warszawa 1998, 239 pp., *Słowiańszczyzna starożytna i wczesnośredniowieczna. Antologia tekstów źródłowych (Ancient and Early Medieval Slavs. An Anthology of Sources)*, Poznań 1999, 275 pp.

21 *Zapiski kaszubskie, pomorskie i morskie. Wybór pism (Cashubian, Pomeranian and Sea Notes. Selected Studies)*, Gdańsk 2000, 503 pp.; *Kaszubi i ich dzieje (The Cashubians and Their History)*, 2nd ed., Gdańsk 2000, 325 pp.

22 *Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens in Preussen. Wirtschaft — Gesellschaft — Staat — Ideologie*, Warszawa 2000, the author's text pp. 15–290.

23 *Święty Wojciech. Biskup Męczennik. Patron Polski, Czech i Węgier (St. Adalbert. Bishop-Martyr. Patron of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary)*, Wrocław 2000, 2nd edition 2004; *Święty Stanisław — Biskup Krakowski, Patron Polski (St. Stanislaus — Bishop of Cracow, Patron of Poland)*, Poznań 2000, 181 pp.

us mention his over 100-page assessment of the 10-volume history of Poland by authors from the Jagiellonian University<sup>24</sup> and the second edition of his book on Saint Adalbert.

Gerard Labuda has been awarded many state prizes and decorations, from the Knight's Cross to the Grand Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order (1996) and the Banner of Labour, First Class (1976). In New York he was awarded the prestigious Jurzykowski prize (1983). In 1996 the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań organised a ceremony of reviving his doctorate and in 2000 awarded him Palma Universitatis Studiorum Posnaniensis. Labuda is a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, of many Polish and foreign scientific societies and has been awarded *honoris causa* doctorate by the universities of Gdańsk (1985), Toruń (1993), Cracow (1995), Warsaw (1997), Wrocław (1999) and Szczecin (2003).

Marcell Kosman

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<sup>24</sup> G. Labuda, *Zadania i cele poznawcze syntezy historii Polski od prawniku do współczesności* (*The Tasks and Cognitive Aims of the Synthesis of Poland's History from Times Immemorial to the Present Day*), "Forum Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Bankowości w Poznaniu", *Prace Historyczno-Politolologiczne Instytutu Historii Politycznej*, vol. IX, N° 4 (19), 2004, pp. 9–109.