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THE POLISH WESTERN BORDER

SEVEN DECADES OF GERARD LABUDA'S RESEARCH

In 1975 Henryk Łowmiański characterised the research profile of a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences¹ and his younger colleague from the Institute of History of Adam Mickiewicz University – Gerard Labuda. At that point, the two men had been working with each other for thirty years, since ‘the exile’ from territories on the river Neris found his haven in Poznań in the spring of 1945. However, before enumerating professor Labuda’s chief areas of interest in the service of Clío – the muse of history – professor Łowmiański shared the following statement with readers:

“Continuing the excellent traditions of our medieval studies, Labuda has mastered to perfection (...) the complete control of scientific literature, which he has been collecting with exceptional heuristic skill. His aim has been to uncover the results of studies – often ones forgotten today – and with their use, highlight a range of problems. Simultaneously, the defining characteristic of his research methods has been combating historiographical legends and fallacies and submitting such views to devastating criticism. Thus, he removes such elements from the sphere of authoritative knowledge. Only having prepared such a sound basis for research does the author strive to build a more adequate image of the past. Moreover, he introduces his own constructions, characterised by outstanding ingenuity, an abundance of observations and the ability to present diverse issues in a vivid and graphic way. Nevertheless, medieval and generally historical studies (as the author does

¹ In 1964 Gerard Labuda became a correspondent-member, and in 1969 a full member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The most recent biographic texts published in the form of obituaries after his death which took place on 1st October 2010: J. Strzelczyk, “Gerard Labuda (1916-2010),” *Przeгляд Zachodni* 1, (2011): 3-18; idem, “Gerard Labuda 1916-2010,” *Roczniki Historyczne* vol. LXXVI (2010): 9-26; idem, “Gerard Labuda 1916-2010,” in J. Strzelczyk, ed., *Wybitni historycy wielkopolscy* (2nd extended edition), (Poznań, 2010): 855-874; the same publication includes research output for the past 35 years, preceded by Henryk Łowmiański’s paper cited below in footnote 2. See also the memories of the author of this paper: M. Kosman, “Pożegnanie Profesora Gerarda Labudy (1916-2010),” *Zapiski Historyczne* vol. LXXV: 4 (2010): 157-163, as well as “Gerard Labuda (28.12.1916-1.10.2010),” *Český časopis historický* vol. 108: 4 (2010): 750-752; as well as M. Řezník “Prof. Gerard Labuda (28.12.1916-1.10.2010),” *Slovanský přehled* (in print – I would like to thank the editorial office of the journal for making the paper written in mid October 2010 available to me).

not avoid modern topics as well) constitute but one aspect of his activity. Activity, which can be described as a harmonious and equally successful involvement in the three basic areas of a scientist's work: research, didactics and organisation"².

These three areas of work can sometimes be closely intertwined; undoubtedly, this is the case, as far as the historical development of the Polish-German frontier and the border between these two nations is concerned. Seven decades... here is the justification for the period of time mentioned in the heading: the cooperation of barely a student with Józef Kisielewski can be treated as the beginning of this stretch of time; the first fundamental volume³ of a synthetic history describing the author's little homeland – written by a senior of Polish historical studies and issued on his ninetieth birthday – can be seen as the finale of this period. The middle of this era is marked by the publication of an excellent history of the Polish western border in the second millennium.

The researcher-to-be grew up in the cultural borderland of his little homeland, Kashubia, a region open to both great nations – Germans and Poles. Although his biography escapes all norms, he tried to slightly trivialise a number of facts when giving interviews many years later. One of those was that he mastered the art of reading before going to school (he was curious of life right “from the start”, and rightly called himself a typical self-taught man⁴ who always chose his own ways and never needed to be led by the hand). Another such example was his debut in scientific polemics against a researcher and PhD holder, even before taking his final secondary school examinations. Finally, the fact that a paper written by him and later considered to be his Master's thesis, as well as his future PhD dissertation, both came into being during his first years at university. With but a shrug of his shoulders he remarked that he was not an exception. That may well be true, but only if you take into consideration scientific geniuses. Having passed his final secondary school examinations, the twenty-year-old arrived at Poznań University, where eminent scholars quickly accepted him as a partner in research endeavours. At this time, he already spoke a number of languages, and soon learned several others. Additionally, as a young boy he had learned the art of calligraphy in beautiful Gothic style, under his mother's watchful eye.

As an eight-year old he went to the Primary School in Luzino where he studied for four years (1924-28), and was taught to read, write and speak Polish correctly. “What good was it that I knew Polish, if I was familiar with the language only

² H. Łowmiański, “Gerard Labuda,” *Nauka Polska* 1 (1965): 58.

³ I am consciously referring to a fundamental volume (up till the 16th century) and not a fundamental synthesis, as it will be possible to assess the entire publication only when the two subsequent tomes prepared by Zygmunt Szultka and Józef Borzyszkowski will have been issued. These tomes, written by seasoned experts on modern Kashubia are anxiously anticipated.

⁴ As he was approaching eighty, he opened up and discussed his childhood memories in the introduction to the book *Dzieje wsi Luzino do schyłku XIX w.* (Gdańsk-Luzino, 1995) 5; see reprint in: *Zapiski kaszubskie, pomorskie i morskie. Wybór pism.* (Gdańsk, 2000), 469.

from church sermons and the prayer book. I read and pronounced every word in Kashubian, and my orthography was very distant from the rules of correct Polish spelling”⁵. He did not forget Kashubian until the end of his life, and used it both willingly and proficiently in telephone conversations with his countrymen. We often witnessed this in Poznań, when the Professor used flawless Polish which he had attained in his family home through reading calendars, classical literature (primarily Henryk Sienkiewicz) and scientific publications. At the age of twelve, his geographic horizons extended when he spent eight years at his first temple of knowledge – the classical gymnasium in Wejherowo – among whose staff he met graduates of the Jagiellonian University. There, but also later during his studies, he came across the opportunity not only to get to know central Poland, but also the distant Kresy [Eastern Borderlands]⁶. This was when the character of the young Pole was formed – a citizen of the reborn Republic of Poland, and at the same time, a researcher of the national past. Soon, however, he was to face the brutal reality.

It was the spring of 1938, Józef Kisielewski (1905-1966), a popular Poznań journalist and the editor-in-chief of the illustrated monthly *Tęcza* [The Rainbow] was preparing a book on the history of West Slavs and their struggle against the Germanic influx. When he asked Kazimierz Tymieniecki for consultations on sources and the literature, the professor delegated this project to a sophomore history student. While Labuda had his doubts whether he would be up to the task, the essayist did not immediately put his full trust in the young man. Soon, however, they developed an understanding, and the book that was to focus on contemporary Germany turned into a work on the issues of Slavic territories and their interests in the face of the impending Second World War. *Ziemia gromadzi prochy* [Earth gathers ashes] appeared in 1938; when half a century later a re-edition was being prepared, Gerard Labuda was asked to write a preface to it. Across a dozen pages or so he evoked a history ranging from “nearly idyllic” times (an expression used by Kisielewski) to the grim present. Having reminded readers of the *Anschluss* of Austria to the Reich, and the occupation of Czechoslovakia, he went on to write:

“Despite the Non-Aggression Pact between Poland and Germany signed on 26th January 1934, which entailed silencing the anti-Polish propaganda in the German government’s official statements, the press and the radio, nothing changed in the everyday practice of economic relations, in the treatment of the Polish minority in Germany, and particularly in the anti-Polish attitude of the society itself. On the contrary, under the influence of the ideology overtly advocated by the Hitler movement, slogans of revising the Polish borders continued to prevail. The superiority of German

⁵ G. Labuda, *Zapiski*, 468.

⁶ During meetings at the Professor’s house, I had the opportunity to hear about his visits to Vilnius, the Gate of Dawn, as well to the region of Volhynia, among others, the stronghold Zbaraż famed by Sienkiewicz.

culture over Slavic culture was openly stated, with a particular stress on the dependence of Polish culture from the German one. Also, the German tradition of the ‘drive to the East’ (Drang nach Osten) was reminded of more and more frequently; this time, however, under the watchword of ‘Wiedergewinnung des deutschen Ostens’ [regaining the German East]⁷.

The idea of the book changed under the influence of political incidents. “Events began to race with history”, while the author and his colleagues did not anticipate the disaster looming quickly. “From the contact between the reality of the present day and the historic reality of former Slavic territories, stretching between Hamburg and Gdańsk, between the estuary of the river Elbe and the Vistula, a new idea for a book appeared and began to materialise. This was a book where the idea of ‘reclaiming the Polish West’ emerged with such clarity for the first time in Polish literature. Nonetheless, when this idea was being formed, no one, not even the Author or his closest colleagues, attributed this kind of significance to it. Its aim was – and this I know – to awake people from their slumber; its task – to sound an alarm. It was also to serve as a great reminder”⁸.

Although in the end the collaboration with Kisielewski turned out to be an episodic one, it did affect the young historian’s views on contemporary and past German issues. Kisielewski, born in the vicinity of Przemyśl, was the son of an officer-lawyer and a teacher. Having attended two secondary schools in Kraków and Grudziądz, he graduated from the department of Polish Studies in Poznań, and was politically connected with Stronnictwo Narodowe [the National Party] (hence, his cautiousness as far as the threat of expansions of the Third Reich). After 1945 the two did not resume their work together, as the journalist remained in emigration, and Labuda – at that time the director of the Institute for Western Affairs – tried to contact him, but to no avail.

The sophomore student described his contribution to the book as a modest one. Their meetings were discussions between a professional historian and an amateur one (sometimes the euphemistic expression: “a historian by accident” is used), due to the different approach to sources. The two men would meet in the editorial office, the journalist’s flat in a villa in the district of Sołacz, as well as for walks on summer afternoons. In July 1938 Labuda accompanied Kisielewski on a journey through his homelands to Gdynia, after which, towards the end of the year, he departed on a scholarship to Lund and their work together was halted. When he returned in July 1939, the book had already been printed. In its introduction, the author enumerated Labuda as one of his associates, which was not without influence on the future life of the young historian. Since the book *Earth gathers ashes* had become a personal enemy of the Third Reich, the Germans began searching for the people mentioned by the author as co-workers immediately after their invasion of Poland. Anyone who was searched and found in possession of a copy of the book risked being sent to

⁷ Quoted after: G. Labuda, *Zapiski*, 427.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 428 (emphasis mine – M.K.).

a concentration camp, at the very least. During the September Campaign, Labuda – unaware of these arrests – was hunted by the Gestapo in the area of his family home, at Poznań University, and later also in Kraków, where he sought refuge in the General Government. However, fortune favoured him. In the end, he found himself in the position of margrave Wielopolski's librarian in the town of Chroberz. He even managed to survive the eviction of the owners and remained there as an accountant, when the estate was taken over by German administration. He returned to Poznań already as a PhD holder (earlier he had obtained his Master's degree while still in conspiracy). Having gained experience in underground operations, and after a didactic debut at the secret University of the Western Lands, he immediately joined the efforts of reconstructing Poznań University, and particularly zealously helped rebuild the library of the Institute of History. Soon, he grew to be a leading figure in the scholarly community. He became an associate professor at the age of 34 (1950) and a full professor six years later. At first (1946) he headed the Institute of the History of Western Slavdom, and next the Institute of Polish History, into which the former institution was incorporated (1952). The actual development and career record of professor Labuda, including all his administrative functions, are quite well known both in his scholarly community and in Poland in general.

In 1975, Henryk Łowmiański used the term “immeasurable, but not (...) unclear”, when describing the scientific output of Gerard Labuda (at that point, it included over a thousand publications)⁹. He also outlined five of the Professor's major areas of interest, including – last but not least – the aforementioned **history of the Polish western border** (5). In first place came the **beginnings of the Polish state in the second half of the 10th century and the earlier Middle Ages 11th – 13th centuries**, next **Western Slavdom in the early Middle Ages** (2), **the history of Pomerania including Warmia, Masuria and the State of the Teutonic Order** (3), as well as **source studies** (4)¹⁰.

⁹ See the list of publications included in the volume in honour of Gerard Labuda's 90th birthday: J. Dobosz, ed., *Naukowe dzieło Profesora Gerarda Labudy* (Poznań, 2006), 162-227. The volume includes the following texts: *Gerard Labuda – zarys biografii* (Tomasz Schramm), *Gerarda Labudy badania nad historią kultury* (Henryk Samsonowicz), *Źródło w historycznych dociekaniach Gerarda Labudy* (Brygida Kürbis), *Historia społeczna w badaniach naukowych Gerarda Labudy* (Jerzy Wyrozumski), *Gerard Labuda – historyk wczesnego chrześcijaństwa polskiego* (Jerzy Kłoczowski), *Początki państwa polskiego w badaniach naukowych Gerarda Labudy* (Roman Michałowski), *Český kontext díla Gerarda Labudy* (Ivan Hlavaček), *Gerard Labuda jako historyk wczesnej Słowiańszczyzny i kontaktów słowiańsko-niemieckich* (Jerzy Strzelczyk), *Dzieje Zakonu Krzyżackiego w dorobku naukowym Profesora Gerarda Labudy* (Tomasz Jasiński), *Pomorze – Brandenburgia – Prusy w badaniach naukowych Gerarda Labudy* (Bogdan Wachowiak) oraz *Polskie Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne w historycznej twórczości naukowej Gerarda Labudy* (Wojciech Wrzesiński). The history of the Polish western border has not been singled out in this list, but the chapters written by J. Strzelczyk, T. Jasiński and B. Wachowiak focus on this issue in particular. The question of Kashubia is not treated separately as well, but the above-mentioned authors discuss it in their chapters.

¹⁰ H. Łowmiański, *ibidem*, 60f.

Gerard Labuda was to go on to become the rector of Adam Mickiewicz University (1962-65), and then – due to the requirement of being employed in only one place, introduced in 1970 – a professor of the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IH PAN)¹¹, where he stayed until his retirement (1986). Before that, however, he was entrusted with the task of setting up the Department of the History of Pomerania¹² at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. This gave rise to a longstanding research plan which included excellent teams of scholars (many of whom began with their M.A theses and in time became professors with rich scholarly output, including monographs of fundamental importance). As a result of their work, multi-volume synthetic analyses were created – in particular focusing on the history of Toruń, Gdańsk and Szczecin – and most importantly, the groundbreaking *Historia Pomorza* [The History of Pomerania] edited by Gerard Labuda. The publication took several decades to complete – the first part of volume one was published in 1972, part three of volume three appeared in 2001. The initial research plans were extended geographically¹³, encompassing Great Pomerania, and reaching beyond the Polish borders established in 1945, both to the west and to the east¹⁴. In the *Preface* to the first part, the editor-in-chief pointed out the multifaceted character of nationality, geography and politics in the Pomerania region, and consequently, the different available models of synthesis. (1: a traditional one – with diverse narrative aspects for particular historical periods; 2: an integrative one – which treated political histories separately, yet unifying economic issues; 3: an individualising one – with a complete division between the subsequent historical stages). Of the three, the last one seemed to be most appropriate, at least in the case of the events occurring before 1815. The subject matter of the dissertation was the history of the local inhabitants, irrespective of their nationality and political background¹⁵. What was stressed in relation to the earliest communities was “the discussion of the morphological and socio-economic aspects of particular cultures within the Pomeranian population,

¹¹ As a matter of fact, his connection to the University never stopped, and he was legally reinstated at the beginning of the 21st century by the University authorities.

¹² Poznań became the venue of the Institute and one of its four offices; the remaining three are formed in Toruń (chaired by prof. Marian Biskup), Gdańsk (prof. Edmund Cieślak), and later also in Szczecin (Bogdan Dopierała). This state of affairs was maintained until Gerard Labuda retired, when the office was reorganised and became self-dependent.

¹³ See in particular: K. Górski, “Zadania historiografii polskiej na Pomorzu,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 2 (1946):139-146.

¹⁴ See the discussion between: J. Hackmann, “Gerard Labudas Konzeption der Geschichte Pommerns,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* vol. 41 (1993): 109-134; and G. Labuda, “O założeniach programowych syntezy Historii Pomorza,” *Zapiski Historyczne* vol. 57 (2002): 621-640. The history of how this multi-volume synthetic work came about and the role of Gerard Labuda played in its creation was described by B. Wachowiak, “Pomorze w polskich badaniach historycznych lat 1953-2002 (pięćdziesięciolecie Zakładu Historii Pomorza IH PAN),” *Acta Cassubiana* vol. IV (Gdańsk-Wejcherowo, 2002), 277-294.

¹⁵ G. Labuda, *Preface to: Historia Pomorza* vol. 1:1 (Poznań, 1969), 7f.

leaving the ethnic issues aside”¹⁶. The situation changed in the 12th century, when the Slavic part of Pomerania entered the “age of feudal relations, while the economic and social development of Prussian Pomerania slowed down significantly”. A breakthrough took place around 1230, when the Teutonic knights arrived at first to the region of Chełmno, and later to Prussia. The indigenous Slavic inhabitants found themselves under the cultural influence and dominance of the foreign German element (knights, townspeople, the Monastic State). The seizing of Pomerania by the Teutonic knights triggered a period of wars with the united *Corona Regni Poloniae* which ended in 1466, and was finally resolved in 1525¹⁷.

The History of Pomerania was a teamwork proving ground¹⁸ for Gerard Labuda where he himself deepened the analysis of the Polish western border in the second millennium A.D. Speaking of institutions – apart from the Department of the History of Pomerania at IH PAN – also the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznań played an important role in his life. He was affiliated with the Institute since its beginning until the end of his life¹⁹. Between 1956 and 1958 he was the vice-director of the Institute, afterwards (until 1960) he served as its director, and from 1962 to 1966 as the chairman of the Science Council. Additionally, for many years he was a member of the *Przegląd Zachodni* Editorial Council – the institution’s chief publishing body. As an exquisite strategist and excellent tactician he would often successfully defend the publishing house when its existence was in peril, and frequently enriched the journal with his own publications. Strangely, he was not to become the first author to publish a dissertation on Polish-German relations (hence, on the history of the Polish western border) in this very institution. The paper entitled *Formy antagonizmu polsko-niemieckiego w dziejach* [The Forms of Polish-German antagonism throughout history] was prepared by two different editorial offices (January-February, and June 1946); however, its manuscript was placed in a drawer for exactly half a century, and

¹⁶ Ibidem, 10.

¹⁷ Ibidem, 11f.

¹⁸ Chronologically, part 3 of volume II was issued last (*Pomorze Zachodnie w latach 1648-1815*), Poznań 2003. There, the editor-in-chief included the concluding remarks before the main text itself, where he provided the total length of the publication (5,500 pages) and discussed his “rather modest” input as an author (p. 134f). He also reminded that volumes IV (2000-2002) focusing on the period 1850-1918, and volume V (in preparation) – until 1939 would appear edited by Stanisław Salmonowicz. In his initial words, Labuda referred to the past: “Work on creating *Historia Pomorza* started with the creation of the Department of Pomeranian History at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1953. The first draft of the methodology of research was presented at the Pomeranian Conference in Gdańsk in 1954 (*Konferencja Pomorska 1954*, Warszawa 1956). Its realisation became possible when a team of authors emerged from among the employees of the Department and the University community, who would have the necessary research preparation for this task. Several years were needed for the first monographs and dissertations to appear, which would set the stage for a future scientific synthesis” (G. Labuda, *Słowo zamykające*, see footnote above), p. 1.

¹⁹ His signature can be found among the 16 founders of the Institute for Western Affairs, who on 19th April 1945 submitted the application for registering the Institute at the Voivodship Office – see: *Instytut Zachodni w dokumentach*, wybór i opracowanie A. Choniawko and Z. Mazur, (Poznań, 2006), 49.

was published as late as 1996. It appeared in a collection of papers on Polish-German relations prepared for the Author's 80th birthday²⁰, who explained the manuscript's origin and history in the afterword:

“This paper was commissioned by the editorial office of *Przegląd Zachodni*, as a voice in the discussion on Zygmunt Wojciechowski's book cited above, *Polska-Niemcy* (1945)²¹. Professor Wojciechowski commented on the first version of the paper, and suggested a number of issues that should be changed, shortened or supplemented; his critical remarks particularly pertained to the conclusion. I extended the description of the parliamentary debate in the Prussian Bundestag from November 1916 – March 1917. What survived was the initial version with my stylistic and content-related corrections, yet I included my own conclusion with only minor alterations. The second version was not published as well. The typescript consists of 17 tightly packed (and already very faded) pages and serves as a document of that time. We were all under the strong influence of wartime experiences which could not have been without effect on some of our judgements and interpretations. What has not changed, however, are the facts which still encourage reflection”²².

What happened, therefore, was post-war censorship – not the official one – but the one operating from the editorial, or director's office. Regardless, both functions were at the time in the hands of Zygmunt Wojciechowski, who served as the director of the Institute and the editor-in-chief of *Przegląd Zachodni*. The above-mentioned publication had the characteristics of an essay, written with passion and reflecting the general mood in Poland at the time. It was filled with grief over the years of persecution experienced during World War II, which was transferred onto an entire millennium of history. Half a century was necessary for these emotions to be revalued (at times even to too great an extent), for the **struggle** to transform into neutral **coexistence**, and sometimes into deep **friendship**²³. This issue was brilliantly discussed by a Poznań researcher in her essay on the **memories of war** and the **war between memories**. According to her, the policy of genocide programmed and consistently realised by the Third Reich broke all the norms existing thus far; the “traditional image of death on the battlefield was pushed out by the memory of a victim who was tortured, shot, or gassed, which had to impact the perception of the general meaning

²⁰ G. Labuda, *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy o przeszłości. Zbiór rozpraw i artykułów* (Poznań, 1996), 11-33 (the chapter *Formy antagonizmu polsko-niemieckiego w dziejach* begins with the first part of this collection of papers entitled: *Polska-Niemcy. Zagadnienia ogólne*).

²¹ Z. Wojciechowski, *Polska-Niemcy. Dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poznań, 1945), 267.

²² G. Labuda, *Formy antagonizmu*, 33f.

²³ A particularly good example of the opposite extreme is the book by Z. Kowalska, *Krzyżacy w innym świetle. Od średniowiecza do czasów współczesnych* (Wien – Tarnów, 1997). A good counterbalance for this publication could be an objectively and clearly written book, issued both in German and Polish: H. Boockmann, *Die Deutsche Orden. Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte* (München, 1981) / *Zakon Krzyżacki. Dwanaście rozdziałów jego historii* (Warszawa, 1998).

of war. The **total** war into which 61 countries were dragged, which was fought on the territories of 40 nations and three continents, left a mark on all walks of life. Nothing was the same after 1945”²⁴.

The recent murders, roundups and deportations to concentration camps were replaced with mass expulsions. These took place chiefly to the east of the Oder, but were not uncommon on its other bank as well, in particular due to the extensive border changes. New inhabitants arrived to what was later called recovered territories; they had to forfeit their own homes beyond the River Bug. To quote Anna Wolff-Powęska, who cites the conclusions of an Italian author from 1923: “The past is continually new. It keeps on changing, as life moves on. Some of its parts, seemingly forgotten, emerge once again; other – less important – ones fade away. The present conducts the past just like a bandmaster conducts musicians in an orchestra. It determines the particular tones. What reaches the present are parts of memory meant for those who will light up or bedim them”²⁵.

Such an attitude should not be characteristic of a researcher, and a historian in particular. However, shaping the public’s opinion of the past – especially in the first years after the war – was not up to Gerard Labuda unless he was changing into a publicist, which was the case with Zygmunt Wojciechowski. The latter – who due to the functions he performed – decided on the direction of political propaganda, and would often resort to the tools he had at hand, i.e. publishing certain texts in the journal he ran, and withholding others. Apparently, he came to the conclusion that this should be the fate of the paper written by a 30-year old researcher, which was ahead of its times and differed from the black and white analyses dominant at the time. Especially that Labuda had introduced certain minor changes, he did not give in when it came to fundamental issues. Hence, his text on the forms of Polish-German antagonisms was placed in the Institute’s archives, and the author himself concentrated on the early Middle Ages. This, however, does not mean that he gave up writing in a chronologically broader sense; still, apart from a few reviews from 1946, his texts were absent from *Przegląd Zachodni* for a long time. In turn, he focused on issues such as *Źródła niemocy polskiej na kresach zachodnich*²⁶ [The sources of Poland’s powerlessness on the western borderlands], or *Uzasadnienie Grunwaldu 15 VII 1410*²⁷ [A justification of Grunwald 15th July 1410]. Already anticipating the grand synthetic publication mentioned above, he sketched the place of

²⁴ A. Wolff-Powęska, *Polacy – Niemcy. Kultura Polityczna, kultura pamięci* (Poznań, 2008), 42. In order for the images of war to change, at least partially – especially the ones of the closest vicinity – much time had to pass and a generation change had to take place. See: M. Muszyński, P. Sypniewski, K. Rak, eds., *Niemcy o Polsce i Polakach – Germans on Poland and Poles – Die Deutschen über Polen und die Polen* (Warszawa, 2007).

²⁵ A. Wolff-Powęska, *ibidem*, 42.

²⁶ G. Labuda, “Źródła niemocy polskiej na kresach zachodnich,” *Przegląd Wielkopolski* II:2 (1946): 33-45. Offprint issued by Księgarnia Akademicka, Poznań 1946.

²⁷ G. Labuda, “Uzasadnienie Grunwaldu 15 VII 1410,” *Głos Wielkopolski* II: 191 (1946).

*Wielkie Pomorze w dziejach Polski*²⁸ [The Great Pomerania in the history of Poland] in a separate smaller book, but also initiated a scientific discussion with a treatise entitled *Potrzeby historiografii polskiej w dziedzinie historii Pomorza Zachodniego w średniowieczu*²⁹ [The needs of Polish historical studies with respect to the history of Western Pomerania in the Middle Ages].

Gerard Labuda's second work on the early Middle Ages (after *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, (1946) [Studies on the beginnings of the Polish state]), i.e. the *Pierwsze Państwo Słowiańskie. Państwo Samona* [The first Slav state. Samo's kingdom] (1949) brought him international fame. However, already before the book was published, the author's output suggested an increasingly stronger interest on the topic of the Polish-German relations, signalled by the above-mentioned unpublished study requested by the editorial office of *Przegląd Zachodni*. Incidentally, it was not until 1950 that his first major text appeared in this very journal³⁰.

Coming back to the treatise from 1946 which has retained its worth even after several decades - its only supplementation were the concluding remarks, written half a century later and containing information about papers published by Kazimierz Tymieniecki, Zygmunt Wojciechowski³¹ and others, including Ewa Maleczyńska and Bronisław Pasięrb's study on the *Polish political thought with respect to Germany during World War II* [Polska myśl polityczna okresu II wojny światowej wobec Niemiec] (Poznań 1990).

The brilliantly written text begins with:

“Germans are not liked by their neighbours, and vice versa. Germans do not like their neighbours. The last war, however, has demonstrated that there is no nation the Germans hate more than the Poles. In fact, it should not be denied that Poles felt the same about Germans.”³²

²⁸ G. Labuda, *Wielkie Pomorze w dziejach Polski*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zachodnie, 1947), 79, including a map.

²⁹ G. Labuda, “Potrzeby historiografii polskiej w dziedzinie historii Pomorza Zachodniego w średniowieczu,” *Zapiski Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* vol. 13:1-4 (1947): 9-30. The following papers were issued in the journal *Polska Zachodnia*: “Dzieje Niemiec w osądzie historyków polskich” (1948, no 4), as well as “Historycy a Ziemie Odzyskane” (1948, no 42), whereas “Pomorze Zachodnie w poglądach historycznych Jana Długosza” appeared in *Tygodnik Wybrzeże* vol. 3: 27, 28 and 29 (1948). The competence of Gerard Labuda was borne out by his presentation at the conference of Polish historians in Wrocław: “Osiągnięcia i postulaty historiografii polskiej w zakresie dziejów Słowiańszczyzny Zachodniej,” in *Pamiętnik VII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich we Wrocławiu*. T.I, (Warszawa, 1948), 187-198; see also: “Historycy dziejów Pomorza wobec nowych zadań (z powodu Sesji naukowej PAN na 500-lecie powrotu Pomorza do Polski i 10-lecie Polski Ludowej w Gdańsku 25-28 października 1954 r.),” *Nauka Polska* 2: 3(7) (1954): 136-157. He continued to use the press to inform the general public of his research achievements, such as: “Naukowcy poznańscy badają dzieje Pomorza Zachodniego,” *Nowy Świat. Tygodniowy dodatek do Głosu Wielkopolskiego* vol. 4: 47 (1953).

³⁰ G. Labuda, “Kazimierz Wachowski jako historyk Słowiańszczyzny Zachodniej,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 9/10 (1950): 337-348.

³¹ He would write about his scientific antagonist with great objectivity: “A resonance of my reasoning at the time can be found in a paper by Z. Wojciechowski, *Polityka wschodnia Niemiec a katastrofa współczesnej cywilizacji*,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 5 (1947): 381-395, which obviously does not make his conclusions any less original” (G. Labuda, *Formy antagonizmu*, 34; emphasis mine – M.K.).

³² *Ibidem*, 10.

It should be borne in mind that these words were written in the city of Poznań destroyed by war and less than a year after its liberation from the Nazi occupation. Next, the author combines the skills of a historian and political scientist, and goes on to write:

“The problem of Polish-German antagonism is of interest to more than these two nations; due to certain idiosyncratic geo-political conditions, this antagonism constituted a threat to world peace and continues to do so. Hence, disarming this antagonism is synonymous with eliminating the danger of war from this part of Europe. The creators of a future peace treatise and the UN High Assembly face the difficult task of coming up with such forms of coexistence between these two nations which would not only cure their long-lasting hatred, but also create a basis for more noble feelings towards each other”³³.

The declaration above constitutes a specific preamble to the main text, which involves a historical perspective (the author also sees a place for researchers of present times dealing with sociology and the psychology of nations), including issues unattainable for other social sciences. He remarks that the historical perspective is a theoretical foundation for constructing an analysis of sociological facts, which can be supported by reaching into the past. The Polish-German antagonism is treated as a complex phenomenon pertaining to large social groups and present both in the past and at present. Throughout the ages, it has existed with various degrees of strength and it has been caused by various sources – political, religious, national, cultural and pseudo-racial elements. The basis for the lack of trust – according to the author – is the common antagonism towards outsiders which was supported by the fact that the term **Germans** was used when referring to foreigners.

The earlier adoption of Christianity gave the Germanic peoples the feeling of civilisational superiority; yet, their contact with Poland took place when the Poles abandoned polytheism and were taking the first steps at creating their own state. According to Labuda, the German national ambition was irritated by the results of wars fought between 1000 (or rather 1002 – note M.K.) – 1018, soon after that by the coronation of Boleslaus the Brave, and later by the coronation of his grandson and namesake in 1076.

The treatise from 1946 should be treated as a forecast of thorough studies on Polish-German relations, particularly throughout the Middle Ages, as well as on the border between the two nations and countries. The author’s reasoning undoubtedly remained under the influence of his times; however, they were far from a characteristic (and to an extent justifiable) one-sided analysis. He bravely (for those times) wrote that both nations are to blame for fanning the flames of antagonisms. Nevertheless, he claims the blame was not distributed evenly, which he supported with opinions of sociologists and a vast quotation from Florian Znaniecki’s work published during the inter-war period (1931). According to Znaniecki:

³³ Ibidem.

“German aggressiveness and expansiveness is not met with any equivalent opposition on behalf of the Polish nation. They do not strive to destroy the Germans, subdue them, divide them or polonise them. All Poles do is try to polonise the German migrants on their own territory and control as much of the German occupied territory as is necessary to remove the obstacles created by the Germans and preventing the Polish nation from actively participating in the civilised world”³⁴.

At this point it is worth reminding Gerard Labuda’s attitude towards hot, controversial topics which abounded in particular with reference to Poland’s western neighbour (as the eastern one was shrouded with a veil of silence by censorship). An important statement appeared in his interview with Piotr Grochmalicki for the Poznań weekly magazine *Wprost*, which incidentally became the title of the publication: *Nie gniewam się na historię* [I’m not angry at history]. When discussing the difficult early years after the liberation of Poland he remarked:

“I assumed that (in difficult times it is best to concentrate on your work; post-script 1999)³⁵. You know, history is a bit like the weather. Can you resent the weather just because it changes? That is why I have never held a grudge towards anyone for those things. As a historian I understand you should not be angry at history”³⁶.

“Those things” – refer to the plan of dismissing Gerard Labuda from the University by the authorities, for his marriage with the daughter of margrave Wielopolski during the occupation. The plan did not materialise though, due to a fortunate turn of events, especially that at the time Labuda received a state award for his *Studies on the beginnings of the Polish state*. Without a shadow of a doubt, however, his attitude to history was of a more complex character than just concentrating on private matters. Containing his anger was primarily related to the past in a broad sense, and especially his attitude to the German problem. His study on the *Forms of antagonism* is a prime example of just that.

During the time when the historic agreement between the governments of Poland and the German Federal Republic was maturing there were no diplomatic relations between the two states. Therefore, it would be impossible to overestimate the role of the researchers working for the handbook committee (history and geography), as well as the role of politicians who relied on their personal contacts³⁷. G. Labuda as

³⁴ G. Labuda, *ibidem*, 31. Next the author goes on to summarise (and concur with) the findings of F. Znaniecki’s “Siły społeczne w walce o Pomorze,” in J. Borowik, ed., *Wielkie Pomorze* vol. III (Toruń, 1931), 80-108.

³⁵ What comes to mind at this point is the memorial speech at Gerard Labuda’s funeral delivered by the vice-director of PAN, Karol Modzelewski. He discussed the late Professor’s approach to the new reality in Poland after 1945. Next to Gerard Labuda he mentioned persona of such magnitude as Tadeusz Manteuffel, Aleksander Gieysztor, or Stanisław Herbst; hence, those responsible for organising scientific life in Poland, who irrespective of the political system worked for the institutional reconstruction of Polish historical studies.

³⁶ I quote after a reprint of the interview in the volume: *Zapiski kaszubskie*, 479 (emphasis mine – M.K.).

³⁷ In his diaries, the then editor-in-chief of the weekly *Polityka*, Mieczysław F. Rakowski thoroughly discusses the atmosphere of preparing those agreements in December 1970, M. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne* vol. 4: 1969-1971 (Warszawa, 2001).

a historian, former rector of Adam Mickiewicz University and, until recently, the director of the Institute for Western Affairs was actively involved in this process. In 1969 he published a 42-page long booklet entitled *Państwo i naród w obronie zachodniej granicy polskiej na przestrzeni dziejów* [The state and the nation in defence of the Polish western border throughout history]. Just beyond the horizon was the grand synthetic analysis which the author was soon to begin writing at the request of Wydawnictwo Poznańskie. Its size – compared to the initial assumptions – increased exponentially. At its base was an eleven-year project (1957-58) to create a two volume work which would also include an analysis of modern and the newest history of the Polish western border by Kazimierz Piwowarski (1903-1968)³⁸. Nonetheless, due to the death of the historian in question, this project failed. Still, after over 10 years, Gerard Labuda who was to have been the author of the volume on medieval and early modern history, decided to take up the task of writing the entire publication. Taking into consideration the length of the publication with 42 author's sheets and the pace at which the book was written was incredible (the preface which crowns the author's unbelievable efforts is dated 21st June 1970). It is a scientific synthesis, yet written in a very clear tone and aimed also at readers outside the narrow circle of specialists (1-323). It includes a comprehensive review of literature (as well as a vast geographical and persons index, 324-453)³⁹.

From all of the Polish historians from the middle of the 20th century, Labuda was the one best prepared to tackle this topic; yet, he began with a humble declaration, one which could have been uttered only by an outstanding scholar. He claimed that once he set about the task of writing the book, he realised he was “not satisfactorily prepared” to do so. Nevertheless, this claim seems to be contradicted, or rather formulated more precisely, in setting out the (and later meticulously realised) plan:

“When elaborating on the topic and moving from ancient times, through the Middle Ages towards the modern era I realised that not only am I badly prepared for this task, but also the entire sphere of Polish historical studies. Much has been written about the history of the Polish western border, and since the turn of the 18th century also about the history of the Polish struggle for independence which was to reclaim not only the Polish state, but also its Western border. Therefore, there is much to talk about it in terms of political history. However, should we move onto other plains of historical processes we will come across blank areas, uncharted branches of history and

³⁸ After 1950, due to political reasons, he was forced to leave his parent University in Kraków and move to Poznań University. During the political thaw of 1956 he returned to Kraków (or rather stopped commuting between the cities). Between 1958 and 1965, he was the director of the Board of Trustees at the Institute for Western Affairs, and after the death of Zygmunt Wojciechowski he became the director of the Institute. There he cooperated closely with Gerard Labuda, who was his deputy (and later his successor to this post 1958-1961). The plans of working together on the topic of the Polish western border turned out unfeasible after Piwowarski's return to Kraków, and due to the serious health problems which revealed themselves towards the end of his life. See the biographical note in: J. Gierowski, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* vol. XXVI (1981), 594-597.

³⁹ The author claimed – in our conversations which he held with me towards the end of his life – that synthetic publications lose their value if they are not based on thorough bibliographical documentation.

a shortage of knowledge. Particularly, since the 19th century, what is imposed upon us is the necessity to recreate the national border and determine its changes until the first decades of the 20th century. Hence, a historian who has been using a popular-synthetic method of exposition is forced to adopt a popular-analytical method⁴⁰.

The author resorted to an extensive list of sources and an impressive list of references; however, as a historian, in this respect he found significant shortcomings, particularly with respect to modern times. Although as a medievalist he was very comfortable with the Middle Ages and the early modern times, he did expect support from historians specialising in the modern era⁴¹. In the bibliographic chapters he did quote, among others, the research of 19th and 20th century specialists such as Roman Wapiński⁴². However, what he found especially useful were the studies by scholars specialising in law: Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Bolesław Wiewióra, or Alfons Klafkowski⁴³, whom he cited very often. Similarly, he relied on the research geographers, literature specialists, sociologists, art historians, and scholars working in other fields, primarily in the humanities.

His work was dedicated to the memory of three of his outstanding predecessors who researched Polish-German relations, Józef Kostrzewski, Kazimierz Tymieniecki and Zygmunt Wojciechowski⁴⁴. He did not treat the Polish borders (in his analyses he did not forget about the eastern ones as well) in isolation, but rather discussed them in the context of the historical process and historical conditionings in particular eras. It suffices to take a glance at the table of contents and the titles of the subsequent 30 chapters (the last, the 31st chapter contains some concluding remarks, p. 315-323). One will find political history next to the discussion of ethnic and administrative borders, the potential of the political system, geography, or culture; however, it is the ‘na-

⁴⁰ G. Labuda, *Polska granica zachodnia. Tysiąc lat dziejów politycznych* (Poznań, 1971), 23.

⁴¹ At various occasions he would discuss topics requiring a wider perspective, such as: *Jak świat światem, nie będzie Niemiec Polakowi bratem* (Poznań, 1968), 17-32. See also: *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy*, 98-111; this issue also became the title of an interview with J. Górski, *Rozmowy o historii* (Kraków, 1967), 92-102, “Echa rzekomo kościuszkowskiego ‘Finis Poloniae’ w niemieckiej myśli politycznej XIX wieku,” in: *Wiek XVIII – Polska i świat. Księga poświęcona Bogusławowi Leśnodorskiemu* (Warszawa, 1974), 125-140; reprint: *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy*, 385-399; in this case the medievalist revised the findings of researchers of modern history, already having written the fundamental synthetic publication on the Polish western border.

⁴² R. Wapiński, “Endecja wobec problemów polskich ziem zachodnich w latach 1919-1939,” *Zapiski Historyczne* 31 (1966): 601-620; “Endecka koncepcja granic Polski w latach 1918-1921,” *ibidem* 33 (1968): 535-557.

⁴³ K. Skubiszewski, *Zachodnie granice Polski* (Gdańsk, 1969); B. Wiewióra, *Uznanie nabytków terytorialnych w prawie międzynarodowym* (Poznań, 1961), *Granica polsko-niemiecka a konkordaty z lat 1929 i 1933* (Warszawa 1958), as well as *Granica polsko-niemiecka po II wojnie światowej* (Poznań, 1970).

⁴⁴ Below is a telling citation from that dedication (a.24): “One writes books alone, but not in solitude. This publication too owes much to Poznań historiographers. In the past fifty years (i.e. since the beginning of the inter-war period – M.K.) this community has been the main centre of Polish scientific west-oriented thought. It is to the chief representatives of this line of thought that I devote this very book, *Polska granica zachodnia*”.

tion' that is always visible. What is worth noticing is the imagery of exposition, also found in the headings, such as: *Najbardziej „stala” granica w Europie w XVI-XVIII wieku* [The most 'stable' border in Europe in the 16th-18th centuries] (note the use of the inverted comas), *Najbardziej ruchoma granica Europy w XVIII wieku* [The most mobile European border in the 18th century], or *Naród polski i jego instytucje w walce o „narodowość” w XIX wieku* [The Polish nation and institutions in the fight for “nationality” in the 19th century]. The last heading refers to the period 1945-1970 and in this case – this we know from the author's later statements – Labuda had to resort to extensive self-censorship, in order not to find himself in conflict with the official censorship. Nevertheless, in the discussion of certain issues he would not be led (politically) astray, in particular in the case of the famous letter of Polish bishops to German bishops, which preceded an international agreement. Therefore, in the end one will not find the name of cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in the index; similarly, the roles of the Protestant and Catholic churches are discussed in a condensed note coupled with a comment that both of these institutions had to say “had a smaller or larger impact – and in any case a stimulating one – on the shaping of German public opinion”⁴⁵.

With the realities of the Gomułka period in mind, one could say that the statement above contains a conclusion which departs from the official version of the period. It may be true that the book appeared in a slightly different political situation – at the beginning of the “Gierek decade” - still, censorship was equally vigilant as before the changes at the top in December 1970.

Gerard Labuda presented his research credo in brief, in chapter one, discussing the border as a subject of historical research. It is an original interpretation, differing from the analyses presented before – usually fragmentary or one-sided ones. This of course is not an allegation directed at the authors of many thorough works, as without them it would be impossible to discuss the subject matter holistically. The point of departure of this study is the increasing density of settlements in the tribal period. A political border came into being with the creation of a state, and with time, issues of national, ethnographic, cultural, social, ideological, etc. borders appeared. These rarely overlapped which led to conflicts between the people living on either side. Such conflicts were most visible in the sphere of politics; let us remind ourselves, therefore, of a fragment of the interpretation mentioned above:

“Every border is a product of evolution; hence, it is created in the fight between the old and the new, in a fight between economic, social, class, political and ideological opposites. The changes occurring in these spheres are symptoms of the transformations that have already happened, but also a forecast of new changes that are to occur in the lives of human communities subject to them. It is most difficult to capture these changes in the spheres of awareness and ideology, as creating new values and their reception happen in a continual, and nearly unperceivable manner. Only religious views take on a more visible shape; this, however, stems from the organisational character of all manner of churches as institutions representing those views outside. Borderlines with respect to the development of productive forces and – what is connected with it – the evolution of social rela-

⁴⁵ G. Labuda, *Polska granica zachodnia*, 309 (emphasis mine – M.K.).

tions are also blurred. It is only through great technological, industrial and social revolutions that military blocks, political systems or civilisations are outlined.”⁴⁶

In the chapter summing up the analysis (XXXI) we find a synthesis of the 1000-year-long history of the Polish western border presented against the background of the history of the state and nation from an evolutionary perspective, including its good and bad sides. Despite looking from a Polish point of view, the author manages to avoid Polono-centric evaluations. In this respect, he does not omit the German partner, but admittedly he does not devote an equal volume of text to it. And no wonder, after all he is writing about the Polish – not German – border. His attention is focused mainly on the times closer to us – modern and contemporary history. Today, he might supplement the text with a chapter (or maybe points 5 and 6 – point 4 is entitled *Ostatni etap 1966-1970* [The last stage 1966-1970]) on the conflict around the borderline running across the Szczecin Lagoon. The conflict was resolved at the last minute, just before the downfall of the ‘old’ system, thanks to the determination of General Wojciech Jaruzelski’s team⁴⁷. Also, he might discuss the new situation on the continent after the unification of Germany and both countries entering common military structures and the EU.

Gerard Labuda’s work, republished after three years⁴⁸, caused quite a response, and not only in Poland. Dozens of reviews and discussions were published⁴⁹, among which many were polemic in nature. In particular, there were a number of one-sided, anti-German voices, such as the publication by Kazimierz Koźniewski, famous for his publicistic disposition, which was however immediately refuted by a Szczecin historian Bogdan Dopierała⁵⁰. The experienced journalist – quite rightly – treated the book as a life’s work⁵¹, although its author had over four decades of creative working life ahead of him; needless to say, he used them to the fullest to create a number of further fundamental synthetic works⁵².

The novel approach to the history of the western border was noticed by well known historians in several extensive analyses, including: Jerzy Topolski⁵³,

⁴⁶ Ibidem, 28.

⁴⁷ More on the topic: M. Kosman, *Los generała. Wokół medialnego wizerunku Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego*. (Toruń, 2008): 354ff (chapter entitled: *Granica...niepokoju*).

⁴⁸ G. Labuda, *Polska granica zachodnia. Tysiąc lat dziejów politycznych*, 2nd edition. (Poznań 1974): 472.

⁴⁹ See: a list of these in the References of the volume: *Naukowe dzieło Profesora Gerarda Labudy*. 216f

⁵⁰ B. Dopierała, “Dwugłos o książce Gerarda Labudy,” *Polityka*, June 17, 1972, 25 (798).

⁵¹ P. de Laval, “Opus vitae Gerarda Labudy,” *Więź* 15:9 (1972): 132-137.

⁵² The last of them, *Historia Kaszubów w dziejach Pomorza* (vol. I opening a synthetic analysis which was to take up three volumes), Gdańsk 2006, p. 530, the author passed on to his successor as rector and called it his life’s greatest work. Undoubtedly, this was the last of his magnificent works and one strictly connected to the history of the Polish western border.

⁵³ J. Topolski, “W imię integralnego spojrzenia na historię,” *Nowe Drogi* 278: 7 (1972): 161-168.

Władysław Czapliński and Wojciech Wrzesiński⁵⁴, Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk⁵⁵, Roman Heck and Adam Galos⁵⁶, or Kazimierz Myśliński⁵⁷. Additionally, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz⁵⁸ discussed the publication from the point of view of a literary specialist with a broad humanistic outlook, while Jan Szczepański⁵⁹ provided the perspective of an experienced sociologist. A fresh evaluation was also included by a legal analysis of the subject matter⁶⁰; moreover, the text aroused the interest of diplomats and specialists in contemporary history⁶¹.

The author of the millennial history of the Polish western border had become the most outstanding specialist in the field already before 1971, and not just in Poland; the publication of the book only confirmed his status. Information about the synthetic analysis reached foreign readers through reviews published by the English and French counterparts of the Institute for Western Affairs, and written by Zdzisław Kaczmarczyk (*Polish Western Affairs – La Pologne et les Affaires Occidentales*), as well as due to researchers from Germany⁶² and Czechoslovakia⁶³.

Among the analytic studies published in the years to come, the third volume of *Fragmety dziejów Słowiańszczyzny* [Fragments of the history of Slavdom] from 1975 was of particular importance to issues related to the shape of the borders. A quarter of a century later (2002), this publication – together with the two earlier volumes – was included in a nearly 1,000-page long book issued by the Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk. Additionally, more and more texts appeared devoted to the history of the author's "little homeland" – Kashubia – the grandest of which was to be the synthetic analysis from 2006⁶⁴ mentioned above. This book can be treated as the final word of seventy years of research on the Polish western border. Other major publications on the topic included the subsequent volumes of *Historia Pomorza* [The history of Pomerania], as well as (issued since 1982) *Historia dyplomacji polskiej* [The history of Polish diplomacy], also edited by Gerard Labuda. What is more, he participated in

⁵⁴ W. Czapliński, W. Wrzesiński, „Polska a Niemcy. Uwagi o książce Gerarda Labudy,” *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka* 27: 3 (1972): 481-487.

⁵⁵ Z. Kaczmarczyk, „Pierwsza synteza dziejów polskiej granicy zachodniej,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 28: 4 (1972): 367-376 (issued also in English and French).

⁵⁶ R. Heck, A. Galos, „Polska granica zachodnia,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* vol. 80: 1 (1973): 85-92.

⁵⁷ K. Myśliński, *Studia Historica Slavo-Germanica* vol. 4 (1975): 137-141.

⁵⁸ J. Iwaszkiewicz, „Rozmowy o książkach,” *Zycie Warszawy* 73 (1972): 5 (for years the eminent writer used to be a columnist for the newspaper).

⁵⁹ J. Szczepański, *Literatura* 13 (1972): 1-11. Researchers and publicists wrote about Labuda's book both in the daily press, as well as in social-cultural weeklies and periodicals such as: *Odra*, *Perspektywy*, *Poglądy*, *Spojrzenia*, *Trybuna Ludu*, *Miesięcznik Literacki*, *Więź*, *Przegląd Lubuski*.

⁶⁰ A. Klafkowski, „Kształty zachodniej granicy,” *Nowe Książki* 6: 530 (1972): 5f.

⁶¹ A review by J. Sulek, *Sprawy międzynarodowe* 9: 25 (1972): 125-127.

⁶² E. Meyer, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 6 (1973): 375-377.

⁶³ V. Žáček, *Slezský sborník* 71: 2 (1973): 158-160.

⁶⁴ See: footnote 52.

many multi-author publications where he wrote on various issues connected with the topic⁶⁵, as well as in study volumes and monographic works⁶⁶.

Gerard Labuda's observations of the nation and state in the history of the western border opens the collection of essays on Polish-German relations in the past issued by the Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy in 1986. The volume included texts written by historians and publicists (Jerzy Krasuski, Wojciech Wrzesiński, Stanisław Stomma, Kazimierz Koźniewski, Edmund Męclewski, Marian Podkowiński, Mieczysław Tomala, and Ryszard Wojna)⁶⁷. The clear presentation of methodological issues provided by Labuda at the beginning of the book constitutes an excellent commentary for the works of the remaining authors which often involve subjective and passionate attitudes. In the same year, the proceedings of the 8th National Congress of Polish Historians organised two years earlier in Poznań were published. One of the plenary lectures given by the most eminent researcher at the conference was titled *Polska granica zachodnia w tysiącletnich dziejach państwa i narodu*⁶⁸ [The Polish western border in the millennial history of the state and nation].

The history of the Polish-German border also served as the object of Labuda's critical remarks – both as a researcher and essayist – which he included in a thought provoking conference presentation. The lecture entitled *Geschichte der deutsch-pol-*

⁶⁵ Among others: „Udział Wielkopolski w zagospodarowaniu ziem zachodnich Polski,” in S. Wykrętowicz, ed., *Spoleczeństwo Wielkopolski w procesie przemian socjalistycznych* (Poznań, 1977), 117-132, as well as a reprint in the volume edited by A. Kwilecki: *Polska myśl zachodnia w Poznaniu i Wielkopolsce, jej rozwój i realizacja w wiekach XIX i XX* (Poznań, 1980), 280-295; “Das deutsch-polnische Verhältnis in Mittelalter – aus polnischer Sicht,” in H.J. Markmann and J. Vietig, eds., *Das deutsch-polnische Verhältnis – Referate zu Problem der deutsch-polnischen Schulbuchempfehlungen* (Berlin, 1981), 31-49; “Polsko-niemieckie problemy graniczne we wczesnym średniowieczu. Przyczynek do dyskusji nad zaleceniami do podręczników szkolnych,” in M. Biskup, ed., *Śląsk i Pomorze w historii stosunków polsko-niemieckich w średniowieczu* (Wrocław, 1983), 20-34; “Polska granica zachodnia w tysiącletnich dziejach państwa i narodu,” *Wiadomości historyczne* 28:1 (1985): 116-132; the same paper appeared in English and German versions: *Polish Western-Affairs/La Pologne et les Affaires Occidentales* 26:1 (1985): 3-28, as well as *Polnische Weststudien* IV:1 (1985): 3-32; “Pomorsko-krzyżacki zatarg graniczny z roku 1267/1268. Przyczynek do migracji Prusów na Pomorze Gdańskie,” *Zapiski Historyczne* 50:2 (1985): 7-25 (after a few years this text evoked a response written by B. Śliwiński, “Jeszcze w sprawie układów pomorsko-krzyżackich z roku 1267/1268,” *ibidem* 57:2/3 (1992): 106-117.

⁶⁶ The most important publication here would be the book written together with M. Biskup, *Dzieje Zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach. Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, państwo, ideologia* (Gdańsk, 1986), 624 pages, which received excellent reviews, caused a large response from readers and was soon re-issued (Gdańsk 1988), translated into German and published as volume 6 of the series *Klio in Polen (Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens in Preussen. Wirtschaft – Gesellschaft – Staat – Ideologie. Aus dem polnischen J. Heyde, U. Kodur. (Osnabrück, 2000))*. In 2006 – a jubilee year – Wydawnictwo Poznańskie published a comprehensive book entitled: *Studia krytyczne o początkach Zakonu Krzyżackiego w Prusach i na Pomorzu*.

⁶⁷ *W cieniu przeszłości. O stosunkach polsko-niemieckich* (Warszawa, 1986).

⁶⁸ G. Labuda, “Polska granica zachodnia w tysiącletnich dziejach państwa i narodu,” *Pamiętnik XIII Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Poznaniu 6-9 września 1984 r.*, vol. 1 (Wrocław, 1986), 45-66.

nischen Grenze als Forschungsproblem [The history of the German-Polish border as a research problem] took place on 15th April 1991 at the *Historische Kommission zu Berlin* during the international conference “Oder-Neisse-Grenze und die Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen”. Its revised version was published in Polish a year later. In it, the author, among others, referred to the newly published work of Klaus Zernack on the history of the eastern German border⁶⁹; in response to the re-edition published in 1996 Labuda wrote:

“Time and again I have been encouraged to prepare a third edition of my synthesis: *Polska granica zachodnia...* [The Polish western border...] (1971, 1974). I am fully aware of the shortcomings of the book which was written in a hurry and under the pressure of the pact on the normalisation of mutual relations between Poland and the German Federal Republic which was being ratified at the time. I understand the necessity of updating the publication in the light of the unification of Germany in 1989. Finally, I am also aware of the range and depth of the necessary historiographical studies which would have to be undertaken to meet the requirements of the current state of research. In particular, one would have to address the critical voices and calls for supplementation which have appeared during the past quarter of a century”⁷⁰.

However, in time the author of the words cited above became more flexible in his attitude towards the necessity of preparing a new version of the book. Today – when he is no longer with us – one can definitely assert that the *Polska granica zachodnia* [Polish western border] has permanently entered the canon of historiographical classics. Bearing in mind that although synthetic works do retain their timeless importance, they also ‘age’ quickly, publishing a new edition of the book appears to be an urgent postulate. In this case, the work of Professor Gerard Labuda can be a model of objectivity as far as presenting the relations with our German neighbours and the history of the “western frontier”. Moreover, it could constitute a source of methodological inspiration for studies on the Polish eastern border.

⁶⁹ G. Labuda, “Dzieje granicy polsko-niemieckiej jako zagadnienia badawcze,” in A. Czubiński, ed., *Problem granic i obszaru odrodzonego państwa polskiego (1918-1990)* (Poznań, 1992), 11-47 (reprinted in the volume: *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy o przeszłości*, p. 494-524). See also: K. Zernack, “Deutschlands Ostgrenze,” in A. Demandt, ed., *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte* (München, 1990).

⁷⁰ G. Labuda, *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy*, 524.

