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## NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

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### FIRST CONFERENCE OF POLISH AND AMERICAN HISTORIANS

The First Conference of Polish and American Historians sponsored by the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw and the Department of History of the University of Iowa in cooperation with other scholarly institutions and universities took place in Nieborów, Poland, May 27–29, 1974. The conference was devoted to the problem "State and Society from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Comparative Approach," with concentration on sociopolitical, institutional, and ideological problems of European and particularly East European history (including Russia). This scholarly event resulted from extensive negotiations between Professors Aleksander Gieysztor, director of the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw, Antoni Mączak, deputy director of the same Institute, and Professor Jaroslaw Pelenski of the University of Iowa, who served as the American coordinator of the conference.

The participants included scholars from the Universities of Iowa and Warsaw, as well as American and Polish scholars from other institutions. Each side contributed seven papers. The following papers were presented by the American participants: Alan W. Fisher (Michigan State University), "Administration of the Territories of Subordinate Nationality Groups in Multinational Empires: Muscovite Russia and the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (A Comparative Approach)"; Ralph E. Giesey (University of Iowa), "From Monarchomachs to Dynastic Officialdom in the Ancien Régime"; John Bell Henneman (University of Iowa), "Soldiers, Society and State Finance in Renaissance France, 1350–1450"; Herbert H. Kaplan (Indiana University), "Russian Commerce with Great Britain During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century"; Jaroslaw Pelenski (University of Iowa), "Muscovite Russia and Poland-Lithuania in the Second Half of the Fifteenth and in the Sixteenth Century: State and Society—A Comparison of Selected Sociopolitical Developments"; Marc Raeff (Columbia University), "The Well-Ordered Police State and Enlightened Absolutism in Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (An Attempt at a Comparative Approach)"; and Ihor Ševčenko (Harvard University), "Agapetus in East and West: The Fate of a Byzantine Mirror of Princes (A Comparison of the Influences of Byzantine Political Theory and Their Reception in Eastern and Western Europe)."

The Polish participants contributed the following papers: Aleksander Gieysztor (University of Warsaw), "Idea of Sovereignty and Royal Emblems in the Late Medieval and Early Modern Poland"; Stanisław Grzybowski (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow), "Oderint dum metuant: Selected Problems in Social Psychology of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"; Marian Małowist (University of Warsaw), "Central Europe, the Baltic Countries and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Constitutional Trends and Developments"; Antoni Mączak (University of Warsaw), "Wealth and Development as Viewed by the Renaissance and Baroque Society"; Stanisław Piekarczyk (University of Warsaw), "'Medieval' versus 'Modern': An Essay on Methodological

Analysis of the Two Predicates"; Jerzy Topolski (University of Poznań), "Origins of the Early Modern Manorial Economy in Europe"; and Zbigniew Wójcik (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw), "Poland and Russia in the Seventeenth Century: Problems of Internal Development (A Comparison)."

Each participant was provided with copies of all the papers, and each had a chance to present a concise oral résumé of his paper. The fourteen résumés were read at six sessions which were followed by extensive question-and-answer periods and discussion.

The papers devoted to the general theme "state and society"—with the American side slightly emphasizing the political aspects, and the Polish stressing to a somewhat greater degree the societal elements—reflected a rather wide scope of the varieties of history. Whatever the differences in the outlook and training of the participants, the prevalent similarities of general methodological approaches were quite astounding. The historians from the two countries tended to speak one scholarly language as far as terminology, concepts, theories, and models were concerned. The discussions were conducted in a frank and uninhibited manner, and the absence of blocs of views and the confining spirit so typical of "delegations" was most refreshing.

The papers and discussions reflected a genuine desire among participants to be detached and historicist, and to avoid the pitfalls of contemporary relevance. At the same time, certain limitations of the profession were apparent: a tendency to adhere to some traditional assumptions, a resistance to views and reinterpretations which do not fit into established conceptions of history, and a hesitancy to confront with an open mind new arguments and perspectives even if the latter are founded on a solid antiquarian basis. In general, the conference revealed that the historians in Poland and the United States share similar concerns and doubts, as well as the frustrating recognition that basic problems remain unresolved.

The conference took place in the Radziwiłł palace, an ideal setting. The hosts should be complimented not only for having provided the American participants with the greatest possible comfort and a most rewarding historical sightseeing tour of Cracow but also for having done everything possible to prove that traditional Polish hospitality is still alive. The official aspects of the event were kept to a minimum, and the ceremonial speeches (the opening statements by Professor Stefan Kieniewicz, chairman of the Committee of the Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and Professor Gieysztor, as well as the remarks at the social lunch by Rector Rodewald, U.S. Ambassador R. T. Davies, and Professor Ševčenko) were informal, relaxing, and witty.

Three institutions were instrumental in making this collaborative project possible: the International Research and Exchanges Board by providing a grant to cover the travel expenses for the American participants, the University of Warsaw by hosting the conference, and the University of Iowa by making a considerable financial commitment. The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw—in particular its first secretary, Leonard J. Baldyga—was especially helpful in the preparations for this scholarly and cultural event.

The fruitful realization of this conference was beneficial to both sides. It was the first of its kind in the history of exchanges between Polish and American historians. It dealt with a serious intellectual problem on a comparative basis, covering Western as well as East European materials and historical experiences. It enabled both Polish and American scholars to exchange information and ideas

on matters of mutual professional interest. One can safely say that it provided a model for similar ventures not only in the field of history but also in other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. A second conference is to take place in the United States in 1976, and a formal invitation has already been extended to the Committee of Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It would be most desirable if Polish-American historical conferences were put on a permanent basis.

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#### GEORGE S. COUNTS, 1889–1974

The recently deceased George S. Counts, professor emeritus of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, was among the early Americans to observe, study, and analyze education in the Soviet Union. His writings on this subject began to appear when the Soviet Union was being examined, for the most part, by extremists of two sorts—those who expressed unbridled admiration of the socio-economic and cultural revolution and those who indulged in thoroughgoing denunciation of the new Soviet society.

Dr. Counts sought to avoid extremes. He wrote in concrete detail, indicated approval in part, and issued warnings with regard to several important characteristics of the Soviet society and its schools. His longer works include *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia* (1930), a record of a seven-month, six-thousand-mile journey in Counts's own automobile; *The Soviet Challenge to America* (1931), a report on social, economic, cultural, and educational changes, with special reference to the First Five-Year Plan; *The Country of the Blind: The Soviet System of Mind Control* (1949), in collaboration with Nucia Lodge, a study of the policy of Zhdanovshchina whereby Stalinism became the mode of thought and expression in all aspects of culture, science, and education; *American Education Through the Soviet Looking Glass* (1951), a countercommentary on N. K. Goncharov's critique of American education in *Sovetskaia pedagogika*; the magnum opus, *The Challenge of Soviet Education* (1957), which emphasized the goals and processes of moral and political education of all age levels, and which was published in the year of the sputnik; and *Khrushchev and the Central Committee Speak on Education* (1959), a translation and interpretation of the plan for the reconstruction of the Soviet educational system. Counts also was the cotranslator of M. Ilin's (I. Ia. Marshak) *New Russia's Primer: The Story of the Five-Year Plan* (1931), which reflected "that extreme devotion to science, technology, and machinery which agitates contemporary Russia"; and of "*I Want To Be Like Stalin*": *From the Russian Text on Pedagogy by B. P. Yesipov and N. K. Goncharov* (1947). In addition, he edited the translation of Albert P. Pinkevich's *The New Education in the Soviet Republic* (1929) and provided an interpretative introduction.

During his visits in 1927, 1929, and 1936 to the USSR, Counts observed schools, collected source materials, and interviewed leading educators, among them N. K. Krupskaya, A. V. Lunacharsky, M. M. Pistrak, S. T. Shatsky, and V. N. Shulgin. His professional interest in the society, ideology, and education of the peoples of Russia dated from the Revolution. Without a doubt, until about 1960 he was the foremost systematic student of Soviet education. In his articles and lectures