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# Summary of the volume.

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

## SUMMARY OF THE VOLUME

The current volume of “Przegląd Historyczny” is devoted to Karol Modzelewski, one of the most prominent Polish medievalists and at the same time one of the chief representatives of the anticommunist opposition in Poland prior to 1989, and a leading parliamentarian during the early period of our political system transformation (1989–1991). This dichotomy in Professor Modzelewski’s biography — on the one hand in his books and articles he discussed remote issues of the Middle Ages, while on the other his political activities placed him among the most important architects of Polish contemporary history — is strongly emphasized in the opening remarks by the editors of the volume. And, due to that same fact, many of the texts to be found below, based on private recollections of the authors, attain the character of source materials for studies on the history of communist Poland.

The article ‘Karol Modzelewski: historian, *homme politique*, and friend. Several remarks’ by Henryk Samsonowicz treats on both aspects of Professor Modzelewski’s endeavours. With respect to his political accomplishments, Samsonowicz returns to earlier years, stressing the inspirational role of Modzelewski’s speeches for the forming of the political opposition in Poland after 1956: their goals, slogans, and their style in general. He notices also the courage and consistency of Professor Modzelewski, who functioned for many years under the pressure of severe police repressions. Discussing the scientific field, Samsonowicz points out that Modzelewski has numerous achievements in reconstructing Polish (the issue of the political and economic system of the early Piast monarchy) and European history (research on Italy under Lombard domination, and on the formation of European states and nations within the process of mutual infiltration of the late-classical and the “barbarian” civilisations of the Germans, Slavs, Finno-Ugric and Baltic peoples).

The article by Adam Michnik, ‘From Polish revolution to Polish hospitality: Some reflections on the biography of Karol Modzelewski’, is of more personal character. Being a close friend ever since the early nineteen-sixties, at times, closest collaborator, Michnik relies chiefly on his own personal recollections. He demonstrates that when Karol Modzelewski and Jacek Kuroń started their political activity defying the system in communist Poland, there existed no behavioural models of an oppositionist. In the course of their struggles, but also during court trials and subsequent prison terms, Modzelewski and Kuroń created standards of what is, and what is not permissible, later on followed by other dissidents. Another political novelty, which should be ascribed to Modzelewski, was putting democratic postulates into wording understandable by the communists, a language which acknowledged the interests of the opponents. This new type of bargain-communication is visible in the 1976 letter to Edward Gierek. In 1980, the same language was taken up by the “Solidarity” movement in the negotiations with the communist regime. Michnik also points to the graduate change in Modzelewski’s stance: from an advocate of

a workers' revolution against communist bureaucracy in the mid-sixties, through the attitude of a careful activist who demonstrated to his younger colleagues potential consequences of their conflict with the authorities (around 1968), to the advocate of compromise negotiations (ever since the nineteen-seventies). In spite of this evolution Modzelewski remained acutely sensitive to social problems; hence his disagreement with the liberalisation of the economy introduced by the so called Balcerowicz Plan in 1989.

Professor Modzelewski's scientific activity is the focus of the interview conducted with him by Paolo Gugliemotti and Gian Maria Varanini. The interview was originally published by the periodical *Reti Medievali Rivista* (Vol. 9, 2010, No. 1). The text brings forth numerous interdependencies of Modzelewski's historical research, the first of which was his social background — Polish intelligentsia tinted by communist ideology, persecuted during the Stalinist era. The second aspect discussed in the interview were the conditions of life in communist Poland, a country, in comparison with other states within the Bloc, relatively liberal, where, nevertheless, persons who voiced views politically incorrect were persecuted, and contacts with foreign nationals were treated with suspicion. The third theme of the interview was the milieu of Polish historians (and to a certain extent philosophers and sociologists), which after 1945 created in the Polish research institutions enclaves of far-reaching freedom for intellectual studies. This attitude resulted in an elastic approach towards Marxist thought, and a readiness to accept other interesting ideas in research methodology, including the incorporating of the methodology of other disciplines into historiography, chiefly archaeology and ethnology. Another subject touched upon in the interview were the inspiring contacts (after 1956) with the learned milieus of France (mainly the *Annales* school) and Italy.

In his replies to the questions Professor Modzelewski pointed to the specificity of Central and Eastern Europe, and its influence on the shape of medieval research. This specificity consists in a relative (in comparison with Western Europe) scarcity of source materials, which forces historians to utilize retrogressive and comparative methods (both approaches sometimes allow for usage of sources spread very far apart one from another in time and space). He stressed the importance of these methods for his own research, noticing that they are an important input of the Eastern European historians into the great themes undertaken by their Western colleagues, but at the same time, he observed, they could be also a source of misunderstandings and polemics.

Professor Modzelewski also described the organisation of historical research in contemporary Poland and replied to some of the criticism aroused by his last book *Barbarzyńska Europa* (Barbarian Europe). He commented also that although he always took care to place distinct limits between his political activities and scientific research, he is conscious that the conditions in which he lived had their impact on the treatment and interpretation of historical source materials of the Middle Ages.

The article by Aneta Pieniędzy 'Karol Modzelewski's research on medieval Italy' treats a distinct aspect of Professor Modzelewski's work. Pieniędzy stresses that ever since his research fellowship in Venice during the years 1961–1962, i.e. nearly all his active life in the academe, Modzelewski worked on the history of medieval Italy. On the one hand he remained under the spell of such historians as: Gino Luzzato, Cinzio Violante, Gian Piero Bognetti, or Giovanni Tabacco, while on the other he influenced Italian historiography as to

research on rural economy and on the states and societies of northern Italy under Lombard power. Interest in Italian history is also discernible in Modzelewski's works on early medieval Poland. In this respect one can enumerate the application of the retrogressive method to the analysis of the status of dependent and servile peasantry during the early Middle Ages, not to mention the awareness of new ideas current in Western European historiography and their application to research on Polish history, and the usage of terminology coined by Western scholars.

Stefan Troebst (University of Leipzig, 'Memory of dictatorships and historical consciousness in Eastern and Southern Europe: A comparison of comparative approaches') analyses relations between system transformations and memory of authoritarian regimes in countries where recollections of nondemocratic systems constitutes personal experiences of the majority of the population: Central and Eastern European countries and the states of the southern part of the continent (i.e. Greece, Portugal and Spain), where the transition from dictatorships to democracy took place in the nineteen-seventies. Troebst describes in length research on these themes, encompassing works of such authors as: Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, Wolfgang Merkel, Carsten Goehrke, Joakim Ekman, Jonas Linde, and his own endeavours. In conclusion Troebst observes that there are various forms of remembering authoritarian regimes and strategies of levelling out the bygones, which depend on the specificity of individual cultures. Nevertheless, in all of these countries the influence of the authoritarian experience and its overcoming to a large extent formed the historical memory of the people. Moreover, in the public discourse there one can discern extreme attitudes, which can be described as "obsession with history" and "lack of memory"; sometimes these attitudes pass directly to the other, like in Spain after the discovery of mass graves of the victims of the Franco regime.

The articles are supplemented by a review by Jan Olszek of the book by Andrzej Friszke, *Anatomia buntu. Kuroń, Modzelewski i komandosi* (The Anatomy of a Revolt: Kuroń, Modzelewski and the 'Commandos'; Cracow, 2010). According to Olszek this book ranks among the most important studies on the history of political opposition in communist Poland. The monograph is based on the acts of the former Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, kept at the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, and recently opened to the historians. These documents, similarly as the archives of the central authorities of the Polish communist party (rendered accessible to the historians previously), allow not only for a more thorough study, but disclose the attitudes of the regime vis-a-vis the opposition, and the measures undertaken against it. These acts are an important enlargement of the source materials previously utilized, which encompassed chiefly reports and recollections of the oppositionists and printed materials. Olszek stresses that the author of the monograph carefully weighs his data coming from both sides, which increase our knowledge of the democratic opposition, but does not allow himself to be overpowered by the perspective of the police acts.