

# Michał Wachowski

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## "Kalkulować... Polacy na szczytach c.k. monarchii", Waldemar Łazuga, Poznań 2013 : [recenzja]

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**Waldemar Łazuga**

***Kalkulować... Polacy na szczytach c.k. monarchii***  
**Poznań 2013, pp. 457**

**W**aldemar Łazuga is a professor of historical science, an expert in Polish and world's 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century history (Director of Institute of Political Thought and Culture at University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań Department of History, Scientific Director of Digital Children's Encyclopaedia of People of Great Poland). Currently he is the proxy of University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań provost and advisor to the Marshal of Great Poland Voivodship. He is the author of many valued publications, such as: *Michał Bobrzyński. Historical thought and political action; Polish government in Austria. Cabinet of earl Kazimierz Badeni; Gabriel Narutowicz. First president of Poland (together with Janusz Pajewski); To understand history. 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. He is a lecturer at many universities in Poland and abroad. Waldemar Łazuga was given many awards and medals, e.g. KLIO award – the most important historical award in Poland (called the Nobel Prize

for historians) for the discussed book, National Education Council Medal, Order of Polonia Restituta, and a medal for contribution to Great Poland Voivodship. His opinion is valued and esteemed, and his publications are widely quoted.

The reviewed book *Kalkulować... Polacy na szczytach c.k. monarchii* comprises of six intriguingly chronologically fragmented chapters and divided into smaller parts. The first chapter, called: *In the country of Francis Joseph*, displays the situation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Austria itself before the deal closing with Hungary. This chapter covers the situation of the Polish people, the armies, administration, and monarchy as a union, of which it was a part of after all. "11 nationalities, 17 crown countries, 20 legislative bodies, 27 parties and – as it was said – countless number of views"<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Łazuga, *Kalkulować... Polacy na szczytach c.k. monarchii*, Poznań 2013, p. 38.

In the second chapter, called: *From contestation to negotiation*, the author talks about the history of first Poles, who reached a significant status in politics during the Austrian Partition (for example W. Zaleski, A. Gołuchowski, earl A. Potocki). The worldview change, that Poles not only can, but actually should take active part in political life of their country, is presented in an appealing way.

Chapter three, named: *From acceptance to constellation*, shows the actions of E. Taaffe's cabinet and Poles helping him: J. Dunajewski, F. Ziemiałkowski, and F. Zaleski. The author calls Dunajewski repeatedly, and not only in this chapter, the most eminent Minister of Finance of the Monarchy. At the end of chapter three there is a description of the actions of the next cabinet, and among that these of S. Madeyski and A. Jaworski.

Chapter four, entitled: *From constellation to democratization*, tells the actions of the next cabinets between 1885 and 1899. Rightly, there is particularly a lot about the administration of Polish Prime Minister – K. Badeni, who is called by the author the next Polish constellation in the monarchy. Besides Badeni, there were two other Polish ministers in the cabinet: E. Rittner and L. Biliński. The chapter covers the topic of electoral reform, which the previous cabinets were unable to conduct and the Poles succeeded in.

Chapter five is called: *From democratization to orientation*. In it, the author reflects on the next administrations until the end of 1913, and actually until the outbreak of First World War. A lot of it is devoted to the linguistic conflicts between Germans, Czechs and Poles as a hypothetical connection.

The last, sixth chapter is called: *From orientation to the end*. The author describes

the times from the outburst of the war until its end and the origin of new Polish country. He shows the actions of the last cabinets of the monarchy, devotes a lot of space to the Poles and their various visions of Poland after the end of the war.

The author also added an introduction to the book, where he capably inserted exhaustive information and goals of the book (which can be the answers to the following questions: “1. What was the reason behind great political careers of Poles in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy? 2. What distinguished Poles, what strengths and weaknesses did they have? 3. How did their attitude towards Austria change – to the government itself, to other nations, to their own traditions? 4. What goals did they have and which were they able to achieve? 5. Where was the centre of gravity for Polish politics and who decided about it?”) and an epilogue, where the questions from the introduction intertwining through the whole book found their constructive and logical answers. The book includes an annex called *Prime ministers, ministers, cabinets*, where the reader finds a listing of all cabinets governing the monarchy in the time that the book covers. The book also contains 53 illustrations from the discussed period included in chapters, which allows the imagination of the readers to capture more, as well as a useful names' index. All of it is a valuable addition to the content of the book.

Through chapters, the author shows stories of Poles, who were politically active in the monarchy. He writes, that these are stories of: “alienation, prostration, contestation, accommodation, acceptance, constellation, idealization, orientation and tragic end”. Among the described cabinets, there are those in which Poland had a very strong, domineering position as well

as ones, where there were almost no Polish people at all. It is justified by maintaining chronology and showing the relationships of these cabinets with other Polish organizations.

The assessment of Poles' actions in Austrian politics was shown in a very appealing way. Łazuga skillfully sums them up from today's point of view, as well as quoted opinions of contemporary people.

The amount of material used in the book is admirable. These are multilingual letters, diaries, protocols, notes, illustrations, public and private documents, press articles and field literature. The author himself admits in the introduction that he had to make a tough selection of all available documents in order not to have the footnotes look "*like skyscrapers*". Despite

this selection, the bibliography astonishes and encourages because of its magnitude.

And it is a bit of a loss, that the author did not decide to publish this book in two volumes, because a couple of matters could have been described broader.

To sum up, Waldemar Łazuga's book is written in a very clear and interesting way. Its main goal, which was to characterize Poles at the peak of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and its partial goals named in the introduction, were attained in the book. Furthermore, accessible style, which was used to write the book, additions such as illustrated insert, a wide bibliography and the preservation of chronology allow to depict the presented topic to the readers in a better way.