Professor Anna Żarnowska (1931–2007)

Obituary and Selected Bibliography

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From the very beginning of her historical studies, Professor Anna Żarnowska was affiliated with Warsaw University, where she started her academic career at the Institute of History at the end of the 1950s. She belonged to the youngest post-war generation of Polish historians dealing with a relatively new and very dynamic trend in Polish post-war historical research: social history.

Anna Żarnowska focussed her historical research on social and cultural transformations during the early phases of industrialisation in Poland. Those changes were taking place at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century in quite remarkable conditions, since Poland had been divided into three parts and incorporated in 1795 into three neighbouring states, Prussia, Russia and the Habsburg Empire. Thus, the basic question raised by Anna Żarnowska was: How

did these circumstances affect the process of modernisation in the Polish rural and highly conservative society, however rich in national cultural traditions?

During her almost fifty years of historical research and studies, Żarnowska presented works dealing with issues such as social mobility and structural transformations, and with the emergence of new social classes at the end of the nineteenth century. Żarnowska's early works in the 1950s and 1960s focussed on the new working class in the Polish Kingdom (the Russian part of Polish territory, also known as Congress Poland), especially on the emergence of urban working-class communities and changes that occurred within that group. Żarnowska raised the question: To what extent did economic and social transformations affect worker families? In the 1970s and 1980s

Żarnowska expanded her research towards the workers' culture, focussing mainly on Congress Poland. Two studies, published respectively in 1974 and 1985, presented Anna Żarnowska's findings regarding the emergence of the working class in the Polish Kingdom during the period of 1870 to 1914, and the workers of Warsaw at the end of the nineteenth century.¹

Both studies, especially the second one, showed a new direction in Professor Żarnowska's research: the culture and daily life of early Polish workers, with Warsaw as a case study. Her study was the first to deal with this issue not from an anthropological perspective, but rather from a historical perspective and using historical methodology. At that time this approach was quite unique in Polish historical research. In a complex analysis with a general eye on the structural transformation of Polish society, Anna Żarnowska examined workers' families, their households, their ways of adapting to the new urban environment, educational ambitions, as well as issues of morality. She also studied such aspects of the emerging working-class urban culture as new forms of leisure and entertainment, religious life, and self-organisation and political activity. As a result of that interest and thanks to Żarnowska's initiative, a research group with an interdisciplinary approach to the subject of Polish workers' culture and consisting of historians, social anthropologists, ethnologists, political scientists and communication scholars appeared at the beginning of the 1980s. A volume of essays appeared as the result of this research.²

At the same time Żarnowska proposed the study of a relatively new field in Polish historiography, focussing on urban families (not only workers but also the intelligentsia, bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie) in the early stages of industrialisation in the Kingdom of Poland. The new approach, seen in Żarnowska's studies as early as the 1960s,³ was very inspiring, especially for young researchers.⁴

In those studies Żarnowska began to show an interest in the 1905 revolution in the Kingdom of Poland, something rather unique among Polish historians after the Second World War, especially because of the anti-Russian character of that revolution, which made it a touchy subject for Polish-Soviet relations. Her studies focussed on the impact of the revolution on Polish society, most of all the social and cultural changes in workers' communities. Żarnowska started a comprehensive study connected with the basic question: How did the revolution affect workers' families, their family life, labour and leisure? One of those issues, namely, regarding changes within the political behaviour and culture of workers during the 1905 revolution, was received with such great interest, especially among younger researchers, that Żarnowska decided to initiate a broad study on the cultural and social impact of the revolution. A conference was held at Warsaw University (1985), and Żarnowska edited all the contributions in a volume.⁵

Professor Żarnowska's studies on the family and its transformation in the process of modernisation in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century soon became a source of inspiration for many other Polish historians, as Żarnowska presented the results of her research and initiated debates on that issue at various conferences, the most important being the Congress of Polish Historians (1994). Żarnowska was at the same time the first Polish historian to focus on the issue of women's new status during industrialisation and modernisation. At a more recent

Congress of Polish Historians (2004) Żarnowska was the co-ordinator and head of one of the sessions committed to questions connected to the family, privacy and intimate life. As a result of the discussions that took place there, a collection of studies was published under the title *Rodzina, prywatność, intymność* (Family, privacy, intimacy).⁶ Żarnowska also presented her studies at the Fifth World Congress for Central and East European Studies (1995). Another international organisation where she frequently presented the results of her historical investigations was the International Conference of Labour and Social History (*Internationale Tagung der Historiker/Innen der Arbeiter- und anderer sozialer Bewegungen—ITH*), whose meetings have been held annually in Linz since the 1960s. For almost forty years Anna Żarnowska was a regular and important participant at those meetings, a member of the executive committee, and an animator of its scientific activity.

At the beginning of the 1980s Professor Żarnowska's studies began to show a growing interest in women's and gender issues, most of all in how the above-mentioned economic and social transformations influenced the life opportunities and social status of women, or gender inequalities and stereotypes. As a result Żarnowska introduced, animated and organised in 1989 a research group working on an absolutely new topic in Polish historical sciences: the transformation of women's social and cultural status in the Polish territories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a comparative perspective. These historical gender studies, unique in Poland at that time, soon resulted in a series of scientific conferences at the Historical Institute at Warsaw University, which attracted researchers from various Polish and international research centres. As a general approach Żarnowska, the supervisor of the research group, proposed the investigation of the traditional social and cultural distances between women and men that might affect the social, legal and economic status of women. Along came other issues, such as the influence of culture and customs on marriage partners (or cohabitating partners), parents and children, women's self-identity and their growing aspirations and ambitions within various fields of activity, such as the family, education, labour and politics.

The above approach is easily recognisable in a series of studies (1990–2007) published in Polish under Żarnowska's supervision in co-operation with Andrzej Szwarz (each volume is a result of a conference, organised by Professor Żarnowska since 1989 at Warsaw University). Thus far nine volumes beginning with a title *Woman and ...*, have appeared.⁷ The research group deals with such subjects as women's social status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, education, social and political activity, culture, everyday life, labour, leisure, marriage and changes in sexual behaviour. The tenth collection of contributions will be published as a separate volume in the series and is a result of a conference held in June 2006 about women's organisations in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸ The above-mentioned conferences usually gather researchers from Poland and other countries like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Russia and the Ukraine. In 2007 the conference, which was to be a continuation of the above subject, was held for the first time without Professor Żarnowska.

The activities just described were possible because a rather informal group of researchers under Żarnowska's leadership worked together at the Institute of History

at Warsaw University. Starting in 1990 this group formed the core of Polish historians focussing on social history, gender history and the history of Polish feminism in a comparative perspective. In 2002 the group gained a more formal status, transforming into a part of the Institute of History's structure under the name of 'The Social History of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Team'. Since Żarnowska was already a professor-emerita, her collaborator of many years, Professor Andrzej Szwarc, became the head of the Team. Thanks to Żarnowska's efforts, the Institute of History also started a new course of nineteenth- and twentieth-century social history studies for its students, with a wide range of subjects like gender, feminism, family studies, questions of mass culture, privacy and sexuality. In addition, Professor Żarnowska tried to integrate Polish historical gender studies and create a more complex programme. Thus, a commission attached to the Committee of the Historical Science of the Polish Academy of Science was established. This Women's History Commission started its activity in 1996, and it was quite obvious that Anna Żarnowska should be its President, a position she held from the very beginning to the last days of her life. The Women's History Commission includes researchers from various academic centres in Poland such as Kielce, Rzeszów, Wrocław, Białystok, Lublin, Siedlce, Gdańsk, Poznań and Warsaw, and their meetings mainly focus on methodological aspects of gender history in Poland. However, conferences dealing with a variety topics, such as 'Women and Business Activity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' and 'Women and Religious Activity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', are on the agenda as well. The Women's History Commission also constitutes the Polish National Committee in the International Federation for Research in Women's History.

During the last twenty years Professor Żarnowska made an enormous effort to establish historical gender studies in Poland. Thanks to her great will and activities, not to say her unquestionable scientific authority among Polish researchers, a very ambitious and broad programme has been started. Without any doubt, Anna Żarnowska's studies and ideas will be continued by her Team, but her unexpected death is an inestimable loss for Polish historical science.

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◆ Notes

1. *Klasa robotnicza Królestwa Polskiego 1870–1914* (The working class in the Kingdom of Poland between 1870 and 1914), Warsaw, 1974, 363; *Robotnicy Warszawy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Workers of Warsaw at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), Warsaw, 1985, 294.
2. *Wokół tradycji kultury robotniczej w Polsce* (Reflections on the traditions of working-class culture in Poland), ed. A. Zarnowska, Warsaw, 1986, 512.
3. 'Społeczne skutki uprzemysłowienia Warszawy' (The social impact of industrialisation in Warsaw), in *Pamiętnik X Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Lublinie 17–21 września 1968 r.* (Proceedings of the tenth Congress of Polish Historians in Lublin, September 17–21, 1968), ed. A. Maczak, Warsaw, 1968, 414–430.
4. They include Mariola Kondracka, Katarzyna Sierakowska, Magdalena Gawin, Andrzej Szwarc, Grazyna Szlagowska, Agnieszka Janiak-Jasinska and Dobrochna Kalwa.
5. *Spółeczeństwo i polityka. Dorastanie do demokracji. Kultura polityczna w Królestwie Polskim na początku XX wieku* (Society and politics. Growing into democracy. The political culture in the Kingdom of Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century), eds. A. Zarnowska and T. Wolsza, Warsaw, 1993, 203.
6. *Rodzina—prywatność—intymność: dzieje rodziny polskiej w kontekście europejskim* (Family—privacy—intimacy: History of the Polish family from a European perspective), eds. D. Kalwa, A. Walaszek and A. Zarnowska, Warsaw, 2005, 197.
7. *Kobieta i społeczeństwo na ziemiach polskich w XIX wieku* (Woman and society in the Polish lands in the nineteenth century), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1990; *Kobieta i edukacja na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku* (Woman and education in the Polish lands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), 2 vols., eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1992; *Kobieta i świat polityki. Polska na tle porównawczym w XIX i w początkach XX wieku* (Woman and the world of politics. Poland in comparative perspective in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1994; *Kobieta i świat polityki w niepodległej Polsce 1918–1939* (Woman and the world of politics in independent Poland 1918–1939), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1996; *Kobieta i kultura. Kobiety wśród twórców kultury intelektualnej i artystycznej w dobie rozbiorów i w niepodległym państwie polskim*

(Woman and culture. Women among intellectuals and artists in Poland at the time of the partitions and in independent Poland), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1996; *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego. Wiek XIX i XX* (Woman and everyday-life culture. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 1997; *Kobieta i praca. Wiek XIX i XX* (Woman and labour. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 2000; *Kobieta i kultura czasu wolnego* (Woman and the culture of leisure time), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 2001; *Kobieta i rewolucja obyczajowa* (Woman and the sexual revolution), eds. A. Zarnowska and A. Szwarc, Warsaw, 2006.

8. This volume is still in preparation, and will apparently be published in early 2008.