

Władysław Czapliński, *Dziennik 1958–1981* [Diary 1958–1981], ed. Tomasz Siewierski, Warszawa, 2024, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 758 pp.

The publication of *Dziennik 1958–1981* [Diary 1958–1981] by Władysław Czapliński, professor at the University of Wrocław, is of great importance both for Polish historiography and for research on the history of academic life and intellectual and social culture in the Polish People's Republic. This is the first diary of a scholar of this calibre to be comprehensively edited and uncensored, and it includes over two decades of personal reflections and institutional observations. It is also a testament to an exceptional representative of the pre-war school of science who endeavoured to maintain intellectual sovereignty under an authoritarian state. It is a distinctive source in terms of genre, facts, and knowledge, not only because the author was one of the most exceptional modern historians of the twentieth century, but also because of the rarity of preserved and published ego-documents of a researcher.

The publication has been carefully put together, but there are some mistakes I will discuss in more detail later in this review. Tomasz Siewierski, the scientific editor of the publication, not only succeeded in the challenging role of commentator and custodian of the text but also provided it with

a comprehensive introduction, substantive explanations, and biographical notes, which make the diary accessible to readers of all levels. The publication encompasses a list of individuals, abbreviations, and illustrations, which is highly advantageous.

It should be noted that Czapliński's *Dziennik* is a special kind of personal document. Unlike the memoirs published during their authors' lifetimes, which were popular in the Polish People's Republic and were more or less polished retrospectives, often edited with publication in mind, this diary is a text that was not intended for publication during the author's lifetime and was not edited by him. It is a personal source that was consciously constructed as a document of its era and was kept fairly regularly from 1958 until the author's death in 1981.

Unlike many diarists, the author regularly and methodically documents events from his academic, institutional, and social life rather than merely describing personal experiences. In his notes, he contemplates the university's future, the Wrocław Scientific Society's operations, personnel changes, relations with his colleagues, and ideological and political tensions within the academic community. The entries also show the inner turmoil of a scientist who upholds the pre-war university's values while attempting to preserve his individuality in the face of mounting opportunism and conformity pressure.

Czapliński's diary serves as a case study in this regard, as it records not only his surroundings but also his identity as a representative of a particular intellectual and ethical heritage. The text can be interpreted as both a historical source and a distinctive intellectual biography due to the author's conscious self-creation, which is characterised by a restrained, analytical, yet penetrating tone. In my opinion, Czapliński comes across in his diary as an extremely modest figure, displaying great humility. He mentions his successes, subsequent works, awards, and distinctions in a few words. His often-critical attitude towards the environment is evident, for example, in his comments on scientific discussions during various conferences and meetings. He describes overly flattering and unjustified comments as "smacking" and their authors as "smackers". The author repeatedly demonstrates his restraint and realistic view of the reality surrounding him. He sarcastically comments on pompous speeches which exaggerate certain figures. I particularly liked the term "high-pitched" (p. 679) used to describe the speeches given during Henryk Zieliński's jubilee in February 1981. The fact that this legacy has been made accessible to researchers without interference from the heirs, abridgement, or censorship is all the more commendable. As noted by the editor, the family's clause expired in 2001, thereby enabling the manuscript's complete publication.

The diary delves into the period of the Polish People's Republic, which was characterised by exceptional dynamism, from the rule of Władysław Gomułka (1956–70) and the apparent stability of the Edward Gierek decade

(1970–80) to the emergence of Solidarity (1980). The diary encompasses a broad spectrum of topics, including daily life in Oporów, a residential district of Wrocław that was only slightly damaged during the Second World War, and university life. The diary presents Czapliński as a genuine university man who is actively involved in the school's operations and its ups and downs. He remains a vigilant observer of academic life, and his notes are replete with detailed accounts of faculty council meetings, senate committees, meetings of the Wrocław Scientific Society, community discussions, and party rallies (in which he participated as a formally non-party member). Special place is given to his thoughts on the operations of the University of Wrocław's Institute of History and the interactions between the younger generation of historians, who frequently had connections to the Polish United Workers' Party [Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR], and the older generation of scholars. He also pays attention to the mechanisms of academic promotion, the instrumentalisation of history, and the reception of Marxism in science.

Furthermore, his observations concerning the establishment and development of the Wrocław academic centre after 1945 are of great interest. His notes are a valuable addition to the study of post-war science, particularly from a microhistorical perspective. Disputes over academic promotions, faculty council meetings, dean elections, personal intrigues, social exclusion and political pressure are just some of the topics that Czapliński describes in detail. The author of the diary reveals the internal functioning of the university in the context of 'dual loyalty': to scientific truth and ideological imperatives. The diarist discloses the inner workings of the university within the context of 'dual loyalty': to scientific truth and to ideological imperatives.

Czapliński's observations regarding the Kraków milieu, the academic community with which he was emotionally and intellectually associated, are equally captivating, despite their occasional harsh criticism. His recollections of historians such as Władysław Konopczyński, Józef Feldman, and Kazimierz Piwarski are not merely biographical notes – they are also testimonies to the memory of the community, the values, and the norms of the scientific ethos, which the diarist constantly confronted with the new realities of the Polish People's Republic. The author of *Dziennik* perceived himself as the intellectual heir to these pre-war traditions and saw numerous contemporary issues through the lens of Kraków.

Entries pertaining to intergenerational relationships are particularly significant. The new conditions posed a challenge for generations of historians educated in the Second Polish Republic, as exemplified by Czapliński. The attitudes of his younger colleagues were complex, ranging from open collaboration to symbolic resistance (including support for the Student Committee of Solidarity [Studencki Komitet Solidarności, SKS] and Workers' Defence Committee [Komitet Obrony Robotników, KOR]). Additionally, Czapliński was a multifaceted individual. He was not only an academic but

also a devout Catholic. He was involved in the Catholic Intellectuals Club and eagerly gave lectures, for example, at the Dominican monastery in Krakow. He was also very fond of young people and met with secondary school pupils and university students outside the university walls.

Additionally, Czapliński was an astute observer of political developments, including those at the local level (such as the activities of the SKS and the disputes surrounding the Institute of History at the University of Wrocław) and across the country (such as anti-intellectual campaigns, student sentiment, and opposition activities). His notes contain references to the antisemitic campaign of March 1968, the workers' strike in December 1970, censorship, reports from Radio Free Europe, as well as bitter reflections on the moral condition of the academic community. His deep distrust of members of the Polish United Workers' Party, his criticism of opportunism, and his aversion to any external pressure on scholars give his notes a decidedly nonconformist tone.

The diary is a remarkable prosopographic source. There are numerous characters that appear in the text, including lecturers, students, officials, party decision-makers, and editors. The editor of the publication has appropriately augmented the text with biographical references that provide insight into the lesser-known and underrepresented figures. The sections devoted to people from the author's inner circle are particularly valuable, including historians Henryk Wereszycki, Adam Kersten, Józef Andrzej Gierowski, and Stefan Inglot, and the literary scholar Marian Jakóbiec.

The diary entries allow us to reconstruct informal relationships, social networks, ideological conflicts, as well as exchanges of letters, foreign contacts, mutual inspirations, and misunderstandings. Czapliński frequently revisits personal subjects, expressing his ambivalence toward certain former students, including Jarema Maciszewski and Jan Sereyka (both historians of the early modern period), and commenting on their attitudes. This depth of psychological insight is a unique feature of his notes.

Additionally, the diary's autobiographical aspect must not be disregarded. From the first to the last page of *Dziennik*, its author is a serious, resolute man, living in accordance with the pre-war scientific ethos and aware of the concepts of academic sovereignty, intellectual integrity, and loyalty. This is confirmed by his colleagues and students in their memoirs, including Sybilla A. Hołdys-Bidwell,<sup>1</sup> Grażyna Pańko,<sup>2</sup> Włodzimierz Suleja,<sup>5</sup> Krzysztof Kawalec,<sup>6</sup> and Edward Czapiewski.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Sybilla A. Hołdys and Włodzimierz Suleja, 'W. Czapliński jako wychowawca historyków', in Krystyn Matwijowski (ed.), *Władysław Czapliński jako uczony i wychowawca* (Wrocław, 1984), 87–8.

<sup>2</sup> Grażyna Pańko (b. 1948), historian of the twentieth century, history educator; graduate and academic employee (since 1971) of the University of Wrocław. See

The editor approached the diary with respect and limited himself to the necessary stylistic corrections, standardisation of the notation, and deciphering abbreviations. The edition preserves the original author's style while adding necessary editorial explanations in footnotes. Regarding the latter, I do not quite understand the idea behind them. The publication is dominated by concise footnotes containing identifying information (names, functions, dates), though for a dozen or so characters, this rule has been abandoned in favour of more detailed biographical information. These exceptions, however, have not been explained in the editor's introduction. Moreover, the introduction does not explain the reasons behind selecting these biographical references (do they only apply to important people, or to every person mentioned?), it is not clear on what sources the footnotes are based, there is no information on whether the footnotes are complete or represent a selection. The absence of a detailed explanation of the text editing guidelines (the so-called 'editor's note') is another problem. Even though interference with the text has been mitigated on numerous occasions, the editorial principles are not systematically and clearly defined, but rather loosely dispersed throughout the text. The editor's somewhat digressive narration does not fully explain the range of his interventions. There are also some typos, the most obvious one being on page 252, where 'Merseburg' appears instead of 'Lerseburg'.

Explicit explanations of Latin quotations and literary and historical references are also included in the footnotes. Additionally, numerous entries have been confronted in the footnotes with other sources which provide additional details or substantiate the author's claims. The work is based on a microfilm that was provided by the Ossoliński National Institute Library in Wrocław. It has been carefully compared with the original that is kept in the Wrocław Library.

The editor generally follows the practices of editing personal sources, including the recommendations of Wiktoria Śliwowska, to whom this edition is dedicated, and does not change the author's style, syntax, or language. Thus, the professor's pre-war idiom, characterised by the style of the era, erudition, and precision, has been preserved. Władysław Czapliński's language

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ead., 'Wspomnienie seminarzystki o Profesorze Władysławie Czaplińskim', in *Czasy nowożytnie. Wspomnienia o śp. prof. Władysławie Eugeniuszu Czaplińskim*, part 2 (Wrocław, 2006), 39–40.

<sup>3</sup> Włodzimierz Suleja (b. 1948), historian of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; graduate of the University of Wrocław, student of Henryk Ziebiński; academic employee at the University of Wrocław from 1972 to 1995 and from 2013 to 2019.

<sup>4</sup> See Krzysztof Kawalec, 'Profesor Władysław Czapliński. Jak go zapamiętałem', in *Czasy nowożytnie*, 29–31.

<sup>5</sup> See Edward Czapiewski, 'Profesor Władysław Czapliński. Trwanie we wdzięcznej pamięci', in *Czasy nowożytnie*, 33–6.

can also be treated as a testament to his high personal culture, which is an additional value of this publication.

The publication of Władysław Czapliński's diary is a significant event in the field of research on academic culture, Polish historiography, and the history of science in the twentieth century. Although I found the introduction to be lacking references to other source publications of a similar nature (such as the diaries of Witold Kula<sup>6</sup> or Józef A. Gierowski from 1981–85<sup>7</sup>), which would have allowed the edition to be placed in a broader historiographical landscape and created a context for further comparative research, I have no doubt that the edition prepared by Tomasz Siewierski will serve as a point of reference for all future research on the history of academic circles in the Polish People's Republic. Czapliński's *Dziennik* prompts reflection on generational memory, university autonomy, scholars' ethical attitudes, and the significance of individual resistance in the face of political pressure. This work will be essential for all researchers who are interested in the history of historiography, the history of science in the Polish People's Republic, academic biographies, and, more broadly, Polish culture in the second half of the twentieth century. I do hope that this edition will be followed by others that further our understanding of the complexities of academic life in post-war Poland.

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<sup>6</sup> Witold Kula, *Rozdziałki*, ed., introd. and footnotes by Marcin Kula (Warszawa, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Józef Andrzej Gierowski, *Dziennik, 1 września 1981 – 13 grudnia 1981*, ed. Andrzej Kobos, introd. Andrzej Leon Sowa (Kraków, 2011).