

Janusz Małek. *Opera Selecta Volume II: Poland and Prussia in the Baltic Area from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century.*

Trans. Hazel Pearson. Studies Presented to the International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions 91. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013. 394 pp. zł76. ISBN: 978-83-231-3034-5.

For some reason that might become more apparent to the reader as they keep perusing this review, the book in question reminds me — in a good way — of a tossed salad. It wouldn't quite seem this way if the presented work actually kept to

its title, meaning that it provided the reader a rich two-course offering of Poland and Prussia in the Baltic area. But it doesn't. There's more. There's Sweden, Denmark, Norway, politics, diplomacy, institutional history, humanism, and much more. In a way, by underselling in its title the rich variety of tasty morsels on display the book tends to sell itself short.

Following Małłek's *Opera Selecta Volume I*, which mostly collected in one place articles written by him in German, volume 2 does the same for his English-language productions. Małłek, a former prorector of the Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń and its erstwhile head of the Department of Modern History and the History of Scandinavia, offers here a smorgasbord of Baltic history that, in effect, constitutes a Festschrift to his erudition and over fifty years of active research and output.

Dealing broadly with Baltic history of the Reformation period, here basically from 1454 (the beginning of the Thirteen Years' War between the Kingdom of Poland and the Prussian League, on one hand, and the Teutonic order on the other) to the eighteenth century, Małłek divides his work into five parts of multiple essays and articles that roughly encompass diplomacy and politics, institutional history of representative estates, the Reformation, culture, and society. The players are the Crown of Poland and the centralizing attempts of the Jagiellons, the Scandinavian kingdoms, and, most importantly, both Ducal and Royal Prussia, each showing much interest in preserving their autonomy against the bigger fish in the waters. It is here that Małłek shines, and here that greatest contributions to historiography are made. As an expert on Prussian and Baltic history, Małłek is in prime position to tackle the complex political, cultural, and linguistic relationship between the two Prussias (Ducal and Royal) and the German Reich and the Crown of Poland. To anglophone scholarship, mostly concerned with post-1648 history of Prussia-Brandenburg and its later metamorphosis, this discussion of earlier, dual-natured Prussian existence (Royal Prussia stayed in Poland till the partitions) adds the necessary ingredients to a more nuanced and refined historiography, one that does not simply advance in a straight line toward nineteenth-century militarism and empire building.

The most important and interesting sections are of course those that historiography finds most controversial, here represented by Małłek's conclusions on incipient feelings of Prussian regional and national self-fashioning. Dispensing with naïve notions of homogenous Prussian society and culture aligned with Germanic national identity, Małłek presents instead a far more complex and subtle reading that sees Prussian regional identity shaped by its political ties with the Polish kingdom, and affected by its heathen Old Prussian roots and the German character of its cities and nobility. Prussia, in neither its Royal nor Ducal iteration culturally, politically, or linguistically a single whole, developed its regional identity in contradistinction to both the Polish state and the German Reich. This, the real meat and potatoes of Małłek's presentation, might appear unpalatable to the course of even late twentieth-century German, Borussian-type historiography produced by the likes of Hans Koch, for instance, and to that side of anglophone historiography that draws from it its flavor, but is more in line with the newer, more balanced approaches of, say, Karin Friederich and her ilk.

Scholars of the Reformation, Scandinavia, the Old Prussian language, and of the development of representative institutions will be equally informed and pleased by the additional materials present in the book. For all its wide-ranging horizons and broad strokes, however, Małłek's offering rather only bulges, instead of breaks new ground. The author's broad strokes themselves might be one of the problems — each of the five main parts of the work could be a monograph itself, and reading each of the essays might suggest that almost every paragraph could be fleshed out to become a more detailed article. It is a very good thing indeed that an academic offering from Poland is now available for English-speaking scholarly consumption, but in the end the work only adumbrates the issues that beg for further analysis.

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