

Ryszard Stemplowski

## Introduction

The years 1989–1993 are remembered as the first stage of the Polish transformation from state socialism into a political democracy and market economy, or from the position of limited sovereignty as a dependent state in the Soviet Union sphere of domination into that of a sovereign partner in the Western community of Nations. Those were the years of Polish pioneering contribution to the dismantling of Soviet domination in Central and Eastern Europe, to the reunification of Germany, and to the renaissance of freedom endeavours in the region. The Polish Constitution of 1997 stipulates that Poland is a democratic state based upon the rule of law and the principles of social justice. Krzysztof Skubiszewski's ministry falls during just these very first years of a sovereign Poland on her way towards democracy and justice.

During this time, Poland's three neighbouring countries (two European: Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic; one Euro-Asian: the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics) became seven – all of them new entities. They emerged on Polish borders without Poland moving an inch: six European states (the Republic of Belarus, the Czech Republic, the German Federal Republic, the Republic of Lithuania, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine), and one Euro-Asian: the Russian Federation (its Kaliningrad exclave). Minister Skubiszewski contributed to the establishment of good neighbourly relations with them all. In particular, following the provisions of the 1990 Two Plus Four Treaty on the Final Settlement with Germany (the Polish Foreign Minister's participation in these treaty negotiations was recorded in the very treaty), the existing German-Polish border was confirmed in a German-Polish treaty of the same year.

Since 1999, Poland has been a member of NATO, and since 2004, of the European Union. The new Polish policies (from 1989 onwards) allowed for economic development based mainly on private ownership and market economy as well as on the beneficial membership of the EU. In 2004, GDP *per capita* in Poland was one-third of the EU level; it was two-thirds in

2014. Current public debt corresponds strictly to constitutional standards. A citizen of Poland was elected President of the European Parliament (2009–2012), and another one became the President of the European Council (in November 2014).

Krzysztof Skubiszewski is one of those individuals who clearly understood the relationship between the political system and foreign policy,<sup>1</sup> and someone who eminently contributed to Poland's success. He was aware of the historic significance of his activities and had some of his speeches and interviews collected in one volume.<sup>2</sup> He also made possible the creation of the Krzysztof Skubiszewski Foundation. Later on, his activities became the subject of a growing number of publications. The most important came from the diplomats who had worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his time.<sup>3</sup>

This collection of papers is the result of a conference held under the auspices of HE Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Court of St. James's, Witold Sobków, in cooperation with the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law (University of Cambridge), and Queen Mary School of Law (University of London). It was held at the London Embassy (14 November 2013). The conference sessions were chaired by Professor Ryszard Piotrowicz (Aberystwyth University), Judge Bruno Simma (Iran-United States Claims Tribunal), and Dr Joanna Gomula (Lauterpacht Centre for International Law, University of Cambridge).

<sup>1</sup> K. Skubiszewski, *Kilka refleksji z pogranicza konstytucji i prawa międzynarodowego* [Some thoughts on the common ground of the constitution and international law], in: W. Bartoszewski, B. Geremek, A. Olechowski, D.K. Rosati, K. Skubiszewski, R. Stemplowski, *Ustrój państwa a polityka zagraniczna* [Political System and Foreign Policy], Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warszawa 2002, pp. 61–75.

<sup>2</sup> K. Skubiszewski, *Polityka zagraniczna i odzyskanie niepodległości. Przemówienia, oświadczenia, wywiady 1989–1993* [Foreign policy and the regaining of independence. Speeches, declarations, interviews, 1989–1993], Interpress, Warszawa 1997.

<sup>3</sup> W. Kuczyński, *Solidarność u władzy. Dziennik 1989–1993* [Solidarność in Power. A Diary 1989–1993], Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk 2010, *passim*. J.M. Nowak, *Krzysztof Skubiszewski i demontaż Układu Warszawskiego* [Krzysztof Skubiszewski and the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact], in: R. Kuźniar, ed., *Krzysztof Skubiszewski – dyplomata i i mąż stanu* [Krzysztof Skubiszewski – A diplomat and a statesman], PISM, Warszawa 2011, pp. 129–152. S. Ciosek, *Wspomnienia (niekoniecznie) dyplomatyczne* [Recollections (not necessarily) Diplomatic], in cooperation with J. Osiecki and E. Charitonow, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2014. J. M. Nowak, *Dyplomata na salonach i w politycznej kuchni* [A Diplomat in High Society and in the Inside of Policy Implementation], Bellona, Warszawa 2014.

Most of the authors participating in the conference have given their permission to publish their conference presentations in this volume.<sup>4</sup> Some of the papers are entirely new versions of earlier publications in Polish.<sup>5</sup>

It is a unique collection that offers a variety of perspectives on Skubiszewski's activities, formed by the authors in contact with Skubiszewski himself. Almost all the authors met Skubiszewski in person, both on professional grounds and privately. In the case of some recollections, the lapse of time may sharpen the picture; or it may mellow it (or so it may seem to readers). The authors of the strictly academic papers are probably less prone to the traps of subjective thinking.

The short biography has been kindly provided by the Krzysztof Skubiszewski Foundation, and the photographs – by the Skubiszewski Family Photo Archives.

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<sup>4</sup> The following conference papers are not included here: “Judge Skubiszewski at the Iran-US Claims Tribunal”, “Judge Skubiszewski in the *Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros* case”, “Professor Skubiszewski's report to the Institut de droit international”, “The use of armed force. Contemporary challenges in light of Professor Skubiszewski's legacy”.

<sup>5</sup> G. Dziemidowicz, *Professor, minister, gentleman*, in: R. Kuźniar, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 61–66; Z. Kędzia, *Prawa człowieka pośród wartości polityki zagranicznej*, in: R. Kuźniar, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 67–82.