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REPORT FROM THE SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ENTITLED:
“SAVING THE ECONOMY: RECONSTRUCTION,
STABILIZATION AND CREATION OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT PATHS IN THE 19TH AND 21ST
CENTURIES” [NA RATUNEK GOSPODARCE: ODBUDOWA,
STABILIZACJA I KREOWANIE ŚCIEŻEK ROZWOJU
GOSPODARKI W XIX–XXI WIEKU].
LUBIN, SEPTEMBER 14–16, 2023

Abstract: In 2021, the Polish Association of Economic History (PTHG) prepared and submitted to the 21st General Congress of Polish Historians – Białystok 2024, a panel entitled *Saving the economy: reconstruction, stabilization and creating paths for the development of the Polish economy in the 19th and 20th centuries*, which was accepted by the congress organizers. The main goal of the research undertaken is to analyze systemic actions to overcome crises in the 19th and 20th centuries, in particular the activity of the state and public institutions “helping the economy”, the tools used and their effectiveness and long-term consequences. The events of the last three years, especially the Covid 19 pandemic, the War in Ukraine, and the energy crisis, have put the world economy once again on the threshold of a global crisis. In this context, scientific reflection on the tools and mechanisms of “saving the economy” and “creating development paths” may have not only a cognitive, but also a practical dimension.

Keywords: Polish Association of Economic History, Historical Museum in Lubin, General Congress of Polish Historians, 21st GCPH [PZHP] – Białystok 2024, economic crisis

<https://doi.org/10.14746/sho.2023.41.2.012>

The PTHG, in cooperation with the Historical Museum in Lubin, decided to organize, one year before the 21st General Congress of Polish Historians, a conference devoted to the issue of counteracting crises, but with a broader time and territorial scope than the research conducted as part of the PTHG panel. The conference, which took place on September 14–16, 2023 in Lubin, gathered over 30 scientists from all over Poland.

In subsequent chronological sessions, examples of actions taken by the state and public institutions in response to crisis situations were presented. In the conference opening speech, Dr. hab. Cecylia Leszczyńska (University of Warsaw) characterized in a synthetic way the role of governments and central banks in creating a financial safety net in the 19th century (Paper entitled: *Governments and central banks in the face of financial crises in the 19th century. The problem of forming a financial safety net*). In subsequent speeches, conference participants analyzed numerous examples of the involvement of state institutions and politicians in solving crisis situations and stabilizing the economy on a micro and macro scale:

- at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries – prof. **Rafał Kowalczyk** (University of Łódź): *Russia's frog leap – the impact of the role of the state in the economy of Tsarist Russia during the era of Mikhail Kristofowicz von Reutern*; prof. **Piotr Franaszek** (Jagiellonian University): *Entrepreneurs and the national and Austrian authorities towards the crises in the Galician oil industry*; and prof. **Iryna Shandra**, (Kharkiv State Academy of Culture): *Ukrainian-Polish large-scale transport projects as an attempt to overcome the economic crisis of the early 20th century*;
- during the Second Polish Republic – prof. **Wojciech Morawski** (Warsaw School of Economics): *Ministers of the Treasury of the Second Polish Republic in the fight against inflation 1918–1924*; prof. **Mirosław Kłusek** (University of Łódź): *Conversion of agricultural debt as an element of the state's fight against the agricultural crisis in the Second Polish Republic*; **Sylwia Straszak-Chandoha**, PhD (Wrocław University of Economics): *Credit as a tool for economic reconstruction and stabilization in the first half of the 20th century in industry*; and **Iwona Kawalla-Lulewicz**, PhD (Historical Museum of the City of Krakow): *Trade in Poland during the Great Depression*;
- during the Polish People's Republic – prof. **Jędrzej Chumiński**, **Krzysztof Popiński**, PhD (Wrocław University of Economics):

Social barriers to the economic development of the Polish People's Republic; prof. **Sławomir Kamosiński** (Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz): *Family farming as a stabilizer of the economy in the era of permanent crisis of the People's Republic of Poland. The formation and activities of family businesses in the Polish People's Republic;* Director **Marek Zawadka** (Historical Museum in Lubin): *Care for the purity of the Oder after 1945;* **Kacper Rosner-Leszczynski**, MA (University of Wrocław): *Can we talk about "taming" former German factories? The attitude of settlers to the industrial landscape of Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1949 – introduction to the issue;* prof. **Adriana Merta-Staszczak** (Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Wrocław University of Economics): *Wood industry in the economic development of Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1989;* **Mateusz Adamczyk**, MA (University of Wrocław): *Plundered city – from prosperity to deep economic collapse. The problem of wild robbery in the Western Territories since 1945 on the example of Bierutów;* **Mariusz Mak**, MA (University of Białystok): *Repressive nature of the personal income taxation system during the Polish People's Republic;* **Robert Klementowski**, PhD (University of Wrocław): *"The key to a new era". The development of nuclear science as a condition for the modernization of Poland in the light of the activities of the State Council for the Use of Nuclear Energy;* **Piotr Syczak**, MA (University of Gdańsk): *About the modern shape of Poland. Development dilemmas at the threshold of the 21st century – what the economy of the Polish People's Republic could have looked like in the light of the report of the Committee for Forecasting National Development "Polska 2000";* **Mateusz Kubicki**, PhD (Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk/University of Gdańsk): *Baltic fishing in the Polish People's Republic in the second half 1980s. Rescue attempt or permanent collapse;* and **Mikołaj Sołkiewicz** (University of Warsaw): *Selected problems of foreign trade of the Polish People's Republic in the area of electronics;*

- in the period of economic transformation after 1989 – **Dariusz Grala**, PhD (School of Socio-Economics in Środa Wielkopolska): *Balcerowicz's first and second plan – assumptions and implementation of the main goals of economic policy in the light of entrepreneurs' assessments and reactions to the government's actions taken in the economy;* and **Marcin Szymański**, PhD (University of Łódź) *Success thanks to or despite? Controversies related to privatization during the Polish economic transformation 1989–2001.*

A valuable counterpoint to papers analyzing issues related to saving the economy in Poland were papers devoted to the issues of economic and social crises and the related actions of state institutions in the USA, Germany, Spain and the EU: **Kamil Kowalski**, PhD (University of Łódź): *The Great Economic Crisis and American labor market legislation (1929–1939)*, prof. **Paweł Grata** (University of Rzeszów) and **Joanna Jaroszyk**, PhD (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań): *Two crises, two systems, two paths – the economies of Spain and Poland in the second half of the 1950s*; prof. **Tadeusz Janicki** (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) *Economic concepts and economic policy of Karl Schiller towards the economic recession in Germany (1966–1972)*; prof. **Rafał Matera** (University of Łódź) *Crises, pandemics, revolutions and wars in the 21st century and the concept of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse by Walter Scheidel*; and **Emilia Jankowska-Ambroziak**, PhD (University of Białystok): *The crisis of the functioning of the external borders of the European Union*. In addition to the rich information layer, they created the opportunity to compare anti-crisis activities undertaken in Poland with those in countries with a higher level of economic development.

In addition to the presentation of 25 papers, the three-day meeting was full of questions, comments and discussions, from which a picture emerged of the state's gradually increasing involvement in economic processes, from an absent state at the end of the 19th century to a ubiquitous state in the times of the Polish People's Republic. The centrally planned economy characteristic of the recent period, which the communists introduced with the intention of eliminating all the weaknesses of the capitalist system (compromised in their opinion) and raising the standard of living of the "working masses of cities and villages", led to the creation of an ineffective economic system and a permanent crisis of shortages. As a result, after 1989, "saving the economy" was only possible by abandoning the socialist economy, radically limiting the presence of the state in the economy and introducing a free market.

Due to the very current topic, the conference not only made a valuable contribution to the development of historical knowledge about the actions of states and public institutions in times of crisis. The examples analyzed by the speakers and the methods they presented for rebuilding, stabilizing and creating economic development paths have a practical dimension and can be applied in contemporary economic policy. Therefore, in order to make the results of the Lubin conference more widely available, the Polish Association of Economic History and the

Historical Museum in Lubin decided to prepare a special volume containing the texts of the papers, which will be published in mid-2024.

Tadeusz Janicki, b. in 1964 in Krotoszyn, associate professor, habilitated doctor of humanities, head of the Department of Economic History of the Faculty of History of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. Author of many works on the socio-economic history of Poland and Germany in the 19th and 20th centuries, with particular emphasis on the history of the countryside, agriculture and agricultural policy, the Nazi occupation of Polish lands, the political thought of the Polish peasant movement and the regional history of Wielkopolska.