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BOOK REVIEW: SILNIKI STACJONARNE NA ZIEMIACH POLSKICH [STATIONARY ENGINES ON POLISH LANDS]

Abstract: The book *Silniki stacjonarne na ziemiach polskich* [*Stationary Engines on Polish Lands*] was written by Grzegorz Smela, Marek Wiśniewski and Andrzej Zwierniak and published in 2022 by the Ruthenus. Grzegorz Smela and Andrzej Zwierniak are passionate about old agricultural technology and are also both co-authors of the book *Polskie silniki stacjonarne i ich producenci w XIX i XX wieku* [*Polish Stationary Engines and their Manufacturers in the 19th and 20th Centuries*; Smela and Zwierniak, 2020]. In addition, Grzegorz Smela is one of the initiators of the creation of the Museum of Stationary Engines and Agricultural Technology in Konieczkowa (Poland). This time the authors invited Marek Wiśniewski, M.Sc., who is a curator and head of the agricultural technology department at the Rev. Krzysztof Kluk Museum of Agriculture in Ciechanowiec (Poland).

Keywords: Poland, technology, stationary engines, industry, agriculture

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The authors of the book *Silniki stacjonarne na ziemiach polskich* [*Stationary Engines on Polish Lands*] (Smela et al., 2022) decided to create a work containing the characteristics of stationary engines of foreign manufacturers used on Polish lands in the 19th and 20th centuries. Before 1918, Polish lands were understood as the territories of the Prussian, Russian and Austrian partitions. The work deals with the area occupied by the Second Republic following the restoration of independence, as well as after World War II by the Polish People's Republic.

The work is divided into six chapters. The first one introduces us to the history of the origin of the internal combustion engine and its devel-



opment in the 19th century. Here, we can read about various concepts, their developers, technical solutions and their application to the stationary engine. According to the authors, the systematic improvement and further development of internal combustion engines continues, despite the fact that the idea of the internal combustion engine has long been in conflict with some trends of the modern world. However, they do not specify which trends they have in mind.

The second chapter deals with Polish manufacturers of stationary engines in the 19th and 20th centuries. The work presents the fate of several factories operating on Polish land starting with the Gas and Oil Engine Factory in Warsaw founded by Rajmund Machczyński. Also, scrolling through the chapter, there are such factories as Perkun and Ursus in Warsaw, Henryk Wegner's Motor Factory in Łódź, the "Motor Polski" Factory in Żnin as well as several others. The authors do not explore the issue in-depth, referring those interested to their previous book covering the subject in much greater detail.

The next chapter, entitled *Engines of foreign manufacturers and the mechanisms of their appearance on Polish territory*, presents us with the circumstances of the appearance of the first engines on Polish land. We can learn how widely the press, especially the trade press, was used to advertise their own products. Moreover, the routes and circumstances by which the engines arrived or left Poland are analyzed. On the book, we can read not only about imports and exports but also about the UNRRA economic aid under which the engines were delivered as well as about the thefts by the military and civilians alike.

The fourth chapter leans into the question of how stationary engines are used in various areas of life. The use of stationary engines in industry, power generation, oil mining, agriculture, military, milling or marine vessels is presented. In addition to this, the authors also introduce interesting uses of engines in such equipment as a firefighter's motor pump, a narrow-gauge locomotive and a road roller. The secondary use of engines or their parts is another very interesting aspect presented in the work. The engines themselves were often used, among other things, in tractors manufactured using the so-called economic method SAMs, while their parts were used in various ways, e.g. the flywheel was used as a weight, and the spark gap was used as a part of a so-called "electric shepherd".

The fifth chapter is the most extensive part of the work and includes examples of stationary engines operating on Polish land. American, English, Austrian, Czech, French, German, Soviet, Swiss and other en-

gines have been presented. The description of each engine is accompanied by a brief history of the company producing the product, as well as the history of a particular unit and its history in Poland.

The last part of the work deals with the stationary engine in the context of its use as a museum object. The authors note that monuments of technology are increasingly appreciated and noticed. Stationary engines are best suited for outdoor exhibitions. Particularly important, in this regard, is the maintenance of technical efficiency by the equipment on display, which gives visitors an experience not only visual but also sound and smell. Great interest is aroused by the ignition procedure, especially for older engines, demonstrations of work such as threshing, or the unusual use of the engine as a percussion instrument.

We can categorize the book as part of the passionate trend, i.e. works written by technology enthusiasts. Like many works of this sort, it is a popular science publication, and like other such items it deals with a subject that is poorly recognized in Polish historiography. Representatives of this trend, usually, act according to the assumption formulated by Jacek Gembara in his work on tractors and harvesters in *People's Poland*: "I feel obliged to save from oblivion this very rich heritage of Polish technical though" (Gembara, 2018: 7). This reviewed work was also written in similar convention, however, this time saving from oblivion stationary engines of foreign manufacture. Nevertheless, compared to other works of this type, the reviewed item definitely stands out. First of all, one of the authors, Marek Wiśniewski, is a museologist – a man with a historical workshop. He is also the head of the Agricultural Technology Department at the Rev. Krzysztof Kluk Museum of Agriculture in Ciechanowiec. Although, due to the popular scientific nature of the work, the historical background is limited, but still definitely broader than in Zbigniew Szydelski's work (Szydelski, 2014). The appearance of a research apparatus in the form of footnotes and bibliography, which in the case of Rafał Mazur's publication may be looked for in vain, is also noteworthy (Mazur, 2019). The book is lavishly illustrated not only with photos of the engines but also with flyers and advertisements from the era that are often integral to the narrative, the vast majority of which were published for the first time. The authors have explained complex technical issues in a straightforward manner, making the work accessible also to readers unfamiliar with engine design.

Summing up the work of Grzegorz Smela, Marek Wiśniewski and Andrzej Zwierniak, it should be mentioned that the work is similar to those written by other enthusiasts due to its popular science character, un-

usual subject matter, and large number of photos. However, it stands out in terms of its research apparatus. The historical background is presented much more extensively than in other publications. If this trend continues, books created by lovers of old technology will not differ significantly from those created by professional historians. At the same time, despite the professionalism of its form, the content has not lost the appeal characteristic of texts written by hobbyists, and you can still feel the great passion of the authors in the text. Historiography still lacks books of this nature, so the reviewed work will make a valuable contribution to the study of the history of technology on Polish lands, especially since it contains a complete catalog of stationary engines of foreign manufacture used in Poland. In conclusion, it can be said that the publication is an important step on the road to the professionalization of research on the history of technology on Polish lands.

Bartosz Zaradzki, holds a Master's degree in history and is a graduate of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. He is currently a PhD student at the same university, specializing in the discipline of history. His research interests include agriculture in the People's Republic of Poland, agricultural technology, and machinery industry.

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