



Witold Szulc (20.6.1937 – 11.5.2026)

Co-editor of *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae* (1967–2011)

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Abstract: The article was written following the death of Witold Szulc, a distinguished historian and long-standing member of the editorial team of *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*. Its aim is to commemorate his academic achievements and present the main stages of his professional and personal life. The article outlines his education at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, his early research on the economic and social history of Greater Poland, and his subsequent specialisation in the economic history of Yugoslavia and Balkan studies. Particular attention is devoted to his contribution to the development of *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, his organisational work at Adam Mickiewicz University, including his service as Dean of the Faculty of History and Head of the Department of Balkan Studies, as well as his teaching and supervision of students. The article also highlights his involvement in academic cooperation, the cooperative movement, and university life, presenting him as a committed scholar, teacher, organiser, and colleague.

Keywords: Witold Szulc; economic history; Balkan studies; *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*; Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

Witold Stanisław Szulc was born on 20 June 1937 in the village of Katarzynowo, in what was then Września district, as the fourth child of Augustyn Szulc, a village schoolteacher, and Stefania, née Domańska. He was just two years old when the Second World War broke out. In December 1939, the whole family was displaced from Greater Poland to Podlasie, settling first in Sewerynówka and then in Sawice Kościelne, in the Sokołów Podlaski district. It was here that the future historian began his primary education, which he continued at the primary school in Janowo-Skąpe

after the family's return to Greater Poland in March 1945, where his father had long been the sole teacher. The difficult living conditions faced by the family of nine ultimately forced him to become self-reliant at an early age. He attended secondary school in Słupca, living in a boarding house. In 1955, he began studying history at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. Due to his family's difficult financial situation, he tried to support himself during his studies by combining his studies with odd jobs. Even then, he demonstrated organisational talent. For almost a year, he headed the 'Marysieńka' Student Employment Agency, and in his final year of study he chaired the University Audit Committee of the Polish Students' Association. Following graduation, he became one of the founders of the 'Akademik' Student Workers' Co-operative, which helped students find casual work, and for eight years he chaired the Supervisory Board of that co-operative.

Having carried out a wide range of farm work since childhood, he developed an interest in various areas of the economy, which was also reflected in his historical interests and led him to choose a seminar on economic history taught by Professor Czesław Łuczak, under whose supervision in 1960, he wrote his Master's thesis on the subject: *'Crafts in Poznań against the backdrop of the general economic crisis of 1929–1933'*. He approached the preparation of this thesis with great seriousness, not only from a historical perspective, but also from a practical one, acquiring many skills – some of them quite rare – and there were few things he could not do. His Master's thesis was highly praised, and an abstract of it was published in print, which was very rarely done at that time (Szulc, 1961).

After completing his studies, whilst awaiting a permanent post at the Institute of History, he worked for two years in the Department of the History of Philosophy at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. In 1962, he moved to the Department of Economic History at Adam Mickiewicz University. As an outstanding and efficient organiser, he quickly became Prof. Czesław Łuczak's closest colleague and right-hand man. Under his supervision, he also wrote his doctoral thesis on *'The Situation of the Working Class in Greater Poland, 1871–1914'*, which examined the economic situation of workers employed outside agriculture; he defended it in 1968. Two years later, the thesis was published (Szulc, 1970b: 191, tab. 34, chart 9).

The economic and social history of Greater Poland was also the subject of several of his shorter works published in journals and anthologies. Among them, the pioneering work *'The Development of Milling in the*

Western and Northern Polish Territories in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries' (Szulc, 1972), appears to be particularly valuable, as do the chapters in *'The History of Greater Poland'* and *'The History of Poznań'* on the development and transformation of crafts, the industrialisation of Poznań, and the working and living conditions of workers under Prussian rule.

He was a co-founder, long-standing editorial secretary and later co-editor of the journal *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, founded in 1966. It was the first – and for a long time the only – journal of the Institute of History at Adam Mickiewicz University published entirely in foreign languages. On his initiative, the journal began to compile and publish, on an ongoing basis, a bibliography of works on economic and social history appearing in Poland. He also co-edited a series of monographs on the towns and regions of Greater Poland. He was always very active in the community and held many positions, including on the audit committees of the Western Institute and the Adam Mickiewicz University Foundation, as well as on the supervisory boards of workers' cooperatives and housing cooperatives (at various levels).

After completing his PhD, he shifted his main academic interests from Greater Poland to the Balkans. He began learning Serbo-Croatian and went on a scholarship to Yugoslavia for several months, where he commenced research into the country's economic history. There, he befriended many eminent Yugoslav historians, including, pre-eminently, Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević from Zagreb, Ljubomir Durković-Jakšić and Nikola Živković from Belgrade, Tone Ferenc from Ljubljana, Dančo Zografski from Skopje and others. He subsequently travelled to Yugoslavia on numerous occasions, gathering unique material on the country's economic history. The result of his research there was his habilitation thesis, *Economic and Social Transformations in Yugoslavia in the Interwar Period (1918–1941)* (Szulc, 1980: 304, tab. 63, chart 7, map 3). The habilitation procedure took place in 1979. Following his habilitation, he was appointed as an associate professor in the Department of Economic History.

His friendship with Ljubomir Durković-Jakšić and his familiarity with the latter's work led to the translation, together with Jan Lešny and Bogusław Zieliński, of the typescript of Durković-Jakšić's work entitled *'Mickiewicz and the Yugoslavs'* from Serbo-Croatian, and its publication by the Adam Mickiewicz University Academic Press (Durković-Jakšić, 1984).

Whilst collaborating with Professor Czesław Łuczak, he also continued to pursue his interests in the social and economic history of Greater Poland. A large part of the collective work edited by Czesław Łuczak, *'Workers in*

Greater Poland in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Working and Living Conditions, was authored by Witold Szulc (1988), as was a section of *'Studies in the History of the Mogilno Region'*.

Between 1988 and 1991, Witold Szulc served as Dean of the Faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University; from 1991, he held the post of Reader. However, the numerous challenges arising from holding this position during a period of major political upheaval led to serious health problems, with which he struggled until the end of his life.

On 1 September 1993, he took over as head of the Department of Balkan Studies following the death of Professor Włodzimierz Pająkowski. He was also appointed head of the Commission for Balkan Studies at the Poznań Branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences and co-editor of the journal *'Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia'*. Whilst he held these positions, the international academic conferences in the *Balcanicum* series were resumed. These were often difficult and turbulent gatherings due to the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia. The professor sought to defuse disputes; he was deeply affected by the break-up of Yugoslavia and regarded it as a great tragedy. In 1999, he organized a panel discussion on the Kosovo issue, which attracted enormous interest from students across various faculties at Adam Mickiewicz University, and in 2002, in collaboration with the Department of Slavic Philology, he organized a nationwide conference dedicated to the idea of Slavic unity. This resulted in the volume *'Community Ideas of the Slavic World'*, which he co-edited (Mikołajczak et al., 2004). He published several works on Balkan history in the journal *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*: in 1993: *'Die Warschauer Agrarkonferenz (August 1930) und die Formierung des Agrarbloks in Ostmitteleuropa'* (Szulc, 1993); in 1994: *'The Influence of economic sanctions of the League of Nations imposed against Italy in 1935 in the Trade relations of Yugoslavia with Italy and Germany'* (Szulc, 1994); in 1998: *'Polish-Yugoslav Trade Relations between the World Wars'* (Szulc, 1998). Papers delivered by him at international academic conferences were also published: *'Factors Contributing to the Integration and Disintegration of the Yugoslav Economy in the Interwar Period'* (Szulc, 2007) and, co-authored: *'The Concept of Macedonia and the Macedonians Through the Centuries'* (Czamańska and Szulc, 2002). He also wrote over twenty entries relating to the Balkans for the *'Dictionary of Rulers of Modern and Contemporary Europe'* and the *'Dictionary of European Dynasties'* (Dobosz et al., 2002), as well as for the *'Encyclopædia Britannica'* (2006). He also contributed to promoting the achievements of Polish scholars by compiling the *Bibliography of Publications in Economic and Social History Printed in Poland between 1967 and 1972* (see, for example, Szulc, 1970a).

He attached great importance to teaching. Between 1973 and 1989, he served as secretary of the History Teaching Group at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and subsequently of the Teaching and Research Group at the Ministry of National Education. He played an active role in developing Balkan studies programmes in Gniezno and Poznań. He delivered lectures and seminars on the history of the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries for the undergraduate History degree programme at Adam Mickiewicz University (UAM), and even after retiring in 2007, also on the Balkan Studies degree programme at the Collegium Europaeum in Gniezno and the Higher School of Trade and Services in Poznań. He supervised over a hundred Master's students and three PhD candidates.

Throughout his adult life, he was actively involved in community and organisational works. He was a great enthusiast of the cooperative movement, which he demonstrated whilst still a student by organising the 'Marysieńka' and 'Akademik' cooperatives. For several years, he was a member of the council of the Provincial Union of Workers' Cooperatives, and between 1973 and 2002 he served on the supervisory boards of housing cooperatives (for seven years at provincial and national level). For about 10 years, he chaired the Audit Committees of the Western Institute and the Adam Mickiewicz University Foundation in Poznań.

In 1962, Witold Szulc married Jadwiga Gajewska, with whom he had two daughters: Agnieszka and Paulina. His home and everything connected with it was his great passion. DIY, decorating and renovating always provided him with a welcome break from his academic work, as did gardening.

He died on 11 May 2026 in Poznań, following a long and debilitating illness.

He was a great role model to us, not only as a highly conscientious scholar, but also as a man of impeccable integrity and empathy. His death is indeed a great loss to us.

Ilona Czamańska is Professor Emerita at the Faculty of History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. She is a historian and specialist in Balkan studies whose research focuses on the history of Central and South-Eastern Europe, particularly between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. From 2007 to 2019, she headed the Department of Balkan Studies at the Institute of History, Adam Mickiewicz University, and served as Chair of the Commission for Balkan Studies at the Poznań Branch of the Polish Academy of Sciences. She is a former editor-in-chief of *Balcanica Posnaniensia. Acta et studia* and the author of numerous publications on the history of the Balkans, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Serbia.

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