

Halina Parafianowicz

Faculty of History and Sociology

University of Białystok

**Professor Andrzej Bartnicki – Creator of the American
Studies Center and “Founding Father” of Modern
Research on U.S. History in Poland**

Professor Andrzej Bartnicki was a leading researcher in world history who passionately extended his work onto new periods and themes. His special interest involved the 19th and 20th centuries, with special focus on diplomatic history and the foreign policy of Britain and the United States. He won a number of prestigious grants and fellowships that enabled him to work in many academic centers abroad – in Austria, Czechoslovakia, the UK, West Germany and the USA. He maintained academic contacts with prominent historians in Poland, Europe and, most notably, in America, and was frequently invited as a guest lecturer and a conference speaker.

In 1976, Professor Bartnicki launched *American Studies*, a multidisciplinary English language periodical publishing contributions by authors from various fields of the humanities and social sciences. Although the shape of the periodical has changed over time, it remains the best window on the state of American Studies in Poland.

As an initiator and manager of many important and difficult Americanist projects, Professor Bartnicki demonstrated an exceptional ability to successfully implement his visionary plans. He devised and created the American Studies Center (ASC) at the University of Warsaw, the pioneer institution of this type in Eastern Europe, served as its first director in the years 1978-1981, and presided over the Center's Academic Council in 1990-94. The purpose of the ASC was not only to promote the interests of the University by opening it to the West in the period of détente, but, more importantly, to build institutional frameworks for the development of American Studies in Poland as a separate discipline. Professor Bartnicki inspired and grouped around the

Center a team of enthusiasts and young scholars sharing his ideas and visions of studying US history and culture.

The main strength of the ASC from the start was its library, containing a then impressive collection of 2000 volumes of basic survey and monographic works in American history, culture, home and foreign policy. Soon the library additionally obtained a collection of primary sources known as the “Library of American Civilization” consisting of over 13,000 microfiches, each containing 900 pages of text. It served as a resource for dozens of BA and MA theses, which, in the subsequent decades, were contributing to the dynamic development of American Studies in Poland, even in the unfavorable conditions of martial law in Poland and deterioration of official Polish-American relations. In the 1990s, a few other American Studies centers were created at Polish universities, yet none of them could rival the Warsaw ASC resources built in the early years.

Initiating the American Studies Center in the mid 1970s involved considerable difficulties and personal risk, as the temporarily warmed political climate could easily deteriorate again due to the Cold War ideological and political confrontations of the world superpowers. Yet Professor Bartnicki did take the risk and won. He also initiated many other important and risky projects that he pursued with remarkable energy and success. He had a clear vision and long-range plans for American Studies in Poland, and – as he used to say – luck was often at his side. His youthful enthusiasm, sometimes bordering on incorrigible romanticism, infected his younger colleagues, students and other co-workers.

When negotiating with the American partners the conditions of setting the ASC, Professor Bartnicki demonstrated deep patriotism. He insisted that laying the institutional foundations for American Studies in Poland should be paralleled by creating similar structures for developing Polish Studies in the US. Thanks to him, the Polish-American agreement about the creation of the ASC at the University of Warsaw contained a clause about the creation of a Polish Studies Center (PSC) at Indiana University, Bloomington. The opening of such a center in 1977 was an unprecedented event, as Polish Studies in America had previously been conducted within Soviet Studies institutions and at Slavonic Studies departments, where Poland did not constitute a separate object of academic inquiry. The PSC at IU Bloomington gave rise to a new attitude to Poland at American universities. Soon, in the new political context of the 1990s, other centers of this kind appeared at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and at the State Universities of Connecticut and Virginia.

Professor Bartnicki took great care to maintain full symmetry and reciprocity in the Polish-American exchange he initiated. Thus, the ASC at the University of Warsaw had a Polish director and an American vice director from IU Bloomington, while the PSC at Indiana University adopted a reversed principle. When Professor Bartnicki acted as Polish vice director of the PSC in Bloomington in 1986-1988, he activated a regular exchange of scholars between the two universities. Annual conferences were held alternately, which stimulated the exchange of scholarship, experience, and helped build professional networks, particularly important for the development of interdisciplinary American Studies in Poland.

In Bloomington, Andrzej Bartnicki, assisted and supported by his spouse Professor Kalina Bartnicka, acted as a real ambassador of Polish history and cultural heritage. The open lectures he organized, for instance by Jan Karski, and official visits of prominent guests (e.g. Rector of the University of Warsaw Prof. Grzegorz Białkowski) were always important events for the Bloomington academic community, and served well the purpose of promoting Poland and Polish Studies. The hospitable campus residence of Kalina and Andrzej Bartnicki constituted another site of endless informal gatherings and discussions on Polish literature, culture, and history, and on the future role of Poland in Europe. This is where new ideas were often conceived of how to popularize Poland among wider circles of American society and how to develop Polish-American scholarly projects. Those informal seminars were attended by American and Polish-American professors, among others by Alicja and Samuel Fiszman, Mary Ellen and Leo Solt, Jean Robinson and Jacek Bielasia, John Findling, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert H. Ferrell.

The formula for scholarly co-operation worked out by Warsaw and Indiana Universities in 1976 became a model for similar bilateral agreements of the ASC. During Professor Bartnicki's term of office as ASC director, the Center signed agreements with the University of Kansas and Kent State University in 1977, and with the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1978. He initiated negotiations with the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and with Rutgers University. The new contacts broadened the basis for energetic and productive research and teaching co-operation in subsequent years.

As a manager, Professor Bartnicki always supported young scholars, without prioritizing doctoral students in history. Thanks to him, the agreement between the Warsaw and Indiana Universities contained clauses about the exchange of junior scholars of all disciplines. Consequently, not only young historians of America went on research trips to the US, but also sociologists, economists, politologists, philosophers, and archaeologists. The visits of

young Polish academics to American universities produced tangible results in the form of publications, and doctoral dissertations. They created opportunities to conduct advanced research and functioned as a springboard for successful applications for prestigious American grants of the Fulbright Program, the American Council for Learned Societies, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Rockefeller Foundation and other organizations.

Professor Bartnicki coordinated some remarkable group projects promoting American history and American Studies, of which the two biggest and most remarkable were *Encyklopedia historii Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki. Dzieje polityczne od Deklaracji Niepodległości do współczesności* (Encyclopedia of American Political History from the Declaration of Independence) published in 1992, and the 5-volume *Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki, 1607-1990* (History of the United States of America, 1607-1990) published in 1995. For the work on the *Encyklopedia*, he invited mostly his doctoral students and young colleagues from the Department of Modern History and History of the United States at the Faculty of History at UW, entrusting them without hesitation with difficult and responsible tasks.

The second of Andrzej Bartnicki's great editorial projects – the multi-volume history of the United States – emerged in the mid-1980s, a period most unfavorable for Polish-American academic contacts. The idea of the publication first appeared in 1984, soon after the end of martial law in Poland, when tensions still persisted in official Polish-American relations enhanced by frequent mutual expulsions of diplomats and journalists accused of espionage. Polish academic visits to the US and the organization of international conferences had to be approved by the Polish Foreign Office, Home Office and the Ministry of Education. In that context, the idea of a major synthetic publication on American history, with contributions from Polish and American authors, must have been particularly courageous and innovative. Academically, the project was quite rational and workable due to the already existing Polish-American professional networks and exchange frameworks. The genuine need for a fresh publication of this scope among the new generation of Polish Americanists promised market success. However, in the specific context of the 1980s, the projects oscillated between political fiction and professional suicide, even in the opinion of Professor Bartnicki's most friendly colleagues.

Yet he did manage to steer the project through many obstacles to a successful end, with the perseverance and enthusiasm that characterized all his activities, and with invaluable help from his American partner and co-editor Professor Donald T. Critchlow. The completion of the Gargantuan task took 10 years, required overcoming political obstacles in Poland (one minister banned

the project at some stage), finding sponsors in Poland and in the US, recruiting sub-editors and authors – ultimately a group of 40 Polish and American historians, and coordinating their work. When finally the 5-volume *Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych* appeared on the Polish academic market in 1995, even the skeptics could not deny the power of Professor Bartnicki's vision and determination.

The multi-volume *Historia Stanów Zjednoczonych* has lost nothing of its value. Consisting of 2000 pages altogether, it remains the broadest survey of the American past available in the Polish language among other synthetic works on the subject written in Poland or translated from English. It combines American and Polish perspectives on American history. The reader learns from it not only about historical events and processes, but also about Polish and American ways of doing history and about terminological differences. It encompasses essays in several fields of history: political, diplomatic, social, economic, intellectual etc. The editors escaped polonocentrism by preserving a numerical balance between the chapters by Polish and American authors. The list of American contributors contains such well-known historians as Jack P. Greene, Lewis L. Gould, Ellis W. Hawley, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Bernard W. Sheehan, Walter Nugent, Richard Polenberg, as well as classics of diplomatic history – Robert H. Ferrell and Alexander DeConde. Prominent Polish contributors to the volumes were Zofia Libiszowska, Michał Rożbicki, Izabella Rusinowa, and a handful of then young scholars, now professors – Krzysztof Michałek, Halina Parafianowicz, Piotr Skurowski and Irmina Wawrzczek.

Andrzej Bartnicki's career and achievements revealed a man of broad horizons, hardworking, tolerant, open to the world and its many cultures. He had a rare gift of uniting people of different worldviews and attitudes. Not only was he interested in the history and present condition of his country, but actively engaged in planning for its future, as in the case of founding the Pułtusk Academy of Humanities, a school he managed as its first Rector from its beginning in 1994. He never wasted time and put all his energy in work – as if he sensed that his time on earth was running short. His active and creative life was prematurely interrupted by a fatal disease on March 16, 2004.

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In spring 2004, two history professors, Krzysztof Michałek and Halina Parafianowicz, Andrzej Bartnicki's former doctoral students and later colleagues, had an idea of how to commemorate the achievements of their late Master and the "founding father" of the new Polish school of American

history, and how to build on the institutional and methodological foundations he laid. They started a seminar for young Polish scholars working on doctoral dissertations in American Studies. The first seminar, under the name of Professor Andrzej Bartnicki Forum for the Advanced Studies of the United States, met on 25 June 2004 at the Pułtusk Academy of Humanities. Its purpose was to create a setting for young Americanists to share research ideas and experience, to discuss methodologies and argument structures, and to meet senior specialists in the field. The seminar, originally a one-day event, has extended over three days and attracts prominent Polish and American academics and a growing number of doctoral students representing history, political sciences, sociology, anthropology, and English. It meets in June each year and traditionally opens with a special session for American history professors presenting their recent research projects. Over the decade, the Forum has established itself as an important institution for the promotion of American Studies the way its patron Andrzej Bartnicki would have liked.

After the sudden death of Krzysztof Michałek in 2009, his friend and Forum co-organizer Halina Parafianowicz hosted the 2010 seminar at the University of Białystok. The idea to move the Forum permanently to Białystok was accepted and financially supported by the University authorities, especially by the Faculty of History and Sociology, with some funding provided by the city council and the American Embassy.

The Forum formula remains unchanged. During the sessions, doctoral students working on topics with an American angle present outlines of their dissertations and discuss the structure of the argument, central hypotheses, the quality of research, type of primary sources etc. Each Forum has a leading theme, and a special session is devoted to the presentations closely related to it. The themes are broad and often relate to important current anniversaries e. g. 220 years of ratifying the American Constitution, or 90 years of Polish-American diplomatic relations. So far, the Forum has been organized around the following themes:

- The Historical Mission of the United States;
- The Declaration of Independence: Its Message in the Past and Today;
- The Universal Character of the American Constitution;
- Presidential Elections in America;
- From Romantic Fascination to Pragmatic Cooperation: Polish-American Relations, 1919-2009;
- The American Century: The U.S. and International Order, 1919-2001;
- American Exceptionalism;

Anti-Americanism: Its Origins, Champions, and Manifestations in a Historical Perspective.

The leading theme for the year 2013 is "American Success: Its Many Faces Past and Present".

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Polish Perspectives on American History: Insights, Interpretations, Revisions is a volume of essays celebrating the 10th edition of Professor Andrzej Bartnicki Forum for the Advanced Studies of the United States. Its thematic and temporal scope is quite broad as it contains articles related to the seminar topics of the entire decade. The monograph consists of voluntary contributions from the past participants of the Forum and does not aspire to be a complete and representative survey of all current Polish Americanist scholarship; yet it maps quite accurately the areas of research undertaken in the field over the last decade.

As the Forum organizer and editor of the present volume, I very much appreciate the assistance which I have steadily received in my work from all the participants of the seminars and from my university colleagues. I gratefully acknowledge the involvement of the authors who contributed essays to the jubilee publication, and the generosity of its sponsors. I very much hope that due to the growing interest of young scholars in American Studies and positive response from the invited foreign specialists, we can anticipate many new vibrant editions of the Forum at the University of Białystok in the future.