When I was asked to give a paper on the place of Poland in American historiography of Europe, my first reaction was that it would be a very short paper.

Over 40 percent of the nearly 14,000 members of the American Historical Association (AHA) specialize in European history. One can estimate that at most about 3 percent of these Europeanists have even a secondary interest in Poland. As many as four thousand scholars attend the annual meetings of the Association. At the meeting in January 2004, there were 176 sessions with over 450 papers, only one of which dealt specifically with Poland, in 2003 again only one paper, and in 2002 none. The *Journal of Modern History* was established in 1929 at the University of Chicago specifically to publish articles in modern European history. In the last decade, it published only three articles dealing with Poland, two of them on Polish-Jewish topics. An article published in 1998 surveying the work of American historians on twentieth-century Europe does not even mention Poland. Although the article recognizes the need after 1989 to reexamine the division between western and eastern Europe, there is little evidence of this in the recent trends it identifies in American historiography of Europe. Only one synthesis of the history of Poland by an American historian has been published in the last ten years. Written by the holder of the Blejwas Chair of Polish Studies at Central Connecticut

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2 Based on statistics on the declared interests of members of the American Association of Slavic Studies provided by the membership coordinator, personal correspondence, November 24, 2003.


5 Berghahn and Maier, “Modern Europe,” 393-414.

State University, it is part of a series of histories of modern nations, including Russia, Germany, and Nigeria. The text is less than 200 pages in length and emphasizes the twentieth century. Its interpretation does not differ markedly from that of most non-Marxist Polish historians. Clearly, Poland’s place in American historiography is definitely marginal.

There are over 150 institutions in the United States that grant doctoral degrees in history. Of 266 doctorates in European history in the academic year 1999-2000, some seven were in Polish history. In the past decade there were fewer than 60 dissertations completed that dealt substantially with the modern history of Poland, 20 percent of them on Polish-Jewish topics. Few of the 4,000 institutions of higher education in the United States offer courses in Polish history as a standard part of the curriculum, certainly fewer than twenty. In the Chicago region, which has over a dozen colleges and universities, only the University of Illinois at Chicago, where I taught Polish history for 23 years, offers courses in Polish history on a regular basis. Some of the larger universities offer courses in the history of Eastern Europe, which is how Americans almost universally refer to the region between Germany and Russia. A few teach courses in the history of East Central Europe, covering the area of the former kingdoms of Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary, a regional approach to Polish history favored by the leading historian of Poland in the United States.

In general, even educated Americans are little interested in history. For many their only contact with the study of history, particularly European history, began and ended with a course known as Western Civilization. The Western Civilization course is “a characteristically American invention.” It dates back to the early twentieth century, when educators perceived a need for a general education course to overcome fragmentation in the study of history, to give students a sense of a common identity and common past, and to overcome deficits in their knowledge of European history, reasons which retain their validity today. At many colleges and universities Western Civilization became a compulsory course for all liberal arts students, not just those specializing in history. For American historians the “roots” of their culture and institutions lie Europe, in a heritage shared particularly with the

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7 158 in 2001, Perspectives, 41, No. 7 (October 2003), 25.
8 Lynn Hunt, “Is European History Passé?,” Perspectives, 40, No. 8 (November 2002), 5; the number on Polish topics is based on a search of Dissertation Abstracts.
9 Piotr S. Wandycz, “Teaching Polish History,” NewsNet, 37, No. 5 (November 1997), 7. I wish to thank the author for bringing this article to my attention.
10 Gilbert Allardycce, “The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course,” American Historical Review, 87, No. 3 (June 1982), 699.
democratic countries of western Europe. The two world wars confirmed this belief in a common western tradition.11

The Cold War brought a massive expansion of Russian and Soviet studies in the United States.12 Thanks to Soviet dominance of Eastern Europe, new resources went into the study of that region as well. More financial support came after the Soviet success in launching Sputnik in 1957. Government-funded fellowships paid for most of my doctoral studies because I was studying a “strategic” language, Polish. But 70 percent of doctoral dissertations in Russian and East European studies from 1965 to 1987 were in Russian studies and less than 6 percent in Polish studies, a plurality of them in language and literature rather than history.13 Moreover, one result was to identify Eastern Europe closely with the Soviet Union. A study in 1984 of curriculum materials used in the secondary schools of the state of New Jersey found that what limited attention was given to the countries of Eastern Europe came “invariably under the form of a sub-unit exclusively devoted to U.S.S.R.”14

The Cold War also reinforced an identification of Western Civilization with western Europe. Western Civilization was equated with the Western military alliance.15 But now Western Civilization courses included the history of Russia. A decade after the start of the Cold War, the author of a survey of history textbooks noted the preoccupation with Russia.16 At the same time he observed that “American students in general history courses tend to learn little about the history of European nations east of Germany and Italy.” He quotes what one student wrote about Eastern Europe following World War I: “A number of countries emerged,

14 Quoted in Thaddeus V. Gromada, Report of the New Jersey Governor’s Commission on Eastern European and Captive Nation History to Governor Thomas H. Kean and Dr. Saul Cooperman, Commissioner of Education (n.p., 1989), 6. I wish to thank the author for bringing this publication to my attention and furnishing me with a copy.
15 Allardyce, “Rise and Fall,” 717.
no one has ever heard anything about them, except for Poland which has appeared from time to time in history.”

In the 1960s interest in the wider world led to the introduction of world history courses as an alternative to Western Civilization, and student protests succeeded in many places in making Western Civilization an optional course. Still, in 1976 Western Civilization textbooks outsold texts in world civilization by about two to one, and in the early 1980s over 500,000 students were enrolled in Western Civilization courses.

The birth of the Solidarity movement in Poland drew enormous interest in the United States, because of the inherent drama of the events but primarily because of the challenge they posed to the Soviet Union. More English-language books about Poland were published in the 1980s than in any other decade. Yet, a commission that in the second half of the 1980s evaluated seventeen textbooks used in the secondary schools of the state of New Jersey found the coverage given to the history and culture of Eastern Europe “inadequate and inaccurate” and that the main focus remained on Russia. Following the dramatic fall of communism in eastern Europe in 1989, the newsletter of the American Historical Association published an article that called for a reconsideration of the way European history is taught, with its division between western and eastern Europe, which the author called “a pedagogical convenience.” But a paper surveying the treatment of Poland in historical texts presented at the Association’s annual meeting in January 1994 still found numerous omissions and distortions. In 1997 the author of the survey of textbooks who forty years earlier had found their treatment of East Central Europe inadequate concluded his criticism was “still largely valid.”

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, called attention to the importance for America of the non-Western world. A little over a year later, the president of the AHA wondered if the time for the study of European history had passed as more institutions required students to take

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18 Allardycie, “Rise and Fall,” 696.
20 Gromada, Report, 28.
22 Anna M. Cienciala, “Old and New Views on Modern Poland in Anglo-American History Texts and Scholarly Books,” unpublished paper. I wish to thank the author for access to this paper and her other suggestions for this paper.
world history than the history of Western Civilization. The co-author of a leading Western Civilization textbook, she admitted that “European history was in fact hardly ever European” because most specialists in modern European history “focus on just one of the major nation-states.” The European history curriculum “is still dominated by American concerns that date to World War I and II,” and as a result European history is taught as “French, German, British, and more rarely Spanish or Italian history.” In fact, the authors of Western Civilization textbooks are most often specialists in French, German, or British history.

The publication of textbooks for courses in Western Civilization is a highly competitive big business. Most recent textbooks are luxuriously illustrated with maps, chronologies, lists of important dates and statistics, and reproductions of historic paintings and photographs. The historical narrative includes excerpts from documents, and review questions and suggested additional readings follow each chapter to help the students. In addition, publishers offer collections of documents and readings, study guides, and teaching manuals as well as websites to be used in conjunction with their textbooks. One recent textbook even includes a free CD-Rom of over 200 documents. The competition is such that instructors can choose from a wide variety of Western Civilization textbooks, and they often do. The five instructors teaching Western Civilization at my university in the fall of 2003 used four different textbooks.

What do Western Civilization textbooks say about modern Polish history? After surveying six representative textbooks, I can confirm that Western Civilization continues to be identified primarily with western Europe. According to the co-author of one of these textbooks, there was a deliberate attempt to include “more about eastern Europe at every opportunity” to distinguish the textbook from the competition. In fact, it does include more references to Poland than the others, identifying individuals, events, and developments that can be related to the historical narrative, which nevertheless remains centered on western Europe. Thus, in connection with the Enlightenment, this textbook identifies King Stanislaw

26 The authors of the sections on the modern history of Western Civilization surveyed here include four specialists in French history, two in British history, and one in Renaissance Italy.
August Poniatowski and Princess Zofia Czartoryska but does not mention the Commission of National Education in connection with the disbanding of the Jesuits and educational reforms. According to another textbook, “the Enlightenment was limited in Eastern Europe. Only a total of 280 books were published in Poland… in 1740,” but it mentions the founding of scientific societies in Warsaw, Cracow, and Danzig; a national library in Warsaw in 1747; and the “Ukrainian University of Lvov” in 1784. Four other textbooks make no reference to the Enlightenment in Poland at all, though a map in one indicates that Warsaw had more subscriptions to the Encyclopedia than any other city east of the Rhine.

The first partition of Poland is presented in three textbooks mainly as an object lesson in eighteenth-century power politics. In one of them Poland even makes one of its rare appearances in a review question, which asks, “What does the partition of Poland indicate about the spirit of enlightened absolutism?” The textbooks blame Poland’s weakness on “internal conflicts,” a “fractious nobility,” which claimed “traditional rights, called the five eternal principles,” which are not explained.

The most extensive account of the final partitions of Poland follows the approach of the American historian R.R. Palmer, who forty years ago placed events in Poland in the context of a wider democratic revolution in the western world. Thus the second and third partitions are counted among the important European events of the period. The text states, “From Philadelphia to Warsaw, the new public steeped in Enlightenment ideas now demand to be heard.” The text refers to the reform party, the Patriots; the role of Poniatowski; the opposition of “most of the aristocrats and the formidable Catherine the Great.” The May 3 Constitution is briefly described as is the uprising led by Kościuszko.“ It notes his

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30 Steven Hause and William Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society* (Belmont, California: West/Wadsworth, 1999), 552, 559, 560. The quotes are on 560 and 559, respectively.


33 Kagan, 622.


“immediate, insoluble dilemma” of needing to win over the peasantry without alienating the nobles supporting the uprising, and his attempt at compromise with the proclamation of May 7, 1794. With the defeat of the uprising there remained “the unsolved problem of Polish serfdom, which isolated the nation’s gentry and townspeople from the rural masses.” Although Palmer’s work is listed in the suggested readings of two other textbooks, one only mentions that the “democratic revolution… included liberal Polish nobles,” and the other refers only to “minor attempts at reform by the Polish nobles.” No other textbook mentions reforms or the constitution of May 3. One even suggests that a refusal to reform resulted in Poland’s annihilation and prints a map of Europe in 1795 that places Warsaw within the territory of the Austrian empire.

None of the textbooks have anything to say about Napoleon’s Duchy of Warsaw, all but one of them mistakenly referring to it as the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. Only one textbook discusses the dispute over Poland at the Congress of Vienna at greater length and is the only one to mention the Republic of Kraków.

The November Uprising appears in all of the textbooks, with accounts ranging in length from two paragraphs along with an excerpt of the Organic Statute and an illustration of Polish rebels in uniform in one textbook to two sentences in another textbook. Only two textbooks allude indirectly to the Great Emigration and to Mickiewicz’s role in it, one noting that his “mystical writings portrayed the Polish exiles as martyrs of a crucified nation with an international Christian mission” and that he “formed a Polish Legion… but rivalries and divisions among the Polish nationalists prevented united action until 1846, when Polish exiles… tried to launch [an]… insurrection for Polish independence. [and]… in Galicia… peasants instead revolted against their noble Polish masters, … Slaughtering some two thousand aristocrats.” The same textbook notes Mickiewicz’s influence on Mazzini. Another textbook sums up this period in two sentences: “Polish nationalists, far from accepting their

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38 King, 579, 429.
39 Hause, 599; Esler, 457; King, 604; Kagan, 682; Kishlansky, 662, 715.
40 Kishlansky, 714-16. Throughout this paper I use the spelling used by the textbooks, often contrary to Polish orthography.
41 Kagan, 707, 725-28; Esler, 509.
42 Hunt, *The Making of the West*, 825-26; see also Kishlansky, 731.
suppression in 1831, were among the most eloquent of nationalists. They saw theirs as a nation of martyrs to the cause of national self-determination, a people who would one day yet be free. Only one other textbook mentions Mickiewicz, merely identifying him as a founder of a “nationalist society at the University of Vilna in 1817.” More textbooks mention Chopin. None of the other textbooks mention the revolt of 1846.

Accounts of the events of 1848 give no details of Polish activities. Maps indicating where revolutionary activity occurred suggest Polish participation, but without explanation. One indicates revolutions in Posen, Kraków, Lemberg, and Warsaw—perhaps a reference to 1863. Another also places revolutions in Warsaw along with Cracow and in eastern Prussia and eastern Galicia, without identifying Poznań and Lwów. Another map indicates Cracow along with the region east of Cracow, clearly a reference to the events of 1846 but not identified as such. Only half of the textbooks mention the January Uprising and only within the context of Russian history. There is nothing concerning how the January Uprising differed from the November Uprising.

Polish developments after the January uprising leading to the re-creation of a Polish state receive virtually no attention. Nothing about the evolution of Polish national thought as typified by the views of Dmowski and Piłsudski. None of the books even identify Dmowski. The only mention of Polish political parties comes when Rosa Luxemburg is identified as “a founder of the Polish socialist party.” The only reference to a Polish labor movement comes when, “At Łódź… forty-six workers were killed in a clash in 1892.” One textbook mentions Polish migration to the Ruhr region, but not to the United States, which is much

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43 Esler, 511.

44 Hause, 686. Mickiewicz should be mentioned in all textbooks according to Wandycz, “The Treatment of East Central Europe,” 220.

45 Hunt, The Making of the West, 831; Esler, 552; King, 723, 741; Hause, 643; Kishlansky, 723


47 Hunt, The Making of the West, 832.

48 King, 672.


50 Wandycz, “The Treatment of East Central Europe,” 221, made this same criticism.

51 King, 756.

52 Hause, 758, which also mentions the “Herne riots,” but does not identify its participants as Polish and gives the wrong date; see John J. Kulczycki, The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement: Xenophobia and Solidarity in the Coal Fields of the Ruhr, 1871-1914 (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 117-53.
more relevant for American students.\textsuperscript{53} Only one book refers to Polish migration to the United States indirectly by including excerpts from the letters of a wife of a Polish immigrant lamenting her husband’s decision not to return to Poland.\textsuperscript{54} In a section on “The Jewish Question,” one textbook reproduces the painting “After the Pogrom” by Maurycy Minkowski, who is identified as a painter of Jewish life in Poland.\textsuperscript{55} The only person of Polish origin that almost all books identify in this period is the “Polish-born French scientist” Marie Curie, who according to one textbook was born “Maya Sklodowska,” whereas another one does not mention her Polish origins.\textsuperscript{56}

Only two textbooks mention the Bolshevik attempt to spread communism to Poland during the Polish-Soviet war. According to one, “French military advisors came to the aid of the Poles and turned the Russians back,” and according to the other, the Poles “drove the Red Army back …, while the Allied powers rushed supplies and advisers to Warsaw.”\textsuperscript{57} One textbook claims that Poland sought “to reclaim the Ukraine,” whereas others list “Polish invaders” among those expelled from “Russian soil” or indicate Polish attacks on maps without noting Bolshevik advances into Poland.\textsuperscript{58}

Under the heading of “Anti-Semitism at the Peacetable,” one textbook prints a statement by an unidentified “Polish leader” at the Paris Peace Conference that begins with the sentence, “We have too many Jews, and those who will be allowed to remain with us must change their habits…” According to the explanation of the document, he “lobbied the Allies to exercise a police power in the newly independent Poland, where major problems would be rural crowding and inability to make ends meet on the land.”\textsuperscript{59} One can easily get the impression

\textsuperscript{53} King, 716.
\textsuperscript{54} Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 914.
\textsuperscript{55} Kishlansky, 794.
\textsuperscript{56} King, 726-27; Kagan, 865; Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 947; Kishlansky, 796; Esler, 560, 732.
\textsuperscript{58} Kishlansky, 880; Esler, 609; Hause, 804; Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 993. See also Anna M. Cienciala, “Historiografia anglosaska o wojnie polsko-sowieckiej i zwycięstwie polskim nad Armią Czerwoną w 1920 r.,” in Anna M. Cienciala and Piotr S. Wandycz, \textit{Wojna Polsko-Bolszewicka 1919-1920 w ocenach historyków} (Warsaw: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Nowym Yorku, 2003), 41-54, which the author kindly brought to my attention.
\textsuperscript{59} Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 999.
that the Versailles Treaty unfairly favored Polish over German claims because East Prussia was “cut off” from the rest of Germany by the Polish “corridor,” terminology used by all of the textbooks. Only one mentions that this was territory Prussia gained in the partitioning of Poland. None refer to the ethnicity of the population that inhabited the territory, although two books include maps elsewhere that indicate the predominately Polish character of the population. Yet, one textbook notes that one-third of Poland’s population was ethnically non-Polish, and another that it “contained unhappy German and Ukrainian minorities.” Another textbook lists Poland among countries that had border disputes with its neighbors. Because of the American identification of its heritage with the democratic tradition, historians generally take a negative view of interwar Poland. As one textbook puts it, “The nation whose postwar fortunes probably most disappointed liberal Europeans was Poland… nationalism proved an insufficient bond to overcome political disagreements stemming from class differences, diverse economic interests, and regionalism… In 1926 Marshal Józef Piłsudski (1857 [sic]–1935) carried out a military coup. Thereafter, he ruled, in effect, personally until his death, when the government passed into the hands of a group of his military followers.” Poland is the only country discussed in one textbook as an example of political developments in eastern Europe, where “Nationalism was increasingly defined in ethnic terms… [many of Poland’s] ethnic minorities… had grievances against the dominant Poles. Moreover, varying religious, dynastic, and cultural traditions divided the Poles… the inability of coalition parliaments to effect economic prosperity led to a coup in 1926 by strongman Józef Piłsudski. Ultimately, Piłsudski made it possible for a country choked by the endless debates of dozens of political parties and impaired by ethnic strife and anti-Semitism to function. Economic hardship and strong-arm solutions went hand in hand in east-central Europe. It was only with incredible difficulty that a reunified Poland survived the postwar years.” According to another textbook, “General Józef Piłsudski used the Polish army to

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60 Kagan, 920; King, 766, speaks of German “territorial concessions”; see also Hunt, The Making of the West, 1000; Esler, 613; Kishlansky, 880, 917.
61 Hause, 811.
62 Hunt, The Making of the West, 1004; Esler, 484.
63 Hunt, The Making of the West, 1000, without noting the minorities in other countries; Kagan, 921.
64 Kishlansky, 880.
65 For more examples, see Cienciała, “Józef Piłsudski.” 167-194.
66 Kagan, 952
hold dictatorial power for nearly fifteen years. ...Piłsudski became the first president of Poland in 1922... His military coup d'état of 1926 created a limited military dictatorship, which tolerated a degree of opposition but did not hesitate to arrest and torture opposition leaders in 1930.\textsuperscript{68} Two textbooks claim to see similarities between Poland and fascist Italy, and two others list Poland among countries where fascism appealed or had authoritarian governments resembling fascism.\textsuperscript{69} Two of the three textbooks that mention the Poland’s annexation of part of Czechoslovakia in 1938 associate Poland with Hitler, though one notes that there was a “strong presence of Poles” in the territory.\textsuperscript{70} None give any historical background of the territorial dispute. One textbook makes no reference to Piłsudski or interwar Poland at all.\textsuperscript{71}

In connection with World War II, only one textbook makes reference to “Polish cavalry on horseback, with sword and lance, fighting in the same campaign that introduced German Panzer tanks.” The same textbook speaks of “one of the most hellish aspects of total war – the attack upon civilian populations.” In Warsaw “the Luftwaffe leveled 15 percent of all buildings... and killed forty thousand civilians. After two weeks,... Stalin sent the Red Army into eastern Poland,... Sixty thousand Polish dead and 200,000 Polish wounded were just the beginning of Polish suffering.”\textsuperscript{72} One textbook refers to “a savage occupation”, the killing of “about 3 million Poles,” “an inferior race, according to Nazi ideology,... reduced to a docile, illiterate serfdom”; whereas another reports, “Hitler established colonies of Germans in parts of Poland, driving the local people from their land and employing them as cheap labor.”\textsuperscript{73}

Only one textbook says anything specific about the Soviet occupation, noting only that “industrialists, union members, professionals, and thousands of others were sent to the Gulag, if not murdered outright,” and only two textbooks mention Katyn, one saying the massacre occurred in 1941.\textsuperscript{74} One textbook states “Stalin moved rapidly to recover czarist Russian lands lost in World War I and to push the frontiers of the Soviet Union as far west as possible.”\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{68} Hause, 820.  
\textsuperscript{69} Esler, 635; King, 809; Hunt, The Making of the West, 1042; Hause, 838.  
\textsuperscript{70} King, 818; Esler, 649; Kagan, 1002.  
\textsuperscript{71} Kishlansky.  
\textsuperscript{72} Hause, 845-46.  
\textsuperscript{73} King, 820; Kagan, 1008-9; see also Kagan, 998.  
\textsuperscript{74} Hunt, The Making of the West, 1058; King, 821; Hause, 846.  
\textsuperscript{75} Esler, 651.
The resistance movements in France, Greece, or Yugoslavia but not in Poland are mentioned in two textbooks, whereas another only mentions that the Polish resistance was united, unlike in Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{76} The Warsaw Uprising receives a sentence or two in four of the textbooks.\textsuperscript{77} One textbook also reports, “Polish exiles broke the German cipher early in the war.”\textsuperscript{78}

One textbook puts Polish losses at 123,000-600,000 killed in combat; 530,000 wounded; more than 5 million civilians killed; about 6 million total killed, whereas another textbook prints a color-coded map, which indicates that over 10 percent of the population was killed with the total Polish military dead at “850,000 (169,822 as Allies)” and 5,778,000 civilian dead.\textsuperscript{79} The most striking image of Polish losses is a half-page photograph in one textbook of a devastated street in Warsaw in 1946 accompanied by a long account about Warsaw “as a stark example of extreme destruction and of startling renewal.” Interwar Warsaw is characterized “as a metropolitan center of charm and culture, known for its artists and intellectuals and vibrant urban life.” An account of the city’s destruction closes with the statement that “By the end of 1944, Warsaw was no more than a heap of rubble with almost 90 percent of its buildings destroyed…Warsaw became known as ‘the vanished city.’” The author then describes the rebuilding of the city: “The achievement of historical preservation was astounding. By 1951 a large part of the city had been rebuilt, perhaps one of the best examples of how Europeans met the postwar challenge of urban reconstruction and economic revival.”\textsuperscript{80}

All of the textbooks have a separate section on the Holocaust, which includes non-Jewish Poles or Slavs among its victims.\textsuperscript{81} One text specifically states that “In Poland, the SS murdered nobility, clergy, and intellectuals and relocated hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens to forced labor camps.”\textsuperscript{82} In a discussion of “Museums and Memory,” this textbook also reports that the “museum at Auschwitz creates a Polish memory of the Holocaust by emphasizing the millions of Poles who died.”\textsuperscript{83} According to one textbook, Poles served as concentration camp guards along with Germans and Ukrainians, and yet the textbook includes

\textsuperscript{76} Hause, 854; Kishlansky, 921; Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 1058.
\textsuperscript{77} Hause, 858; Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 1061; King, 823; Kagan, 1030.
\textsuperscript{78} King, 821.
\textsuperscript{79} Hause, 859; Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 1065.
\textsuperscript{80} Kishlansky, 954-55.
\textsuperscript{81} Hause, 862; King 824; Kishlansky, 924; Esler, 664-65
\textsuperscript{82} Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 1052-53.
\textsuperscript{83} Hunt, \textit{The Making of the West}, 1056-57.
“members of the Polish… leadership” among the victims. The Warsaw ghetto uprising is
mentioned by four of the textbooks, one citing the wrong year. Italy, Denmark, France,
Raoul Wallenberg and, even Oscar Schindler are mentioned as having concealed or protected
Jews, but not Poland or Żegota.

One textbook differs significantly from the others and even from its own earlier editions
in its treatment of the Holocaust. It notes that the Polish “upper and professional classes were
entirely removed – either jailed, deported, or killed. Schools and churches were closed. The
Nazis limited marriage to keep down the Polish birth rate and imposed harsh living
conditions.” But the textbook precedes its discussion of the destruction of the Jews with
a survey of the history of the Jews of Poland before 1939. According to the author, this was
done “in recognition that the Holocaust had become a unit in many Western Civilization
courses in which the book is assigned.” The section begins by stating, “A large Jewish
community had dwelled within Polish lands for centuries, often in a climate of religious and
cultural anti-Semitism.” Concerning the interwar period, it asserts, “Discrimination against
Jews, if not outright persecution, persisted… The new Polish government defined the nation
in terms of Polish ethnic nationalism, [which]… defined Jews as outside the Polish nation.”
A section entitled “Polish Anti-Semitism Between the Wars,” begins with the assertion that
“the Polish government, supported by spokesmen for the Polish Roman Catholic Church,
pursued policies that were anti-Semitic.” Following examples of discriminatory laws and
practices, the textbook states, “The path of assimilation into the larger culture… hit a dead
end in Poland because Poles generally refused to regard even secular, assimilated Jews as
fellow Poles.” After the Holocaust, “The tiny minority of Polish Jews who had survived
faced bitter anti-Semitism under the postwar Soviet-dominated government. Many
immigrated to Israel,… The largest Jewish community in Europe had virtually ceased to

84 Kishlansky, 925.
85 Hunt, The Making of the West, 1052-54; Esler, 664-65; Kishlansky, 926; Hause, 863, gives the wrong
year, 1942.
86 Hause, 862; Esler, 665; King, 826; Hunt, The Making of the West, 1059.
87 Kagan, 1018.
90 Kagan, 1018.
In attempting to explain the Holocaust, the textbook cites Jedwabne, where “local Poles themselves turned against their Jewish neighbors in outbursts of localized anti-Semitic violence… [that] killed approximately 1,600 Jewish inhabitants of the town. This horrendous incident clearly suggests that although most of the atrocities against the Jews were carried out by Nazis, there existed a climate of either indifference or outright support in part of Poland as well as in other parts of Nazi-occupied Europe.”

The textbooks say little about Poland and the conferences of the Big Three, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin. Two of the textbooks note that the territory the Soviet Union gained from Poland once belonged to Russia or was vital for its security. Concerning the expulsions and migrations that followed the war, several textbooks note that hundreds of thousands to 1.5 million Poles fled or were forced to leave the Soviet Union, that Germans and Ukrainians were expelled, and that 3 to 3.5 million Poles migrated to the new western and northern territories. One textbook also reports, “Many surviving Jews often had no home to return to, as property had been confiscated and entire communities destroyed. Moreover, anti-Semitism had become official policy under the Nazis. In the summer of 1946, a vicious crowd in Kielce, Poland, rioted against returning Jewish survivors, killing at least 40 of the 250. Elsewhere in eastern Europe, such violence was common.”

According to one textbook, “In Poland the Communists fixed the election results of 1945 [sic] and 1946 to create the illusion of approval for communism. Nevertheless, the Communists had to share power between 1945 and 1947 with the popular Peasant Party of Stanislaw Mikolajczyk.” In another textbook we learn, “The Communist position in Poland was strong in 1945 because many non-Communist leaders had been killed in the Warsaw uprising of 1944… The Communist-led provisional government did not hold elections until 1947, when its coalition received 80.1 percent of the vote and Western protests arose that the
elections had not been fair.” Other textbooks also state that “there was an outcry by the western Allies” or that for Americans “Soviet power in eastern Europe proved to be a bitter disappointment.”

Although all the textbooks mention the events of 1956 in Poland and one notes that they inspired the Hungarian rebellion, only one textbook gives a more detailed account of the events of 1956. The protests of 1970 and 1976 are mentioned in a sentence in three of the textbooks. Other forms of resistance are mentioned in only two textbooks: in the late 1960s “Polish high school and university students created Michnik Clubs… to study Western political theory, science, and economics”; and in 1980 [sic] intellectuals formed the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) and joined with workers in demanding reforms.

One textbook gives more attention than the others to the role of the pope in the birth of Solidarity and the defeat of communism. Only two other textbooks mention the pope in connection with Solidarity, though one seems to mix the chronology as if Solidarity preceded his election, and one other mentions the support for Solidarity of the Catholic Church.

The birth of Solidarity gets relatively extensive coverage in four of the textbooks, and all of them note the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, only one adding the name of Anna Walentynowicz. One textbook gives an account of other changes in 1980-81, including within the Polish Communist party. One textbook prints 15 of the “Demands of the Solidarity Workers.” Among the reasons cited by four of the textbooks for the imposition of martial law are to prevent Soviet intervention, to save the Polish Communist party, and to preserve the position of the military. According to two textbooks, the government’s need for “new loans from the U.S.-led bloc” or the threat of NATO to end détente limited the government’s

101 Hause, 900.
102 Esler, 673; Kishlansky, 942.
104 Hause, 937; Hunt, The Making of the West, 1167; Kishlansky, 992.
105 Hunt, The Making of the West, 1135, 1167; Kishlansky, 993.
109 Hause, 938.
repression. Concerning the imposition of martial law, one textbook states only that Solidarity was “banned but continued underground,” whereas another says nothing at all.

All of the textbooks mention Poland first among the countries where revolutions occurred in 1989, though two textbooks give no details, mentioning only that Solidarity negotiated reforms. Only two textbooks refer to the strikes of 1988. Whereas three textbooks speak of free elections to parliament, one notes that only the upper house of parliament was freely elected and refers to the Sejm as nonelected. Despite the huge number of books in English published on Solidarity, none of the textbooks includes a book specifically on Poland in the 1980s and only one on the post-1989 period in their lists of suggested readings at the end of the chapter.

References to postwar cultural and social developments in Poland are rare in these textbooks. One textbook, however, includes a photograph of “Zbigniew Cybulski, the Polish James Dean,” from “Ashes and Diamonds,” places Andrzej Wajda among those “existentialist philosophers and other cinema directors,… [who] captured the debate over human values and the interest in young heroes of the postwar era,” mentions Stanislaw Lem’s novel Solaris as an example of science fiction in Eastern Europe, and reprints a photograph of “bloki” in Poland as an example of “slapdash, cheap buildings with far less than one room per person [that] went up from England to Eastern Europe.” The only other cultural reference to Poland in any of these textbooks is to a play staged by Jerzy Grotowsky [sic]. As for social developments, one textbook cites Poland as an example of how things got worse for women after the fall of communism, where “the reinvigorated Roman Catholic Church has reaffirmed its uncompromising stand against birth control and abortion.” This same textbook notes in its epilogue that “The Polish-born Pope John Paul II, a trained philosopher and former anti-Communist,… periodically reminds his vast audience of the needs of the poor in a world bent on becoming rich.”

112 Esler, 683; King.
113 Esler, 685, 713; King, 877.
114 Kagan, 1069; Kishlansky, 993.
116 Kishlansky, 1013.
117 Hunt, The Making of the West, 1100, 1116, 10871
118 Esler, 744.
119 King, 886.
120 King, 903.
Conclusion

Poland occupies a barely visible place on the margins of the American historiography of modern Europe. In practice American specialists in European history focus primarily on the national history of one country, above all Great Britain, France, or Germany. Few have even a minor interest in Poland or pay any attention to the works of those not numerous American historians specializing in the modern history of Poland. Only a handful of American universities offer courses in Polish history, and doctoral programs in recent times have produced on average about six doctoral dissertations in modern Polish history annually.

The main exposure to European history of most educated Americans comes in courses on Western Civilization. These courses began about a century ago as a means of educating students about the “roots” of American culture and institutions, a past shared in the eyes of American historians with the democratic countries of western Europe, particularly Great Britain and France. American participation in two world wars and in the Cold War confirmed this identification with western Europe. The Cold War resulted in more attention being paid to Russia and the Soviet bloc, but in American minds it also increased the distance between western and eastern Europe. As a result textbooks added material on Russia while maintaining their focus on western Europe.

After nearly half a century, this emphasis in Western Civilization textbooks on western Europe plus Russia has become “a pedagogical convenience.” The rise of the Solidarity Trade Union and the fall of communism did not bring about a radical change in the situation. Meanwhile, since September 11, 2001, American attention has shifted away from Europe to the history of the non-Western world. Optimism about the future of East Central Europe in American historiography expressed in an article published ten years ago has proven unfounded.121

A survey of recently published textbooks finds that none provide a sustained narrative of Polish history. Instead, Poland appears in history “from time to time,” as a student observed decades ago. It appears in connection with influences emanating from western Europe, as during the Enlightenment, but even then the Commission of National Education is not likely to be mentioned. It appears when events in Poland are part of a general European phenomenon, as in 1830, but not necessarily in 1848. Poland receives the greatest attention when it

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is a flashpoint of history as in the 1980s, but even then one cannot expect the complex story of the origins of Polish events to be recounted. Milestones in Polish history, such as the Constitution of May 3, the Duchy of Warsaw, the insurrections of 1846 and 1863, the Polish-Soviet War, the underground resistance during World War II, the Katyn Forest massacre, and the Warsaw Uprising, often go unmentioned or receive no more than passing reference without any indication of their significance for the course of Polish history.

What is to be done? Only long-term “organic work” can hope to move Poland from the margins of American historiography of Europe closer to the center of its attention. The participation of historians in Poland is vital to any such effort. Despite all the publications in English about Poland in the last two decades, coverage of many aspects of Polish history in English remains thin or nonexistent. For example, when an American specialist in French history who is writing a book on Napoleon asked me to suggest works on Napoleon and the Poles in English, I could recommend only a dissertation on the Duchy of Warsaw by a Canadian historian. To help correct the inadequate coverage of Polish history in English, historians in Poland should submit articles for publication to American journals dealing with European history, such as the *Journal of Modern History*. In 1980 the Polish Historical Association initiated the publication of Polish historical works in western European languages in a series entitled “The Polish Historical Library” under the editorship of Marian Biskup. A revival of this series would greatly contribute to the Polish historical literature accessible to American historians. Thanks to modern technology not available in 1980, the world-wide-web (www) provides a relatively easy and inexpensive way of working towards the same goal. The Polish Historical Association should create a website with English translations of the most important documents and primary sources in Polish history. Such a website would provide American teachers with materials to assign for student research projects. It might also afford an opportunity for the Polish Historical Association to establish contact with the relatively small number of Americans who specialize in Polish history. The Polish Historical Association should support their efforts to promote Polish history in America and recognize their contributions to Polish historiography.

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Because of the marginal position of Poland in American historiography, Poles who look to the American public, including American historians of modern Europe, for sympathy and understanding are very likely to be disappointed. Unless the place of Poland in American historiography improves, for Americans Poland will become the land of King Ubu, that is, the “Królestwo Nigdzie.”