

A note on biography

Marceli Handelsman was born in 1882, in a Polish Jewish family. In 1900, he graduated summa cum laude from the 5th Secondary School for Boys. Between 1900 and 1904 he studied at the Faculty of Law of the Imperial University of Warsaw and was awarded a golden medal for his master's thesis. He most likely chose law for pragmatic reasons. Handelsman was keen on history already then, but law was supposed to guarantee him a profession and work that was extremely hard to find in the times of intensive Russification.

Already while a law student, Handelsman attended lectures in History, which helped him pursue his interests. He gained the knowledge that he could not acquire at university by reading, inquisitiveness, and hard work. After graduation, he pursued his career in law at his uncle Marek Kuratow's law firm. Ultimately, he chose scientific work in history. A month later, he left to study in Berlin, where he attended lectures in History, Literature, Philosophy and Social Anthropology.

As revolutionary fighting in Poland was becoming increasingly fierce in 1905, Handelsman decided to return to his homeland to join in the anti-tsar efforts. During his visit to Poland he delivered lectures i.a. in General History. His stay in Poland did not last long. Persuaded by his friends, Handelsman returned to Berlin to continue his studies, yet by no means did he give up his political activity. Apart from lecturing, he educated the Polish workers in the Polish Socialist Party [PPS]. He was active in party publications and for a few months, he was the editor of *Gazeta Chłopska* [The Peasants' Gazette]. In the aftermath of political problems, he was expelled from Prussia in 1906.

After he left Berlin, he went to Paris, where he ultimately gave up political activism and led a scholarly life. He continued his studies at École nationale des chartes and Collège de France. There, under the guidance of Gabriel Monod, he wrote his doctoral dissertation entitled

Napoléon et la Pologne 1806, which he published in Paris, but successfully submitted in 1909 under the guidance of Gerard Meyer von Knonau, during his short stay in Zurich. He stayed in Paris until 1912, when he decided to return to Poland. In autumn, he became a lecturer in general history at the Society for Educational Courses in Warsaw. He resumed his activity at the Warsaw Scientific Society [TNW] that he had joined in 1908. In 1915, he took the position of lecturer in Modern History at the University of Warsaw, where he stayed until the outbreak of the war in 1939 and where he was awarded full professorship. Between 1930 and 1931, he advocated the establishment of the Institute of History and became its director.

Handelsman was also active beyond the University of Warsaw. For several years, he expertly combined his teaching skills and scientific passion. He consolidated his position as a scientist both in Poland and abroad. He was an active member of the Society of the Friends of History, where he held the post of editor of *Przegląd Historyczny* [Historical Review] (1918-1939), and of the Warsaw Scientific Society [TNW]. Between 1925 and 1939, he was delegated by the Polish Historical Society to the International Committee of Historical Sciences and in 1938 was elected a member of the organizational committee of International Congresses of Historical Sciences. He was also a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences [PAU], Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in Paris, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London, Royal Scientific Society in Prague, Institute of Slavonic Studies in Prague, Royal Historical Society in London, Centre International de Synthèse in Paris and the honorary member of the Hungarian Historical Society. He was also a member of the Management Board of Société d'Histoire Moderne in Paris, the originator of the Federation of Historical Societies of Eastern Europe and the editor of the Federation's journal.

Handelsman's activity was by no means restricted to science and teaching alone. His interests went much further than that; he was involved in Poland's political and cultural life. He chaired Towarzystwo Badań Zagadnień Międzynarodowych [Society for Research into International Affairs]. He was also a co-founder and deputy president of the Institute of Nationality Studies (1921). In 1937, he co-founded the Democratic Club in Warsaw, and a year later – the Alliance of Democrats [SD].

Conscious of the risk and danger of death, Handelsman stayed in Warsaw after the outbreak of the war and only left in 1941 together with his wife. Under an alias of Maciej Targowski, he settled down in Podkowa Leśna and next in Milanówek. He continued to take an active part in the scholarly life. He liaised with the Home Army Office of Information and Propaganda and held classes for a small group of students within the clandestine university. In

this period, he also began his work on Adam Czartoryski's biography. The manuscript was brought to safety during the war and published by Stefan Kieniewicz in the period 1948–1950.

On 14 July 1944, Handelsman was arrested and imprisoned first in Radom and later in Częstochowa. He was then taken to the Gross-Rosen camp. In February 1945, the prisoners were transported to Nordhausen, where Handelsman died on the eve of the camp's liberation, around 20 March 1945.

About the book

Historyka by Marceľi Handelsman was written for teaching and methodological purposes as there was no simple textbook for students of history on the methodology and theory of historiography. Hence, it was designed to fit with the history syllabus applicable at that time, and was used in teaching methodology for several years as a textbook and a fundamental methodological source. The material was intended to walk the reader through all topics, from the simplest ones, through more difficult, to the most complex issues.

The first part, consisting of a general introduction to key and basic notions, was explained in a straightforward and transparent manner to make it understandable both for students in the first years of their studies in history and for amateurs. The author begins with the notion of history and presents to the reader the subject matter of historical research, tasks, types and methodology. He outlines the notion of history itself, the scope of history, and its place among other sciences.

Further on, the author explains fundamental notions in heuristic methods, source criticism, hermeneutics, study, and lecture. He introduces the readers to a number of critical activities intended to make their work more efficient. Apart from explaining basic notions and issues, the author also provides practical tips to improve the student's work. Handelsman begins with key issues, for example, how to prepare for a library search. Next, he walks the reader through the methods of using sources, research into the sources, their dates and analysis. Finally, he elaborates on the study, structuring and preparation of the materials for publication, as well as on the principles and types of a historical lecture. The last part of the publication in the form of a theoretical treaty is an attempt to scientifically encompass the principles of historical cognition and is dedicated to students of senior years or experienced researchers, who have already developed a methodological basis.

All chapters and subchapters are accompanied by abundant bibliography, at present mainly of historical importance, but at the time of publication providing a rich source of subject literature. Although the book was published several decades ago, it continues to be irreplaceable and up-to-date in many respects.

Impact on historiography

Historyka by Marcei Handelsman is the only work written in the interwar period which provides a holistic overview of the theoretical and methodological issues related to history. For four decades, the publication was the fundamental academic textbook and a certain expression of the official position of the Polish historical circles as regards methodology. Handelsman's work can be considered to be a recapitulation of his long-time research work and experience amassed throughout his academic career.

Handelsman's myriad life experience definitely had a great effect on the shape of his methodological mindset. As one of the very few scholars in his times, he had the opportunity to obtain a multicultural education, which enabled him to gain insight into multifarious views of historiography. He acquired extensive experience as a researcher in various fields. He did not restrict himself to just one area; he was more interested in merging various issues. As a result, he had a broader perspective of methodology and the ability of an in-depth reflection. From the very beginning of his career at the University of Warsaw, he taught classes in methodology. He looked at them as an opportunity to study together with his students rather than as an obligation. He wrote on numerous occasions that lots of his reflections and thoughts dawned on him while he was preparing for classes. This proves that *Historyka* is a result of long-time in-depth reflections and research throughout Handelsman's entire career.

The author's main aim was to bridge the gap in literature, as well as to expand and establish the historical awareness in the new generation of researchers. His perseverant and long-time analysis yielded comprehensive methodological reflection and made it possible to build a consistent system of views which he used in further research. For his own needs, he also created a glossary of terms used in his further scientific work. The work was created in stages, as Handelsman's thoughts evolved; its scope was subject to change over the two published editions. A comparison of both publications indicates that Handelsman's methodological thought advanced throughout his entire career. The first edition of *Historyka* was meant to be a textbook in order to structure the methodological knowledge in a way making it possible for the student to gradually become immersed in the craft. The issues were lined up from the simplest to the more difficult ones. Each mentioned issue is backed by numerous examples from the author's research and experience of the leading Polish historians of those times. The second edition, with an added extensive chapter, a few subchapters and new bibliography, was not only intended to be a textbook for students, but also for experienced researchers. Handelsman's work also includes extensive bibliography, at present definitely of historical

importance, but at the time of publication providing an abundant source of subject literature. In his search, Handelsman made use not only of Polish subject literature, but also of German, French, American, and English sources. He followed his foreign colleagues' scientific achievements in his field on an ongoing basis.

Several issues referred to by Handelsman were discussed accurately and in detail (unfortunately, not all of them to the degree that he would wish). Nevertheless, over the next 40 years, Handelsman's work remained the only publication outlining the theoretical fundamentals of history from the Polish point of view. This critical and extensive topic was not to be elaborated upon for many years to come.