Summary

Krzysztof Skubiszewski
Poznanian – Professor – Statesman

The biography portrays Professor Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who was born in Poznań and remained closely associated with the city throughout his life. An eminent scholar and world expert in international law, he served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in Poland's first non-communist government and in three successive governments, and as President of the Iran–United States Claims Tribunal. The book highlights his personal refinement, elegance, exceptional work ethic, and qualities that shaped his stature as a scholar, statesman, and distinguished European political figure.

The book consists of eight chapters covering different stages of Krzysztof Skubiszewski's life and highlighting the principal areas of his activity. The introduction presents the current state of research on his life, work, and achievements, and identifies the primary sources on which this biography is based. Given the intention to explore his ties with Adam Mickiewicz University, these sources consist primarily of records preserved in the University Archives, as well as personal papers deposited with the Zygmunt Wojciechowski Institute for Western Affairs and the Poznań Branch of the Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The book concludes with a chronologically arranged bibliography of Krzysztof Skubiszewski's publications.

The chapter "The Road to the University" examines Krzysztof Skubiszewski's formative years, focusing on his family back-

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ground, childhood, education, and wartime experiences. Born in Poznań into the family of Professor Ludwik Skubiszewski and Aniela Leitgeber, he grew up in an environment shaped by intellectual curiosity, patriotism, and a profound respect for education and public service. The chapter demonstrates the importance of family traditions, cultural heritage, and the atmosphere of interwar Poznań in shaping his character, values, and future life choices. It also reconstructs the wartime fate of the Skubiszewski family, including their displacement from Poznań, life under occupation, and the educational difficulties caused by the war. Particular attention is devoted to Krzysztof Skubiszewski's participation in clandestine education in Warsaw, his subsequent education and secondary-school graduation in Biała Podlaska, and the impact of wartime experiences on his later life and that of his family. The chapter concludes with the family's return to devastated Poznań in 1945 and Krzysztof Skubiszewski's commencing his law studies, which marked the starting point of his academic career.

The next chapter, entitled "At the University", traces Krzysztof Skubiszewski's academic career at Poznań University, from his enrolment as a law student in 1945 to his attainment of professorial rank. It examines the intellectual formation of the young scholar, whose interest in public international law developed during his studies, particularly under the influence of Professors Bohdan Winiarski and Alfons Klafkowski, successive heads of the Chair of International Law. The chapter discusses his early scholarly achievements as well as his teaching and organisational activities at the Faculty of Law. Particular attention is devoted to his extensive contacts with foreign academic institutions, including studies, research, lectures, and conferences at leading European and American universities. These experiences strengthened his scholarly reputation and secured his standing in the field of international law. At the same time, the chapter

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reconstructs the political constraints on his academic career in communist Poland, including restrictions on foreign travel, difficulties in publishing scholarly works, and delays in academic promotion. These difficulties, however, did not weaken his scholarly independence or academic integrity. His university years are presented as the period in which Krzysztof Skubiszewski helped to shape and develop the Poznań school of international law, whose achievements have enduring significance.

The subsequent chapter examines the period following Krzysztof Skubiszewski's move from the University to the Institute of Legal Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It analyses the academic and political circumstances of this transition and shows how the new institutional environment enabled him to broaden the scope of his research and boost its international impact. This period was marked by exceptional scholarly activity and growing international recognition, accompanied by increasing involvement in public affairs during the final decades of communist Poland. Particular attention is devoted to his work in the Primate's Social Council and the Consultative Council to the Chairman of the Council of State, within which he brought his extensive legal expertise to discussions on constitutional reform and the rule of law. His activities on behalf of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" are presented as an expression of civic responsibility and concern for the state and civil society. Throughout this period, Krzysztof Skubiszewski maintained his independence from party structures and remained faithful to the values that guided his life and work. His years at the Polish Academy of Sciences are presented as a transitional stage between his academic career and his subsequent political career, particularly his role in building and developing a new Polish foreign policy as Minister of Foreign Affairs in four successive governments after 1989.

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The analysis then turns to Krzysztof Skubiszewski's scholarly achievements and his contribution to developing the Polish school of public international law. His extensive body of work is presented as a coherent research programme combining methodological precision, intellectual originality, and practical significance. Four principal areas of research are identified: the relationship between international and domestic law; the prohibition of the use of force and collective security; the role of international organisations in the development of international law; and the legal aspects of Polish-German relations after the Second World War. Across these fields, Krzysztof Skubiszewski consistently combined rigorous legal analysis with an awareness of the practical importance of international law for peace, stability, and state sovereignty. His scholarship reflected Poland's national interests while remaining firmly rooted in universal principles of international law and independent of ideological pressures. The chapter also demonstrates that some of his pioneering concepts indicated major directions in the development of international legal scholarship and had a significant influence on its codification and further development.

A particularly important place is occupied by Krzysztof Skubiszewski's activities as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1989 to 1993. He is portrayed as a non-partisan expert and statesman, who based Polish foreign policy on the foundations of international law and the raison d'etat. Among his most important achievements were securing the final confirmation of the Oder–Neisse border in the treaty with Germany and negotiating the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Polish territory.

He laid the foundations for Poland's integration into European structures through the country's membership in the Council of Europe while also expanding regional ties within the Visegrád Group and the Weimar Triangle. As part of Poland's new treaty

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policy with other states, he also proved instrumental in bringing about the signing of the Concordat with the Holy See.

His political independence, and subsequent participation in four governments, helped preserve the continuity of Polish foreign policy during the period of systemic transformation. The overriding principle guiding his actions was raison d'etat. It was for this reason that in 1993, motivated by concern for the political stability of the state, he withdrew his candidacy for the position of judge at the International Court of Justice, despite enjoying broad support and possessing the highest qualifications for the office.

The chapter "Architect of Change" focuses on Professor Skubiszewski's role in establishing the foundations of the binding force of international law within the legal order of democratic Poland and in recognising human rights and the international rule of law as the overarching principles of Polish foreign policy. In both of these areas, the value of combining Professor Skubiszewski's exceptional achievements as an eminent scholar of international law with his experience as foreign minister during Poland's transition to independence and democracy is particularly evident. The analysis highlights not only his theoretical and legislative proposals but also his impact on practice. A practical illustration of the binding force of international law within the domestic legal order is the landmark ratification of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. On the issue of human rights and the rule of law, emphasis is placed on the influence of Professor Skubiszewski and Polish diplomacy under his leadership on the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 and on establishing the post of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The next chapter examines Krzysztof Skubiszewski's international activities following the completion of his political mission as Minister of Foreign Affairs. His transition from government

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service to international adjudication is presented as a natural continuation of his lifelong commitment to the development of the doctrine of international law. Particular attention is devoted to his decision in 1993 to withdraw his candidacy for the International Court of Justice, despite broad international support, placing the national interest above his personal ambitions. The narrative then turns to his work at the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, where he first served as a judge and President of a Chamber and subsequently as President of the Tribunal. Characterised by intellectual independence, methodological precision, and respect for international law, his judicial approach reflected the combination of his academic and diplomatic experience. The chapter also considers his continued involvement in international scholarly and professional organisations and his contribution to the development of international law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. His work in The Hague is presented as the culmination of decades of scholarly, teaching, and public service. The chapter concludes by emphasising Krzysztof Skubiszewski's lasting international authority as a scholar, diplomat, and international judge.

The biography concludes with an account of the honours and recognition bestowed on Krzysztof Skubiszewski both during his lifetime and after his death. These distinctions reflected his outstanding scholarly achievements as well as his contribution to Polish foreign policy and the development of international law. The text presents his most important decorations, honorary doctorates, memberships in prestigious academic institutions and learned societies, and professional awards. It also discusses numerous initiatives undertaken after his death to preserve and promote his legacy, particularly scholarly lectures and conferences devoted to his memory, as well as publications concerning his life and work. Particular attention is given to the lasting significance of his scholarly achievements

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for research on public international law and the history of Polish diplomacy. His public service is likewise presented as a lasting example of integrity, professionalism, and commitment to protecting the Polish state's national interest. The chapter affirms Krzysztof Skubiszewski's permanent standing among the most distinguished Polish scholars, diplomats, and statesmen of the twentieth century.

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