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**Abstract:**

The text addresses the evolution of Polish handbooks on the general part of private law, which were published in the interwar period and throughout the second half of the 20th century. It builds on the history of “Civil law. General part”, a handbook initially authored by Aleksander Wolter and subsequently amended and updated by Jerzy Ignatowicz and Krzysztof Stefaniuk. With its newest edition (of 2017), it is the longest-standing handbook on Polish private law, which has been in use for almost 70 years. The handbook has been used not only for academic teaching purposes, but also as a sophisticated and in-depth handbook on the general part of civil law (and the civil law as such). The text attempts to sketch an “intellectual biography” of the handbook, against the backdrop of legal literature of that era. In particular, it attempts to allocate A. Wolter’s handbook vis-à-vis the underlying question, whether and to what extent the handbooks on the general part of civil law should be shaped purely as teaching materials or as more substantial “research handbooks”, which present the core principles and the core conceptual and methodological premises of the discipline. In so doing, the text attempts to understand how the choice of a deeper and more elaborate structure of the handbook, made in mid-1950s by A. Wolter and preserved in the next editions of the book, was contingent on the specific way of the development of Polish civil law throughout the 20th century. Finally, the article attempts to map the current role of the handbook in the landscape of Polish civil law and to assess its topicality for the current developments in the methodology of research.