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FRANCISZEK CEMKA – A FRIEND AND ADVOCATE OF MUSEOLOGY

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Abstract: On 12 October 2018, Jan Franciszek Cemka passed away. Born in Tuchola in 1946, he was an archaeologist, graduate from the Department of Philosophy and History of the University of Lodz, an expert on museology, a civil servant, Director of the Museum Department, and later of the Department of National Heritage at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, a Minister's adviser, mentor of young administration officials.

Resorting to his expertise, Director Franciszek Cemka actively participated in the transformation processes of Polish

museology, e.g. he coordinated the implementation of the *Archaeological Photo of Poland* Project; as an expert, he co-authored the Act on Museums of 1996; he also contributed to organizing the International Auschwitz Council. As the head of the Ministry Department for Museums in Poland, he actively participated in numerous bodies related to this sphere of culture. Moreover, he authored many papers on museology published in professional periodicals. For his longstanding work and civil service, Franciszek Cemka was given many state and professional decorations.

Keywords: Franciszek Cemka (1946–2018), Museum Department at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, director, museology, expert, council.

I had the privilege of meeting Director Franciszek Cemka at the Ministry of Culture in 2002. Though I was not employed by the Department he headed, he actually agreed to be the tutor of my written project crowning my preparatory service to become a civil servant. In the course of our encounters I found him an extremely open individual, always eager to share his expertise and experience gathered in the course of the years of working with the institutions or offices related to that extremely important for our identity 'sector of culture that museology is. His openness and selfless desire to assist in solving many complex issues, both from within museology and everyday work of a civil servant, dominate in the reminiscences of all those who used to know the Director.

Born in Tuchola on 5 October 1946, Franciszek Jan Cemka never forgot his Kashubian descent, and painstakingly cherished his bond with his little homeland by serving e.g. as a member of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, and chairing its Warsaw branch in 1991–2001. Having graduated from a Tuchola Comprehensive Secondary School

(today Bartłomiej Nowodworski School) in 1964, he began studies at the Department of Philosophy and History of the University of Lodz, and was conferred the Master of Arts degree in Polish and universal archaeology in 1970. Until his last days he remained loyal to the friends he had made during his university years. Still as a student, he started working at the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography in Lodz. He subsequently worked for the Lodz Office of Research and Documentation of Monuments, where he was involved in museum supervision.

The next stage in Franciszek Cemka's career, started in 1974 and lasting until his retirement, was work for the Ministry of Culture and Art in the Board of Museums and Monument Protection, the Museum Department used to be a section of. With the transformation occurring throughout the 1980s and 90s, the need for change, also within museology, could be felt; museums were finding it hard to stand the competition of e.g. promptly commercializing media, offering a gradually easier to absorb entertainment. At

the request of Minister Izabela Cywińska Franciszek Cemka set down to establishing an independent museum department, following which Marek Rostworowski appointed him Director of the Museum Department which continues to operate in the Ministry as the Department of Cultural Heritage. The next manifestation that museology was appreciated could be seen in the works on the Act on Museums adopted in 1996 Director Cemka co-authored as an outstanding expert perfectly feeling the 'pulse of museum life'. In its core, the Act continues the main piece of legislation for the legal framework of museum's operations in Poland.

The Ministry was not the only domain of Franciszek Cemka's activity. Still in the 1980s, he completed his Post-Graduate Studies in International Service, as well as attended a language course at the Goethe Institute in Rothenburg. Furthermore, he dealt with organizing the conservation archaeological service, and coordinated the Project called the Archaeological Picture of Poland. Cooperating with Władysław Bartoszewski, he participated in the organizing of the International Auschwitz Council, and headed the Organizational Committee to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

As the head of the Ministry department dealing with museums in Poland, he boasted just the adequate background to actively participate in different bodies related to this sphere of culture. And so Director Cemka was member of e.g. ICOM, Council of the Museums of Sports and Tourism in Warsaw, honorary member of the Association of Open Air Museums; he also chaired the works of the Council of the Museum of Folk Musical Instruments in Szydłowiec, and participated in the Council of the Eryk Lipiński Museum of Caricature in Warsaw. In 2000–06, Franciszek Cemka represented the Ministry on the 'Muzealnictwo' Annual Editorial Board.

Moreover, it is thanks to Director Cemka that the cooperation with the Permanent Conference of Museums, Libraries and Archives in the West was established. He also participated as an expert in the Sejm Committee dealing with, e.g. the continuously topical issue of reprivatizing museum exhibits from state-owned collections. Furthermore, he authored numerous papers published in professional periodicals, e.g. 'Muzealnictwo', 'Wiadomości Konserwatorskie', 'Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie', 'Rocznik Muzeum Okręgowego w Zielonej Górze', 'Sprawozdania z Badań Wykopaliskowych', as well as in dailies: 'Gazeta Wyborcza', 'Życie Warszawy', 'Dziennik Łódzki' and the 'Der Spiegel' weekly.

Throughout his very last years at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Franciszek Cemka worked as an advisor to the Minister.

Franciszek Cemka's work and service in the care of Polish cultural heritage were awarded with numerous honours: the Golden Cross of Merit, Silver Cross of Merit, Bronze Medal of the 'Gloria Artis Medal of Merit to Culture', Medal of



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the Commission of National Education, Golden Badge of Merit 'For Safeguarding Monuments', Golden Medal for Longstanding Service, Badge of Merit 'To Distinguished Culture Activist', Golden Medal 'Of Merit for National Defence', and the Medal of the 50th Anniversary of the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association.

Despite having retired, Franciszek Cemka continued serving with his expertise, and actively participated in cultural life, particularly in as far as museology was concerned. He could be seen during various previews or at such events as the annual prize awarding gala of the Sybil Museum Event of the Year. My last encounter with Director Cemka took place in Warsaw's Krakowskie Przedmieście Street in August 2018. Although ailing due to his illness, he was as great an optimist as ever. Regrettably, on 12 October 2018, Polish museology lost its great friend and advocate, who was buried at Warsaw's Powązki Military Cemetery.

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Also the conversation I had with Mrs Jolanta Cemka, for which I express my sincere gratitude.

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Table of contents 2019: <https://muzealnictworocznik.com/issue/11897>