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JACEK MILER 1964–2018. AN ART HISTORIAN WHO BECAME A CIVIL SERVANT

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Abstract: On 21 December 2018, Jacek Miler passed away; an art historian, he was professionally involved with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage from 1993. Born on 18 March 1964 in Warsaw, he studied history of church art at the Academy of Catholic Theology (ATK). It was in July 1993 that he started working for the Office of the Plenipotentiary of Poland's Government for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad at the Ministry of Culture and Art. Five years later he became Head of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary, as of 2000 serving as its Deputy Director. In 2001–2002, he served as the Minister's Plenipotentiary to establish the Juliusz Słowacki Museum in Kremets, Ukraine. From 2006 he headed the Department of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, while in 2008–2016 the Department of Cultural Heritage. In 2016, he became Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses, the post he held until his death.

Working over 25 years within the changing organizational structures of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, he actively contributed to the protection of Polish cultural heritage beyond Poland and the restitution of Polish art works lost during WW II. He co-created museums dedicated to illustrious Poles: to Juliusz Słowacki in Kremets, and to Joseph Conrad – Józef Korzeniowski in Berdychiv, both in Ukraine, as

well as to Witold Gombrowicz in Vence, France. He focused on the provision of the institutional system of the preservation of Polish cultural heritage, involving in elaborating donation programmes: *Protection of the Cultural Heritage Abroad*, *Memorial Sites Abroad*, *Investigation of Polish Wartime Losses*, as well as in the establishment of the permanent support to Polish émigré institutions protecting national heritage assets. He participated in the legislative process of the Act on the Restitution of National Cultural Assets of 25 May 2017 and the Act of 12 April 2018 on the Amendments to the Act on Organizing Cultural Activity whose provisions allow to support cultural institutions founded abroad by Polish migrants. As of the mid-1990s, he was involved in the works of numerous committees and expert teams dealing with the protection of shared cultural heritage, e.g. Polish-Belarusian Consultancy Committee on National Heritage, Intergovernmental Polish-Ukrainian Committee for the Protection and Return of Goods Lost and Illegally Displaced during WW II, and the Polish-Lithuanian Group of Experts for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

For his outstanding merits for the protection of Polish cultural heritage he was awarded many state honours, medals and prizes, this both during his lifetime and posthumously.

Keywords: Jacek Miler (1964–2018), restitution of cultural assets, preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad, émigré institutions, National Memorial Sites abroad.

On 21 December 2018, Jacek Miler passed away; an art historian, he had been related to the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The sad news, released by Jacek Miler's beloved ones, promptly spread among those who had been his acquaintances: class mates and university mates, co-workers, and those who over the last quarter of a century

had had an opportunity to cooperate with him in the area of the preservation of cultural heritage in Poland and beyond. The gentle comforting words addressed to Jacek's loved ones were interwoven with respect and admiration for Jacek Miller who for many was embodiment of a knowledgeable, responsible, and effective civil servant.



Photo D. Matloch, MKiDN

Born on 18 March 1964 in Warsaw, he studied history of church art at the Department of Historical and Social Sciences at Warsaw's Academy of Catholic Theology, ATK (currently the Cardinal Wyszyński University, UKSW). It was in 1993 that he started working for the Office of the Plenipotentiary of Poland's Government for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, from 1991 forming part of the structures of the Ministry of Culture and Art. Most likely he did not suspect this would be the job for the rest of his life.

The Office of the Plenipotentiary of Poland's Government for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad was after the 1989 transformation the first state institution whose tasks included initiating and coordinating activities related to the preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad, such as: registering movable and immovable cultural assets related to Poland, yet being outside Poland's border as a result of war looting, change in national identification of certain territories, and illegal export; organizing of search for lost Polish cultural assets and undertaking restitution activities; documentation of Polish cultural property abroad; organizing and providing assistance in order to preserve and conserve cultural heritage assets; commemoration of outstanding individuals or historic events related to Polish cultural heritage abroad; assistance to émigré organizations and institutions preserving Polish cultural heritage;

cooperation with the Head Office of State Archives as for the preservation of Polish archival records abroad and potential vindications; and finally promoting knowledge of Polish cultural heritage remaining outside Poland.

The small team of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary that Jacek Miler joined had two basic tasks to accomplish: to make a list of cultural goods lost as a result of WW II and to identify their preservation state, to register them and prioritize goals in relation to preservation and conservation of the tangible cultural heritage, in the first place in the former eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth/the Second Polish Republic.

Although back then almost half a century had passed since the end of WW II, Poland did not have as yet a relatively comprehensive register of the losses suffered by museums, libraries, archives, public institutions, religious associations, and private individuals. In 1944–51, there operated the Office for Wartime Restitution and Reparations (BRIOW) which over a relatively short period of time collected substantial documentation. With time, however, no more attempts were made to have the objects returned, and documentation works were halted. When in 1991 the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad was established, works were begun with the recreation of the documentation put together by BRIOW, which at the time proved dispersed and partially destroyed, and with creating the first computer database, registering cultural assets lost following WW II from Poland's territory within its borders after 1945 (the bases were improved over the years, and were gradually made available online).

It was soon realized, however, that works on documenting wartime losses had to be launched almost from scratch, and information needed to be collected anew; at the same time, in the case of the objects that were identified, and whose whereabouts were ascertained, material had to be prepared for first restitution applications (sets of documents that required pointing to the object's unequivocal provenance, that had to describe the circumstances of its loss, and firstly to prove the ownership title).

The main tasks of Jacek Miler, who also supported works of the team dealing with wartime losses, among others through the preliminary research both in Poland and abroad, included activities connected with the preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad. In order to thoroughly become acquainted with the cultural heritage objects of the former Polish territories, Jacek Miler together with his co-workers organized field trips, and there he established contacts with the owners and administrators of the objects, as well as with representatives of the local authorities. He quite promptly started up cooperation with scientific centres and institutions interested in the research into and preservation of Polish cultural heritage remaining outside Poland.

From the very beginning he participated in the talks with Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine, which led to the Government's Plenipotentiary for the Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad negotiating agreements and bilateral contracts with respective plenipotentiaries of the governments of those countries. Appropriate provisions included in the relevant documents allowed to create mixed commissions. In compliance with the concluded agreements, the Office of the Polish Government's Plenipotentiary participated in

the documentation, conservation, and rehabilitation of the cultural heritage objects that are located beyond Poland's eastern border.

The documentation works aimed first of all at localizing and inventorying of Polish cultural heritage objects and those related to Poland. Collecting information was possible thanks to preliminary researches in archives, libraries, and in iconography resources, field inventorying, and cooperation with institutions and private individuals in Poland and abroad. Thanks to Jacek Miler's commitment it was possible to e.g. finance inventory works conducted as part of the project whose effects were systematically released in the volumes published in subsequent years containing detailed inventory of historic buildings: *Materials for the History of Sacral Art in the Eastern Territories of the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* edited by Prof. Jan K. Ostrowski. The works of Polish scientists and students of the history of art departments restored the memory of thousands of historic buildings, many of them for the first time being introduced into academic circulation.

In 1998, Jacek Miler became the Head of the Eastern Department in the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad. This coincided with the real opportunity to launch works aimed at creating the Museum of Juliusz Słowacki in Kremets, Ukraine. With the Office's financing, a preliminary documentation on the planned rehabilitation of the old manor of the Słowacki family was prepared in 1998. However, it was only in early 1999, in the course of the preparation for the celebration of the 190th anniversary of Juliusz Słowacki's birth and the 150th anniversary of his death that representatives of the governments of Poland and Ukraine concluded a preliminary agreement related to the building and creating Słowacki's museum there. In 1999, the Polish party could start implementing the works. The contractor: Energopol-Trade S.A. was selected. In compliance with the contract concluded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage with the Polish Community Association covering the author's and investor's supervision, respective stages of the works were jointly commissioned. Parallel to rehabilitation works, preparation of the display of the future museum was conducted from mid 2000, the latter entrusted to the Polish Writers' Association and Warsaw's Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature. By that time, Jacek Miler had already been appointed Deputy Director of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary.

As of October 2001 the tasks of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, at the time liquidated, were taken over by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. Given a simultaneous drastic cut in financing for various forms of preservation of cultural heritage abroad, the decision had an unfavourable impact on the activities planned for the purpose.

The staff teams of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary dealing with wartime losses and preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad were incorporated into the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MKiDN), at first into the structures of the Department of National Heritage and Historical Monument Preservation, and slightly later, following yet another restructuring, into the Department of National Heritage (DDN). Despite financial limitations, it was possible to undertake or continue rehabilitation and

conservation works in Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Latvia. Moreover, also documentation and inventorying of cultural heritage objects, including civil graves and cemeteries, were continued. Not only did the Section for Eastern Territories within the Department of National Heritage headed by Jacek Miler supervise the above-mentioned projects, but they also actively contributed to preparing academic conferences, courses, summer schools, exhibitions, and publications dedicated to the topics related to Polish Cultural Heritage abroad, also dealing with the publication of subsequent volumes of their own titles that had been launched within the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary: *Polish Culture Losses and Shared Heritage Series*.

Of special importance were the already-mentioned complex works related to the renovation, conservation, and refurbishing of the old manor of the Słowackis in Kremets conducted by DDN, and the establishment of the Juliusz Słowacki Museum there. It was all along the preparations, and later implementation, that Jacek Miler directly supervised the Kremets Project financed by the Ministry of Culture. In February 2001, he was appointed the Minister of Culture's Plenipotentiary to create the Juliusz Słowacki Museum. The institution's ceremonious opening was held on 21 September 2004.

At the time when the Juliusz Słowacki Museum in Kremets was being prepared, as of the mid-1990s works were conducted to create the Museum of Joseph Conrad – Józef Korzeniowski, the latter to be located on the premises of the Discalced Carmelite in Berdychiv, Ukraine, within the Berdychiv Fortress. The instigator of the project was Prof. Zdzisław Najder and the Polish Conrad Society supported by its counterpart Conrad Societies from Great Britain and France. With the participation of the Office of the Government's Plenipotentiary for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, efforts were made to establish the institution in one of the former convent edifices. The Discalced Friars committed themselves to making available appropriate rooms for the Museum's needs and free of charge, provided the local authorities returned to them the ruined gate building. Finally, however, the Museum was not opened as planned in September 1999, this coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the writer's death. The preparations for the establishing of the Museum were interrupted for several years.

In 2003, Prof. Najder informed the Polish Ministry of Culture that in the presence of Berdychiv's Mayor a contract had been signed by the Joseph Conrad Society (UK) and the Joseph Conrad Society (USA) with the Order of the Discalced Carmelites related to establishing the Joseph Conrad Museum in the convent building that was soon to be returned to the Friars by the Zhitomir Oblast Council. Over those numerous years the issue of establishing the Museum in Berdychiv was monitored by the civil servants supervised by Jacek Miler, and when finally the project could move on, necessary steps were taken to provide its financing.

The ceremonies launching the opening of the Museum of Joseph Conrad – Józef Korzeniowski in Berdychiv took place on 3 December 2008. On the occasion, a temporary exhibition was mounted in the lower church. At the same time, the rehabilitation of the historical Convent wing meant to house the Museum and financed by MKiDN was initiated, to be concluded in 2012. The work on the display's script

and artistic layout was conducted by specialists from the Adam Mickiewicz of Literature and the Academy of Fine Arts, both in Warsaw. Although they were completed in November 2013, the ceremonious opening of the Museum was postponed due to the war activities taking place in Ukraine's territory. Finally, this institution of unique international character started operating on 28 June 2015.

Let us, however, move back to 2006. That was a turning point at which a radical change in the attitude to documenting wartime losses and to the restitutions of cultural goods as well as to the preservation of cultural heritage abroad took place. It was the ambition of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage to conduct an active policy within this area. In order to secure an appropriate coordination of all the activities, in 2006, the Department of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad was created within the structure of MKiDN, and Jacek Miler became its Director. At the same time, on the decision of the Minister of Culture, a special grant programme was launched, allowing authorized applicants to ask for financing to be allocated to the preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad. Within its framework (today it is called *Preservation of Cultural Heritage Abroad*) Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage could finance, for example, rehabilitation and conservation works on the objects located outside Poland, field research, documentation, inventorying, as well as could support the institutions active in the area of preserving Polish cultural heritage.

Upon the decision of Jacek Miler as the Director of the Department serving as the so-called institution managing the Programme, the evaluation system for tasks to be financed with the Programme budget was promptly worked out, particularly as far as conservations works on the facilities of Polish cultural heritage abroad were concerned. It consisted in monitoring and commissioning works by committees participated by Department staff and invited outside experts. What continued regularly were talks with foreign partners, particularly on intra-governmental forums of bilateral commissions with Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine, whose goals was to work out cooperation principles, and also possibilities to support beneficiaries implementing projects financed within the Minister of Culture's Programme. In the Polish-Ukrainian Intra-Governmental Commission for the preservation and return of the lost and illegally displaced cultural assets during WW II, talks were also conducted on the elaboration and making available for public viewing of the Collections of the National Ossoliński Institute (Ossolineum) kept at the Stefanyk National Science Library in Lviv. The main forum for the cooperation with Belarusians, in turn, was the Polish-Belarusian Consultation Commission for Cultural Heritage which provided communication platform for specialists in archival materials, immovable cultural heritage objects, movable cultural heritage objects, as well as in library and museology issues. As for the Lithuanian partner, the cooperation was grounded in the agreement on the preservation of cultural heritage signed in 1999 and the decisions agreed upon in the course of sessions of the Polish-Lithuanian Expert Group for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

It is becoming to mention at this point the impact of the fact that in late 2007 Jacek Miler signed the 'Memorandum of Understanding' related to the cooperation with respect

to the objects of shared cultural heritage within the Lviv Oblast (the Ukrainian Party: Vasyl Ivanovsky, Director of Management of the Preservation of Cultural Goods of the District Administration in Lviv) and in Lviv (the Ukrainian Party: Vasil Kosiv, Deputy Mayor of Lviv). The agreement reached on that occasion allowed to begin comprehensive inventory and conservation works at the Lviv Lychakiv Cemetery, conducted by Polish-Ukrainian teams. Meanwhile, when speaking of the financial resources allocated by MKiD for the purpose, of particular impact was the continuation of the rehabilitation and conservation works conducted in Lviv's Latin and Armenian Cathedrals, and the many-years' project of the restoration of the old Collegiate Church in Zhovkva. It is impossible to list all the many the facilities in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, Moldova, France, Italy, India, Switzerland...Therefore I would like to recommend the article published in the jubilee issue of 'Cenne, Bezcenne / Utracone' (Nos.1(86)-4(89)/2017), *Preservation of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad. Projects Financed with MKiDN Grants* by Jacek Miler and the Author of the present paper.

The Department of National Heritage, and earlier the Office for the Government's Plenipotentiary for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad, used to find a reliable partner in the Centre for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad headed by Prof. Ryszard Brykowski, and active from 1993 within the structure of the Polish Community Association. For Jacek Miler and his co-workers, Prof. Ryszard Brykowski (1931–2017) was one of those individuals who were the profound source of knowledge of inventorying and conservation of historical monuments as well as of cultural heritage in the territories of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The possibility to cooperate on regular basis with great experts in the field, the art historians: above-mentioned Prof. Ryszard Brykowski, Maria Kałamajska-Saeed PhD, Prof. Jan K. Ostrowski, Jerzy T. Petrus, Tadeusz Bernatowicz PhD, Andrzej Betlej PhD; the book historian and librarian studies specialist Prof. Barbara Bieńkowska; the historians: Adolf Juzwenko PhD, Jan Malicki, and Andrzej Przewoźnik, as well as monument conservators headed by Janusz Smaza PhD, professor at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts, was the guarantee that the officials responsible for supervising works financed by the Minister of Culture boasted adequate background to perform their tasks. Of major impact was the launch of cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as diplomatic and consular missions whose aid in the implementation of projects was essentially needed.

One of the projects implemented with substantial support, including financing, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Polish diplomatic missions in India was the programme aimed at saving the endangered heritage of Stefan Norblin in India's Jodhpur and Morvi. The works, coordinated by the Department of National Heritage at MKiDN, Polish Embassy, and Polish Institute in New Delhi, were financed with the grants from the *Preservation of Cultural Heritage Abroad Programme* of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. The multi-stage conservation project completed in 2017 was accompanied by exhibitions in Poland and in India, publications and video productions dedicated to the rediscovered and unknown oeuvre of Stefan Norblin, Warsaw artist who used to work for India's maharajas.

Moreover, Jacek Miler put a great emphasis on the cooperation with émigré institutions associated within the Permanent Conference of Polish Museums, Archives, and Libraries in the West, and also remaining outside that structure, such as the Literary Institute in Maisons-Laffitte. Thanks to the cooperation with e.g. the General Director of State Archives and National Library, archival preliminary research, ordering and inventorying works, as well as digitizing and conservation of the collections were conducted on a larger scale. Financing was also allocated to exhibitions and studies published by those institutions.

Around that time, DDN also began publishing its own series of books, titled: *Outside Poland*.

Furthermore, the team headed by Jacek Miler took over the coordination of issues related to documenting this part of cultural heritage which had been dispersed and lost as a result of WW II. What Jacek Miler found strong support in was the possibility to continue cooperation with Prof. Jan Pruszyński (1941–2008), an outstanding expert in the issues of cultural heritage preservation, author of the fundamental monograph *Poland's Cultural Heritage, Its Losses and Legal Protection* (2001). Stronger emphasis was at the time put on collecting data related to the wartime losses of libraries and movable art works (movable objects of cultural heritage) from the territories of Poland within its borders as of 1945. This allowed to list the losses in the written heritage and book collections, and also to expand the content of the continuously modernized computer database of wartime losses in works of art and historical mementoes lost during WW II and as its result within Poland's current borders.

The works are continued, and the activities of the Department of Wartime Losses (currently of the Department of the Restitution of Cultural Artefacts operating within the structure of the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses, MKiDN) were gradually extended to include the monitoring of the international market of art works, an in proportion to increasing digitizing, and making museum objects available online, also searching in public collections abroad. The results of the so-far works have been partially published in the catalogue of wartime losses and posted online (www.dzielautracone.gov.pl). Furthermore, also other means allowing for the restitution of the lost cultural goods have been resorted to. Currently, the Department of the Restitution of Cultural Goods closely cooperates with e.g. FBI or Interpol. In many a case, it also resorts to the help of Polish diplomatic and consular missions.

Functioning within the frequently restructuring Ministry of Culture, the Department can boast numerous spectacular successes, among which mention should be made of the return to Poland of such works as Aleksander Gierymski's *Jewess with Oranges*, Julian Fałat's *Battle Hunt at Nieśwież* and *Before the Hunt at Rytwiany*, Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowicz's *Negress*, *Francesco Guardi's Palace Stairs* (National Museum in Warsaw), Diana's bust by Jean-Antoine Houdon (Royal Łazienki Museum), *Sermone Scripti* mediaeval manuscript (National Library), two 18th-century furniture pieces Chinese style (Wilanów Palace Museum), Maksymilina Gierymski's *Winter in a Small Town* (National Museum in Cracow), ethnographic collection (Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum in Lodz), and many others.

In 2008, a new restructuring step was taken in the Ministry

of Culture. The Department of Cultural Heritage (DDK) was created, and it took over the majority of the tasks previously handled by the liquidated Department for Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad and the Department of National Heritage.

Appointed Director of the new Department, Jacek Miler was faced with really challenging issues: supervision over the activities in museology, archives, commemorations, war tombs and cemeteries, extermination memorials and their protective zones, preservation and protection of cultural heritage abroad, the latter also including the continuation of the works meant to document Poland-related items of particular importance for Polish cultural heritage, as well as movable cultural assets lost as a result of WW II, search for Polish war losses, recovery attempts, as well as the supervision of the activity of cultural heritage NGOs.

Such a wide range of DDK tasks made Jacek Miler focus first of all on those related to the institutions remaining under the factual, organizational, and financial supervision of the Minister of Culture. Among the toughest challenges he faced was to provide factual supervision over the implementation of the years' long construction of the Polish History Museum in Warsaw (bearing in mind its latest location on the premises of Warsaw's Citadel), the Museum of WW II in Gdansk (also preparation for the launch of its permanent exhibition), as well as the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów. The engagement in the above of DDK required preparation of bills of acts and other regulations that remain within the scope of responsibility of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

What did not lose prominence in the Department's activity was stronger cooperation bonding with émigré institutions. Of particular importance were the efforts Jacek Miler made to prevent the winding down of the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, regrettably still endangered due to the position taken by the local authorities threatening with discontinuing the Castle rent contract.

On behalf of MKiDN Jacek Miler also coordinated the inventory project of the Archive of the Literary Institute in Maisons-Laffitte, initiated thanks to the support of the Deputy Minister of Culture at the time Tomasz Merta. Since July 2009 the Archive has been featured in the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register. Started in June 2009, the inventorying lasted until the end of 2015, actively assisted by the 'Kultura' Literary Institute Association dealing with the heritage of Jerzy Giedroyc and his co-workers, National Library, and the Head Director of State Archives.

As the representative of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, Jacek Miler sat on the Board of the Libertas Foundation (financing the activity of the Polish Museum in Rapperswil), on the Board of the Ciechanowiecki Collection Foundation, and on the Managing Board of the project implemented by the Ministry of National Education: *Polish-German Textbook for History Teaching*. He was Deputy Chair of the Curator Council of the National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław for the 4th term of office (2011–13) and Ossolineum's Scientific Council of the 3rd term of office (2016–21), as well as of the Council of the Centre for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding.

He also managed to win the agreement to establish a new state cultural institution whose range of activities covered in particular dissemination of the knowledge of museums,

museum objects, public collections, and cultural heritage objects, as well as setting up and popularizing standards in museology and collection preservation. The National Institute for Museums and Public Collections (NIMOZ) set up with the Ordinance of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 18 February 2011, was created on the grounds of the earlier structures of the Centre for Protection of Public Collections. It was headed by Piotr Majewski PhD, earlier serving as the Deputy Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage at MKiDN.

An important aspect of the cooperation with the museologist circles was the support DDK provided to organizing the First Congress of Polish Museologists, which was held in Lodz in 2015, bringing together ca 1.200 individuals; it was convened at the instigation of the Association of Polish Museologists, Association of Open-Air Museums, ICOM Poland, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as well as NIMOZ.

At this point, let us go back several years again to emphasize what a tragic moment 10 April 2010 was for Jacek Miler and his co-workers. On that day he was present at the Katyń Polish War Cemetery, where the participants of the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Katyń Massacre had come on a special train. Andrzej Przewoźnik, Secretary of the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, and Tomasz Merta, Deputy Minister of Culture, had been at the station to see them off. The following day both boarded the plane taking the Polish delegation headed by Poland's President Lech Kaczyński, together with representatives of Katyń Families, as well as parliamentarians and clergy, to Smolensk. The horrifying news of the death of all the passengers of that tragic flight reached Jacek Miler at the Katyn Cemetery. He knew that among the casualties there was Tomasz Merta, directly supervising the activities of the Department of Cultural Heritage, an illustrious historian of political thought, an individual highly respected and considered extremely trustworthy by those who cooperated with him at the Ministry of Culture, and Andrzej Przewoźnik Jacek Miler had worked and been friends with for a very long time. For years to come he retained that notion of the loss of individuals who had been extremely sensitive and valuable, full of passion and commitment, devoted to their civil service.

In 2016, yet another restructuring took place in the Ministry of Culture. Jacek Miler ended the Director-position-stage of supervising museums by starting talks with the Ministry authorities about the future of the Prince Czartoryski Collection. For years he had been quite unequivocal claiming that the precious Collection should be purchased by the Polish state. When this idea met with the approval of the Minister of Culture Prof. Piotr Gliński, he accompanied him during the talks on the transaction. The purchase of the entire Czartoryski Collection including Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine* was completed on 29 December 2016.

That very year out of the structure of the Department of Cultural Heritage, the Division of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses was formed; initially it was to have the similar scope of responsibilities as the Department of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad that had been liquidated in 2008. It soon turned out that the scope was to be much

broader, since as of 1 August 2016 what ceased to exist was the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, and the issues related to the martyrdom sites abroad as well as the fulfilment of the international agreements with regard to cemeteries and war graves turned out to be a direct responsibility of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. Within the structure of the new Department headed by Jacek Miler, there were three factual divisions dealing respectively with: Polish cultural heritage abroad, wartime losses, as well as *national memorial sites abroad*.

The formation of the last division implied a number of new tasks, these including preparation and supervision of tender procedures related to large war cemeteries outside Poland (e.g. in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Italy, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), and coordination of the care of Polish war cemeteries and memorial sites abroad (several thousand of objects), as well as object reconnaissance, the latter two tasks in cooperation with Polish diplomatic missions. All these were the tasks that Director Miler supervised directly. The need to continue projects with outside organizations, particularly NGOs, resulted in the decision of the Minister of Culture to start as of 2017 a new National Memorial Sites Abroad Grant Programme.

This, however, was not the only financing programme started after the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses had been established. The Minister's Programme titled *Investigation of Polish Wartime Losses* became the response to the need to deepen provenance studies of artistic collections, that had for years been pointed to by the individuals cooperating with Jacek Miler, and to deal with wartime losses and the recovery of cultural heritage.

The Department under Jacek Miler also continued works on the provisions of the Act on the Restitution of the National Cultural Property, finally signed by Poland's President on 5 June 2017 (being a transposition into Polish law of the Directive 2014/60/CE of 15 May 2014 2014/60/CE 2014/60/CE on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State). New tasks emerged as resulting from the transfer of the entirety of key competences to the Minister of Culture.

In the meantime, the Department of the Restitution of Cultural Assets (formerly the Department of Wartime Losses) strengthened the monitoring of the art market in search of Polish wartime losses and the verification of digitized public collections abroad, as well as applied new means to recover the lost cultural property. Currently several dozen restitution processes are underway both in Poland and abroad.

With the course of time what became a more and more important area of the activity of that Department was promoting the topics related to the search of cultural heritage objects lost as a result of WW II. New methods and new tools appeared: not only the Department's own, continuously improved website, exhibitions or publications, but also projects conducted with outside partners, such as the *Lost Museum* enjoying unwavering popularity whose virtual collections have been available for viewing since 2010 during the cutting-edge multi-media shows prepared annually for the Long Night of Museums in Poland's largest cities (<https://muzeumutracone.pl/>).

Among the projects that the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses related to the preservation of Polish cultural heritage abroad, what

needs to be emphasized is the role that Jacek Miler played in creating the Witold Gombrowicz Museum in Vence (Espace Muséal Witold Gombrowicz à Vence). The initiative to commemorate the writer in Vence, namely in the house in which he spent the last days of his life with his wife Rita Gombrowicz (1965–69), was conceived in 2004, in the course of hosting a series of cultural events in relation to the Polish Year in France. Thanks to the contacts Jacek Miler established and the cooperation of his Department with Vence Municipality, particularly with Evelyne Temmam who became the project's great promoter, also supported by Rita Gombrowicz, with time the shared idea to commemorate the Polish writer could be implemented.

Despite a several years of an interruption, the intention was finally implemented, and on 23 September 2017, the ceremony inaugurating the Witold Gombrowicz Museum in Vence was held, climaxing the completion of the Polish-French Project to revitalize the Alexandrine Villa, and turning it into a delineated Witold Gombrowicz Museum Space: Espace Muséal. Regrettably, Jacek Miler's health condition did not allow him to attend the event.

Furthermore, Jacek Miler participated in the long-lasting endeavours and negotiations aiming at brining the heritage of the sculptor August Zamoyski (1893–1970) from France to Poland, thus preventing the dispersion of the precious collection. Until the last moments of his life, he treated this question as a priority. It was already after Jacek Miler's death that the negotiations of the purchase of the sculptures and the copyright to Zamoyski's heritage were possible; with the contract signed in January 2018, the works actually reached Warsaw in March 2019. Shortly afterwards, on 17th May, they were displayed at the National Museum in Warsaw in the 'Zamoyski: Rescued Works' Exhibition.

There was one more issue that ranked high on Jacek Miler's priority list, namely the future of émigré institutions amassing precious artistic and historical collections. The Act on Organizing and Running Cultural Activity amended in 2018 offered the possibility to extent state's patronage, so that by regular financing from the state budget the state could support Polish cultural institutions also outside the country's borders. Regrettably, Jacek Miler was not given enough time to finalize works on the principles for providing such assistance. They are being continued by his colleagues from the Department of Cultural Heritage Abroad and Wartime Losses.

Jacek Miler was perfectly aware that it was necessary for the Ministry of Culture to support a growing number of projects: in numerous countries and under changing

geopolitical circumstances, that this required new means and additional resources. It was in cooperation with him that the Author of the present paper worked on the concept of the operation of a new institution: POLONIKA National Institute of Polish Cultural Heritage Abroad established on 18 December 2017 on the decision of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage Prof. Piotr Gliński. Jacek's death put an end to almost 25-years of our work together aimed at preserving Polish cultural heritage.

When bidding farewell to Jacek Miler, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Culture Prof. Piotr Gliński said: *His extensive knowledge and vast experience, as well as extreme facility to win co-workers were always respected and appreciated, He was an outstanding expert, but an extremely likeable individual, too.* Those who appreciated working with Jacek Miler demonstrated this by accompanying his Family and friends when leading him to the place of his eternal rests at Warsaw's Powązki Military Cemetery: they were ministers and deputy ministers of culture (both those running the Ministry currently and before), colleagues from the institution he worked for all his life, but also representatives of Poland's President's Office and Polish Senate, of the Ministries: of Foreign Affairs, National Education, and of Science and Higher Education; of Warsaw Municipality, of a number of cultural institutions, museums, libraries, archives, and of universities; clergymen, diplomats, scientists, officers for the preservation of cultural heritage, representatives of NGOs and students who he shared his knowledge and experience with during the lectures at Warsaw's Cardinal Wyszyński University and the University of Warsaw.

The funeral ceremonies on 4 January 2019 began with the Holy Mass at St Charles Borromeo Church in the Old Powązki celebrated by Bishop Michał Janocha, and concelebrated by priests from Warsaw, Cracow, Vilnius, Paris, Kamianets-Podilskyi, and Ashmyany. Upon the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland, for his outstanding contribution to the preservation of Polish cultural heritage Jacek Miler was posthumously awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. In his lifetime for his work he had received the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (2013), Latvian Cross of Recognition (Atzinības krusts) of the 3rd class (2013), Golden Medal of John Paul II (2014), Silver Medal for Merit to Culture Gloria Artis (2019). Furthermore, posthumously he received the 2019 Aleksander Gieysztor Award of 'Przegląd Wschodni' for 2018.

They say no one is indispensable. Jacek Miler, an art historian who became a civil servant, however, refutes that claim.

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