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VARIA

A TORUŃ PUBLISHING HOUSE TWO DECADES LATER

by Marcei Kosman

The 18th day of June 2010 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek (WAM) publishing house. It was celebrated with a concert, entitled *20 years have passed*, attended by numerous eminent guests from the world of politics, academia and culture who filled the theater to the brim. In the foyer they could see an exhibition of photographs illustrating the rich history of the publishing house. I use the term 'publishing house' as the company fully deserves this name, which is associated with the noblest traditions of Polish editorial work. Owing to Adam Marszałek, Toruń has grown to assume the leading position in this respect, leaving in its wake both companies of long standing tradition as well as those that have emerged over the last two decades, only a handful of which have survived till the present day.

The person at the centre of the anniversary celebration did not intend to change the world, yet in 1990, at the turning point of the great transformations in Poland,¹ he could realistically see the needs of the publishing market and gradually extended the scope of his activities to go beyond

¹ For more on this subject see: M. Kosman, *Polska w drugim tysiącleciu*, Vol. II. Toruń 2007.

Poland, via his ongoing relationship with cultural and typographic circles in Beijing. These were the times when only a few properly assessed the economic potential of China. Here, Marszałek's training in political science came in handy. His proficiency in this field was crowned with a doctoral degree, awarded by the Faculty of Social Sciences at Adam Mickiewicz University.² It has equipped the awardee both with the theoretical competence and practical knowledge indispensable for a manager to be recognized in academic circles. He studied history, but wrote his doctoral dissertation on political science, as he found employment in the faculty of political science at Mikołaj Kopernik University (UMK) upon graduation with his master's degree. Having completed a six-month academic stay in Paris and defended his dissertation (1984), he decided to become self-employed and established a publishing company. While this task was not easy, he could count on support from the university circles in Toruń, and his supervisor from Poznań.³

Going back to the beginnings of the publishing house from Toruń, we have before our eyes Adam Marszałek's great predecessors, excellent Polish publishers – the Orgelbrands, the Gebethners, the Wolffs, the founders of the Trzaska – Evert – Michalski company, as well as the talented men of books from the last fifty years, some of whom were able to pull renowned publishing houses out from crisis.⁴ I treat all of them as worthy predecessors of Adam Marszałek. One cannot fail to mention Pałac Prasy (Press Palace) in Kraków, and the name of Marian Dąbrowski, as the analogies are relatively obvious. Starting before WWI with a modest, local newspaper (*Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*), in the interwar period he created

² On December 17, 1984, a public defense of Adam Marszałek's doctoral dissertation took place at the Institute of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Science at Adam Mickiewicz University. The dissertation, written under the academic supervision of Professor Czesław Mojsiewicz was entitled *Stosunki polsko-francuskie w latach 1944–1958 i ich odbicie w publicystyce polskiej* [Polish-French relations in 1944–1958 and their reflection in Polish press publications] – cf.: Czesław Mojsiewicz. *Mistrz, Wychowawca, Przyjaciel*, ed. J. Marszałek-Kawa. Toruń 2010, p. 230.

³ Ibidem, p. 78.

⁴ Who I have in mind here are the figures associated with Wydawnictwo Literackie in Kraków, Czytelnik, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Iskry in Warsaw, Ossolineum, or Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie in Wrocław.

a powerful press and publishing concern. At its peak, he employed over a thousand workers (he worked with many illustrious writers and journalists) who had excellent editorial know-how; his management of print and distribution was superb. All these things come to my mind today, when I see Adam Marszałek at conferences, mainly on political science, but not only, in Poznań, Słubice, Warsaw, Kraków, and in other places. Lively, dynamic and pro-active, he observes the book market, but he is also sought by potential clients. Assisted by a select team, he attaches great importance to elegant advertising. He is constantly on the move, wandering across continents and documenting his contacts with a camera, adding words to accompany the picture.

An account of the anniversary celebration, mentioned at the beginning, was published in issue no. 125/126 of his own promotional newspaper *Echo Świdwina* [Świdwin Echo], whose title testifies that the author maintains permanent contacts with his *little fatherland*, and his feelings are reciprocated. He remembers his old teachers fondly, to whom he has devoted separate publications after many years. On the pages of his newspaper there is room for information on his home community.

The guests who attended the anniversary were mainly authors – academics working at Polish universities, with the most prominent Professors from Mikołaj Kopernik University, including its Rector, Professor Andrzej Radzimiński, members of parliament, writers, diplomats, generals. The City Mayor awarded the “Thorunium medal” to the founder of WAM (which is the current name of the publishing house, alternatively called Marszałek Holding), in the presence of the ex-Speaker of the Polish Senate, Professor Longin Pastusiak, President of the Association of Polish Writers, Marek Wawrzkiwicz, and the authorities of the provincial assembly. Yet the most adored (and photographed!) person was the excellent actress, Grażyna Barszczewska, who is held in exceptionally high esteem by the President of WAM, as well as by many others.

In the speeches delivered during the celebration, particular attention was paid to the astonishing progress Marszałek’s work had made in just over two decades, from a small publishing company (a considerable majority of its peers lived only for a short time, others have remained quite small) to a great academic publishing house, ranking first in Poland in

terms of the number of titles published. All this has been meticulously documented, and the participants of the meeting at the Toruń theater received a beautiful edition of a nearly 500-page anniversary book entitled *20 years have passed...* It contained the documentation of how the Holding developed, the memories of scores of celebrities (mainly authors associated with WAM over many years), and letters of congratulation.⁵

What we have after twenty years, is a family-owned holding company comprising several publishing houses. This is what provides the foundation for success – a strong, solid basis for the company already involving three generations; the President was accompanied by his wife, Halina, their only daughter – Joanna (a doctor of humanities in the field of political science and an assistant professor at UMK) with her husband (Daniel Kawa), and two young ladies – Zuzanna and Marianna – who took part in the anniversary celebration⁶ and were presented with two beautiful little books published in their honor and containing laudatory poems penned by renowned authors and serious professors.⁷ Such publications are reminiscent of a noble practice from days gone by that are so rare in the present dehumanized world. Such has been the foundation of the undertaking whose development is visibly shown in the expansion of the material facilities of WAM in Toruń and nearby Łysomice.

This is how the beginning of the history of WAM were presented as penned by a political scientist, one of WAM's current mainstays: "In the late 1980s, Poland faced a great developmental opportunity. There were many ideas of how to take advantage of it. They concerned all fields of political, business and scientific life as well as culture. As it always is, economy was the foundation. The economic transformation plan sug-

⁵ *Dwadzieścia lat minęło... Księga jubileuszowa Wydawnictwa Adam Marszałek*, ed. J. Orzeł. Toruń 2010, p. 494; second, extended edition: Toruń 2010 (further on I quote the first edition and refer to it as: *Księga*).

⁶ *Marianna i Zuzanna na Jubileuszu*, "Echo Świdwina" 2010, No. 125/126, p. 16.

⁷ *Niezwykła panna Zuzanna* (Toruń 2007); *Rezolutna panna Marianna* (Toruń 2010). Each book begins with a superbly written foreword by Zygmunt Broniarek, who addresses the President's granddaughters and the achievements of his company. A significant portion of the authors are from abroad. This is an excellent opportunity to promote the Toruń-based holding company.

gested by Leszek Balcerowicz was too radical for many. It aroused fears concerning the standard of living, the future of society and individual families. It appeared, though, that there were many members of Polish society ready to take risks and support the concept of rapid changes. This support was required by and important for the whole economy.”⁸

One of the pioneers of the free market economy in culture was Adam Marszałek, thirty-six years old and an MA at the time, when he returned from his internship at the Sorbonne University in 1989. It all began when he published the material from an academic conference held at UMK that the respected university was unable to publish on its own. For this purpose he set up a company *Firma Wydawniczo-Handlowa 'MADO'* and published the book in a mere two months, although “with poor graphic design” as his daughter – and presently co-owner of the company – justifiably observes.

I can fully agree with this self-criticism as I published two books⁹ with the new publisher in his early days, and their appearance tended to be rather rough.¹⁰ This was in no way unusual though. Many quite accidental and incompetent ‘comrades in the art of print’ took up publishing activity, only to disappear from circulation quite early on. Those who remained were responsible and had a vision, they improved publishing methods, employed competent editors and professionals who were being made redundant by the collapsing old businesses. Marszałek was among these

⁸ J. Marszałek-Kawa, *Historia i współczesność Wydawnictwa Adam Marszałek, Księga*, p. 18.

⁹ *Wilno dawniej i dziś* (Toruń 1993) and *Cmentarze dawnego Wilna* (Toruń 1994). At least the glue used to be of good quality and the copies I still have do not fall apart, unlike many others published in Poland by other new publishing companies that were springing up like mushrooms in those days.

¹⁰ I will repeat the statement I recently made in the anniversary book: The graphic appearance of WAM publications “initially was far from beautiful, yet recently it can be fully appreciated as evidenced by a series of commemorative books. (...) A commemorative volume that deserves to be mentioned is Valdas Adamkus’s book translated from Lithuanian – I held it in my hands with the unreserved admiration of a bibliophile...” *Księga*, p. 87 n. The publications mentioned above in footnote 12 below are true editorial treasures.

who remained and, more importantly, he was soon spearheading the industry.

The first book to bear the company name of Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek was published in late 1990. Unlike more than one of these new businessmen who slightly prematurely became dizzy with their success, most often imaginary, the owners of this publishing house did not waste their initially modest income. Their own apartment (the famous address 37, Przy Kaszowniku) served as the first location of the company; the office was located there and potential authors arrived for talks there as well. The company made sure they had a solid printing house, though. After some time, two additional rooms were added as an office in the building of a kindergarten in Kosynierów Kościuszkowskich Street. All that is remote history now. The owner, who assumed the title of President, employed two full time workers then – an office manager and a driver. Initially, Marszałek's part-time editors were also employed by the publishing department of UMK. The boss himself remained employed by the University until 1994 (where he lectured on editorship for a time). After that, he concentrated on WAM. A year earlier, he made a good bargain buying a secondhand, yet well-maintained, printing machine. Earlier, he used to print his publications in Wąbrzeźno and Inowrocław. The machine was installed in Kosynierów St. thereby initiating the company's own, modern manufacturing facilities.

Another company location was in Rydygiera St., from where it returned to Przy Kaszowniku, when the family residence was erected in Łysomice in 1996. In time, a storehouse and manufacturing facilities moved next to it. Eventually, 2005 saw the construction of the headquarters in 44, Lubicka St. in Toruń. At present, the company employs 28 full timers, apart from subcontractors, commissioned workers, and the owners, who are as active as ever. There is no overstaffing, the headcount corresponds to the company's needs.

What should be emphasized is the pragmatic approach to the company's management, a realistic attitude to the present combined with a vision developed on solid grounds, far-reaching perspective (no too far though!), respect for economic principles at the planning stage and during the implementation stage, and appropriate distribution. That is why the

boss and his co-workers attend academic conferences and consult with opinion leaders in the circles of potential clients, mainly in Poland (where the central book repository and ten branches are located), but also abroad. That is why the proportion of foreign authors is so considerable, with writers drawn from the circles of Polish émigrés across the globe, such as Kamil Dziewanowski or Konrad Studnicki Gizbert, a representative of academia. For this reason the fascinating memoirs of a Polish entrepreneur in Canada, Celestyn Bachorz,¹¹ have been published. The list of foreign authors embraces scientists, poets and prose writers from Israel, the Czech Republic, Russia, Lithuania, Serbia, Germany, Ukraine, and many other countries. Since 2007, the publishing house has had a branch in Beijing, and several studies of Polish authors have been published in Chinese, including studies in political science. Ten years earlier, the President began the ongoing popularization of his hometown, founding *Głos Świdwina*. This periodical, set up to promote WAM, features excellent editorship and a very elegant graphic appearance. A hundred and twenty six issues have been published over 13 years.¹²

1993 saw the beginning of the construction of a new building for the publishing company, which housed the reception and offset printing house. The investment was completed in two years. The machine park grew in 2006, to include digital equipment. Another two years were taken up by work that commenced in 2003, in the company headquarters, erected in Toruń, in 44 Lubicka St. Its three floors have a total surface of 900 m² and are mostly occupied by the editorial office and a part of the computer typesetting department (its remaining part, together with the

¹¹ This is an immense volume. If the reader is not discouraged at first sight by its size, he will find it a real page-turner. The author's origins are near Września. He did not return to Poland after 1945. Today he is an Honorary Citizen of Września, a benefactor of the Foundation of Września Children, and The Man of Wielkopolska in 1999. Adam Marszałek committed himself to ensuring that Wielkopolska honors Bachorz, an engineer, inventor, former prisoner of a labor camp and Polish soldier in the West. Cf. M. Kosman, *Między Kanadą i Wrześnią*, "Przegląd Wielkopolski" 2009, No. 4(86), pp. 60–62.

¹² Świdwin is Adam Marszałek's hometown. Marszałek has not forgotten his high school or teachers. Among other things, WAM published a book by Janusz Bohuszewicz, *Ta nasza młodość... Na pamiątkę jubileuszu 60-lecia Liceum Ogólnokształcącego im. Stanisława Staszica w Polczynie Zdroju*.

accounting department, is located elsewhere in Toruń). In the close vicinity, at 46 Lubicka St., an offset printing house is located, its role however has somewhat diminished since the digital printing house in Łysomice was modernized in 2006. This is where another building of 200m² was erected three years later to accommodate the editorial and reception offices as well as garages. In the middle of 2010, a new investment commenced in this suburban location. After several months, a new building of 770 m² was completed to house editorial rooms and a new location for the digital printing house. Then the former building was turned into a storehouse.

At present, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek has four buildings in Toruń and three more in Łysomice, over a dozen vehicles and a modern typographic park. The fast and efficient publishing process is facilitated by computers, scanners, photocopiers, offset and digital printing machines and cutters. Further considerable purchases of such devices are planned for 2011.

It's no wonder then, that, with such material foundations, that are constantly being expanded and modernized, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek has developed so dynamically. Marszałek Holding comprises the following companies: Adam Marszałek Beijing Publishing Consulting Co. Ltd (branch in Beijing), Dom Wydawniczy Duet, Europejskie Centrum Edukacyjne, Wydawnictwo MADDO, and Wydawnictwo GRADO. The list of periodicals they publish is impressive: *Athenaeum. Studia Politologiczne* [Athenaeum. Political studies], *Azja – Pacyfik* [Asia – the Pacific], *Kultura i Edukacja* [Culture and education], *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, *Świat Idei i Polityki* [The world of ideas and politics], *The New Educational Review*, as are their series: *Biała Seria Polskiego Towarzystwa Nauk Politycznych* [The white series of the Polish Society of Political Science], *Biblioteczka Bydgoska* [Bydgoszcz library], *Biblioteka Azji i Pacyfiku* [The library of Asia and the Pacific], *Biblioteka 'Kultury i Edukacji'* [The library of 'Culture and education'], *Biblioteka Operowa* [Opera Library], *Biblioteka* [Library of] *'The New Educational Review'*, *Biblioteka ToMiTo* [ToMiTo library] (which deals with the subjects concerning Toruń), *Biografie Niezwykłe* [Unusual biographies], *Człowiek – Środowisko życia – Edukacja* [Man – environment – education], *Człowiek i Polityka* [Man and politics], *Dialog Europejski* [European dialogue], *Filozofowie dla*

Początkujących [Philosophers for beginners], *Komunikacja Społeczna – Komunikacja Medialna – Komunikacja Sieci* [Social communication – media communication – network communication], *Komunikacja Społeczna w Edukacji* [Social communication in education], *Lewica w III RP* [The left wing in Poland after 1989], *Medicina Historica, Meandry Współczesnej Polityki* [Vicissitudes of modern politics], *Miasta i ich dzieje* [Towns and their history], *Multimedialna Biblioteka Pedagogiczna* [Multimedia pedagogical library], *Nauka o Komunikowaniu* [The science of communication], *Oblicza Mediów* [The faces of the media], *Nietzsche Seminarium* [Nietzsche seminar], *Parlamenty Świata* [Parliaments of the world], *Pedagogika Mediów* [Pedagogy of the media], *Polska – Unia – Integracja* [Poland – the EU – integration], *Problemy Współczesnego Świata* [The problems of the modern world], *Przestrzenie Życia Społecznego* [The realms of social life], *Samorząd Terytorialny XXI Wieku* [Local self-government in the 21st century], *Słuchowiska Polskiego Radia* [Polish radio plays], *Spotkania* [Encounters], *Staropolski Ogląd Świata* [The outlook on the world in historical Poland], *Sztuki Teatralne* [Theatrical plays], *The Peculiarity of Man*, *Wybory – Demokracja – Polityka* [Elections – democracy – politics]. The *Miasta i ich dzieje* [Towns and their history] series is among the most interesting. Encompassing approximately a hundred titles, it publishes modern authors as well as new editions of classical works, such as Szymon Askenazy's *Gdańsk a Polska* [Gdańsk versus Poland], an interesting comparative study by Leszek Belzyt *Kraków i Praga około 1600 roku* [Kraków and Prague around 1600], or the books concerning Vilnius¹³ or Grodno. A considerable portion of this series are monographs of towns in Eastern Pomerania, including Toruń.

To complete the presentation of the company's entire publishing range, four series of poetry need to be mentioned: *Dekada Poetów* [Decade of the poets], *Seria Duet* [Duet series], *Liryka Polska* [Polish lyrics], *Polsko-Rosyjska Biblioteka Poetycka* [Polish-Russian poetic library]. Numerous commemorative books published outside these series also deserve to be mentioned. Following a uniform graphic pattern and attractively bound, they commemorate the anniversaries of illustrious researchers (such as

¹³ Not all have been enumerated in the list (*Księga jubileuszowa*, pp. 450–459).

Janusz Małek, Czesław Mojsiewicz, Longin Pastusiak) and a grandee of Polish journalism, Zygmunt Broniarek (honored with a book of peculiar construction with many illustrations).

Lithuanian subjects hold a special position among WAM publications. They range from modernity (via the Lithuanian Embassy in Warsaw and the Honorary Consulate in Toruń; the publications encompass a beautiful edition of Lithuanian ex-President, Valdas Adamkus's¹⁴ memoirs) to history, which may be even more important. The publications on the period prior to the partition of Poland, the partitions, and the interwar period occupy several shelves. The books of Polish researchers from Vilnius are of particular significance here, as their authors conduct their studies in truly heroic circumstances that call for sacrifices their colleagues from Poland could not even imagine. I will mention just one example, Assistant Professor Henryka Ilgiewicz and her postdoctoral dissertation on academic societies in Vilnius in the time following the partitions.¹⁵

The anniversary book of WAM embraces numerous texts – both extensive pieces and brief letters of congratulation, all expressing utter appreciation for one of the most successful publishing initiatives of the past two decades. This was the period of free market economy that enforced the bankruptcy of most companies, unfortunately including also those with great merit of national culture, which is a great pity. Some other companies – although not too many – have passed the test of new market conditions, which involved the abandonment of censorship, which should not be forgotten. It should also be noted that it is a considerable exaggeration to blame censorship for all the obstacles in issuing intellectually free publications. Censorship disappeared, but it was replaced by probably even stricter self-censorship and restrictions imposed by editors,¹⁶ as well as

¹⁴ He was still in office when the Polish version was printed and he personally took part in its promotion in Toruń.

¹⁵ For more on this subject see: M. Kosman, *Lumen ex patria. Uwagi o polskiej humanistyce we współczesnym Wilnie* [in:] *Stosunki polsko – litewskie wczoraj i dziś*, ed. W.K. Roman, J. Marszałek-Kawa. Toruń 2009, pp. 244–268.

¹⁶ Opinions on this subject were voiced during an academic conference, organized at Warsaw University and devoted to the assessment of censorship in communist Poland after ten years of its abandonment: *Środki masowej informacji w Polsce po likwidacji in-*

the pressure exerted by the political powers that dominated at a given time, who believed that “justice must be on our side”. Doctor Adam Marszałek represents a model of apolitical attitude maintained in his professional activity, or – to be more precise – of the equal treatment of representatives of different political options. Sometimes with no profit in sight, or maybe even envisaging losses, he never hesitates to publish studies that are certain to be attacked by the supporters of the current ‘leading power.’¹⁷ For this publisher, a historian by education, this is nothing new, *nihil novi sub sole*. His attitude calls for respect, however, as he sets higher values over business principles.

One of the opinions expressed about Adam Marszałek, presented in the *Księga jubileuszowa*, entitled *Być sobą* [Be yourself], is worth emphasizing. Krzysztof Pałeczki, the author, begins with the question of “how did it happen that within a couple of years somebody ‘from nowhere’, with no capital or patrons became such a significant figure in this city, somebody so well recognized, or became even more than that – an embodiment of a ‘trademark’ in the circles of book traders and writers, scientists and social workers, politicians and businessmen of Toruń?” Pałeczki answers that question himself: it was possible because of a passion for useful and honest activity, courage (sometimes that of a gambler), imagination (but grounded on common sense and realism), and being a boss who is demanding but who has the nature of a true humanist. He is a man who can do a lot, but continuously learns new things, who observes the world and civilizational transformations. And there is one more thing – “authenticity. Nothing artificial, nothing purely for show.”¹⁸

This authenticity oozes from the texts written by competent individuals who do not care for cheap panegyrics. These are not needed, as twenty years of the company’s achievements speak for themselves. One could say that WAM’s excellent publications are accompanied by some weak ones, some redundant. This is true, but the publisher cannot be held responsible

stytucji cenzury 1990–2000, ed. J. Adamowski. Warszawa 2000. See also: *Cenzura w PRL. Relacje historyków*, ed. Z. Romek. Warszawa 2000.

¹⁷ I addressed this subject on a particular example – see *Księga jubileuszowa*, p. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 37 n.

for their contents.¹⁹ To some extent he relies on the reviews that frequently disqualify weaker works, but sometimes fail to note the faults such works contain. What is most important is the truly great abundance of publications that have enriched both the Polish and foreign academic market. This has mainly been noted by such researchers as Andrzej Chodubski, a humanist with a broad outlook,²⁰ Longin Pastusiak, an expert in American studies,²¹ the historian Krzysztof Mikulski,²² political scientists, educators, experts in literary studies, experts in the culture of Old Poland, and the representatives of Toruń university circles. WAM has close ties with the universities in Gdańsk, Olsztyn, and Poznań (mainly with its faculty of political science). Owing to civilizational advancements, considerable distances do not hinder close relationships with the Western hemisphere, as evidenced by the publications and articles in *Echo Świdwina* by Konrad Studnicki-Gizbert, a representative of an old Lithuanian family (I mean the historical Lithuania that used to be a part of the old Poland) who settled in Canada after WWII and remains young in spirit. This is how he remembers the beginning of his acquaintance with the publisher:

“In those times Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek was cramped in a place (or rather an apartment) that was utterly insufficient. The workers were almost sitting on top of one another, the President’s office was a tiny room with two minute armchairs (...) [which] should be donated to a museum of entrepreneurship as an example that everything is possible...”²³

¹⁹ It should be remembered that it is the author who bears responsibility for the text and its ultimate version, unless serious changes are introduced in the process of editorial work. I know from my own experience, as the author of seven books published by WAM over many years (1993–2010) and edited by several editors, that their input is subtle and they never ‘correct’ what the author has written. After all, not every author is proficient in using the Polish language...

²⁰ *‘Instytucja’ dr Adam Marszałek – Księga*, pp. 50–57. The author emphasizes the role of editorial reviews when approving the texts for print.

²¹ *Wkład Wydawnictwa Adam Marszałek w rozwój polskiej amerykanistyki* – ibidem, p. 72 n.

²² *Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek w oczach historyka* – ibidem, p. 109 nn.

²³ *Między Kanadą a Toruniem* – ibidem, p. 173.