

A FORGOTTEN HERO: JAN MORAWIŃSKI (1907–1949)

Roman Olkowski

Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów

ORCID 0000-0002-0297-5499

Notes of a Curator at the National Museum published in 1970 in the second volume of the book *Struggle for Cultural Goods* is the only generally available testimony to saving historic monuments by Jan Morawiński during WWII.¹ Additionally priceless, because of Morawiński documenting the looting of 137 paintings belonging to the pre-WWII Branicki Collection at Wilanów. The above-mentioned *Notes* were published by the Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy after the author's manuscript from 1944–1945. It, however, seems to be missing a chapter, since Morawiński was on many occasions mentioned in the reports of the employees of the National Museum in Warsaw (MNW) from the Nazi occupation period published in 'Rocznik MNW' ['MNW Annual'] in 1965–1967.² However, in the to-date literature his person in the context of saving Polish cultural heritage appears only in the background. When the National Museum in Warsaw is spoken of, the role of Prof. Stanisław Lorentz (1899–1991) is mainly exposed. While it is Prof. Karol Estreicher (1906–1984) who is considered the grandest repossessor of Polish historic monuments looted by the Germans. Actually, both gentlemen competed in this respect, this confirmed by Estreicher in his *Diary* and by Lorentz in *Talking to Lorentz*.³ Additionally, both, in the course of their long post-WWII life in Poland, consolidated a legend they enshrouded themselves in, this reflected in the recent (6 March–23 June 2019) exhibition titled 'Lost Heritage' held at the Gdansk Museum of the Second World War which put together the accomplishments of both men. All this causes that I am strongly tempted to bring out of oblivion the figure of the hero of those times: Jan Morawiński,⁴ publishing the previously unknown archival material,⁵ briefly describing merely ten years of his life which he devoted to saving Polish cultural heritage.⁶

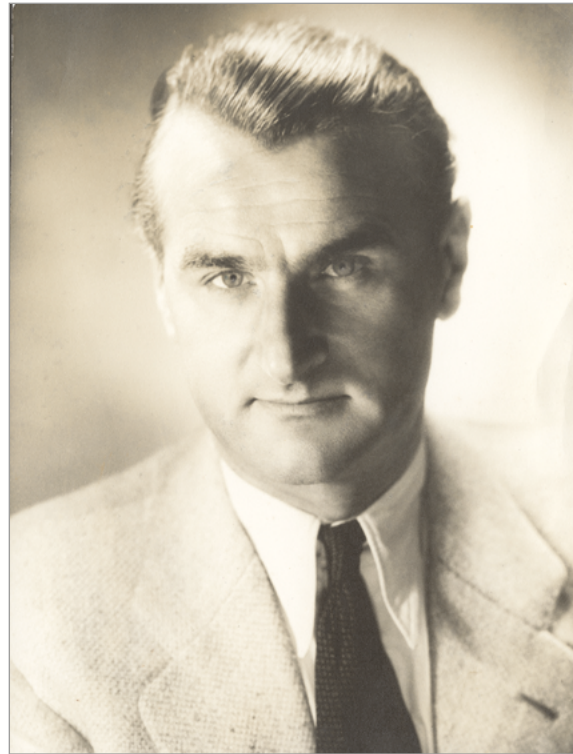
The story begins in the summer of 1939 when Morawiński starts working for the National Museum in Warsaw. Straight away, together with other staff, he is delegated to securing the museum exhibits in the event of the war. Jerzy

Sienkiewicz⁷ recalls this as follows: *the principle of a two-stage securing of the collection was adopted. This meaning that throughout the period of acute tension that could at any point turn into active warfare, we decided to remove from display rooms and storerooms the most precious, previously selected museum exhibits. And to hide these museum cimelia and prevent from destruction, however, it had to be done in the way invisible to Museum visitors. The second stage of the protection was to be introduced upon army mobilization (...). For that purpose, we had earlier prepared an air-raid shelter within our own building (...).*⁸

The account of Maria Friedlówna (later Bogucka)⁹ shows how hard and tedious the work was: *we were sitting together with Morawiński on chests; we would take one by one rings, medallions, watches; we described them, marked them, while Kalinowski (caretaker), who was kneeling on the ground before us, would wrap every little object in cellulose wadding and put: a smaller into a bigger one, this into a small jewel case, this into the chest so that as much as possible could fit in, so that it would all serve the purpose the best. We would take into our hands those small pieces with much sadness: they were so precious, and so tiny that could be lost so easily. A sculpture, a painting could be found easier in the future, while a jewel can fit in any pocket.*¹⁰ Already in August, private collections from around Poland started inflowing to MNW, e.g., those belonging to the Raczynski Palace at Rogalin¹¹ or from the Evangelical church on the Hel Peninsula brought from there by Jerzy Chyczewski, Pomeranian Conservator,¹² who justly supposed that Hel could become a battlefield already at the beginning of the war.¹³

On 1 September 1939, MNW staff continued packing the collection they had started in late August, also those pieces which were subject to securing as the second. At that time it was not possible to think of regular work: *It is dangerous in the Museum rooms, constant air raids. We dash into them only for a moment. Every now and then someone grabs an*

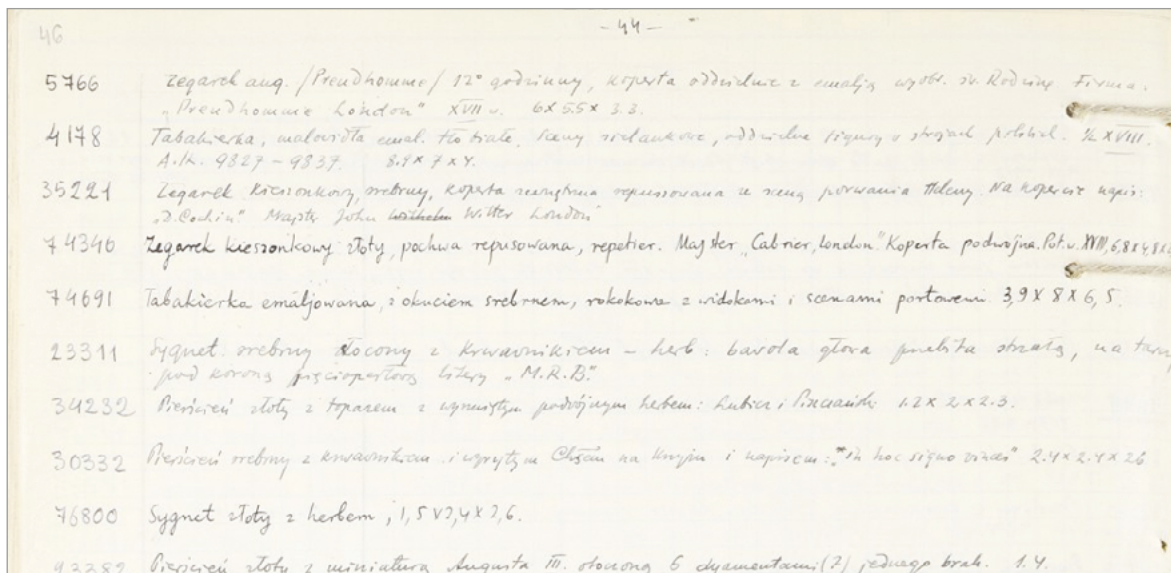
object from the room, and carries it to the shelter. Windows shattered, glass in cabinets actually, too; we inspect the shelters and rooms fearing fires after the air raids¹⁴ (...) we often run across the basements checking if everything is fine. The long corridor is lined with chests with plates and prints from Mrs Mrozińska's department. Next to it Rodakowski's 'Chicken War' propped against the wall. For no purpose at all, Morawiński squeezes between the crates and moves the painting several metres to the side. In the afternoon a bomb struck the fourth part and Museum's internal corner. There cabinets with Chinese exhibits completely crushed, and here the 'Chicken War' saved only because it had been moved. In the place where it had stood before a hole in the wall, some chests with prints destroyed.¹⁵ Despite substantial destruction and the demolishing of a part of the building with air bombs and artillery shells, the Museum collection was damaged only to a relatively little degree. All this owing to Morawiński's dedication who together with Prof. Michał Walicki headed the Museum team for air defence, saving the Museum building struck by six bombs and 41 artillery shells. Over that time, four fires were put out, including two which posed the threat of the whole building's destruction.¹⁶



1. Jan Morawiński's photo portrait, Author's collection

Apart from the heroic activities of the museum curators which were aimed at saving the historic monuments inside the MNW building, what did not stop was the securing and transporting the monuments saved within Warsaw, also prone to bombing, fires, or theft, to the Museum cellars and storerooms at Podwale and in the Old Town. At that time Morawiński transported the objects from the State Art Collection which had remained with no guardians at the Royal Łazienki.¹⁷ His sacrifice was exceptional when saving historic pieces from the Warsaw Castle. The edifice was already on fire when responding to the radio appeal made by Warsaw's Mayor Stefan Starzyński, the lorries with museum curator teams headed by Walicki and Morawiński set off for the Castle.¹⁸ I saw Dr Lorentz when assisted by curators; Walicki PhD and Morawiński MA was

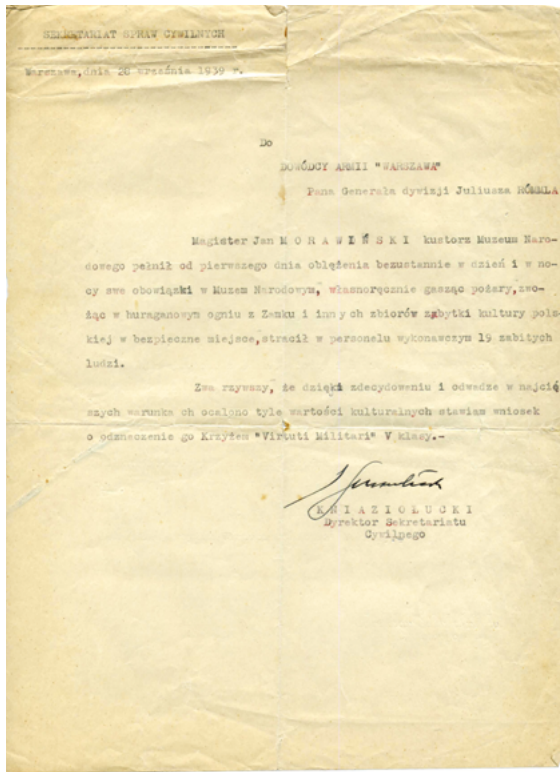
running across the rooms of the Royal Castle amidst blazes; I could see, how, oblivious to the shells, he would take the most precious paintings off the wall..., recalled Henryk Pawłowicz.¹⁹ Morawiński organized and headed the rescue column which, using the lorry he confiscated from the City Cleaning Department (he drove it), transported the Royal Castle furnishing to the Museum's shelter. M. Friedłówna



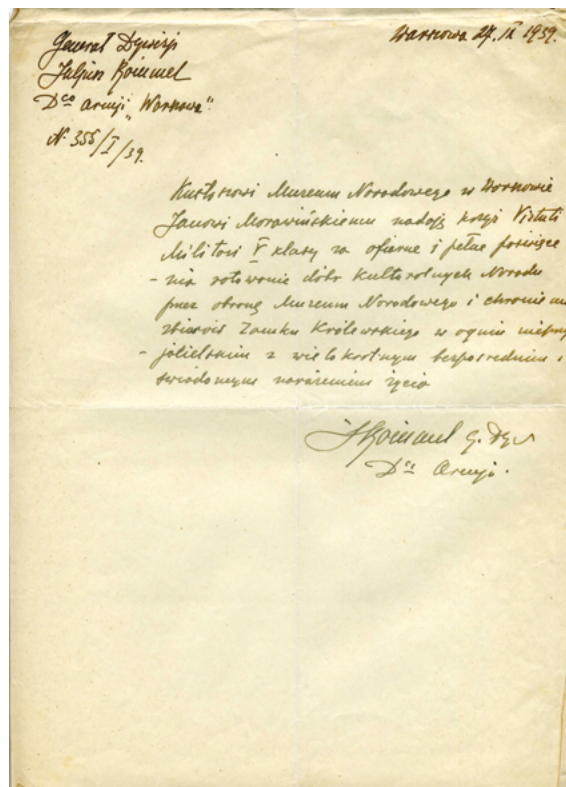
2. Fragment of lists made by Maria Friedłówna and Jan Morawiński, AMNW, Cat. No. 707/3, k. 46

also recalled the drama and heroism of those days: 17 of September. There is an air raid, and suddenly on the radio: the Castle is bombarded, come, whoever can, to rescue, this is an appeal to the residents of the Old Town. The Director immediately organizes help. They travel in a lorry. A glow of fire over Warsaw. The Director alternates with Morawiński and with a handful of caretakers (we cannot deplete our own staff too badly), they bring from the Castle Canaletto's painting, ceramics, tapestries, whatever they can get hold of. Out of nowhere, boy scouts from Bydgoszcz, aged 15–18, suddenly appear. They are very brave. They rush into rooms: 'what's most important?', grasp things, carry them out, climb walls, take off paintings. The lorry arrives at the Museum, the first courtyard, and here we unload it.²⁰ On one of those expeditions, the lorry fell under a heavy artillery fire. It is night, they have left again. We are at the Rychlings' (...) Why are they taking so long? (...) Morawiński comes through the door, grey, his face convulsed, he staggers. – No, nothing happened to them, but to the group!... and he begins telling in a dull voice, exhausted, how the bomb struck and how fourteen boys were heavily wounded, how some called 'Mum', and died, how he took them to hospital. That's why it took them so long.²¹

General Juliusz Rómmel declared that the Museum could be saved only thanks to the superhuman efforts of its employees, who with courage and sacrifice defended its collection. Who distinguished themselves were the curator Dr Michał Walicki and the curator Jan Morawiński,²² who, similarly as Lorentz were awarded the Virtuti Militari Cross of the 5th class for saving the Nation's cultural goods by



3. Leon Kniaziółucki's motion to award the Virtuti Militari Cross of the 5th Class to Jan Morawiński, A. Morawińska's archive



4. Document of awarding the Virtuti Militari Cross of the 5th Class by Gen. Juliusz Rómmel, Commander of the Warsaw Army, to Jan Morawiński, A. Morawińska's archive

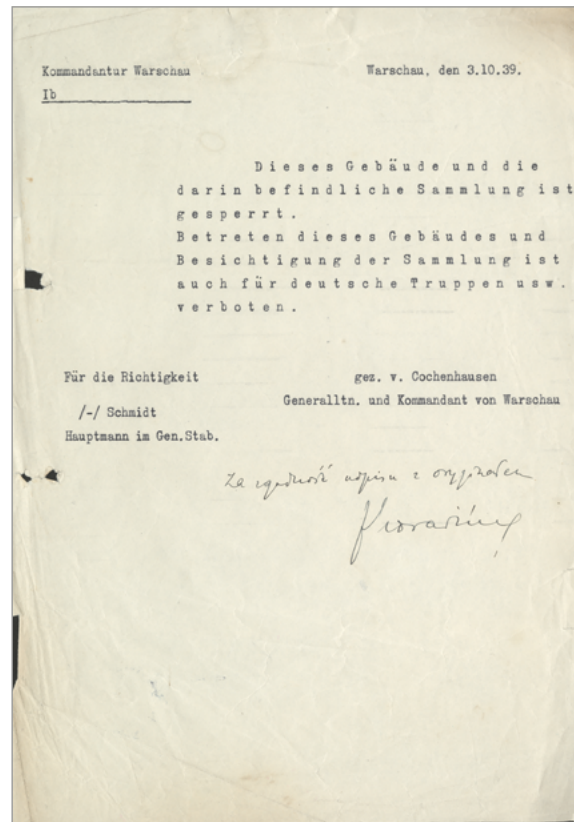
defending the National Museum and preserving the collection of the Royal Castle under enemy's fire, often directly and consciously risking their life.²³ At the moment of capitulation, not only did not Morawiński lose his heart, but he also tried to boost the spirits of his colleagues by saying: *this does not release us from our responsibilities. We have to do our duty. Under the occupation there will be some life, too, and we have to find our place in it,*²⁴ recalls Friedłówna.

In early October 1939, Lorentz appointed Morawiński his deputy. Lorentz himself, at that point staying close to Warsaw's Mayor Starzyński, recounted: *I did not spend much time at the Museum that October. I assigned the communication with the Germans who would show up to Jan Morawiński, and as the time then and later demonstrated this was a very fortunate choice.*²⁵ Morawiński thus exerted a very important function of deputy director, but at the same time he was head of the storage space and inventories. Fluent in German, at least until the end of October he was the first on the frontline in contacts with German officials. These included e.g., Dr Peter Paulsen and SS Second Lieutenant Dr Theo Deisel, who supervised the Museum from the military perspective, with whom Morawiński was in frequent touch.²⁶ Soon, MNW was visited also by representatives of the Office of the Special Delegate for Listing and Securing Works of Art and Culture Monuments (Dienststelle des Sonderbeauftragten für die Erfassung und Sicherung der Kunst und Kulturschätze) in order to confiscate the most precious works. Owing to his function, Morawiński was obliged to present lists of artworks which had been since

August and September kept in closed chests in MNW's cellars.²⁷ Some chests were taken over by the representative of the Special Delegate, some were left in the Museum as a 'deposit'; others were transported to Cracow in December 1939.²⁸ The Nazis also 'took care' of the works of art from the Castle, saved, e.g. by Morawiński. What they took away were mediaeval historic monuments from the Castle conservation laboratory and Canaletto's paintings.

In the first half of November 1939, Morawiński received at the Museum building several hundred paintings from the building of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts (Zachęta).²⁹ The unloading and storing of the collection on the MNW ground floor was performed by Jews who hurriedly carried out Deisel's orders. As Marconi recalls: *We felt bad for watching people being rushed all the time, while the paintings could get damaged. At one point I saw Morawiński drawing Deisel's attention to a hole in one of the larger paintings. Deisel summoned me and asked if that damage occurred when the paintings were carried. I knew that many of those paintings had been damaged even when at Zachęta, but I intuitively understood what Morawiński was up to. I categorically stated that the damage had occurred when the paintings were carried around. The pace was slowed down.*³⁰

Apart from securing collections of museums and private collections from the Warsaw area, the National Museum staff particularly contributed to saving the historic collections of the Royal Castle, Łazienki, and the Copper-Roof Palace, namely the furnishing of royal residences.³¹ In September, putting their own life at risk, Museum employees headed by Morawiński, evacuated historic objects from the burning Castle, and following the September campaign, they took care of the remaining building. In late October, the Germans removed Polish conservation teams operating in the Castle. The latter were replaced by German sappers whose task was to drill holes for dynamite in the ground floor rooms: two months later, there were already several thousand of such holes. Every day the Nazis herded hundreds of Jews to the Castle to use them to help dismantle the edifice décor and installations, On the instruction of the German officials: Dagobert Frey and Josef Mühlmann,³² marbles, panelling, and even heaters were pulled out. Under such circumstances the Department of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology organized a meeting of a dozen or so of Warsaw art historians and architects at which it was decided that everything had to be done to enable the reconstruction of the Castle in the future. Curators and National Museum staff, resorting to the support of the Municipality, began their operations in the Castle in early November 1939. The team included, among others, Lorentz, Morawiński, Friedlówna, Miechowski, Kozakiewicz, and the caretaker Krzysztośiak.³³ Their task was to secure and transport architectural elements³⁴ to the Museum as well as to document the Castle's destruction by the Nazis, the latter being the section Morawiński was particularly involved in: *In the course of the conscious destruction of the Royal Castle interiors I succeeded in getting inside together with a group of Jewish labourers herded there to work, and having the 'Leica' camera hidden I photographed all the details of the ongoing devastation. After a week's work I was caught with the camera in hand, handed to the Gestapo, and interrogated as suspected of espionage. Put in custody*



5. Gen. Friedrich von Cochenhausen's order to protect MNW's edifice and collection, copy made by Jan Morawiński, A. Morawińska's archive

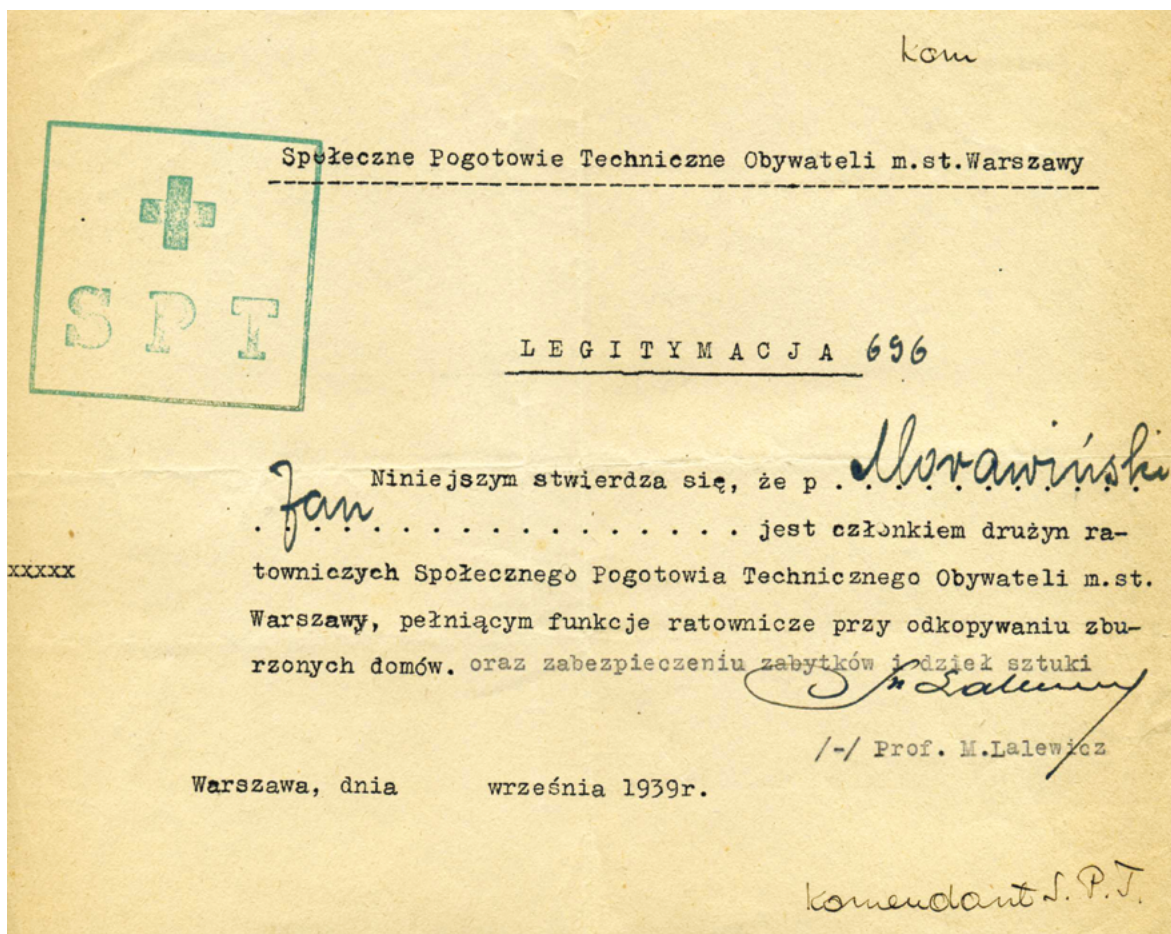
*in the Daniłowiczowska Street Prison, I was interrogated on a daily basis, and released in poor health thanks to the fact that my files had been lost and to an external intervention.*³⁵ [at this point and everywhere below in the quotes from his notes the underlining was marked by Morawiński himself – RO]. This external intervention was the help coming from Dr Josef Mühlmann who upon his return from a holiday contributed to releasing Morawiński and Miechowski from the Gestapo.³⁶ According to Gebethner, Morawiński, following his release and having recovered, went to the Gestapo in Szucha Avenue demanding to retrieve his confiscated camera. Such a move required real courage, and the Germans themselves appreciated it to the extent that they returned the camera, albeit without the film.³⁷

At the beginning of the war, MNW staff also started saving artistic collections across all Warsaw. Member of the Social Technical Emergency Services, Morawiński participated in searching through the ruins of e.g., the Library of the Zamoycki Entail,³⁸ he ascertained what had formed part of the furnishing of the burnt down tenement house at 40 Smolna Street in Warsaw, property of Adam Branicki,³⁹ and as head of storages and inventories he also received private deposits and collections of other institutions.⁴⁰ *We are thus bringing in books from demolished libraries, recalls Friedlówna, we're admitting paintings from ruined houses deposited with us. Driving across the city is challenging. I transport the private painting collections from the Górskas. In Ujazdowskie*

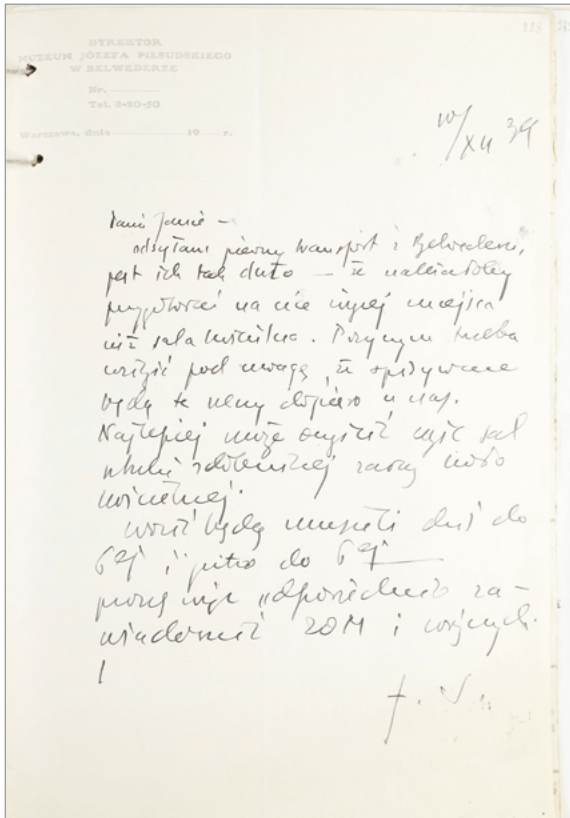
Avenue we collect the deposit from Dr Krystall (...) during a meeting with the Director we decide not to enter the collections being secured into the big inventory books (...). We suspect that the deposits of Jewish owners face the greatest risk. We're going to start small notebooks with the lists, marking items with ciphered signs. Known to us and the owners.⁴¹ In the inventorying work Morawiński was initially assisted by Wanda Sommerfeld and Maria Friedlówna, and later by Anna Szemiothowa. What began was the official work on the inventorying of the inflowing works and at the same time clandestine work. Throughout the whole Nazi occupation, MNW was the main resistance centre dealing with culture. Here the clandestine centre to document the destructions and transports taken to the Reich by the Germans was organized.⁴² Over the whole occupation period Morawiński was at the head of the Museum's clandestine action of inventorying and documenting the destructions and lootings in the sphere of culture. During that work descriptions, photographs, and drawn copies of all the items transported by the Germans were made. As a result, a documenting archives was created covering files of lists, photographs, and drawings of the looted objects for future recovery. The archives was burnt down during the 1944 Uprising. The remaining fragments (at the 'Warsaw Accuses'

Exhibition) testify to the working method adopted.⁴³ Gebethner recalls: in the place of forbidden photographs, if we didn't happen to have ready prints, drawings or water-colours were made, this excelled at by Zygmunt Miechowski.⁴⁴ Later still there even appeared the opportunity to take photos. So thus our dossier with respect to historic monuments, first of all the precious ones, extended to become really sizeable files, representing many art works and an ample documenting output, often perfectly conducted. The list of goldsmithery items featured drawn copies of the artist's and maker's marks, while in the list of paintings and drawings there were facsimiles of artists' signatures, etc.⁴⁵

Until June 1941, Morawiński worked in the main MNW building. That very year Alfred Schellenberg became the German official responsible for the Museum.⁴⁶ At that time the Museum staff used to meet at 8 am daily in Director Lorentz's office. The meetings were dedicated to discussing the current activities conducted in the Museum, and to agreeing on the strategy versus the Nazi orders. The German officials, including Schellenberg, began work at 9, so we could talk in peace: eight people: Morawiński, Gebethner, Sienkiewicz, Marconi, Grein, Walicki, Grabowski, and Wieczorkiewicz until the arrest, recalled Lorentz.⁴⁷ After the attack of Germany on the Soviet Union, together with



6. Jan Morawiński's ID No. 696 of the Social Technical Emergency Services, A. Morawińska's archive



7. Jerzy Sienkiewicz's letter dated 10 December 1939 to Jan Morawiński, Head of the storeroom, on the evacuated Belvedere collection, AMNW, Cat. No. 707/9 k. 228

Miechowski, Morawiński inventoried church bells confiscated throughout the General Governorate. In the order there was mention of the possibility to exempt from being melted bells of exceptional historic or artistic value, however, application for such exemption could be submitted only once the bells had been deposited at the repository.⁴⁸ By the end of 1941, a list of historic bells had been made; they were considered by Morawiński and Miechowski as valuable and withdrawn from the transportation to Cracow.⁴⁹

The Old Town

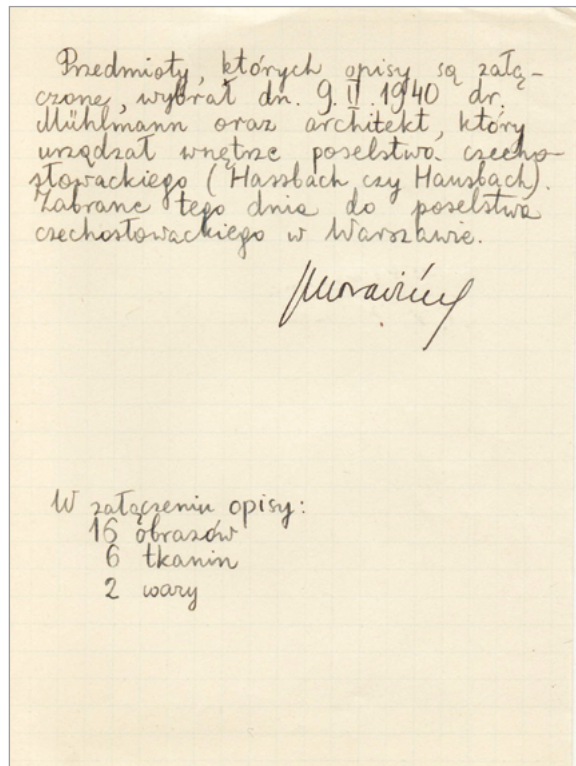
In June 1941, Jan Morawiński became head of the Museum of Old Warsaw in the Old Town, exerting the function until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising. He supplanted the arrested curator Antoni Wiczorkiewicz.⁵⁰ In December 1941, Morawiński secured the collection of the dissolved Society of the Lovers of History from the tenement house of the Dukes of Mazovia⁵¹ and the remains of the furnishing of the Fukiers' tenement house.⁵² In June 1942, he personally transported the collection of several thousand rolls of films, slides, and prints that belonged to the Polish Tourism Society from the building at 19 Nowy Świat Street to the store room in the Old Town.⁵³

When heading the branch in the Baryczkas' tenement house, he took care of the arms secured in September 1939. *At the moment of the capitulation on 27 September*

*1939, together with one caretaker we took an ample set of arms and ammunition which we placed in one of the rooms, later walled in, of the Museum of Old Warsaw in the Baryczkas' tenement house in the Old Town, together with the arms collected by the Museum's curator Dr Antoni Wiczorkiewicz who stayed in close contact with the People's Army (AL). Following his arrest on 17 June 1941 (a month later he died at Auschwitz), I took over the curator position at the Baryczkas' and kept the whole arms collection, twice a year arranging weapons' conservation conducted by an AL armourer until the eve of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, when at night two lorries took all of it to the arms distribution centre of the integrated Home Army and People's Army command in the Old Town.*⁵⁴

Wilanów

As mentioned above, Morawiński also served as guardian of the Branicki Collection in Warsaw. Already in late 1940 and early 1941, as requested by Beata Branicka, MNW performed a quiet control of the Wilanów Palace buildings, artwork collection, and the archives.⁵⁵ It was Morawiński who became the unofficial curator of the estate.⁵⁶ With the permission of the German authorities, as of May 1941 he performed that function officially, while as of July, he also served as guardian of Natolin. Morawiecki assumed control of the Branicki Collection packed in chests in November and



8. Document for underground records confirming that on 9 February 1940 the Germans transferred museum exhibits to the seat of the former Czechoslovak diplomatic mission, 13 Chopina Street, MNW, Incomplete File of Artworks Taken during the Occupation by the Germans, Property of the National Museum and Deposits

December 1939 as instructed by the Office of the Special Delegate. Apart from the works taken away, the collection core packed in 53 chests was left on site. When Morawiński began his office, the chests were unpacked, and the objects conserved whenever possible. In June and July 1941, they were packed again, while the rest of the 'unsecured' paintings whose number amounted to 220 remained unpacked in the Palace.⁵⁷

Until the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising, Morawiński shared his time between the Old Town and Wilanów. On 28 March 1944, he was instructed to make a list of and pack the historic Wilanów furniture pieces which were to be taken to Cracow.⁵⁸ Since the front was approaching, following a debate with Beata Branicka and Director Lorentz, he began to secure on site the Palace collection which had survived in its majority.⁵⁹ Resorting to the help of Aleksander Siedacz and Stanisław Pyzel,⁶⁰ Wilanów residents, he had some pieces of the collection from Museum rooms put in chests, and bricked in in the cellar. On the day the Warsaw Uprising broke out, Morawiński was working on securing the Wilanów collection; until the end of that day he was unable to reach the Old Town, and so he focused all his energy on securing the Wilanów treasures.

After having been violently chased out from the house in Służew, and after his wife and new-born daughter had reached Natolin where they stayed, Morawiński once again came to Wilanów on 6 August to take care of the Palace collection. At that point the Palace had already been taken over by the Nazi troops. The collection bricked in in the cellar and the library had been plundered, *the historic halls of the Palace had floors covered with straw on which soldiers slept. To put their backpacks and other utensils they used 18th-century stools... The traces of that wear were visible in the rips of the already damaged textiles by leather strap buckles or in the form of greasy margarine stains, crushed tomatoes and soup. In the centre of each room, amidst the makeshift beds there stood 18th-century gilded tables, surrounded with Rococo armchairs covered with tapestries. They were used to sit down on when meals were eaten... The Palace hall was filled with furniture pieces from the living quarter of the right wing in which a hospital had been organized.*⁶¹ Having spoken to the commander of the troops stationed at the Palace, Morawiński received a written permit to conduct some works to secure the Museum collection. Able to skilfully address the soldiers, he managed to have all the historic pieces collected in several rooms, later sealed.

As the fights for Wilanów with the insurgents' troops from the Kabaty and Chojnów Forests were inevitably approaching, all the Palace furnishing: paintings, furniture, equipment, were taken to the cellars and walled in. This was the state that lasted until the end of August when there appeared some Hungarians commanded by General László Szabó, cavalry division commander, with, among others, Major Barley, Budapest Museum curator. Several days later the Hungarian Division arrived, and the Germans withdrew. At the same time all the civilians inhabiting the strip of 10 km along the Vistula had to move out. Morawiński, too, was forced to do so. He came to dwell in the forster's lodge at Chojnów, a village 11 km from Wilanów. Having presented himself at General Szabó's staff at Zalesie near Piaseczno, Morawiński was not authorized to stay at

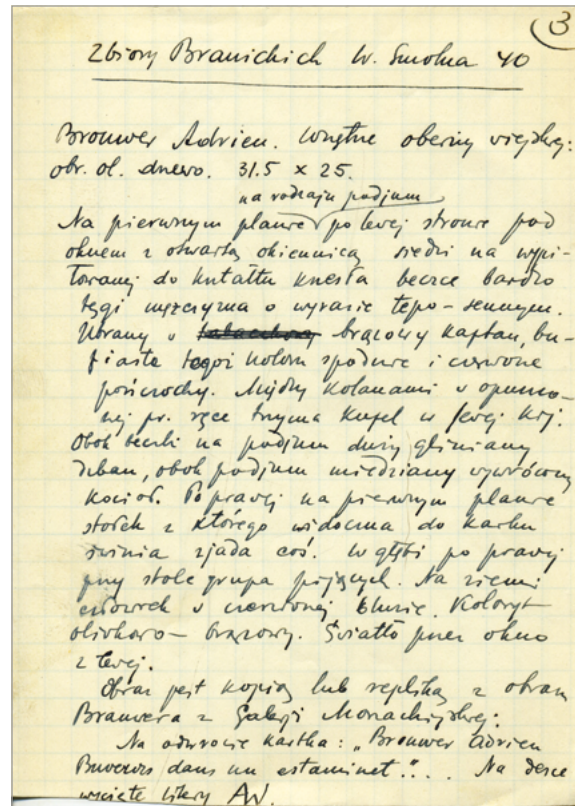
Wilanów. However, oblivious to this ban and the front line, he cycled there twice, risking his life, but was not let into the Palace. Several weeks later, the Hungarians left the front line, and were replaced by the 313th Volkssturm Division commanded by General Eberhardt Kinzel whose staff was located at Zalesie, too. Morawiński immediately appeared there, asking a Major to authorize his trips to Wilanów, so that he could take care of the Palace. As a result of his arduous efforts, he was granted the permit (valid for a fortnight) to travel to Wilanów on the first frontline (Zone A) and the right to enter the Palace.⁶² Having reached the Palace, Morawiński found the following: *Paintings have disappeared from the Museum rooms: large sizes, ca 150 pieces, which we had been unable to take to the cellar. A number of antique books have disappeared from the library. The cellars remained walled in and the walls untouched. The cellars with the paintings bore no signs of major losses.*⁶³

He visited Wilanów on several more occasions, and each time found the Palace having deteriorated. On 30 October 1944, Morawiński was summoned to the staff where Captain Presser, the second staff officer, ordered him as the so-far guardian of the Wilanów Museum to witness the transportation of the paintings out of Wilanów and to help select the most precious of the ones that had remained on site.⁶⁴ Since the front was nearby, and he was not able to judge where the collection would be safer, Morawiński decided to leave a half of the precious items on site, in the Palace, and qualified another half to be taken away. He, nevertheless, put together a precise list of the things dispatched, number of shipment invoice, carriage number, and destination. On the following day, he found 20 Poles who were loading the paintings into carriages of the narrow-gauge railway. Owing to a large distance, Morawiński arranged for a horse-drawn carriage to help transport the paintings to the railway which subsequently took them to the broad-gauge railway in Piaseczno. Regrettably, due to the challenging circumstances, Morawiński was unable to precisely divide the paintings. However, at the moment when they were carried out, he made a list with double inventory numbers found on the paintings' back, reflecting the inventories from 1895 and 1924 (the same number) and the inventory of Aleksandra Potocka née Lubomirski from 1823. Apart from 137 paintings, also two armchairs from the suit covered with the *Aubusson* tapestry were taken. Morawiński personally supervised the carrying of the paintings into the carriages, making sure the canvases were not destroyed on the way. On 1 November 1944, all those historic pieces were transported to *Świdnica*.⁶⁵ Morawiński was unable to make the Wilanów collection stay in the Palace, however, thanks to his efforts its pieces were spared being damaged, while his lists of the items taken away partially helped to recover them for Wilanów already in the spring of 1945.⁶⁶ Still in late November, together with Stanisław Lorentz, Adam Stebelski, and Alfred Schellenberg, he took part in the inspection of the Wilanów Palace.⁶⁷ Jan Morawiński resumed his care of the Palace and the Wilanów collection as early as in January 1945, albeit already under completely different circumstances.

The Pruszków Action

In late October 1944, Jan Morawiński was summoned to

work at MNW and participated in the so-called Pruszków Action.⁶⁸ In harmony with Art. 10 of the capitulation agreement, the German command was to facilitate the evacuation of objects of artistic, cultural, or ecclesial value from Warsaw. However, these provisions remained on paper only. The Nazis consciously burnt the buildings, one after another, destroying anything they found on the way.⁶⁹ Under such circumstances, at the instigation of the staff of the Culture Section of the Department of Education and Culture of the Polish Underground State, Lorentz, assisted by Stanisław Wachowiak, met with the Governor of the Warsaw District Ludwig Fischer to obtain from him a permit to save movable historic pieces. Under the guise of working for the Nazis: the work consisting in selecting the most precious artworks to have them dispatched to Germany no later than within merely a fortnight, the action of saving historic monuments was carried out until the Red Army entered Warsaw. The first reconnaissance team left Pruszków on 25 October 1944. The action was participated by museum curators, archivists, librarians, naturalists. Physical labour was conducted also by workers, intelligentsia representatives from Warsaw, Pruszków, and the vicinity. Among them there were many railway workers and clerks from the Warsaw Municipality. Five teams were organized: for the National Museum, Library of the Warsaw University, Central Archives of Historical Records, National Library, and the Zoological Museum.⁷⁰ Morawiński participated in the MNW group composed of S. Lorentz, M. Walicki, J. Sienkiewicz, J. Zachwatowicz, S. Kozakiewicz, as well as the artists: Alfons Karny and Jan Cybis. Between November 1944 and January 1945, the team prepared ten carriages full of collection pieces ready to be dispatched.⁷¹ On 9 December 1944, on the corner of the Jerozolimskie Avenue and Nowy Świat Street on their way to work the Museum group came under fire from the side of the Praga District. One of the team members was shot, several injured, among them Morawiński. Having been shot on the knee, which posed the threat of limb amputation, prevented him from further efforts to save cultural goods during WWII. He was taken to the County Hospital in Pruszków where he stayed until 19 January 1945.⁷² The Pruszków Action ended on 14 January 1945, thus closing the chapter of saving cultural goods during warfare. Janina Boczowska-Gebethner wrote in her memoirs that MNW



9. Description of Adrian Brouwer's painting Interior of a Tavern from the Branicki tenement house at 40 Smolna Street made by J. Morawiński for underground records MNW, Incomplete File of Artworks Taken during the Occupation by the Germans, Property of the National Museum and Deposits

was at that time *the only institution which not only was able to fulfil the responsibility of taking care of art works, (...) but was also willing to fulfil this responsibility.*⁷³ Indeed, the National Museum in Warsaw played such an important role in saving Polish cultural heritage thanks to its employees: people courageous, willing to sacrifice, hardworking, and determined. Jan Morawiński was undoubtedly such a man. He initiated a new chapter of saving historic monument in January 1945, however, this is the topic for another story.

Abstract: *Notes of a Curator at the National Museum* published in 1970 in the second volume of the book *Struggle for Cultural Goods* is the only generally available testimony to saving the Wilanów historic monuments by Jan Morawiński, a forgotten hero from the times of WWII. Additionally priceless because of Morawiński documenting the looting of 137 paintings belonging to the pre-WWII Branicki collection at Wilanów. The above-mentioned *Notes* were published by the Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy after the manuscript kept in the private archive of the author's daughter Agnieszka Morawińska. The notes, however, resemble pieces of paper torn from a notebook in which an earlier chapter is missing. The missing chapter does exist, yet for unknown reasons was omitted in the two-volume *Struggle for Cultural Goods*.

Warsaw 1939–1945 edited by Prof. Stanisław Lorentz.

The present paper is based on Morawiński's hand-written testimony, supported by archival sources and recollections of his colleagues from the National Museum in Warsaw (MNW). From August 1939 to August 1944, Jan Morawiński, together with others, was involved in saving precious museum exhibits in the Museum building, but also throughout Warsaw. He was involved in packing the historic monuments into crates which were to help them survive the toughest times, and he helped to put out fires at the Museum, risking his own life. Moreover, he rescued the Royal Castle collections during the hardest bombing of Warsaw, transporting them to the storages in Warsaw's Jerozolimskie Avenue. For his dedication he was awarded

the *Virtuti Militari* Cross of the 5th class by Gen. Juliusz Rómmel.

After Warsaw's surrender, he was assigned Head of MNW's storerooms and inventories: when Director Lorentz was absent, he acted as his deputy. In the first period of the Nazi occupation he courageously faced German officials. Furthermore, he headed the clandestine action of inventorying and documenting German destructions and plundering. The knowledge amassed in this way was extremely helpful

in the restitution of the looted historic monuments, not only museum ones. He also contributed to documenting the destruction of the Warsaw Castle. Imprisoned by the Nazis, he went through Gestapo's hands at Daniłowiczowska Street in Warsaw. Later on, he became manager of the Museum of Old Warsaw in the Old Town, at the same time acting as a guardian of the Wilanów collection. Following the defeat of the Warsaw Uprising, he participated in the so-called Pruszków Action in whose course he was badly injured.

Keywords: Jan Morawiński, National Museum in Warsaw, Wilanów collection, Royal Castle in Warsaw, plunder of art works.

Endnotes

- ¹ J. Morawiński, *Notatki kustosa Muzeum Narodowego [Notes of a Curator at the National Museum]*, in: *Walka o dobra kultury [Struggle for Cultural Goods]*, Warszawa 1970, Vol. 2, pp. 167-178. The *Notes* are two documents: the first dated 25 October 1944 describing the destruction of the Wilanów Palace conducted in early August 1944; the second *Zeznanie dotyczące szkód wyrządzonych w zbiorach Muzeum Wilanowskiego w czasie od 4 sierpnia 1944 do 19 stycznia 1945 r.* [Testimony to the Damage Inflicted to the Collections of the Wilanów Museum from 4 August 1944 to 19 January 1945], containing the list of paintings taken from Wilanów by the Germans on 31 October 1944.
- ² M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie' (below 'RMNW') 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 357-374; S. Gebethner, *Wspomnienia z okupacji [Recollections of the Nazi Occupation Period]*, 'RMNW' 1967, Vol. XI, pp. 225-268; J. Kojecki, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 354-357; S. Kozakiewicz, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 348-354; idem, *Wspomnienia z okresu wojny, okupacji i pierwszych miesięcy po wyzwoleniu (1939-1945) [Recollections of the Period of the War, Occupation, and the First Months after the Liberation (1939-1945)]*, 'RMNW' 1967, Vol. XI, pp. 279-298; S. Lorentz, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 335-344; B. Marconi, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 379-381; idem, *Wspomnienia z lat 1939-1945 [Recollections from 1939-1945]*, 'RMNW' 1967, Vol. XI, pp. 269-277; M. Mrozińska, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, p. 382, eadem, *Wspomnienia z czasów okupacji [Recollections of the Nazi Occupation Period]*, 'RMNW' 1966, Vol. X, pp. 519-527; J. Sienkiewicz, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum Narodowym [Recollections of the National Museum]*, 'RMNW' 1965, Vol. IX, pp. 344-348.
- ³ K. Streicher, *Dziennik wypadków [Diary of Events]*, Vols. 1-2, Kraków 2002; R. Jarocki, *Rozmowy z Lorentzem [Talking to Lorentz]*, Warszawa 1981.
- ⁴ Jan Morawiński was born on 6 February 1907 in the village of Moczydło, at the time part of Kąty Commune, Grójec County, as the sixth youngest child of Franciszka née Łuczak and Piotr Morawiński. He went to a primary school in Góra Kalwaria which he finished in June 1917. He graduated from a secondary school in Warsaw, despite great financial shortages of his family. In the school year 1924/1925 he passed the final secondary school exam at the Warsaw Wojciech Górski Secondary School, following which he decided to become a priest. After his final school exam, he studied at the University of Warsaw: Old Christian art under Father Prof. Paweł Stygier at the Theological Department and parallel to it history of art at the Humanist Department under Prof. Zygmunt Batowski which he graduated from with the MA title in 1931. Between 1 May 1930 and 1 August 1938, he was a Major in the Field Curia of the Polish Army serving as chaplain of the 1st Regiment of Light Cavalry of Józef Piłsudski. He left the clergy in 1938, see: Documents in Agnieszka Morawińska's Archives (below AM Archives), Cat. No. 12/41, pp. 155-156; Archives of the National Museum in Warsaw (below as AMNW), Cat. No. 12/41, pp. 155-156; Z. Rewski, *Jan Morawiński 6.II.1907-13.XII.1949 [Jan Morawiński. 6 February 1907-13 December 1949]*, 'Biuletyn Historii Sztuki' 1951, Vol. XIII, fasc. 4, p. 207; *Polski Słownik Biograficzny [Polish Biographical Dictionary]*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław etc. 1976, Vol. XXI, p. 659.
- ⁵ E.g., J. Morawiński, [life story fragment] describing his activity in 1939-1 August 1944, Agnieszka Morawińska's collection: AM Archives.
- ⁶ The story has been divided into two parts. In the first one, I describe Morawiński during the Nazi occupation period, in the second as the repossessor.
- ⁷ Jerzy Sienkiewicz (1897-1960), art historian, MNW curator in 1937-1949.
- ⁸ J. Sienkiewicz, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 344. In view of the lack of clear directives of the state and municipal authorities, the decision was not made to evacuate the collection out of Warsaw.
- ⁹ Maria Friedel-Bogucka (1909-1984), MNW assistant during WWII.
- ¹⁰ M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 359.
- ¹¹ Files of the Inventory Department of MNW (below as MNW Inventory Department), Portfolio of the Raczyńskich, Cat. No. 104/DD.
- ¹² Jerzy Chyczewski (1907-1944), e.g., Pomeranian conservator in 1937-1939, author of the lost *Kroniki Towarzystwa Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych [Chronicle of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts]*, see: R. Olkowski, *Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie (1860-1940; 1948). Zarys historyczny i katalog zbiorów [The Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1860-1940; 1948), Historical Outline and Catalogue of Works]* Warszawa 2020.
- ¹³ Minutes of 2 August 1939, regrettably, the majority of the works from this deposit have not been preserved; Fond: Deposit of the Pomeranian Conservator's Office, MNW Inventory Department, Cat. No. P. Min. Fin.
- ¹⁴ M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 365.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 369.
- ¹⁶ AM Archives, J. Morawiński, [life story fragment], p. 1.

- ¹⁷ S. Lorentz, *Wspomnienie o ratowaniu zabytków i dzieł sztuki we wrześniu 1939 r.* [Recollections of Saving Historic Monuments and Artworks in September 1939], in: *Cywilna obrona Warszawy we wrześniu 1939 r. Dokumenty, materiały prasowe, wspomnienia i relacje* [Civil Defence of Warsaw in September 1939. Documents, Press Materials, Recollections, and Accounts], Warszawa 1964, p. 267.
- ¹⁸ S. Kozakiewicz, *Wspomnienia o...*, s. 351.
- ¹⁹ H. Pawłowicz, *Okupacyjne dzieje samorządu Warszawy* [History of Warsaw's Local Authorities during the Nazi Occupation], Warszawa 1974, p. 127.
- ²⁰ M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 365.
- ²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 369, also S. Kozakiewicz, *Memories of the Museum...*, p. 351. Morawiński mentioned the deaths of four people and six injured during the operation.
- ²² J. Rómmel, *Relacja o działalności instytucji i agend cywilnej obrony Warszawy* [Report on the Activity of Institutions and Agendas of Warsaw's Civil Defence], in: *Cywilna obrona Warszawy...* p. 369.
- ²³ *The third day of the capitulation... Major Kniaziołudzki (sic!) came accompanied by several of the Staff of Warsaw's defence, only briefly. Mid-way across the courtyard, he greeted everyone and handed to Director Morawiński the Virtuti Militari Cross Card with which they had been awarded on 28 September, and left. That is how in this way the distinction between the front and the rear was emphasized* – M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 372.
- ²⁴ M. Friedel-Bogucka, *ibid.*, p. 371.
- ²⁵ R. Jarocki, *Rozmowy z...*, p. 189; S. Lorentz, *Wspomnienie o ratowaniu zabytków...*, p. 276.
- ²⁶ S. Gebethner, *Wspomnienia z...*, p. 230.
- ²⁷ See War Archives, 10 portfolios: AMNW, Cat. No. 707/1-10.
- ²⁸ 157 MNW chests and 109 chests with other collections, AMNW Cat. No. 654, p. 6.
- ²⁹ AMNW Cat. No. 654, p. 5; this was part of the Society's own collection and basic paintings; see R. Olkowski, *Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk...*
- ³⁰ B. Marconi, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 380.
- ³¹ J. Sienkiewicz, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 346.
- ³² Dr Josef Mühlmann (1886-1972), Kajetan Mühlmann's step-brother, chief of the northern group for the securing of artworks.
- ³³ S. Gebethner, *Wspomnienia z...*, p. 234.
- ³⁴ On 9-24 October 1940 out of the walls of the Royal Castle architectural elements of the outside sculptures and fragments of the interior stucco and pa interly decoration were pulled out. Over 500 pieces of stone fragments and 205 of the stucco decorations were brought; initially, partially stored in the lapidarium, they were later ordered and protected against further destruction. Additionally, the collection of the Castle Museum made up of architectural fragments, bricks, ceramics, i.e., the finds discovered in the Castle in the course of conservation works, as well as plans and models, the remains of the of the Managements of the State Art Collection: all these were taken to the department of the Museum of Old Warsaw in the Baryczkas' tenement house. – AMNW, Cat. No. 654, p. 7.
- ³⁵ AM Archives, J. Morawiński, [life story fragment], p. 1.
- ³⁶ Central Archive of Modern Records, Ministry of Culture and Art [AAN MKiS], Cat. No. 387/4, k. 53: 'Dr. Josef Mühlmann Tätigkeit in Polen 1939-1945': *on the personal request of Museum officials I have intervened on several occasions when the Gestapo arrested some individuals, and through personal intervention, have succeeded in releasing them. Otherwise, they would not have been spared death, particularly the Museum Deputy Director Dr Morawiński who could be released together with his co-worker.*
- ³⁷ S. Lorentz, *Walka o Zamek 1939-1980* [Struggle for the Castle 1939-1980], Warszawa 1986, p. 18.
- ³⁸ J. Morawiński, Wstęp [Introduction], in: *Antoni Magier, Estetyka Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy* [Antoni Magier. Aesthetics of the Capital City of Warsaw], Warszawa 1963, p. 6. Morawiński's found Magier's manuscript in the ruins of Library of the Zamoyski Entail. He was preparing it for printing throughout all the Nazi occupation period, however, he did not manage to do it. Magier's manuscript compiled by Hanna and Eugeniusz Szwanowski was published in 1963.
- ³⁹ AAN MKiS, Cat. No. 387/34, p. 43.
- ⁴⁰ E.g., the collection of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in the Belvedere Palace.
- ⁴¹ M. Friedel-Bogucka, *Wspomnienia o...*, p. 373. Playing safe, the collections of the Goldberg-Górskis and Bronisław Krystall were inventoried as fictitious donations.
- ⁴² S. Korboński, *Polskie Państwo Podziemne. Przewodnik po Podziemiu z lat 1939-1945* [Polish Underground State. Guide to the Underground from 1939-1945], Warszawa 2008.
- ⁴³ AM Archives, J. Morawiński [life story fragment], p. 1 – several dozen sheets of paper have been preserved; they constitute a precious source for identification of war losses; see *Kartoteka niekompletna dzieł sztuki zabranych w czasie okupacji przez Niemców, własność Muzeum Narodowego oraz depozyty* [Incomplete Files of Art Works, Property of the National Museum and Deposits, Taken by the Germans during the Occupation] at MNW.
- ⁴⁴ *Zygmunt was a master at executing such drawings and was able to render in several plans the most characteristic features of a painting, a candlestick, a cup, or a porcelain figurine. There were many of those sheets of paper, made in fountain pen and blue ink; I made similar, though far less aptly* – S. Kozakiewicz, *Wspomnienia z okresu...*, p. 283.
- ⁴⁵ S. Gebethner, *Wspomnienia z...*, p. 234.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 239.
- ⁴⁷ R. Jarocki, *Rozmowy z...*, p. 232. The frequently published photo of the MNW staff featuring all the enumerated gentlemen is widely known.
- ⁴⁸ Letter of the Government of the General Government of August 4, 1941, AMNW file no. 710a, p. 330.
- ⁴⁹ AMNW Cat. No. 654, p. 10.
- ⁵⁰ S. Kozakiewicz, *Wspomnienia o Muzeum...*, p. 354.
- ⁵¹ AMNW, Cat. No. 690, p. 230.
- ⁵² AMNW, Cat. No. 654, p. 10.
- ⁵³ AMNW, Cat. No. 654, p. 24.
- ⁵⁴ AM Archives, J. Morawiński, [life story fragment], p. 1.

- ⁵⁵ R. Jarocki, *Rozmowy z...*, p. 237.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ AMNW, Cat. No. 654, p. 10.
- ⁵⁸ A. Schellenberg's letter to B. Branicka dated 28 March 1944, AMNW Cat. No. 710a, p. 264.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169: 9 chests with collection pieces were taken in June 1944 to Cracow by J. Mühlmann, at MNW there were 40 paintings brought in 1943.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ J. Morawiński, *Notatki...*, p. 167.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- ⁶⁶ He recovered the remaining part of the Wilanów collection as a result of vindication from the USSR in 1951 and 1956, and also Germany in 1948 – AAN MKiS, Cat. No. 387/54, p. 150.
- ⁶⁷ Adam Stebelski's account AAN MKiS, 387/53, pp. 139-142.
- ⁶⁸ See: P. Majewski, *Akcja pruszkowska. Ochrona zbiorów kulturalnych w powstaniu warszawskim i po jego upadku* [The Pruszków Action, Preservation of Cultural Collections during the Warsaw Uprising and after Its Defeat], 'Rocznik Warszawski' 2004, pp. 201-235.
- ⁶⁹ Stanisław Wachowiak, Deputy President of the Main Charity Council (RGO) recalled: [1 September 1944] *An image straight from Dante's hell. The city is ablaze. In Marszałkowska, Krucza, Makotowska Streets, along which we are going, we are scared that the walls of the houses on fire fall on us. Smoke, whiff, hot ashes, ruins, horror, and atrocity (...)* Notebook 29 October–6 December 1944. AAN, Stanisław and Wanda Wachowiak Fond, Cat. No. 691/15, p. 4.
- ⁷⁰ R. Jarocki, *Rozmowy z...*, p. 263.
- ⁷¹ AAN Stanisław and Wanda Wachowiak Fond, Cat. No. 691/54, p. 107.
- ⁷² J. Morawiński, *Notatki...*, p. 171.
- ⁷³ J. Gebethnerowa, *Warszawa wczoraj, dziś i nigdy* [Warsaw Yesterday, Today, and Never], 'RMNW' 1966, Vol. X, p. 517.

Roman Olkowski

A graduate in history of the University of Gdansk and of the Post-graduate Museological Studies at the University of Warsaw; (1995–2013) he worked for the National Museum in Warsaw, (2010) he became a specialist in provenance research of Museum exhibits, (until March 2012) Deputy Chief Cataloguer, (since 2013) curator and Head of the Collection Department at the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Sulejów; author of the publication *Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie (1860–1940, 1948). Zarys historyczny i katalog zbiorów* [The Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw (1860–1940; 1948), Historical Outline and Catalogue of Works], Vols. 1–3 (MKDNIŚ, Warszawa 2020) and of papers addressing the issue of provenance research of artworks published in: 'Museology', 'Adlojada' and 'Roczniki Sztuki Śląskiej'; he is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in the area of recovering lost works of art; e-mail: r.olkowski@muzeumpilsudski.pl

Word count: 6 624; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 9; **References:** 73

Received: 06.2021; **Reviewed:** 07.2021; **Accepted:** 08.2021; **Published:** 09.2021

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0015.2632

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Competing interests: Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Cite this article as: Olkowski R.; A FORGOTTEN HERO: JAN MORAWIŃSKI (1907–1949). *Muz.*, 2021(62): 220-226

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