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A R T Y K U Ł Y

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PIOTR ZAREMBA (1910–1993). BIOGRAPHY TO BE UNVEILED

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1. Over a quarter of a century has passed since Piotr Zaremba's death. To this day, no book has been written that would give a deeper look at his activity and personality.¹ This may come as a surprise not only because the contribution to the post-war history of Western Pomerania and Szczecin is unquestionable in this case, but also because Zaremba is still arousing an uncommon interest. There is his white and black legend. For some, he is the "Szczecin of the century", a man symbolizing the success of Polish post-war aspirations, an internationally renowned urban

¹ Although there is no published biography of Piotr Zaremba, there are quite a few works that can be helpful in bringing closer the figure and personality of Piotr Zaremba, see e.g. Kazimierz Kozłowski, „Piotr Zaremba – pierwszy prezydent polskiego Szczecina z perspektywy III RP”, in: *Prezydenci Szczecina. Suplement do „Kroniki Szczecina”*, ed. Piotr Chrobak, Kazimierz Kozłowski, Zdzisława Pacała (Szczecin: Szczecińskie Towarzystwo „Pogranicze”, Oficyna Wydawnicza Archiwum Państwowego w Szczecinie „Dokument”, 2014), 9–34; Kazimierz Kozłowski, „Dwaj prezydenci polskiego Szczecina i ich czasy”, *Acta Cassubiana XXI* (2019): 143–158; Eryk Krasucki, „O Piotrze Zarembie, jego pamiątkarskim dziele i o tym, co dziś znaczy dla szczecinian”, in: Piotr Zaremba, *Wspomnienia Prezydenta Szczecina. Pierwszy szczeciński rok – 1945* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Księży Młyn, 2016), 7–27; Eryk Krasucki, „Zaremba non-fiction. Kilka refleksji wokół sporu o biografie”, in: *Kronika Szczecina 2012*, ed. Anna Bartczak, Maria Frenkel, Kazimierz Kozłowski (Szczecin: Oficyna Wydawnicza Archiwum Państwowego w Szczecinie „Dokument”, 2013), 199–207; Paweł Zaremba, *Koligacje rodzinne pierwszego prezydenta Szczecina Piotra Zaremby* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Archiwum Państwowego w Szczecinie „Dokument”, 2013).

planner.² Others see him as a careerist, a communist, an informer and a bad president.³ However, such strongly polarised opinions do not provoke new research, and the discussions that occasionally erupt, such as the one about Zaremba's biogram at the Breakthrough Dialogue Centre or the one about the initiative to build his monument, are to a large extent limited to expressing one's convictions, and are certainly not an authentic debate, which is backed by an in-depth knowledge of historical sources.⁴ For this reason, the most popular knowledge carrier for the first President of Szczecin is still his memoirs from the years 1945–1950, published since the 1960s and recently reissued again.⁵ This source is indisputably important, but it has its limitations and – what is most important – refers only to a short moment of a long and extremely rich life.

² The most complete expression of appreciation for Piotr Zaremba was found in the plebiscites announced in 2000: "Szczecin of the Century", organized by the local branches of "Gazeta Wyborcza", Polish Radio and TVP, and "Pomorzanin of Our Times", which was announced by "Głos Szczeciński", "Gazeta Pomorska" and "Głos Pomorza" newspapers. The first president won in them with an overwhelming number of votes, see Joanna Dżaman, ed., *Szczecinianie stulecia*, (Łódź–Szczecin: Friday of the 13th-Agora, 2000); Krystyna Pohl, *70 Nieprzecierzecirzecinych, Pomorzanin Naszych Czasów*, gs24.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://gs24.pl/70-nieprzecierzecirzecinych-pomorzanin-naszych-czasow/ar/5261254>. Respect for Zaremba's achievements is also reflected in the establishment in 2019 of the Social Committee for the Construction of the Monument of the First Polish President of Szczecin, Professor Piotr Zaremba, see Resolution No. 1/2019 of 11 June 2019 on the creation of the Social Committee for the Construction of the Monument of the First Polish President of Szczecin, Professor Piotr Zaremba, held by the author.

³ See, among others, Krzysztof Sałaciński, „Kto zdewastował Szczecin? (kilka pytań do prof. P. Zaremby)”, *Solidarność Szczecińska – 80* 100 (1990), 24: 4; „Zaremba versus Sochański. Dyskusji wysłuchał Wojciech Jachim”, *Gazeta Wyborcza Szczecin*, 22.12.2006, 13–14; Maciej Maciejowski, „Zaremba lukrowany czy rzeczywisty”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 23–25.01.2014, 22.

⁴ Jolanta Kowalewska, *Będzie nowy biogram Piotra Zaremby. Historycy sprawdzą też inne*, 1, szczecin.wyborcza.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,34939,19539399,bedzie-nowy-biogram-piotra-zaremby-historycy-sprawdza-tez-inne.html>; Adam Zadworny, *Zrozumieć Piotra i Pawła (w Centrum Dialogu Przelomy)*, 1, szczecin.wyborcza.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,150424,19550222,zrozumiec-piotra-i-pawla-w-centrum-dialogu-przelomy-komentarz.html>; Eryk Krasucki, *Lista godności i podłości Piotra Zaremby*, 1, szczecin.wyborcza.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,150424,19648139,lista-godnosci-i-podlosci-piotra-zaremby-esej-eryka-krasuckiego.html>; Adam Zadworny, *Protest byłych opozycjonistów przeciwko cenzurze biogramu Piotra Zaremby*, 1, szczecin.wyborcza.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,34939,19753704,protest-bylych-opozycjonistow-przeciwko-cenzurze-biogramu-piotra.html>; Paweł Zaremba, *O biogramie Piotra Zaremby. Oświadczenie syna pierwszego prezydenta*, 1, szczecin.wyborcza.pl, accessed 10.05.2020, <https://szczecin.wyborcza.pl/szczecin/1,34939,19784833,o-biogramie-piotra-zaremby-oswiadczenie-syna-pierwszego-prezydenta.html>.

⁵ Piotr Zaremba, *Wspomnienia Prezydenta Szczecina 1945–1950* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1980); Piotr Zaremba, *Wspomnienia Prezydenta Szczecina. Pierwszy*.

What are the reasons why Piotr Zaremba should have an extensive biography? This is not only due to his visible, almost 50 years of presence in the social and political life of Western Pomerania. After all, it is known that contemporary biographies may concern people who have not had contact with the so-called great history and the story of their lives is often something of a servant, which includes an attempt to reflect on the epoch and its conditions, the human or family situation at that time, may finally be a testimony. Zaremba's biography combines both perspectives. It would therefore be a story about a man who made history, the one by big H, as well as about a person connected with his time, in whose fate a certain truth about the epoch in which he lived. Synthetic images relating to the life of a long-time professor at the Szczecin University of Technology have not, so far, gone beyond standardized encyclopaedic notes.⁶ This gave rise to a misleading feeling that we are dealing with someone whose life is banally "flat": he was born somewhere, lived somewhere, did something, directed something, taught something, wrote, spoke, was rewarded, and finally died. His personality was completely lost here, the era and all the colours that should accompany the description of the life of a person who has left a huge legacy – material and symbolic – and who still arouses passionate disputes.

In order not to be vindictive, but also to avoid overly synthetic discussion of the whole biography of Piotr Zaremba, I would like to point out only three threads that make it possible to realize how much cognitive potential is hidden in it. I would like to point out straight away that I choose less unobvious "threads", although actually in relation to this biography, almost all of them are such, maybe apart from the history of the five-year presidency, although there are still many issues that are not reflected in literature. My proposals are closed in three themes: a. Family Zaremba; b. Urban planner with an international position; c. Consistent statesman. Through these themes I want to show how important problems concerning the 20th century history of Poland and the world can be touched by the biography of Piotr Zaremba, among them the issues related to emigration and its difficult choices, the problems of local and global urban planning, and finally, the question of what it meant to be a state ruler in relation to a large part of the

⁶ See e.g. Kazimierz Kozłowski, Stanisław Latour, *Piotr Zaremba. Prezydent*, in: Dżaman, *Szczecinianie*, 11–12; Wojciech Banaszek, *Pierwszy polski prezydent Szczecina*, sedina.pl, accessed 11.05.2020, <http://sedina.pl/wordpress/index.php/2006/10/18/pierwszy-polski-prezydent-szczecina-1/>; Wojciech Pęski, *Zaremba Piotr*, in: *Encyklopedia Szczecina*, ed. Tadeusz Białęcki (Szczecin: Szczecińskie Towarzystwo Kultury, 2015), 1259.

previous century, dynamic and full of situations not obvious from the point of view of various doctrines and ideologies.

This text also aims at analysing the reasons why serious biographical reflection in relation to Piotr Zaremba does not exist, despite the fact that he is an emblematic figure for Szczecin and Western Pomerania. I will be examining the reasons for this state of affairs. I will also examine whether this focus is exceptional for the West Pomeranian biography, so my text will also try – although only to a cursory extent – to analyse the state of biographic writing in relation to people relevant to the post-war history of the region. This, I believe to be a particularly justified question in a situation where biography – after years of neglect in this area – has for some time become an extremely popular genre of historical writing in Poland, giving historians with their messages the unique opportunity to go far beyond the field set by academic circles.⁷

2. When I write about family matters, I mean not so much what is connected with widely understood genealogical issues, but above all what is connected with Piotr Zaremba's functioning in the family environment, both before and after World War II. Admittedly, Paweł Zaremba, the President's younger son, wrote that: "the obligatory home reading, as I remember from my childhood, was the family tree,"⁸ which the president patiently and carefully complemented over the years with the help of his loved ones, but stories dating back to the Middle Ages and some mythical Gedeon, son of Thomir from Stieg and Alfilda, can do very little to help understand the biography of a man living in the 20th century. Of course, they should be taken into account, this is part of a phenomenon that can be called after the German philosophers of *Weltanschauung* or "intellectual eyewitness", but we should also be aware that in this case we are dealing with intellectual fun rather than something that can significantly broaden our knowledge of the man we are interested in.⁹

⁷ See Jolanta Kolbuszewska, Rafał Stobiecki, Introduction to *Biografistyka we współczesnych badaniach historycznych. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. Jolanta Kolbuszewska, Rafał Stobiecki (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2017), 7–9.

⁸ Paweł Zaremba, *Koligacje*, 21.

⁹ Genealogical "games" were dealt with by several people in the Zaremba family, which is confirmed by the letter of Piotr Zaremba's cousin, Jerzy, called "Lubelski" in the family, to distinguish him from Jerzy Zaremba – the older brother of the first president of Szczecin: "I'm still in correspondence with Andrzej now, I'm making this exception because I'm sending him news about the family, he's interested in it and he's making copies for Jerzy. I have a lot of these data today and, apart from the necessary gainful activities, I sit at home, read and prepare my notes, at

I admit that other sentences from the cited publication by Paweł Zaremba are much more inspiring, namely, those where he synthesizes, several hundred years of his family history, with a special emphasis on what happened in an era which has been assumed to be called differently: the age of the Holocaust, the century of peoples' wandering, or a difficult or unpleasant age. Piotr Zaremba's son writes about a family "flooded and pushed through European history. The roots of the family are deeply rooted in Wielkopolska, which is making its pilgrimage with the persistent aim of returning to its roots, passed down from generation to generation. She meets other families, equally experienced by the fate of Italy, France and Germany, on her way and joins them. Hence: For a family, the pre-partition period is a time of blossoming and splendour. The period of partitions is a time of fall and wandering, of one's own and not one's own will. The Great War period is a time of heroic struggle for the state. The inter-war period is a time of dreamlike return to the roots, marked by the stigma of internal disputes. The Second World War is a time of struggle for survival and wandering. The post-war period is a time of life scattered on both sides of the Iron Curtain."¹⁰

In these few sentences, a number of issues have been outlined, in reference to the biography of Piotr Zaremba, not touched at all so far. However, the extremely plastic-sounding formula about "a family flooded and pushed through the history of Europe" is not only a metaphor, but also a concrete one, which is reflected in documents, letters and various notes, e.g. in this memory of Piotr Zaremba concerning his departure from Russia in the first days of November 1918: "We're going on a long train. Mom, Pawelek, me and Alusia. We get off and pull things – some old grandfather helps us. The crowd in the hall, the trains are still not going. We wait a long time. Then mom comes and we go through the tracks for a long time, long time to the house of some railwayman. There I drink tea and sleep. Then we go somewhere again, and things go by car. Through the road the barriers and gates. They watch everything in our luggage. They even cut through my toy dog. Then it's dark. The barrier rises and again [the word illegible], but others scream too. We move quickly to the 'German' side."¹¹

least let me have this benefit", State Archive in Szczecin (Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie) (hereinafter: APSz), Legacy of Piotr Zaremba (Spuścizna Piotra Zaremby), signature (hereinafter: sygn.) 1050, Letter from Jerzy Zaremba (so called „lubelski”) to Piotr Zaremba, Lublin, April 22, 1957.

¹⁰ Paweł Zaremba, *Koligacje*, 21.

¹¹ Archive of Piotr Zaremba's family (Archiwum rodziny Piotra Zaremby) (hereinafter: ARPZ), Memoirs since 1913, no. 20, written down in 1971.

These sentences were written down by Piotr Zaremba after many decades, during his holiday in Wisła in 1971, but they are saturated with the excitement of an infant excited about his journey. At the same time, they have been marked by the awareness of a middle aged man who realizes how important in life are the moments of transition, these markers, the passing of which brings an irreversible change. They may concern great and small issues, historically significant from the point of view of the state and nation, but they may also touch upon trivial issues, though important in an individual assessment. This is also the case in the described case: in a moment Poland will regain its independence, and the Zaremba family is going where they can feel at home again. Although temporarily ‘disembodied’ – Piotr’s father and brother, Jerzy, have been serving in the ‘blue army’ of General Józef Haller for several months – they are relieved to see the change taking place. It is a transition between the world of revolution and chaos, towards a space of order, temporarily only called “German”. There have been many similar passages in Piotr Zaremba’s life (including the move to Poznań in 1926; the choice of Lviv as a place of study in 1930; the decision to move to Szczecin made during the war and accept the post of city president in 1945; the decision to leave for North Korea in 1954). He noticed all of them, meticulously noted them and tried to understand their far-reaching meaning.

Almost always at these moments, matters closest to him, strongly connected with his family, were also important. Of course, it is difficult to determine whether it was really in the centre of his world, but some issues are not in doubt. For example, when in 1971 Piotr Zaremba, in an attempt to sum up his life to date, wrote down a set of the most important dates in his life, many of them concerned family issues: issues related to his wife and children (“the most important chance of life”, “dates that give me much of a joy”). Especially the extensive correspondence that he had for “decades” with his brothers, wife, children, and close and distant relatives brought in a lot of information about how important family was to the reality of the first president of Szczecin. This happened regardless of the moment and conditions in which Zaremba was located. For example, letters to his wife Barbara, which he sent in April 1945, despite extremely unfavourable circumstances and with virtually no certainty that they would reach their addressee.¹²

¹² ARPZ, Letters from Piotr Zaremba to his wife Barbara, April 15–29, 1945.

In the case of the professor's biography, family correspondence is a documentation almost completely undiscovered.¹³ Apart from a few excerpts quoted by his son in his valuable publication, there has been no insight into what it contains. And these are documents of paramount importance, illuminating the life of Piotr Zaremba as well as his family environment. Particularly noteworthy are the post-war letters from the brothers Jerzy and Paweł; the siblings returned to regular correspondence in 1956. This is significant because it shows how important this year was in the life of many Poles. It abolished the fear, impossibility and complete cutting off of brothers and sisters living in exile. Although they met in 1946, they remained silent, knowing nothing about each other and what was happening to them. The political "thaw" was thus the beginning of a long-term exchange of letters, allowing the reader to learn about the specificity of everyday life in exile, but also about the permanence of family ties, loyalty and feelings. There is not much politics in these letters, at any rate, that would be expressed directly. It is hidden between the poems, in understatements and atmosphere, it is a certain addition to the family saga, which, however, is entirely embedded in a great history. These poignant, sometimes funny epistolary testimonies can be supplemented by other sources. A good example are the completely unknown in Poland memories of Eve Zaremba, the daughter of Jerzy, the niece of the President of Szczecin, who gained great popularity in Canada as an author of¹⁴ crime novels.

Although it would sound paradoxical, the deep relationship with younger brother Paul is also reflected in the material that has evoked the most emotions in recent years, i.e. documents collected by the Security Service on the occasion of cases code-named "Emir" and "Academic".¹⁵ Careful reading of them, combined with knowledge of letters and family messages, allows us to see that, yes, both brothers participated in the game proposed by the secret police, but it takes place on their terms. The status of Piotr Zaremba, which he gained in the People's Republic of Poland, through his work and political involvement, allowed him to run the game without much concern for his career. For Paweł – the Security Service wanted to bring him back to Poland – the situation was certainly intellectually

¹³ A large part of Piotr Zaremba's private correspondence is located in his legacy in the State Archive in Szczecin, the rest of the letters are owned by his family.

¹⁴ Eve Zaremba, *The Broad Side. Reflections on a Long Life* (Ontario: Insomniac Press, 2015).

¹⁵ See the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej) (hereinafter: AIPN), sign. BU 01592/40/Jacket, Piotr Zaremba, 1975–1987; AIPN, sign. BU 01263/597/Jacket, Code-named "Emir", 1960–1979.

very interesting. He is coaxed by the services of the People's Republic of Poland, who make him an offer, but this happens when he does not have to succumb to any temptations. His life in the professional and private sense is fully stabilised at that moment, although it could probably be more satisfying in terms of writing, as Paweł Zaremba has repeatedly mentioned in his letters. But this is another matter. So SB has no "carrot", anything that could make its offer really attractive, but its officers do not know about it.

Perhaps somehow they have gained information that Piotr is convinced that his younger brother is wasting his talent in the West, that he could do much better in Poland – both writing and university. Perhaps. But it is also necessary to know that each of the Zaremba brothers maintained his inner integrity, was himself "the rudder and ship", and that the choices made by one were absolutely respected by the other. Even if the game that they are playing with the SB is not fully understood today, it is far from the zero-one interpretation proposed a few years ago, where money and other low motives played the main role.¹⁶ There are far more family dependencies than politics in these contacts, and the documentation that has been produced makes it clear that detaching it from its personal context precludes any meaningful conclusion. This observation applies, of course, not only to the operational matters of the "Emir" and "Academician", but should be applied in virtually every case where we are dealing with such "sensitive" issues. This is not always possible, but in this case, it is all the more, surprising is the scale of the controversy that has arisen years ago in connection with the whole matter.

3. Similarly, in too simple a way, it seems, there was an account of Piotr Zaremba's urban achievements. This remark refers especially to Szczecin, where one actually forgets what the basic professional occupation of the first president was. In the capital of Western Pomerania, he is still for many (most of them?) an architect, not an urban planner; one can even sometimes get the impression, listening to various remarks about him, that the main field of his professional activity was just only Szczecin itself. This is completely untrue. In the hall of the Zarembów house at 27 Wyspiańskiego Street there was a wall map of the world at a scale of 1:30 million, on which all of the hero's professional journeys were drawn. The densities of lines running from Poland in various directions show not

¹⁶ Krzysztof Tarka, „Pawła Zaremby „gra” z wywiadem PRL”, *Zeszyty Historyczne (Paryż)* 168 (2009): 140–152.

only the geographical range of his activity, but also, to some extent, the scale of its oblivion today.

Although this may not be particularly surprising that, after all, the “my home is my castle” approach was prioritised as local issues often overshadowed the global ones. Thus, Zaremba has been connected nowadays with the decisions of the 1940s and 1950s concerning the reconstruction and rebuilding of the city, accusing him of abandoning the conservation of the surviving buildings and infrastructure (sometimes there is even a claim that Szczecin abandoned any form of protection and renewal of what was left of the pre-war urban structure!) and of allowing for a theft-based economy, which caused the city to lose, among others, several representative buildings. The exemplification of these accusations can be found in the text published in 1990 by the architect Krzysztof Sałaciński *Kto zdewastował Szczecin (kilka pytań do prof. P. Zaremby)* (transl. *Who devastated Szczecin (several questions to Professor P. Zaremba)*). The author addresses the following questions to Piotr Zaremba: “1. Do you still consider your concept of the Nadodrże Boulevard to be correct? So many years have passed and this boulevard still leads nowhere (that is, from the station to the Chrobry Embankment – and it was supposed to be a fast route connecting Gryfino with the Police). The specialists consider this concept to be wrong, all the more so, as it caused the city to turn away from the river. 2. Even if we were to assume that the construction of this artery was necessary for Szczecin, why was the whole Podzamcze, and not only its part, through which the artery was to run, liquidated? 3. What happened to (...) studies showing the state of war damage in the Old Town? Do you not have any materials on this subject in your private collections? 4. Did you make the decision to level the described area with the ground on your own or as a result of, top-down inspiration or pressure.”¹⁷ The tone of this article, the use of such terms as “barbaric and shameful” the strategy of conduct and the application of a peculiar form of discourse (“We do not count on Mr. Piotr Zaremba to answer these few questions”), a lot speaks by itself of how unceremoniously they referred in the beginning of the transformation to everything that happened in the first post-war years and in the period of communism in Poland. Zaremba is not a discussion partner here, he is put in the position of a “boy to be beaten” and pointed out his submissiveness, inaction, bad will and what else is possible. There is actually no

¹⁷ Sałaciński, „Kto”, 4.

place for an informed discussion in all this. At least it seems to be a one-sided and closed for any debates view.

However, Zaremba reacted and answered Sałaciński's accusations in a matter of fact, although it can be assumed that it was not only to the architect in question that the answer was addressed. By the way, one can add that in the archival legacy of the first president one can find a lot of various polemics, sometimes referring to trivial, or sometimes first-rate matters, as in the case discussed. Thus, he reminded us about the possibilities of the post-war period and the trends in world urban planning and architecture of that time. He referred to economics and politics; matters that were important after all, but at a temporary distance difficult to see, especially with such a critical attitude that was characteristic of his adversary. Clearly irritated by the categorically preposterous changes and a certain amount of absurdity of the charges, he asked: "– For if there was no reconstruction and maintenance – where did Poles live in Szczecin, whose number increased from 25,000 at the end of 1945 to 132,000 at the end of 1947? – If there was no reconstruction of schools where children were taught, whose number increased from 200 in September 1945 to 9,200 in September 1947? – If there was no reconstruction of the surviving city infrastructure, how could Szczecin have drawn more than one million cubic metres of water at the end of 1947 and obtained 980,000 cubic metres of gas from its own reconstructed gasworks through the city? – If there was no reconstruction of the technical infrastructure, how did it happen that at the end of 1945 there were 12 km of tram lines in operation, which reached 34 km in 1947?"¹⁸

In the second part of his interview, Zaremba explained the motives behind the construction of the Nadodrzańska Artery, while negating the supposition in Sałaciński's text that the expansion of this route of communication caused the destruction of large fragments of the Szczecin Podzamcze. He accused his adversary of lacking historical knowledge about the state of destruction in this part of the city, but also of a lot of bad will in understanding the intentions behind the project. He stressed that the plans of that time went beyond simple thinking about reconstruction, as they were an attempt to shift Szczecin's current, westward development axis to the north-south direction, definitely more beneficial from the point of view of both the agglomeration and state interests. Zaremba was certainly right, but the point is that several decades after the war, in a situation

¹⁸ APSz, Legacy of Piotra Zaremba, sign. 62, Piotr Zaremba, „Szczecińska przeszłość i przyszłość (insynuacje i prawda)”, July 31, 1990 [no pagination].

where other components of the original plan could not be realised for various reasons (not because of Zaremba!), this original intention, which was to connect the priority areas of the agglomeration and ensure good communication between the northern parts of the city and the port and the country, ceased to be readable, and the author of the project may not have been fully aware of¹⁹ it. Therefore, he might have been surprised, probably also irritated, by the constant talk about moving the city away from the Oder River, a fact which is difficult to deny regardless of the interpretation of the motives behind the artery designers. No one was especially interested in the fact that similar diametrical solutions were willingly used in Poland (e.g. in Łódź) and in the West (e.g. in Paris)²⁰ at that time.

Looking at Piotr Zaremba's polemics after many years, its vastness and strongly didactic character, one has an impression that the author is trying to gather all accusations against him, and with his answer he closes the discussion about his Szczecin urban development achievements. For him, it is a kind of summary of matters about which he wrote and spoke many times, but which were either forgotten or reinterpreted in the spirit of political change taking place in Poland. It was certainly not an easy text for him, not only because of the form in which the discourse addressed him, but also because at that time (and for a long time, which resulted from the definition of his profession) he was more interested in the future than in the past. "Society [he wrote] is already tired of babbling around in the past, it waited in 1990 for a clear formulation of new prospects for the development of its city – region – country. This is the basis for the basic, servant duty of the Polish press, although it is much easier to deny than to create, as exemplified by the statement just discussed."²¹ For Piotr Zaremba, this leaning towards the future is not just a rhetorical trick. It is followed by the presentation of several issues which, in his opinion, require serious consideration at this time. They are sometimes formulated in general terms, sometimes in more detail, but

¹⁹ See Zaremba, *Wspomnienia*, 421. On the reconstruction of Szczecin e.g. Bogdana Kozińska, „Neue Stadtstrukturen und Symbole des Neuanfangs in Stettin. Die sozialistische Stadt im Gefüge historisch gewachsener Städte”, in: *Die Schleifung. Zerstörung und wiederaufbau historischer Bauten in Deutschland und Polen*, ed. Dieter Bingen, Hans-Martin Hinz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 66–79; Jan Musekamp, *Między Stettinem a Szczecinem. Metamorfozy miasta w latach 1945–2005*, (Poznań: Nauka i Innowacje, 2013).

²⁰ See Paweł Zaremba, Konrad Zaremba, „Rola inżyniera Piotra Zaremby, pierwszego prezydenta Szczecina, w koncepcji odbudowy miasta”, typed script owned by the author.

²¹ APSz, Legacy of Piotr Zaremba, sign. 62, Piotr Zaremba, „Szczecińska przeszłość i przyszłość (insynuacje i prawda)”, July 31, 1990 [no pagination].

each of them, looking from today's perspective, brings with it a significance that goes beyond what is current. So the professor writes about ecology and greenery, the city and local government, transport and tourism, also about the Oder and the port. In the last case he writes: "the service of Berlin by the port of Szczecin; the city as co-owner and user of the port; the economic and spatial relationship of the city with the port; special economic zones in the port and in the city."²² Piotr Zaremba's several years of involvement in the creation of the Special Economic Zone in the Oder Mouth Region (the idea failed, unfortunately, as a result of a lack of political agreement at the regional level) may be an example of the fact that after the political transformation of 1989, his enthusiasm and energy sought an outlet in new and original projects.²³

The discomfort of responding to the various "Szczecin hoaxes" can also be associated with the fact that for many decades, at least since the mid 1950s, Piotr Zaremba's field of interest has been far removed from the local ones. Alicja Gzowska and Piotr Bujas, Warsaw art historians from the University of Warsaw, who analyze the achievements of the urban character of this text, inscribe him in the context of international research aimed at creating supranational structures in architecture, urban planning, also in the economy, which serve to exchange experiences and support sustainable development in developing countries, often referred to at the time as the Third World countries.²⁴ The Cold War policy behind this is obvious – e.g. in the conclusion of a text written after his first visit to Korea, Zaremba writes: "We believe that we will be able to help the liberated peaceful countries of Asia to build their new, best possible free future"²⁵ – but his activity was not in fact different from what was done at the time in London at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, at the University of Liverpool or at the Institute of Housing Studies in Rotterdam.²⁶ The most important element of this informal transnational project was the Study of Urban Planning and Regional

²² Ibidem.

²³ ARPZ, Collection of documents related to the establishment of the Special Economic Zone in the Odra Mouth Region, 1985–1990 [no pagination].

²⁴ Alicja Gzowska, „Piotr Zaremba – szczeciński urbanista o światowym rozmachu „, lecture at TRAF0 Trafostacji Sztuki in Szczecin, 27 October 2018.

²⁵ Piotr Zaremba, „Metodyka pracy urbanistycznej w Korei”, *Miasto 3* (1956): 32.

²⁶ Piotr Bujas, Alicja Gzowska, „New Agencies: Convergent Frameworks of Research and Architectural Design”, in: *Re-Scaling the Environment: New Landscapes of Design, 1960–1980*, vol. 2: *East West Central Re-Building Europe, 1950–1990*, ed. Ákos Moravánszky, Karl R. Kegler (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017), 299–300.

Planning of Developing Countries, operating at the Szczecin University of Technology in 1966–1998 and most of the time under the management of Zaremba. They are sometimes referred to as “Szczecin export product”.²⁷ The figures speak for themselves: nearly 500 graduates from 47 countries in Africa, South America and Asia (the largest number of students came from Egypt, India and Mexico).

The general objectives of the study are defined as follows: “a. to offer theoretical knowledge based on the latest methodological achievements; b. to adapt the programme to the current situation of developing countries; c. to implement to work in multidisciplinary teams; d. to present Polish achievements in the field of spatial planning.”²⁸ The thematic scope formulated in this way allowed for the acquisition of general knowledge, serving to quickly “transplant” it in relation to the countries from which the students came from. Also the presentation of Polish achievements was not accidental in all this. The idea of establishing the study was based on the conviction that the Polish experience related to the post-war reconstruction may prove particularly valuable for “young” and not very wealthy countries. It should be reminded that the post-war planning activity was based on the theory of directional urban planning, which gave urban organisms a chance for fast and desirable development, despite the scarcity of financial and organisational resources and the lack of properly educated staff. Wojciech Pęski, one of many students of Piotr Zaremba, who is not afraid to call him one of the most eminent urban planners of the 20th century, wrote that the method used at the time “consisted in determining long-term spatial-functional alternatives and choosing the one that best met the conditions for sustained development.”²⁹ By the way, it can be noted that the achievements of Polish urban planning from the 1940s, which after 1989 was considered to be unequivocally subordinated to ideological goals, or at best not very interesting (although its roots lie in the 20th century), are nowadays the subject of important studies and debates.³⁰

²⁷ Alicja Gzowska, „Szczeciński produkt eksportowy, czyli jak zrobić miasto?”, *Stettiner* 3 (2013): 104–109.

²⁸ Krystyna Mieszkowska, „Podyplomowe Studium Urbanistyki i Planowania Regionalnego dla Krajów Rozwijających się 1966–1990 / Postgraduate Course of Town and Regional Planning for Developing Countries 1966–1990”, *Przestrzeń & Forma / Space & Form* 22 (2014), 3: 190, 196.

²⁹ Wojciech Pęski, „Aktualność idei oraz prac prof. Piotra Zaremby”, *Przestrzeń & Forma* 10 (2008): 91.

³⁰ See e.g. Andrzej Skalimowski, *Sigalin. Towarzysz odbudowy* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2018); Grzegorz Piątek, *Najlepsze miasto świata. Warszawa w odbudowie 1944–1949* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2020).

A characteristic feature of the Szczecin study was that great importance was attached to mastering practical team design skills. This was a strong inspiration for Piotr Zaremba, who had always attached great importance to “first things”, as is shown by his notebooks and notebooks from his studies at the Lviv Polytechnic.³¹ As early as the 1960s he wrote that “design classes, based on solid theoretical preparation, allow urban planners from various countries to implement themselves into interdisciplinary design work, enabling them to establish international, professional contacts.”³² Being a holistic approach to spatial design was the source of the study’s success, in addition to being available for study. Cooperation is one thing, but each of the students had a chance to implement their own ideas, because in the final stage of their studies, the students focused on individual work. Interestingly, most of them focused on developing ecological and social problems in spatial planning, on the analysis of regional settlement systems in coastal areas, and on designing urban spatial structures. It is not difficult to notice that each of the issues mentioned above was a derivative of the scientific and practical interests of Piotr Zaremba and the approach which today is referred to as sustainable development management, i.e. such an arrangement of space which will not exclude the realisation of aspirations and ideas of subsequent generations.³³

It is a truism to say that Szczecin’s study would not have been possible without Piotr Zaremba, although obviously the selection of staff and the involvement of such researchers as Halina Orlińska, Jerzy Piątkiewicz, Bronisław Sekuła, Jerzy Byrecki, Leszek Czernik, Liliana Kamińska, Krystyna Mieszkowska and Wojciech Pęski also played a great role in the success of this idea. However, the initiative was based on the direct experience – referring to the years 1954–1964 – resulting from Zaremba’s numerous trips to such countries as North Korea, China, Ghana or Vietnam. He was there, sometimes for many months, as an expert and advisor on spatial planning issues and as a visiting professor.³⁴ This was only the beginning of his international adventure and the list created in 1989 on the occasion of Piotr Zaremba’s candidacy for the Third World Prize awarded

³¹ APSz, Legacy of Piotr Zaremba, sign. 10–13, Notebooks with notes from the period of studies at the Lviv Polytechnic 1928–1933.

³² Piotr Zaremba, „Studia podyplomowe w zakresie planowania przestrzennego dla słuchaczy krajów rozwijających się”, *Życie Szkoły Wyższej* 10 (1966): 42–43.

³³ Wojciech Pęski, *Zarządzanie zrównoważonym rozwojem miast* (Warszawa: Arkady, 1999).

³⁴ APSz, Legacy of Piotr Zaremba, sign. 4, Scientific resume prepared for Piotr Zaremba’s application to UNESCO Scientific Prize for Exceptional Contributions to Scientific and Technical Progress, April 15, 1983, 5–7.

by the Board of Trustees the Third World Foundation, funded by the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, includes 54 scientific trips as a lecturer at foreign universities and institutes (including the University of Ghana and Vietnam). There are also 14 trips as an advisor and expert (including Libya, China, the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Iraq, Mexico, France, the United States and the Soviet Union).³⁵ He was also a Szczecin-based scientist, head of project teams or urban consultant in cities such as Mamou in Ghana, Baghdad in Iraq or La Paz in Mexico, and since the mid-1970s he has regularly participated in international forums established by UNESCO. It can be added that since 1979 this UN agency has also sponsored and financed several courses that the employees of Szczecin University of Technology organized outside Poland.³⁶

The achievements of this nearly four decades of Piotr Zaremba's international career are enormous. It consists of project documentation, books and articles, but also family and official correspondence and various private notes, of which travel diaries seem to be the most interesting. There are about a hundred of these densely written notebooks documenting each foreign study stay, full of notes, drawings, sketches and maps, but also useful contacts. To illustrate their cognitive value, it is worthwhile looking at one of them, for example the one about Zaremba's trip to China and North Korea in September–December 1957. This was not the first trip of a Polish urban planner to this corner of Asia, and he already had long, many months' stays between 1954 and 1956. It was not the last trip, either, he visited China 11 times in total, and North Korea three times. This time he came with lectures, but also to see the effects of his work from previous years.

Thus, the notebooks from 1957 contained a lot of data relating to lectures and projects, which were consulted by the scientist. This is a meticulous account of his travels through Wusi, Canton, Wuhan, Beijing, Pyongyang, Won San, Ham Chyn and Chongjin, among others. Numerous remarks show how attentive Zaremba was, but also how much of his various sentimental reflexes. For example, in the Korean Chongjin, he writes down his impressions from meetings with his

³⁵ APSz, Legacy of Piotr Zaremba, sign. 5, Scientific resume prepared by prof. Jan K. Kostrzewski for Piotr Zaremba's application to Third World Prize, November 12, 1989, 1–43.

³⁶ Piotr Bujas, Alicja Gzowska, Łukasz Stanek, *Postgraduate Course in Urban and Regional Planning for Developing Countries, Szczecin University of Technology*, radical-pedagogies.com, accessed 20.05.2020, <https://radical-pedagogies.com/search-cases/p03-postgraduate-course-urban-regional-planning-developing-countries-szczecin-university-technology/>.

former colleagues, which he has not seen for a year and a half.³⁷ He notes with satisfaction that his ideas are being implemented and that everything is going in the right direction, although he also notices some difficulties, such as the fact that the poorly calibrated amendments made to the general plan create confusion. He tries to correct this, probably also knowing the reality in which he is turning. But Korea and China is not only a job, as it would be in any other place, it means something more. So it's a pleasure for Zaremba to have a beautiful view out from the window, of mountains and sea, small culinary pleasures, meetings with people, the ability to move around, and dynamics. Especially interesting seems to be the record that the professor made in Wuhan, on the occasion of his visit to Donghu Park: "A long walk all over the waterfront park now ready. And he thinks: why not create the same park on Lake Dąbskie in Szczecin? Where does the Chinese come from with this fantastic freedom to create beautiful things – if they do not imitate strangers, but are themselves? What else can I give to them, besides understanding of the function of the city – apart from understanding that they are unique – and not copying anyone. And here I am to convince them not to imitate anybody!"³⁸

In these few seemingly carelessly sketched sentences one can find something like a program. Its component is respect for what is found. There is no trace of cultural superiority here, no trace of mentoring. Zaremba has been looking carefully at what he has seen, realizing that a drastic interference into the existing space would be something inappropriate, especially in the face of many centuries of culture and achievements. He has respect for culture, but also for nature and sensitivity to ecological problems will become a characteristic feature of his output. This is also the novelty of Piotr Zaremba as an urban planner. Greenery, which he has been dealing with since his studies, is not only a decorative element. It is something much bigger, which he has expressed in numerous texts and lectures, where he stressed that in spatial planning, ecological priorities should be at least equivalent to economic ones, that only by such arrangement of issues is it possible to create. He was also not afraid to use strong words in his texts, as when he wrote about man as a creator and destroyer of the landscape and nature

³⁷ ARPZ, Journal of Travels to China and Korea in 1957, Notes of December 6–7, 1957 [no pagination].

³⁸ *Ibidem*, Notes from November 11, 1957 [without pagination].

ruthlessly attacked by technology.³⁹ What he wrote back in the 1940s is still valid today and fits perfectly into the ideology of ecological movements, which may come as a big surprise to many, probably not the first and not the last when it comes to the impressive professional output of Piotr Zaremba.

4. In an interesting interview with “*Pogranicza*” bimonthly, Krzysztof Zaremba, grandson of the first President of Szczecin, recalled: “When my grandfather, Piotr Zaremba, was dying, he was going through very hard times – he was very weak and he became speechless. When I visited him in the last moments of his life, he asked me to come closer and I understood that he wanted to tell me something – but how? He managed to hold a pen in his fingers and then, on a piece of paper he sketched the mouth of the Oder River, from Szczecin to Świnoujście with a few quick strokes.”⁴⁰ This picture can probably only be compared with the famous leaflet/declaration of 7 July 1945, saying, or actually shouting, that “POLACY, Szczecin is Polish!” Here is a clasp that clips nearly half a century of activity not free of political commitment. Today, it is controversial in many points.

Today, when describing the political elections of Szczecin’s first president, the analysis gives way to simplifications, becoming a “list of dignity and meanness.”⁴¹ He is denied membership in the Polish Workers’ Party, and later in the Polish United Workers’ Party, leading the Nation’s Unity Front for years and being active in numerous propaganda initiatives that were organized in the following decades of the Polish communism. All this is true. However, each item on this list could be considered further, because – on the contrary to what some people claim – it is not about ordinary opportunism. There is a deeper thought behind it, which I would refer to as a consistent prophetic attitude. According to its assumptions – neither codified nor ever written down by Piotr Zaremba – working for the state became his superior value. Regardless of personal and political sympathies and antipathies, regardless of the conditions, it is not always beneficial for the protagonist of this text. This attitude is inspired by the organic work (Karol Marcinkowski is, after all, the patron of Zaremba’s high school in Poznań) and by his aversion to political changes, which are doomed to failure in advance. Perhaps something that was taken from the conviction that human life is closed within

³⁹ Piotr Zaremba, *Planowanie zieleni i krajobrazu. Zieleń w urbanistyce i komunikacji* (Warszawa: Instytut Badawczy Budownictwa, 1946).

⁴⁰ „Szczecińskie kontrowersje. Z Krzysztofem Zarembą rozmawiają Wojciech Banaszak i Marcin Pabisiak”, *Pogranicza* 68 (2007), 3: 62–72.

⁴¹ Krasucki, *Lista*.

a certain time, geographical and cultural framework and it is the duty of a person who wants to act in the public sphere to understand their limitations in order to make good use of their time.

The reconstruction of the political involvement of Piotr Zaremba, and above all his political way of thinking, resembles a bit of a jigsaw puzzle. Sources give some clues in relation to particular years and there are a lot of various official documents, but actually nothing that would allow to define him unambiguously as a politician. There is no arbitrariness here that the signature under the photo of Zaremba in *Time* magazine in December 1947 carried with it. “Communist Mayor of Szczecin” – this is how he was characterized, and in the article itself the term “communist” was used.⁴² Formally, this could be accepted because since March 1947, Zaremba was indeed a member of the PPR, and later of the PZPR, but if it was a real distinction, I would have a lot of doubts.⁴³ There is another signature under the mentioned photograph from the American weekly: “Poland is worth a mass”, and in the text we will find a description of a Catholic ceremony that took place in Szczecin on the occasion of the opening of a city hospital. The paraphrase of the famous saying by Henryk IV Burbon – although it seems to be only a neat rhetorical trick in the text – can be used as a key to understanding Piotr Zaremba’s post-war political activity.

If so, ask what, when engaging in politics, he had to give up. The first association: a system of values, conservative, strongly marked by his right-wing view of the world, brought from home. It is common knowledge, however, that the post-war development of the “Regained Territories” was enthusiastically supported by people connected with national thought from before the war, to mention only Zygmunt Wojciechowski, Edward Serwański or Andrzej Wojtkowski,⁴⁴

⁴² “Foreign News: Poland – Plan Fulfillment”, *Time* 22 (1947): 22–23.

⁴³ It is worth remembering that Zaremba joins PPR at the persuasion of Leonard Borkowicz, the Governor of Szczecin and his “protector”. This proposal is made when Borkowicz realizes that it will be more and more difficult for him to defend himself against accusations of class hostility, which are made against the president. The fact that the President of Szczecin was indeed perceived by the hard core of the power apparatus as a stranger can be proved by the operational weld that the Security Office set up against him at the end of 1946, see Archive of Institute of National Remembrance, Branch in Szczecin (Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Oddział w Szczecinie) (hereinafter: AIPNSz), sign. IPN Sz 009/607, The case of an agency investigation, codenamed „Żarówka” / „Neron”, concerning Piotr Zaremba, 1945–1954.

⁴⁴ See Tomasz Nodzyński, „Twórcy myśli zachodniej w kraju przed i po 1945 r. Wybrane sylwetki poglądy”, in: *Rzeczy dotyczące myśli zachodniej Nad Odrą i Bałtykiem. Myśl zachodnia: ludzie – koncepcje – realizacja do 1989 r.*, ed. Magdalena Semczyszyn, Tomasz Sikorski, Adam Wątor (Szczecin: IPN, 2013), 31–49; Marian Mroczo, *Polska myśl zachodnia 1918–1939*

so there was no particular dissonance here. As far as conservatism is concerned, expressed, for example, in his religious attitude, he even wrote in a biography prepared for PPR in August 1947: “I am a believing and religious man and I acknowledge that this fact does not hinder anything, but it facilitates work for the good of Poland under the political and social direction of the Polish Workers’ Party.”⁴⁵ This document brings another important declaration: “I have undergone a major evolution of concepts in the last year and have arrived at this and no other outcome of the thought process. I believe that Poland’s future on the Oder River, its resilience against Germany and its internal compactness can best be achieved by pursuing the political agenda represented by the PPR, and therefore I consider my accession to closer cooperation a consequence of this conviction.”⁴⁶ So it is not about communism itself, not about class struggle, revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, collective ownership of the means of production and what else there is to do with communism as a compact ideological project. The accession to the party in this case is determined by pragmatism and the conviction that at a given moment the communists are the guarantors of what is most important to him, with the Oder, Western Pomerania and Szczecin in the first place.

And the German threat is worth emphasizing, because this component is often overlooked. Zaremba – a Poznań-born in Heidelberg, who had a great command of the German and who knew the Germans well, even from the occupation years – saw them not only as powerful neighbours but also as rivals. He was convinced that what happened in 1945, i.e. the takeover of the “Regained Territories” by Poland, would not be accepted by them (never?). This assumption will condition his evaluation and attitude on the occasion of various “hot” events. Both as obvious as the support for the Polish authorities on the occasion of the conflict in the Pomeranian Bay,⁴⁷ but also much more ambiguous, as for example in 1970 during the workers’ revolt, when in his text published in “*Kurier Szczeciński*”⁴⁸ he saw a real danger of destroying his work and the generation

(*kształtowanie i upowszechnianie*) (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1986); Grzegorz Strauchold, *Mysł zachodnia i jej realizacja w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1945–1957* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2003).

⁴⁵ AIPNSz, sign. IPN Sz 009/607, Copy of Piotr Zaremba’s biography, August 18, 1947, 202–203.

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ Tomasz Ślepówroński, „Geneza konfliktu między PRL a NRD w Zatoce Pomorskiej”, *Przełęcz Zachodniopomorski* 44 (2000), 3: 95–118.

⁴⁸ „Potępienie aktów wandalizmu, bandytyzmu i chuligańskich ekscesów. Wypowiedzi ludzi pracy Szczecina”, *Kurier Szczeciński*, 18–19.12.1970, 3. See Eryk Krasucki, „Grudzień’70 /

close to him, a peculiar end of the world that was being built in the post-war period. This was in harmony with the vision of the authorities, it was in their hands, perhaps behind the text was the inspiration of the local party apparatus, but one can also argue that the full identity of the goals did not exist here. The calm on the western borders was in his opinion something necessary, as the escalation of the conflict could turn against Polish interests. It also seems that he was not indifferent to the fate of the protesting workers. In his notebook he wrote down under the date 17 December 1970, i.e. on that “black Thursday”, when 13 people were killed on the streets of Szczecin: “My heart is squeezing something – but I’m not giving up – it had to happen.”⁴⁹ So he saw, this is how it can be interpreted, the historical moment described as a dramatic conflict of rightful reasons, in which he was to unequivocally stand up for what he had sacrificed his life to. He saw the situation in 1946 on the occasion of the demonstration of *Trzymamy Straż nad Odrą / We Keep the Guard Over The Oder*, when he did not in any way support Stanisław Mikołajczyk, enthusiastically received by the scouting youth (*incidentally*, he did not value the leader of the PSL, which is reflected several times in his notes)⁵⁰ and it was similar in 1981, when he supported the introduction of martial law.

In each of these cases, when Piotr Zaremba supported unambiguously the policy of the ruling party, he did not galvanise either faith in the ideology, nor in any clear opportunism, so frequently accused of it, sometimes even by people who are sympathetic to it. For example, Leonard Borkowicz noted in his memoirs (with his characteristic love for hyperbole): “Zaremba is of course a disgusting conformist, but at the same time he is a valuable man, universally useful and genuinely cultural.”⁵¹ This was because “Poland was worth a mass”, because “Szczecin was worth a mass”, especially when a dozen or so kilometres from this city the border with Germany ran, when the international political situation was far from stable. In this context, the *Memoirs of the Mayor of Szczecin 1945–1950* are a very interesting document. It is worth reading them as a testimony to the anti-German attitudes of the time, both in relation to the post-war community of

Styczeń’71 – szczeciński przełom”, in: *Poznań, Szczecin, Wrocław. Trzy uniwersytety, trzy miasta, trzy regiony*, ed. Waldemar Łazuga, Sebastian Paczos (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2010), 213–225.

⁴⁹ ARPZ, A diary from 1970, Notes of December 17 1970 [no pagination].

⁵⁰ ARPZ, Journal 1945–1947, Notes of 13–14 April 1946 [no pagination].

⁵¹ Pomeranian Library of Szczecin (Książnica Pomorska w Szczecinie), Special Collections, The legacy of Leonard Borkowicz, sign. 2999, Leonard Borkowicz’s Notes, notebook VIII, May 30, 1983, 151. I would thank Dr. Katarzyna Rembacka for drawing my attention to this memoir.

Szczecin and the President himself. The basic source of this aversion, or, more properly speaking, hatred, is the war and occupation, the way the Germans treated the Poles, but also one can see here undoubtedly something more, so the fear of Germans, marked by the endemic way of thinking, as an eternal threat. An interesting testimony of the worldview is also a record of a conversation with older brother Jerzy.

It was October 1946, the men saw each other for the first time since 1939. The scene of the conversation was London, where Piotr came to talk about the reconstruction of the country and what had been achieved in the “Regained Lands” during numerous official meetings. This is the record of the then exchange of opinions: “1. He does not deny the need for social reforms and the internationalization of industry. 2. believes that there must be a war between two worlds – the West and the East. Poland, in his opinion, must take part on the western side, because of the spiritual and cultural community, etc. The nation is not a language, but a culture. I answer, or rather ask myself: what kind of participation is Germany supposed to take. A. – On the west side. Me: so against the Polish territories? A. Yes. I: isn’t this a dark spot in the reasoning? A: there is no... – but [...]. The tendency for us to leave the Regained Territories... I: did he take into account the fact that life itself produces a new type of people in the western lands, a new type of Poles attached to those lands and not intending to leave them? It crosses your calculations that, having suddenly opened a road to the east, these people will throw away what they already had. – A. – It states that this is a strong argument. I: Germany is not defeated – and biologically, war is a new biological death for Poland. The statement that Germany is no longer the greatest and only⁵² enemy of Poland is a denial of the facts and beliefs of the Nation.”⁵³

Once again, I would like to draw attention to the fact that recreating Piotr Zaremba’s political thinking is a necessity to refer to various, highly dispersed documents and testimonies, to what is official and unofficial, often reading between the lines, which in itself is a fascinating activity. Simplified interpretations, referring only to political external forms, undoubtedly impoverish the image of the characters and cannot help to fully understand their activity. This does not mean that Zaremba’s future biographer will be able to omit them. Unfortunately, there is no escape from reading the subsequent minutes of meetings of various

⁵² Underlined in the text.

⁵³ ARPZ, Journal 1945–1947, Notes of October 12, 1946 [no pagination].

party bodies, the Front for National Unity or the analysis of speeches more or less marked by political improvisation. At the same time, I have no doubt that the main stitch of political views of the first President of Szczecin is already perfectly visible. He is determined by his consistent prophetic attitude and almost unconditional devotion to what happened in the western and northern lands as a result of post-war decisions. An excellent description of this attitude and this way of thinking is brought by one of the notes from Piotr Zaremba's notebook. In 1982, the first months of martial law, he visited Paris and there, having a moment for quiet reflection, he crossed out a few words that might be considered his political credo: "(...) I sit on the Trocadero terrace, look at the Eiffel and think... How rare is the time – and the condition to think. There is no more important event for Poland from the early Middle Ages to 1945 – like Poland's return to the Oder. Szczecin/Wrocław, these are symbols of the 20th century – not Gierek, Gomułka, Jaruzelski or Wałęsa. In the years 200, all this will become entangled in people. Just like the average Pole, Zygmunt Stary and Korybut or Augusts are intertwined. But one thing will remain: in this bizarre, often alien arrangement of conditions – Poland got involved in the affairs of history, put its foot in the closing door, did not let itself be closed in 1945, although it closed a few years later. And we entered these 'Lands', with intuition, not political expression, according to the growing grassroots national subconscious, which we could not express. It was indeed a 'deed of the Poles' more important than the right and important rush of August 1980. And I was there, doing my job – as I can see now that there is no more important role for me than to instil in the Jurkish (my conversation with him on 31.8.1981) and in the Jaruzelski (my conversation with him on 17.4.82), that the most important thing is that our successors, those conditions of the third generation, could live permanently in the Polish Szczecin of the 21st century. Whoever helps us to achieve this, regardless of the facts and inclinations, is our friend. Who is against it – our enemy, even if of a kind attitude to traditional views. It is not easy to see it this way, but it is necessary."⁵⁴

5. Referring to selected threads from Piotr Zaremba's biography, I tried to show how huge potential opens up to researchers of recent history. It is a journey towards a rich family history, dating back several centuries, but especially fascinating in relation to 20th century history. It is also a journey towards urban and planning fascination, in which we can accompany a scientist gradually gaining

⁵⁴ ARPZ, Journal of 1982, Notes of April 16, 1982 [no pagination].

international recognition, not forgetting where he came from and giving his beloved place the opportunity to benefit from the prestige surrounding him. It is, after all, an entry into the world of complicated relations binding a man brought up in a national and conservative tradition, trying, in the name of higher reasons, to find himself in a political reality dominated by an essentially alien ideology. Each of these threads is illuminated by a huge number of sources of various provenance. Their proper use gives a chance for a colourful description, extremely saturated with details, and above all, comprehensive, devoid of the banality of black and white studies. The situation is similar in relation to other parts of Piotr Zaremba's biography. Thus, it can be concluded that the basic skill of his biographer should be an above-average ability to select information.

So it is worth returning to the question from the beginning: why hasn't the biography of Piotr Zaremba been created so far? It cannot be simply justified as the basic body of sources has been known for many years. The legacy that the first president's family donated to the State Archive in Szczecin in 1995 is over 1104 archival units and covers over 23 running meters.⁵⁵ The files of the City Board, the Szczecin Voivodeship Office, as well as other documents concerning the presidency from 1945–1950 (including, of course, memoirs) have been available for decades. The situation is similar with regard to the academic activity of Piotr Zaremba and his involvement in various political bodies from the period of People's Poland. For a dozen or so years now, due to the activity of the IPN Archives, materials collected about him by the secret police have also been available. The situation is worst when it comes to the work of an urban planner on the international forum. I don't know if anyone has looked into the archives in China, Vietnam, Mexico or Iraq, but it is also worth noting that most of the material related to Piotr Zaremba's foreign trips is available through the legacy donated to the archive by his family and in the family archive, which is also worth a word here. It consists of personal materials under the care of the professor's children – diaries, travel diaries, notebooks, notes, correspondence, photographs, i.e. biographical material of considerable importance, allowing us to learn about both public and private life.

The material stored by the family is not available to the public and to use it you need the family's consent. The same applies to the legacy stored in the State

⁵⁵ APSz, Inventory to the collection: Legacy of Piotr Zaremba, Iga Bańkowska, *Notatka informacyjna do inwentarza zespołu archiwalnego (65/1067). Spuścizna Piotra Zaremby (1910–1993) 1926–1993*, Dezember, 2013, 1–11.

Archives, although in this case obtaining permission is a pure formality. Can such an obstacle be an obstacle in writing Piotr Zaremba's biography? To a certain extent, probably yes, but it is also nothing unusual and biographers of recent history meet with a similar situation very often. So I would not see here the main reason for this state of affairs. What seems more important to me is something that has already been signalled to some extent in relation to the above mentioned threads. The biography of Piotr Zaremba is a huge research challenge, connected with the need for good discernment and in the specificity of different, often very different epochs, and in the specificity of various local environments, and in the specificity of various disciplines or scientific fields, because both urban planning and planning are at stake, architecture, politics, history of ideas, history of science, some knowledge about the activities of the secret services, the history of Polish post-war emigration, diary literature, but also various *hobbies*, which occupied the professor all his life, with his beloved philately at the forefront. It should also be noted that his life was not only on the Polish plan, so it is also necessary to know the international context. It seems particularly important to know the history of the so-called developing countries.

Such an erudite challenge is actually standard in biographical research today, but the enormity of material and matters that occupied Piotr Zaremba could have been of some importance in deciding whether or not to start writing such a book. It is worth noting at this point that in the past there were already several "approaches" to it and all of them failed. What determined it? Probably the biggest factor was lack of mature approach, trying to sail out into "the deep ocean on a small boat". Maybe the lack of distance, that was necessary to face a character so spectacular. However, these are only speculations, because in general, the success is determined by willpower and diligence. Here, I would like to draw a particular attention to one element, because it is connected with the regional context. In Western Pomerania – especially in Szczecin – Piotr Zaremba is still an iconic figure, and thus almost everyone has some kind of attitude, some kind of a view of him. Analysing the phenomenon of Zaremba from the point of view of collective memory, understood as a field of constant encounters and conflicts, constructed images of the past and people working in it, would be a fascinating, though certainly also a rather difficult task.⁵⁶ However, it seems necessary. A dry, factually escaping biography will not explain anything especially in this matter,

⁵⁶ Barbara Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2006), 32–45.

but it is also about the inhabitants of Western Pomerania finding out from the basis of Piotr Zaremba's biography something important about themselves, or to be precise – what and how they remember.⁵⁷

The sum of the above mentioned conditions could have determined why Piotr Zaremba's biography has not yet appeared on the bookstore shelves. But it is also not easy for the reader to find a lot of other studies on persons more or less significant in relation to the post-war history of Western Pomerania. Regional biographical research did not go beyond causal studies, which does not take away their value.⁵⁸ Often these are texts filling many important cognitive gaps and actually necessary for a meaningful recognition of post-war reality in its various dimensions, most often published in regional scientific periodicals. The books themselves – although not classic author's monographs – are not insignificant, but they are often occasional editions, serving more to commemorate an important person for a given milieu than a critical reflection on his/her life and activity. These are most often studies referring to the activity of representatives of intelligent groups, such as doctors, teachers, artists, church or maritime workers.⁵⁹ They are complemented by collective studies, bringing knowledge about selected environments or simply reflecting on the most important figures of the era. In this case, I take into account both works of a scientific nature, as well as those that

⁵⁷ Andrzej Szpociński, ed., *Wobec przeszłości. Pamięć przeszłości jako element kultury współczesnej* (Warszawa: Instytut im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2005).

⁵⁸ Many texts of this type were published recently in *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, for example see: Maria Jaremek, „Działalność Karola Czejarka – księgarza, współorganizatora instytucji i społecznego ruchu kulturalnego na Pomorzu Zachodnim, germanisty, autora licznych publikacji”, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 3 (2019): 107–125; Radosław Ptaszyński, Magdalena Żukowska, „Bolesław Nagay (1926–2014). Szkic do portretu chirurga”, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 2 (2019): 79–98; Artur Kaźmierczak, „Słuchacze Szkoły Prawniczej Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości w Szczecinie skierowani na odbycie aplikacji sądowej w okręgu Sądu Apelacyjnego w Szczecinie. Na podstawie akt osobowych aplikantów Sądu Apelacyjnego i Sądu Wojewódzkiego w Szczecinie”, *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski* 1 (2017): 125–155.

⁵⁹ For examples of publications from this group, see Ireneusz Kojder, ed., *Marek Eisner* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Pomorskiego Uniwersytetu Medycznego, 2014); Paweł Migdański ed., *Szkołę tworzy człowiek. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Pani Danucie Rodziewicz* (Szczecin: KAdruk, 2012); *Erazm ze Szczecina. Twórczość Erazma Kalwaryjskiego / Erasmus von Stettin. Erazm Kalwaryjski und sein Werk*, transl. Paweł Kowalski (Szczecin: Stowarzyszenie Czas Przestrzeń Tożsamość, KAdruk, 2013); Anna Gut-Czerwonka, *Zygmunt Wujek, artysta nietypowy* (Koszalin: Archiwum Państwowe w Koszalinie, 2019); Kazimierz Kozłowski, Grzegorz Wejman, ed., *Arcybiskup prof. dr hab. Kazimierz Majdański. Obrońca życia i mąż stanu* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2011); the series *Ludzie morskiego Szczecina* by Ryszard Techman, consisting of several dozen texts, printed in the „Kronika Szczecina”.

do not fit into strictly academic categories.⁶⁰ Of course, all kinds of publications – memoirs, diaries, dailies, interviews – are of great importance from the point of view of West Pomeranian biography. It is, however, a separate group of publications, which have an auxiliary character from the point of view of research, but here, too, the books are very rare.⁶¹

In fact, the only monographic study that meets all scientific criteria is the biography of Leonard Borkowicz by Katarzyna Rembacka.⁶² In the perspective of a few years, books devoted to the life and activity of Marian Jurczyk, Andrzej Milczanowski and Alfred Wielopolski, among others, should also be published. This may not be a “biographical revolution”, but a certain stir in research is noticeable.

Piotr Zaremba should finally have an extensive biography. He is too important a figure for Western Pomerania to be able to stay longer in conversation about him on causal texts or worse on some unfounded ‘thoughts about him and his work as evident today.

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⁶⁰ For example publications from this group, see Józef Rutkowski et al, ed., *Ludzie nauki Szczecina w 50leciu. Księga osiągnięcia*, vol. 1 (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 1996); Katarzyna Rembacka, ed., *Szczecin – history is created by people. Second Educational Conference, Szczecin II XII 2009* (Szczecin: IPN Szczecin, Szczecin City Hall, 2010).

⁶¹ For further readings on this matter, see Roman Kostynowicz, *W blasku katedr. Ostatnie artykuły, dziennik* (Szczecin: Stowarzyszenie Konserwatorów Zabytków – Oddział w Szczecinie, Oficyna Wydawnicza Archiwum Państwowego w Szczecinie „Dokument”, 2010); Piotr Zieliński, *Marian Jurczyk. Zły prezydent. Wywiad-rzeka* (Szczecin: Piotr Zieliński, 2008); Tadeusz Białecki, *Szczecin – przystanek na całe życie*, vol. 1: *Wspomnienia z lat 1933–1958*, vol. 2: *Wspomnienia z lat 1958–1975* (Szczecin: Książnica Pomorska, 2009–2012); Alfred Wielopolski, *Z herbem po służbach. Wspomnienia*, ed. Aleksander Wit Labuda (Warszawa: Naczelna Dyrekcja Archiwów Państwowych, 2016).

⁶² Katarzyna Rembacka, *Komunista na peryferiach władzy. Historia Leonarda Borkowicza 1912–1989* (Szczecin–Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2020).

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ABSTRACT

Piotr Zaremba (1910–1993) was the first post-war president of Szczecin, an internationally renowned urban planner and planner, and the author of fascinating memories of the first post-war years. He was also the winner of several plebiscites, a specific game crowning the end of the previous century. The verdict of the participants was recognized as “Szczecin of the century” and “Pomerania of the century”. It is therefore astonishing that there is no extensive biography of the former rector of the Szczecin University of Technology and one of the co-founders of the University of Szczecin, although it would have been a study that would have given contemporary people considerable knowledge about the important problems of 20th century history. Not only regional, but also national and European history. By discussing selected threads: family, urban and political, the author of the article tries to show, on the one hand, the richness of source material connected with Piotr Zaremba’s biography and, on the other hand, the possibility of multi-faceted lighting of its individual fragments. He tries to multiply the questions more than to give final answers. For these to appear, an extensive biographical book is necessary. In the second part of the text, therefore, the aim of the text is to analyse the reasons why serious biographical reflection on Piotr Zaremba does not exist, despite the fact that he is an emblematic figure for Szczecin and Western Pomerania. The author also follows whether the case under examination is something exceptional for the West Pomeranian biography, characterising the state of biographical writing in relation to people relevant to the post-war history of the region. This seems to me to be a particularly justified question in a situation where biography – after years of neglect in this area – has for some time become an extremely popular genre of historical writing in Poland, giving historians the opportunity to go far beyond the circle set by academic circles with their message. The article is based on a wide range of archival queries, often referring to documentation that has not been in scientific circulation so far.

PIOTR ZAREMBA (1910–1993). BIOGRAFIA DO ODSŁONIĘCIA**ABSTRAKT**

Piotr Zaremba (1910–1993) był pierwszym powojennym prezydentem Szczecina, urbanistą i planistą o międzynarodowej sławie, również autorem fascynujących wspomnień dotyczących pierwszych lat powojennych. Był też zwycięzcą kilku plebiscytów, specyficznej zabawy wieńczącej koniec poprzedniego wieku. Werdyktem uczestników został uznany za „szczecinianina stulecia” i „Pomorzanina stulecia”. Zdziwia więc brak obszernej biografii byłego rektora Politechniki Szczecińskiej i jednego ze współtwórców Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, choć byłoby to opracowanie dające współczesnym nie małą wiedzę na temat istotnych problemów XX-wiecznej historii. Nie tylko regionalnej, ale ogólnopolskiej i europejskiej. Poprzez omówienie wybranych wątków: rodzinnego, urbanistycznego i politycznego, autor artykułu stara się pokazać z jednej strony bogactwo materiału źródłowego wiążącego się z życiorysem Piotra Zaremba, z drugiej zaś możliwość wieloaspektowego oświetlenia poszczególnych jego fragmentów. Stara się w większym stopniu mnożyć pytania, niż udzielać ostatecznych odpowiedzi. Aby te się pojawiły niezbędna jest obszerna książka biograficzna. W drugiej części tekst stawia sobie więc za cel przeanalizowanie przyczyn, dla których poważny namysł biograficzny w odniesieniu do Piotra Zaremba nie istnieje, pomimo tego, że jest on dla Szczecina i Pomorza Zachodniego postacią emblematyczną. Autor śledzi także, czy badany przypadek jest czymś wyjątkowym dla zachodniopomorskiej biografistyki, charakteryzując stan pisarstwa biograficznego w odniesieniu do osób istotnych dla powojennej historii regionu. Wydaje mi się to pytaniem szczególnie uzasadnionym w sytuacji, kiedy biografistyka – po latach zaniedbań w tym obszarze – staje się w Polsce od pewnego czasu niezwykle popularnym gatunkiem piśmiennictwa historycznego, dającym historykom możliwość wyjścia ze swoim przekazem daleko poza krąg wyznaczany przez środowiska akademickie. Artykuł opiera się na szerokiej kwerendzie archiwalnej, odnosząc się nierzadko do dokumentacji niebędącej jak dotąd w obiegu naukowym.