

Ratajczak interview from 15

Wiesenthal people”, and whoever you like, warning him: “If you don’t kick out that Ratajczak, your school will be boycotted, and you won’t get any grants”. Well, so the Rector suspends me from my duties as academic teacher. Alas, he is a trustworthy man, who is sensitive to the direction of the wind of history (today he fulfills the glorious function of a Polish Republic Senator from the SLD). (34) In April 1999, I was going through hard times. My timid university colleagues turned their backs on me. There came a point when they would not recognize me in the street. It has remained so since. The media were spitting at me. As if it were not enough that I was suspended from my job, the university was told by the “top” to take me to an academic court. The court lasted a year, and was an open ridicule of justice. During the consecutive hearings, I would give 2-hour speeches on the subject of freedom of speech and the right to question. Also, I would make a stand toward the theses announced by the Holocaust revisionists, but the university inquisition seldom pretended to listen to me. The verdict was ready: a disciplinary removal from the university, with a 3-year ban on work in the teaching profession. I had only the satisfaction of intellectually finishing off Messrs. judges (the moral bottom, and of like legal knowledge), as well as the disciplinary spokesman for Opole University, Prof. Wiesław Łukaszewski, who, after a year of investigation, was not able to produce even one prosecution witness. When I showed to my father Łukaszewski’s prosecution statement against me, my father asserted that, compared to Łukaszewski, one Andrei Vyshinsky (35) appeared a good lawyer. Well, but privately Łukaszewski is a psychologist, and the make-up of the academic court consisted of a medieval historian, another psychologist, as well as a priest from the OU Theological Faculty. Indeed, we have interesting priests nowadays.

But at least I was comforted by the attitude of my students. They wrote petitions in my defense to the Rector and the press, at terrible risk on the occasion. Two of them got immediately suspended from the university. When I learned of this, I forbade them any similar acts. Also, with great relief, I accepted moral support from numerous countrymen. People phoned me all the time, cheering me up. Unusually active was the Polonia (36) in the USA and Canada, who inundated the university with e-mails in my defense. Several letters came also from Australia. Poles felt intuitively that the monstrous machinery of political correctness, operating like a steamroller, was falling down upon one man. I was sinking in a good company, later supplemented by courageous scientists (Mirosław Dakowski, Rafał Broda, Ryszard Bender, Peter Raina, etc.), as well as equally courageous editors of some newspapers. I would have been a happy man if, at that time, I had fought only the learning institution’s cowards and their commanders. But no such thing! In May 1999, my case was taken care of by the public prosecutor’s office, which accused me of breaking Article 55 of the Institute for National Remembrance Act. (37) This Article, after the fashion of West European and other states, punishes with up to three years in jail for the so-called denial of Nazi crimes. This barely concealed censorship, in force in Poland since January 1, 1999, signifies, in my opinion, the grave of historiography, because it puts a stop to scientific questioning, without which the historian’s job makes no sense. The lawmaker, inspired by the “Holocaust Industry”, seems to say: “It all happened so and so; if you try to deviate, we’ll clap you up”.

Very well, I reply, there is no one in his right mind who would deny Nazi crimes (against Jews; that is what this strictly ethnic Act is all about), but nobody will convince me that it all happened the way that Messrs. Gross, (38) Wilkomirski, (39) and the whole bunch of liars working for the Holocaust Industry (also in Australia

there is no shortage of those) wish. Of course, the object of the prosecution’s and court’s inquiry is the book DANGEROUS TOPICS, that is, its subchapter ‘Holocaust Revisionism’. My explanation that I merely present the revisionists’ opinions appears futile, and so do my attempts to introduce defense witnesses, experts, etc. Well, the court knows better. I’ve already received two verdicts, but the end of the affair is nowhere in sight; at present, I face 10 months in jail. It looks as if I have touched on something that causes fury of the mighty of the world, because, logically thinking, one does not persecute a man for three years for dealing with meaningless trifles.

ZK: How did your scientific career begin?

DR: In 1986, after getting a university degree, I went back to Opole. On my way, I submitted an application for the School of Pedagogy there. Its processing took two years. It was still the time of flourishing komuna, (39) and, reportedly, some papers from the well-known institution, (41) (followed me all the way down from Poznań. Thus I remained in suspense, or perhaps not entirely in suspense, because, meanwhile, the Polish People’s Army claimed me; it was still full of dumb sergeants, who would be after us for little crosses on our uniforms. Formally, in February 1988, I became an assistant lecturer at the History Institute of the School of Pedagogy in Opole. In 1991, I published my first book, THE POLES IN THE WILNO DISTRICT, 1939-44. Four years later, I published THE TESTIMONY OF FATHER WOJCZEK, which the second, expanded edition appeared the following year. In 1994, I began collecting material for my PhD thesis, devoted, in fact, to Stalinist crimes in the Opole district. I defended it in June 1997, automatically advancing to the position of lecturer at the History Institute of Opole University (formerly, the School of Pedagogy). A little earlier, in 1996, I published, together with Ryszard Miązek, THE HOME UNDERGROUND ARMY, 1949-52. In the fall of 1997, I started collecting material for my assistant professor dissertation on Archbishop Bolesław Kominek. (42) These works got interrupted for known reasons. In April 1999, after publishing DANGEROUS TOPICS, I got suspended, and then fired, in a disciplinary manner, from Opole University, with a 3-year ban on work as a teacher. Afterwards, in 2001, I published EVEN MORE DANGEROUS TOPICS. This year, a second, expanded edition of the book will appear, as well as a new volume from my pen, entitled THE CASE OF DR. DARIUSZ RATAJCZAK, OR THE UNIVERSITY BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. Currently, I work as a night porter in Opole.

Notes:

23. Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza (The Polish United Workers’ Party). A communist party, founded in 1948 through the enforced merger of the Polish Socialist Party with the Polish Workers’ Party. The former, founded in 1892, fought the Tsarist rule in the Russian Partition; the latter, founded in 1942, was Soviet-sponsored. The PZPR was the ruling party of People’s Poland, loyal to the Soviet Union. Dissolved on 27 January 1990.

24. A political party, of liberal, conservative-liberal, and Christian profile, founded in 1994. Tadeusz Mazowiecki was its leader from 1995 to 2000. In 1989, as Premier, in a speech to the Sejm (Polish Parliament), Mazowiecki declared: “We are marking off the [communist] past with a thick line.”

25. Launched by the Home Army on 1 August 1944 against the German garrison in Warsaw. The Soviets refused assistance to the insurgents.

26. Akcja “Burza.” The military activities, including sabotage, of the Home Army at the rear of the German Army, begun in March 1944 in Volhynia. At times, the Polish units fought arm-in-arm with the Soviet partisans and the Red Army. After the fighting, most of the Home Army units were disarmed by the Soviets, and

either incorporated into the Polish army within the Red Army, or shipped to Soviet concentration camps.

27. Narodowe Siły Zbrojne (NSZ). An underground resistance organization formed in September 1942, independent of the Home Army. It fought against the Germans and Soviet partisans. After the war, the NSZ fought the communist authorities. As a result of mass arrests of its members by the communist security apparatus, the organization stopped its activities in 1947. Its leaders were executed.

28. Round Table (Okrągły Stół). A conference of representatives of Solidarity (incl. Lech Wałęsa, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Jacek Kuron) and communist authorities between 6 February and 5 March 1989 in Magdalenka near Warsaw. The negotiations made possible the formation of the first non-communist government in post-war Poland.

29. Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego (Department for Public Security), the UB, informally UB [oobe] (also derog. ubecja). A political police force, created in July 1944 by the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (Home National Council), a Soviet-controlled Communist organization, acting as the official representation of the Polish nation. In 1945, the UB was placed under the Ministry of Public Security. Formally in charge of internal security of the Polish state, in reality the UB fought ruthlessly any opposition to Communist authority. Its core consisted of NKVD officers, and its rank-and-file included Communist activists, trained in the Soviet Union, Nazi collaborators, and common criminals. (UB members were referred to by the derogatory term ubeks. In December 1956, it was renamed Służba Bezpieczeństwa (SB - Security Service).

30. Litwacy. Jews from Russia proper who, from the late 19th century on, settled in the Russian Partition (Russian Poland). Some of them came from Lithuania (in Polish: Litwa).

31. The Gazeta Wyborcza (Election Newspaper). A daily, edited in Warsaw since 1989; ideologically close to the Freedom Union. Originally, a Solidarity periodical, supporting the movement’s campaign to win election to the Sejm and Senate in 1989. Its editor-in-chief is Adam Michnik.

32. Jerzy Buzek. Premier from 1997 to 2001. Of the AWS (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, Solidarity Election Action).

33. Władysław Bartoszewski (b.1922). Historian and politician. In 1940-41, prisoner at Auschwitz. Member of the Home Army. Co-founder of the Council For Aid to Jews (Żegota). Imprisoned during the Stalinist period. In 1983-90, lecturer at universities in Munchen, Augsburg, and Eichstatt, Germany. Honorary citizen of Israel (from 1991). Minister of External Affairs in 1995 and 2000-01.

34. Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance). A coalition of left-wing political parties, created in 1991, and led by former members of the PZPR (which was dissolved in 1990), including President Aleksander Kwaśniewski.

35. Andrei Y. Vishinsky (1883-1954). Soviet chief prosecutor during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.

36. The Polish community outside of Poland.

37. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, the IPN. Founded in 1998 to collect documents on the Communist security apparatus, and carry out investigations of Nazi and Communist crimes.

38. Jan Tomasz Gross, author of NEIGHBORS: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN JEDWABNE, where he alleges that in the summer of 1941, the Polish inhabitants of a small town Jedwabne in Eastern Poland savagely murdered, for obscure reasons (plunder? irrational hatred?), 1600 Jewish neighbors. Norman Finkelstein calls Gross’s book “a kind of Goldhagen for Beginners” and “standard Holocaust Industry literature”.

39. Benjamin Wilkomirski, real name: Bruno Doessekker, a Swiss writer claiming to be a child Holocaust survivor, author of FRAGMENTS: MEMORIES OF A WARTIME CHILDHOOD. It has been found that he is not Jewish, and was not in concentration camps as a child.

40. Polish derogatory term for the Communist system and its functionaries.

41. The SB (see Note 29).

42. Bolesław Kominek (1903-74). Archbishop of Wrocław. During the Stalinist period, prevented by the Communist authorities from residing in Wrocław and being consecrated. Clandestinely consecrated in 1954; consecration was kept secret until 1956. Cardinal from 1973. □



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